

Teachers' Pedagogical Competences and Pupils' Academic Performance in Primary Schools in Kibuku District, Uganda

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Abstract: *The study examined the relationship between teachers' pedagogical competences and academic performance of pupils in Kibuku District in Eastern Uganda. Four specific objectives were employed to guide this study. The purpose was to critically examine the significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical competences and pupils' academic performance. The breakdown of the relationships focused on: Knowledge about learners; context knowledge; subject knowledge; interpersonal skills; communication skills; teachers' pedagogical competences; teaching skills; teachers' content knowledge; class management skills; and academic performance of pupils. An experimental research design was used to conduct this study with a mixed methods approach of quantitative and qualitative methods. A sample size of 208 teachers was used with 130 questionnaires received back. Relationships among variables were established using Pearson correlation coefficients while hypotheses were tested using simultaneous linear regression coefficients at a confidence interval of 99%. The study established positive and significant relationships among; knowledge about learners, context knowledge, subject knowledge, interpersonal skills, communication skills, teachers' pedagogical competences, teaching skills, teachers' content knowledge, class management skills and academic performance. The major recommendations were that: Teachers should interact and inquire about the daily life experiences of pupils to enhance the use of appropriate teaching methods to facilitate learning; and that teachers must use activity-based strategies and participatory methods of teaching such as discussion, guided discovery, storytelling, demonstration etc. to enable learners master concepts based on the surroundings, contextualize, and interpret concepts easily.*

Key words: Teachers' pedagogical competences, academic performance, primary schools, Kibuku, Uganda

1. Introduction

Pedagogical competences refer to the minimum professional standards, often specified by law, which should enable a person to fulfill a particular role of the teaching profession (Andreia and Mata, 2011). Contextually, pedagogical competences refer to the teachers' desired content knowledge, methodologies, communication skills and classroom management skills in an effort to meet the expectations of their learners. The study used the concept "Competence" to mean ability to enable a pupil own basic skills by the help of the teacher (Wamika, 2017).

Teachers' pedagogical competence is one of the issues explaining teacher performance in Kibuku District. Right from history, these two variables have not been closely discussed in regards to primary schools. Academic performance, as a widely researched topic, has been explained by very many other variables instead.

History has identified that academic performance was first connected to physical activity way back in the 1950s and 1960s when researchers in the United States of America wanted to establish the relationship between physical activity and academic performance. Research shows that initially, academic performance was based on grading scales and tests that varied by teachers and were more subjective than standardized academic assessments typically used in research today. Today's understanding of academic performance is characterized by refined and improved protocols allowing for more accurate comparisons of results across classrooms and schools (Trost and Johnson, 2009).

Kibuku District is found in Eastern Uganda, named after its chief town Kibuku, where the headquarters are located. It is bordered by the districts of Pallisa to the North, Budaka to the East, Butaleja District to the South, and Namutumba District to the West. The headquarters of Kibuku are located 53 kilometers (33 miles) by road

West of Mbale, the largest town in the region (Namuyangu, 2016).

The district has one county, 9 Sub-counties, 40 parishes and 244 village councils. Kibuku directorate of education is charged with overseeing the implementation of district and national education policies and plans. The district has a total of 98 primary schools, 42 of which are government aided whereas, 56 are privately owned (Nakeba and Ngobi, 2012). The main concern however, is that since 2013, there has been a lot of concern about poor performance of primary pupils in Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) ranking the district as one of the worst performing in the whole of Eastern region. The district is still struggling with improvement in her education quality in the hands of issues related to the quality of teachers. MoES in conjunction with some NGO education partners such as Research Triangle Institute (RTI) implementing Early Grade Reading through School Health and Reading Program (SHRP) spearheaded by Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness Project (UTSEP) under Global Partnership for Education (GPE) have sunk a lot of funds including textbooks (primers) for learners in both English and Local Language in the same area to boost learners' literacy skills but meaningful results have never been realized. This state of affairs prompted the researchers to critically examine among other factors teachers' pedagogical competences and pupils' academic performance, given that teachers are regarded to be the key change-makers in issues of learning and performance (Hanushek, et al, 2008 and STiR Education, 2016).

There has been a significant decline in academic performance for the last six years in Kibuku District. This is a direct outcome of employing teachers with poor pedagogical competences as documented in previous studies (Sahana and Vijila, 2015; Bossaert, Doumen, and Verschueren, 2011; Halliman, 2008). Observations have shown that teachers' pedagogical competences negate their chances to performing very well and impact negatively on pupils' academic performance (Omotere, Yinger, and Danielson, 2012). The poor academic performance has negatively affected the pupils of Kibuku in various aspects such as; failure to join institutions of higher learning after PLE on government sponsorship, unemployment, high dropout rates, low retention levels, low completion levels and high criminal offences registered among others.

Academic performance is not an isolated phenomenon but one predicted by factors like teachers' pedagogical competences, classroom environment, parents' involvement, pupil-teacher relationships, instructional materials' use, teacher motivation, relevant reference materials, teacher qualifications and so on. Despite the government interventions in addressing most of these issues, teachers' pedagogical competences remain a major challenge on pupils' academic performance in Kibuku. Scholars have tried to investigate on most of

those attributes but no attempts have been made to critically test the relationship between teachers' pedagogical competences and pupils' academic performance, especially in Kibuku District.

It is therefore against this background that this study sets out to examine whether teachers' pedagogical competences could predict the good academic performance of pupils in Kibuku District. Some parents from Kibuku have resorted to taking their children to schools in other neighbouring regions in search for better academic performance and quality education (Namuyangu, 2016). If this state of affairs is not addressed, all efforts of the on-going education interventions by NGO education partners, government and other stakeholders may continue to be futile.

2. Literature review and related studies

Pedagogical competences are just one form of competences that entail the capacity of an individual to use a corresponding, and synergistic combination of tangible resources which take form of instructional materials such as books, articles, cases, and technology or intangible resources which are customized into knowledge, skills and experience to achieve efficiency or success in teaching (Madhavaram and Leverie, 2010). On the other hand, academic performance refers to a measure of how much a pupil has understood in the classroom ensured through giving tests, quizzes, mental work, practical work, examinations and homework (Bossaert, Doumen, and Verschueren, 2011). In this study, academic performance basically means achievement in Primary Leaving Examinations (P.L.E). Edward, Margaret, Wang, and Walberg (1986) emphasize the importance of academic Performance with regard to different perspectives such as for individuals and societies, as well as psychological and educational research. In addition, an early synthesis of existing research on the educational effects of the time but it still influences current research such as investigations of predictors of academic achievement in some of the large-scale academic achievement assessment studies such as Program for International Student Assessment, PISA. Edward, et al., (1986) highlight the relevance of research syntheses such as reviews and meta-analyses as an initial point for the improvement of educational processes.

Large-scale scholastic achievement assessments such as PISA (OECD, 2010) investigated predictors of academic achievement on an international level. The studies have increased the amount of attention paid to the role of family background and the educational system in the development of individual performance. The quality of teaching, in particular, has been emphasized as a predictor of student achievement. Altogether, there are valuable cross-sectional studies investigating many predictors of academic achievement.

A further focus in educational research has been placed on tertiary educational research. Richardson, et al (2012) subsumes the individual correlates of university learners' performance.

Learners with higher mental ability as demonstrated by Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests and those who are higher in conscientiousness linked to effort and achievement motivation tend to achieve highly in academic settings (Stumm, Sophie, Hell, and Premuzic, 2011). A recent meta-analysis study suggested that mental curiosity as measured by typical intellectual engagement has a significant influence on academic achievement in addition to intelligence and conscientiousness. A similar study also revealed that children's semi-structured home learning environment transitions into a more structured learning environment when children start first grade. Early academic achievement enhances later academic achievement (Bossaert G. Doumen, Buyse, and Verschueren, 2011).

In developed countries such as America, Canada, Ireland, Norway and others, academic performance plays an important role in every person's life. Academic achievement is measured by Grade Point Average or standardized assessments designed for selection purpose such as the Scholastic Assessment Tests to determine whether a learner has an opportunity to continue his or her education in a university and influences one's vocational career after education. Besides, academic achievement brings about the wealth of a nation and its prosperity (Myrberg and Monica, 2001).

However, as research goes on expanding in the public and online discourse, Teacher pedagogical competence is not largely tackled in relation to academic performance. Most publications tease academic performance in relation to parental marital status, socio-economic status of parents, school environment, government facilitation, motivation, and community factors, among other issues (Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin, 2008). Effective teachers evaluate resources to use when teaching a unit or lesson. They use criteria such as appropriateness for grade level; alignment to national, state, or local standards; accuracy of information contained within the resource; the time allowed for the lesson or unit; and the learning benefits that come from using the resource (Rimm-Kaufman, 2010 & Wamika, 2017).

The effective teacher recognizes academic instruction as central to his or her role. This focuses on instructional guides not only the teacher's own planning and classroom behavior, but also comes across clearly to learners and represents the major elements in a robust learning environment (Weglinsky, 2001).

Effective teachers who consistently prioritize instruction and student learning as the central purposes of schooling communicate an enthusiasm and dedication to learning that learners reflect in their own

behavior and practice. This motivates both teachers and learners, thus the ability to remember concepts in classroom and during examinations are connected. This is only possible if a teacher has used a good instructional approach (Stetcher, Bohrnsted, Kirst, and Williams, 2001). Effective teachers reinforce their focus on instruction through their allocation of time to the teaching and learning process, and through their expectations for student learning. The amount of time learners spend engaged in learning experiences, together with the quality of the instruction, are positively associated with student learning and thus high academic performance in schools (Aslam and Monazza, 2009).

At the planning stage, the teacher should bear in mind or make use of the planning elements such as: Identification of learning objectives, designing of learning experiences, evaluating the effectiveness of those learning experiences in achieving the objectives and improving the learning experiences in the light of evaluation so as to better achieve the objectives. Specifically, planning is a moment to design instructional content or topic, techniques and the instructional material that can be suitable for the age of the children. The locality, nature of the class and the time factor should be put into consideration (Lasbery, 2006).

Although it is true that the extent to which learners learn this new content is dependent on factors such as the skill of the teacher, the interest of the student, and the complexity of the content, the research literature supports one compelling fact: what learners already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they may learn new information relative to the content. Commonly, researchers and theorists refer to what a person already knows about a topic as 'background knowledge.' Numerous studies have confirmed the relationship between background knowledge and achievement, (Aslam and Monazza, 2009).

In the center of educational landscape, the effect of teachers on the academic performance of learners has received significant attention. Teachers do have a significant role to play in determining the academic performance of learners. In order for learners to be successful in academics, a momentous teacher -to-student relationship has been noted to be a vital element (Trost and Johnson, 2009).

According to Omotere, Yinger, and Danielson (2012), in Africa, countries such as Mozambique, South Africa and Nigeria express serious concerns about the effect of Teacher pedagogical competence and academic performance. This is because the standard of education is gradually lowering, which UNESCO attributes to teacher pedagogical skills.

The researchers, therefore, believe that with the rise of these concerns about academic performance as

attributed to pedagogical competences, it is important to conduct a study to test the relationship between pedagogical competences and academic performance.

In a related development, the most common role teachers play in the classroom is to dispense pertinent knowledge to learners by following the curriculum. Teachers use various methods such as lecture, small group activities and hands-on learning activities to dispense knowledge to learners. Beyond that, they serve many other roles in the classroom. Teachers set the tone of their classrooms, build warm environment, mentor and nurture learners, become role models, listen and look for signs of trouble etc. (Fraser and Walberg, 2005). They are therefore, responsible for promoting the mission and ethos of the schools through structured classroom prayer, participation in the liturgical life of the school, and modeling of appropriate standards of behaviour.

Effective teaching and learning cannot occur without congenial classroom environment. Teachers maintain positive and effective learning environment through well prepared and varied lessons, which cater for the range of student abilities and interests. It also involves, setting of realistic and challenging academic standards of student performance. Teachers are therefore, required to demonstrate commitment to continuous professional development through interest and attendance to appropriate in-service courses and commitment to a programme of professional study (Ajayi, 1999).

Organizing time and preparing materials in advance of instruction have been noted as important aspects of effective teaching. Individual and team planning are mutually beneficial to creating valuable learning experiences for learners. Team planning allows teachers to collaboratively examine important issues and develop a collective approach to instruction (Bossaert, Doumen, and Verschuere, 2011). A primary psychological mediator of the relationship between learner engagement and educational context is the degree to which learners feel competent and confident of their ability to be successful in completing educational tasks. Learners who are convinced that they lack the ability to succeed or control the outcome of their educational experience cannot make an effort to engage or excel in school-related work. To become successful, learners need to know what it takes to succeed and believe they can succeed, given what they know. Thus, a learner who doesn't think he/she can complete assigned homework successfully, or who does not understand what to do, is unlikely to attempt the assignment. Similarly, a learner who does not think he/she is able to pass the courses needed to graduate is unlikely to do much work and may end up cutting classes or even dropping out (Armentano and Dominick, 2003).

Research on learning shows that learners become cognitively engaged when teachers ask them to wrestle with new concepts, explain their reasoning, defend their

conclusions, or explore alternative strategies and solutions. Learners enjoy learning more and are more likely to participate in school tasks when their teachers employ active pedagogical strategies. Collaboration among peer learners working together in pairs or small groups to help one another, also has been associated with increased engagement and learning. When learner can put their heads together rather than work in isolation, they are more receptive to challenging assignments (Aslam and Monazza, 2009).

In another development, empirical work has been carried out in the field of communication in secondary schools. The findings showed that the school administration has a choice of several channels used to communicate to learners' important information concerning the school. The channels chosen and used determine how well the information is passed and received by the students as well as determining the reaction of the students to the message. Meetings were preferred as the best channel of communication because they give firsthand information which is not subject to misinterpretation (Blasse, 2006).

It is arguably emphasized that teachers must demonstrate willingness to share ideas, show empathy towards their learners and build an atmosphere that gives out a positive and safe place for learners (Christiansen, 2002). Furthermore, effective communication could possibly be established as groundwork for creative positive learner-teacher relationships which eventually have a positive impact on the academic performance of learners.

In addition, scholars argue that a communication method which is verbal and nonverbal has a significant impact on the student-teacher relationship and it is crucial that teachers understand the significance of the art of communicating to make sure that relationships are maintained. Nevertheless, it was found out that positive relationships amongst the learners and teachers have an effect on academic performance (Christiansen, 2012).

Most of the literature reviewed according to various researchers as given above is related to the study objectives. However, no attempts were made to establish the relationship between the various aspects of pedagogical competence and academic performance particularly in Kibuku district, where the two variables remained an issue of contention, thus, justifying the need for this study.

The Walberg Theory of Educational Productivity advanced by Walberg in 1981 was used to measure academic performance. The theory states that good academic performance is based on the social, behavioral, motivational, affective, cognitive and meta-cognitive behaviors of learners. According to this theory, learners who become more self-aware and confident regarding their learning abilities, more motivated, set learning goals, and self-regulated

perform well in class (Kevin, 2008). According to this theory, a teacher is supposed to handle learners competently, he or she must have specific characteristics to ensure that learners' behaviors are tamed and the child must understand content in the classroom by providing an enabling environment and application of participatory instructional methods. The theory is very relevant to the study in that it puts emphasis on meaningful learning and performance based on the teachers' pedagogical competences.

3. Methodology

An experimental research design was used to conduct this study. This type of research design is a test under controlled conditions made to demonstrate a known truth, to examine the validity of hypothesis or to determine the efficiency of something previously untried. Prior to this interpretation, available studies have tried to explore much about teaching methods, school environment and other related factors affecting education but the aspect of pedagogical competences in relation to academic performance in upper primary classes leaves more hypotheses that require confirmation. The methods of data collection and analysis were both quantitative and qualitative in nature because the intention was to get the breadth in in-depth perspectives of the study in question.

3.1 Study population and sampling

The study population was 432 respondents. It included teachers, head teachers, and deputy head teachers.

The sample using Yamane (1967) formula was as follows;

$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ where n = sample size, N the total population targeted and e = percentage of error made in selecting sample (5% or 0.05), and 1 is representative of any likely avoided element that would have been included.

$$\begin{aligned} \therefore n &= \frac{432}{1+432(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{432}{1+432 \times 0.0025} \\ &= \frac{432}{1+1.08} \\ &= \frac{432}{2.08} = 207.6 \text{ (208)} \end{aligned}$$

3.2 Data collection instruments

Prior to the nature of the study design, a questionnaire with close ended questions was used. A questionnaire was chosen for its practical nature, e.g to cover many people in short period of time and results can be easily quantified and presented using a software package. A questionnaire was used to obtain findings from teachers.

Questionnaires have advantages over some other types of surveys in that they are cheap, do not require as much effort from the questioner as verbal or telephone surveys, and often have standardized answers that make it simple to compile data. However, such standardized answers may frustrate users. Questionnaires are also sharply limited by the fact that respondents must be able to read the questions and respond to them

3.3 Validity

The instruments were designed and items were given to the experts and colleagues to analyze their suitability and thereafter assess and fine-tune them for authenticity. This process was very helpful in enabling the tools to test what they were intended to test (Ogunniyi, 2000).

3.4 Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable, consistent and accurate results after carrying out research, (Phelan and Wren, 2014). The researchers used Cronbach Alpha (α) coefficients to determine the reliability of the instrument. According to Cronbach, for an instrument to be reliable, its Cronbach Alpha must be at least from 0.70 and above. Fortunately, after all the computations, the Cronbach Alpha was 0.79, thence, making the tools to be significantly authentic.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was coded, analyzed statistically by use of SPSS (V.22) and reported by the help of figures and tables quantitatively. Specifically, the background information was analyzed using percentage scores while results were presented and analyzed descriptively using percentage ratings. On the other hand, Qualitative data was summarized, grouped / sub-grouped thematically for easy analysis, reported qualitatively and backed-up with quotations and statements of the respondents.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Confidentiality was taken into account so as to protect respondent's image since some of the issues which were handled pertained to the security of their work. Respondents were assured that the study was only for academic purpose and for that matter; the self-administered questionnaires were anonymous. Respect and dignity were accorded while setting the questionnaire. Thus all respondents were given equal treatment to enable each of them participating willingly without bias and unrealistic expectations. During the informant interview sessions, schedules were made basing on the convenience of individual interviewees. Questions were asked to the participants to prompt them to provide appropriate information and where some questions seemed unclear, an effort was made to paraphrase for clarity until the desired responses were obtained.

4. Results and Discussion

The study examined age distribution of respondents with the purpose of ensuring that all respondents were mature and reasonable enough to participate in the study. Results on age-brackets in the below table revealed that the highest number of respondents was in the age-bracket of 29-39 (40.8%), followed by those in the age bracket of 40-50 (30%) and 18-28(20.8%). These findings imply that all respondents were in active age-group and could interpret questionnaires well without any bias thus improving the reliability of findings.

Statistical data from Table 1 below indicates that there were 89 male respondents representing 68.5% compared to 41 female respondents representing 31.5%. This significant difference in gender distribution can be attributed to the fact that there was recruitment of more males than female teachers.

Results in Table 1 below indicate that majority of the respondents, 116 constituting (89.2%) were married and 14(10.8%) were single. This meant they were settled and ready to administer tasks in their respective school environments without maximum supervision thus improving on reliability of results.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-28	27	20.8
29-39	53	40.8
40-50	42	32.3
Above 50	8	6.2
Total	130	100
Gender		
Male	89	68.5
Female	41	31.5
Total	130	100
Marital status		
Married	116	89.2
Single	14	10.8
Total	130	100
Education Qualification		
Masters	1	1
Bachelors	7	5.4
Diploma	37	28.5
Certificate	85	65.4
Total	130	100

Table 2: Results of Correlation Analysis

Variable	ACP	COK(3)	SUK(4)	TGS(8)	CMS(10)
COK	.460**	1			
SUK	.623**	.634**	1		
TGS	.726**	.590**	.674**	1	
CMS	.427**	.515**	.531**	.611**	1

N = 130; ** $p < .01$

KEY=ACP- Academic Performance; COK- Context Knowledge; SUK- Subject Knowledge; TGS – Teaching skills; CMS – Class management skills

4.1 The relationship between context knowledge and academic performance of pupils in Kibuku District

The study established whether there was a significant relationship between subject knowledge and academic performance of pupils in Kibuku District. Correlation Analysis results indicated that there existed a significant positive relationship between subject knowledge and academic performance ($r = .460$; $p < 0.01$). This implies that significant changes in academic performance are brought about by changes in teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach respectively. What teachers possess is what they are able to offer their learners and what learners acquire from their teachers is what they base on to perform in their academics. In an effort to cross-validate data obtained using the self-administered questionnaires, informant interview sessions were organized with a total of 10 Head teachers. In the researchers' effort to prompt head teachers comment on the pedagogical competences of their subject teachers, one headteacher asserted as follows:

...majority of our subject teachers are honestly weak in terms of identifying, selecting, preparing, employing the relevant instructional methods and delivering the right subject-matter to the learners as required. The highest percentage of our teachers do not want to prepare schemes of work and lesson plans on a regular basis unfortunately, many of them do not have opportunities to participate in continuous professional development workshops, seminars and conferences through which they acquire capacity building opportunities. What is taught is very different from what is examined in PLE, thereby rendering our learners helpless...

Basing on the quotation and the overall results obtained from participants during the informant interviews, it was discovered that the ongoing instructional practices and teachers' context knowledge in Kibuku District by the time of this study, were impacting on pupils' learning and academic performance in a negative direction.

4.2 The relationship between subject knowledge and academic performance of pupils

The study further tested whether there was a significant relationship between subject knowledge and academic performance of pupils in Kibuku District. Correlation Analysis results showed that there exists a significant positive relationship between subject knowledge and academic performance ($r = .623$; $p < 0.01$). This implies that significant changes in academic performance are brought about by changes in teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach. The quantitative data results were in agreement with qualitative data results which were obtained through informant interviews with headteachers. On the aspect of subject knowledge, majority of the headteachers insisted that subject specialist teachers who were competent, knowledgeable and well-grounded facilitated learners to obtain good academic grades as the reverse was true with the incompetent subject teachers in the area of study.

4.3 The relationship between teaching skills and academic performance of pupils in Kibuku District

The study aimed at finding out whether a relationship between teaching skills and academic performance of pupils in Kibuku District existed. According to correlation analysis, results indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between teaching skills and academic performance, ($r = .726$; $p < 0.01$). This means that significant changes in pupils' academic performance in Kibuku District were brought about by changes in teachers' ability to employ desired or appropriate teaching skills. In an effort to cross-validate data obtained using self-administered questionnaires, results were also obtained from headteachers who half of them insisted that teachers' teaching skills were dependent on experience whereas, the other half observed that the teaching skills of teachers depended on individual teacher's competence. However, all participants commented that teaching skills had a significant effect on learners' academic performance.

4.4 The relationship between class management skills and academic performance of pupils in Kibuku District

According to the correlation results of this study, there was a positive and significant relationship between class management skills and academic performance of pupils, ($r = .427$; $p < 0.01$). This means that changes in class management skills bring about changes in academic performance. Therefore, with appropriate management skills, teachers can handle issues related to classroom learning such as; overcrowding, divergent learners' behaviors and attitude, preparation of materials, and instructional dynamics which impact on academic performance.

4.5 Discussion

The study showed that context knowledge was a significant predictor of academic performance. These results are in line with Rimm-Kaufman (2010) who noted that effective teachers evaluate resources before use when teaching a lesson and that through context knowledge, teachers have been able to use criteria such as appropriateness for grade level; alignment to national, state, or local standards; accuracy of information contained within the resource; the time allowed for the lesson or unit; and the learning benefits that come from using the resource; all these are necessary for improvement of academic performance. In other words, in order to improve academic performance, teachers must be competent enough to attend to learners' points of concern, especially during lessons in the most appropriate manner. This builds the confidence a learner ought to possess in his or her teacher, and in turn enhances the level of concentration. In addition, teachers are required to use analogies, diagrams and pictures to keep pupils focused and enable them understand the claimed difficult subjects such as science and mathematics.

Subject knowledge was also found to be a significant predictor of academic performance. The findings of this study mirror the work of Becker (1997) and Greenfield (1998) who established that two learners might have an equal amount of background knowledge. However, one learner's knowledge might relate to traditional school subjects such as mathematics, science, history, and the like, whereas the other learner's knowledge might be about non-academic topics such as the best subway route to take to get downtown during rush hours, the place to stand in the subway car that provides the most ventilation on a hot summer day, and so on. Therefore, success in using subject knowledge for effective teaching relies on teacher's ability to; keep track of pupils' academic performance, follow basic prescribed content of the curriculum, build rapport with pupils and interact with all learners equally.

Teaching skills are significant predictors of academic performance in primary schools in Kibuku District.

These findings are reflected in Meek (2003) and Wang (2012) results noting that achievement is higher in classes where instructional time is maximized by teachers who employ a variety of skills in the learning environment. Further, having a scope (lesson plans & schemes of work) and sequence (timetables) help the teacher to plan and address learner's needs for information. Consistent with the findings above, in an effort to improve on academic performance in schools, the school administrators need to ensure that there is effective teaching and completion of the syllabus, through close supervision. Similarly, teaching methods need to be learner-centered in order to pave room for active learner participation during a given instructional process.

Class management skills significantly predict academic performance in primary schools in Kibuku District. This finding is in agreement with Armentano and Dominick (2003) who established that organizing time and preparing materials in advance to instruction have been noted as important aspects of effective teaching hence enhancing academic performance. Further, individual and team planning as components of class management are essential in classroom delivery, which subsequently improve academic performance. Ability of teachers to use different teaching methods as key domain to class management skills are mutually beneficial to creating valuable learning experiences for learners. Team planning allows teachers to collaboratively examine important issues and develop a collective approach to instruction, which subsequently improves academic performance. Teachers' skills of with-it-ness for example, help in drawing the learners' attention throughout a given instructional process. Pedagogical competent teachers, therefore, need to possess more than two eyes.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the study findings, it is hereby concluded that teachers' pedagogical competences drive academic performance in schools. A steady and gradual progress in teachers' knowledge about learners, possession of thorough context knowledge, high teacher competence levels, and knowledge of the subject matter are paramount in the lesson preparation, hence improvement on academic performance. Further, from this study, it significantly proves that interpersonal relationships between teachers and learners, teacher's ability to communicate, and the incorporation of contemporary issues in curricular development, sustain academic performance in educational organizations/institutions. NGOs, government and other stakeholders are relating academic performance to teacher motivation, support supervision, instructional materials, mid-day meals, inadequate staff, headteachers' leadership styles to mention a few and a

lot of resources are heavily invested but surprisingly, learners' academic performance has not improved to the expectations. According to the findings of this study therefore, if the aspect of teachers' pedagogical competence is not addressed, the time, funds and other resources may continue to be futile (Wambi, 2018).

5.2 Recommendations

In view of the study findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were proposed basing on the objectives of the study:

Teachers should interact and inquire about the daily life experiences of pupils so as to enhance the use of appropriate teaching methods to facilitate learning processes in educational institutions.

It is hereby recommended that teachers use suitable pedagogical skills such as demonstrations that can be done with the utilization of learning aids to enable learners understand concepts based on the surroundings, contextualize, and interpret concepts easily.

In addition, school management should organize and facilitate teachers' seminars, conferences and workshops to retool, build their professional capacity and enable them have grip on subject matter in order to appropriately deliver competently and support learners to improve on their academic performance.

Since the study found interpersonal skills as a significant predictor of academic performance, it was recommended that efforts be undertaken to narrow the distance between learners and teachers. This can be achieved through establishing academic parents under the arrangement of school-family initiatives at school where individual learners are attached to a teacher who regularly interests them at personal level interface.

The central government/school governance should increase funding to schools to enhance availability of necessary, relevant and appropriate teaching materials such as textbooks, syllabi and other relevant curriculum materials to support teachers to improve on learners' academic performance.

Further, curricula designers and developers should incorporate contemporary issues in the respective school curricula to enable learners be abreast with them (contemporary issues) to meet the changing pupil and teacher demands, since this study established that, such issues are cross-cutting and impact on academic performance.

Teachers should undergo Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) on specific topics e.g, phonetics, oral expression, reading, comprehension, use of language items such as poems, songs, riddles, lullabies, tongue twisters for purposes of training speech organs

and effective writing for lower, middle and upper primary sections in primary schools; since communication skills of teachers were found to impact positively on learners' academic performance in this study.

Finally, districts and schools are supposed to establish 'training colleges' for their teachers to enable them get retooled continuously for purposes of proper capacity building and professional growth, thence, empowering them to facilitate learners' improved academic performance starting with themselves.

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