



Challenges of Physical and Home Environment on Quality Learning of Grade 6 Learners in Public Primary Schools in West Pokot County, Kenya

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Abstract: West Pokot County faces a lot of challenges, both physical and home environment which affects provision of quality learning to primary school learners. This study aimed at finding out how these environmental factors hindered provision of quality learning of grade 6 learners in public primary schools in West Pokot County. Its objectives were to find out: how physical environment affected provision of quality learning in Public Primary Schools in West Pokot County and how home environment hindered quality learning. Its target population had 6,357 people, composed of grade 6 learners, parents, head teachers, teachers, Sub-County Directors of Education (S/CDEs), Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) and the County Director of Education (CDE). A representative sample of 914 respondents was selected from the target population, using random and purposive sampling procedures. Questionnaires, Semi-Structured Interview Schedules and document analysis guide were used to collect information from respondents. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Analyzed quantitative data was presented in tables, while qualitative data were presented in narrations form. The study found that West Pokot County was hilly and rocky; home environment wasn't conducive for learning; many schools lacked clean water; and there were land-slides during heavy rains which destroyed schools. The study recommended that: Boarding Primary Schools be built in available conducive environments to keep children in school to avoid harsh terrain and harsh home environment that hindered their learning; bore-holes should be drilled in schools to provide clean water; and people should be moved from areas that experienced land-slides.

Keywords: Physical Environment, Home Environment, Conducive Learning Environment, Basic Education, Quality Learning

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1. Introduction

Globally, towards the end of the 1990s, there was tremendous progress across the world. The number of Children that were out of school had decreased and gender

parity had been achieved (Bokova IG, (2015). But the whole initiative of basic education was slow paced from the time of Jomtien, Thailand World Education Conference was held (UNESCO, 2015). The main threats on provision of basic education, according to the Director of UNESCO (2015) were: conflicts in some countries; drought; war and

other cultural issues. In sub-Saharan countries some leaders made education a political tool. In some developed countries there was economic recession among other issues (Bokova, (2015).

United Nations made a Universal declaration on Human Rights in 1948 which states that, 'Everyone has right to education'. Many countries of the world made efforts to implement this right. However, there are many countries, especially in the so called third world countries, that are still having challenges in realizing the provision of quality education to all deserving citizens. Some of the challenges are brought about by the environment in which some people live.

In Africa, according to Global Monitoring Report, no Sub Saharan country had achieved universal education by deadline of 2015 (Bokova, 2015). World Education International Report indicated that millions of people lacked basic education, which included literacy, baseline mathematical understanding and general skills (Bokova, 2004).

In Nigeria, the Universal Basic Education was launched in 1999 with an aim of providing free and compulsory education for every Nigerian child aged between 6 to 15 years. It aimed at providing greater access and ensuring quality of basic education. The program did not take off immediately after its launch, for it did not have legal backing. Later UBE Commission made greater strides to address the issues of provision of infrastructure, Physical facilities such as classrooms, toilets, teachers and provision of learning materials, and transformation of school terrain among other requirements (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2018). This scheme was monitored by Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), that made basic education free and compulsory right of every child. They promulgated the UBEC law Section 15 that defines UBE as early childhood care and education. The Federal Government of Nigeria through Nigerian National and Research and development Council has initiated reforms aimed at reviewing the philosophy and structuring of the 9-year basic education (Aderinoye, 2007). Although Nigeria presents positive development, it has challenges such as: political problems of military rule, lack of diversification of education delivery system, low enrolment as 33% of school going children do not go to school, lack of basic instructional materials, too many unqualified teachers, weak decision making channels and poor relationship between parents and schools (Solomon, 2018).

In East Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda struggled and declared education for all after independence. The East African Countries in general prioritized the struggle with educational literacy challenges. Despite this

generalization, each country had its own environmental challenges that hampered basic education (UNESCO, 2011).

In Uganda the Government of Uganda considers education a basic right (Global Partnership for Education (2019). In 1997 the Ugandan Government introduced Universal Primary Education to improve enrolment. It was initially supposed to be free but limited to four children per family. This did not succeed due to Uganda's complex family structure as most families have more than four children (Forwek, 2017).

In Kenya, people living in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) are disadvantaged in matters education. The environment in such areas is harsh. Climatic conditions are difficult and the terrain is unfavourable too. A case in point is West Pokot County. This is one of the ASAL counties in Kenya, with an environment that is relatively harsh in terms of its terrain, and generally uncondusive home environment. Koech Report (1999) observed that ASAL areas had specific problems. The report recommended establishment of boarding schools both boys and girls (KESSP Manual, 2005). According to Okutu (2019), the government has built a number of Low-Cost Boarding Primary Schools in West Pokot County which are playing key role in providing Education to this ASAL County, especially to girl-child. However, pupil enrolment in these schools was relatively low due to cost-sharing policy. More so, some of the schools were lacking facilities or the available facilities were dilapidated (Okutu, 2019). Rotich in Katiba corner (Jan, 2018), notes that certain segments of the society were yet to benefit from basic compulsory education due to geographical accessibility to schools. Many schools lacked proper buildings, toilets, desks, textbooks, teaching materials, lack of funds and discrimination between boys and girls.

On schools' accessibility, Macharia et al (2022) notes that, 'Understanding the location of schools relative to the population they serve is important to contextualize the time, students must travel and to define school catchment areas (SCAs) for planning.' In West Pokot County, some of the school going children finds it difficult to access school on time because schools are located relatively far away from their areas of residence.

One of the objectives of the Policy Framework for Nomadic Education in Kenya (2015) is to ensure equitable access to relevant education by all the children in nomadic areas (Okutu, 2019). Despite the existing government plans intended to ensure access and equity of education provision in the country, issues of imbalance in enrolment, completion rates and academic achievement between children of pastoralist communities and the rest of the

country have been and still are the subject of debate considering the huge disparities that exist to which many feel are not receiving the expected attention (Ayiro, and Sang, 2017).

In West Pokot County, approximately 30% of children of school going age are out of school. These children move with their parents who are nomadic pastoralists instead of going to school. Most of these children become cattle rustlers (Owino, 2015).

Table 1: Number of Primary Schools per Sub County in West Pokot County

Sub County	Number of Schools
West Pokot	175
Pokot South	92
Kipkomo	139
Central Pokot	127
Pokot North	135
TOTAL	668

Source: TSC May, 2019

The number of schools indicated in table 1 above is still low, compared to a vast West Pokot County that has a surface area of 9,100 square kilometers, with a population of 777,180 persons, according to ACK – Kitale Strategic Plan (2019-2023). The concern of this study was the challenges of harsh environmental conditions that inhibits children in West Pokot County to access basic education. There was need to look for remedial measures to these challenges.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

West Pokot County experiences harsh environmental conditions that appear to have various effects on the provision of quality learning to school going children. The terrain of West Pokot County is rugged, hilly and rocky, making it difficult to adequately site schools and provide requisite physical facilities like: classrooms, toilets, among others (Hussein 2016).

Such an environment makes it difficult to provide the requisite schools’ physical facilities. Available schools are sited very far apart and the long distances affect learning as young children find it difficult to walk long distances to access schools (Wawire, (2015). More so, the county experiences hunger due to harsh climatic conditions and depends on food aid from World Food Program, a scenario that makes provision of education difficult (Mwangi, 2015). The condition of home environment is poor as parents cannot adequately take care of their school going

children due to nomadic lifestyle of moving with their livestock in search of pasture.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Objectives of this study were to:

1. Find out how physical environment affected provision of quality learning to Grade 6 learners in Public Primary Schools in West Pokot County.
2. Establish how home environment hindered the quality learning of Grade 6 learners in Public Primary Schools in West Pokot County;

2. Literature Review

2.1 Influence of Physical Environment on Provision of Quality Learning

Apter (2014) in a study Towards a theory of things reversal theory and personality stated that in the school environment, factors such as acoustics, light, colour may improve or hinder student’ academic performance. Noise, temperature and seat arrangements are the most significant factors that affect learning process. A well-designed learning environment can enhance both teachers and learners functioning and aesthetic experience. Current study was on ‘Challenges of physical and home

Environment on Provision of Quality learning to Grade 6 Learners in West Pokot County, Kenya.

Baasi (2020) did a study on the effect of school physical environment on academic achievement of senior High school students in Ghana. The study sought to investigate the contribution of a number of physical environments on the performance of students in high school. The findings confirmed that students in High school with pleasant physical environment performed better than those whose learning environment was not conducive. He further established that adequate school facilities provide a positive educational climate suitable for student learning. The study was done in Ghana, while the current study was conducted in Kenya, on challenges of physical and home environment on provision of quality learning, in the County of West Pokot.

Sheffield et al (2017), conducted a study on Climate Change and Schools: Environmental Hazards and Resilience. The study revealed that quality and availability of data on health, environmental risks and school infrastructure vary significantly by political geography. No systematic indicators for accessing environmental health in school exist in U.S. which prevents direct comparisons of indicators between regions for both baseline assessment as well as tracking progress of interventions or impact of policies.

The study recommended that the health sector representatives across Federal agencies, parents, and mental health advocates should be included in this agency. Such a strategy can have co-benefits on health in the short and long term. The study also emphasized that “it takes roots to weather the storm” by focusing on opportunities to change the context of and affect social determinants of health and frame response and recovery initiatives by focusing on the concept of resilience through “building back better”. In order to prevent further structural racism and socio-economic disadvantages, special attention should be on those prone to climate change related disasters and on disadvantaged schools and children, as they are more vulnerable to climate change risks. Further surveillance, oversight health and climate change tasks will improve over time.

This study, which was conducted in US, focused mainly on environmental health. It also focused on prevention of structural racism and socio-economic disadvantages in the US. As much as some of its recommendations, such ‘special attention to be directed to climate change related disasters on disadvantaged schools and children’ were related to the current study, its focus was far much different compared to current study. The current study’s focus was

on how learning was hindered by environmental challenges such as the topography and home environment.

A study by Macharia et al (2022) on, ‘Modelling geographic access and school catchment areas across public primary schools to support subnational planning in Kenya’, was conducted in Western Kenya which included eight counties and 62 sub-counties. The counties were: Bungoma, Busia, Kakamega, Vihiga, Siaya, Kisumu, Homa Bay, and Migori. The average travel time to the nearest Public Primary School (PPS) in the Western region was 28 min in 2009 and reduced by 39% to 17 min by 2020. Therefore, in 2009 children walked on average 4 min (0.3 km) further relative to the Ministry of Education’s threshold of 24 min, while in 2020, all children were covered within the threshold. Accounting for the population distribution, 65% (1,390,173) of School Going Children (SGC) lived within the threshold in 2009. Therefore, 35% of the SGC were considered marginalized in 2009. In 2020, 11% of SGC were outside the threshold, with 89% (2,455,102) residing within the cut-off. The 24% increase was observed in the areas where new schools had been introduced. At the county level in 2009, the average travel time was 34 minutes in the most marginalized county (Homa Bay). The proportion of SGC within 24 minutes was uneven in sub counties, ranging from 29% to 14%.

This study had a bearing to the current study since its focus was on geographical challenges in accessing Public Primary Schools. However, the current study focused on other environmental factors such as home environment, among others. The area of this study was wider because it included eight counties in Western Kenya, while the current study targeted only one county – West Pokot County.

2.2 Challenges of home environment

Optimal conditions for a good home environment, according to UNICEF include a safe and well-organized physical environment, with opportunities for children to play, explore and discover and the presence of developmentally appropriate objects like toys and books (UNICEF Data (2024).

The home is the first institution of a child that has significant relationships with students’ overall life (Khan, et al, 2019). It is the earliest contact learning environment in early childhood development, which plays an important role in the development of children’s social-emotional competence (Shaomei, et al, 2023).

The term “Home environment” is not an abstract concept. It is the combination of physical and psychological

environment. First one includes rooms, basic facilities such as water, shelter, clothes, food and other physical needs of the individuals, while the psychological environment of home includes the mutual interactions of family members, respect, say in family matters and such other things (Khan, et al, 2019).

According to Mukama (2010) and Muala (2010), as quoted by (Khan, et al. 2019), There are certain factors which come to the fore when talking about home environment. They include: nature of family, authority (head of family), and educational status of parents, attitudes of parents towards children and financial position of the family. All these factors are significant for home environment and its effect on children's acquisition of education. Many studies have been conducted by different researchers on home environment and its effects on education. Some of them are reviewed below:

Shaomei, et al (2023), conducted a study on, 'How Home Learning Environment Contributes to Children's Social-Emotional Competence: A Moderated Mediation Model.' The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between the home learning environment and its intrinsic structure (i.e. structural family characteristics, parental beliefs and interests, and the educational processes) and children's social-emotional competence, and whether gender played a moderating role in the relationship. This study found that:

- (1) Structural family characteristics and parental beliefs and interests both had a significant positive predictive effect on children's social-emotional competence.
- (2) The educational processes fully mediated between structural family characteristics, parental beliefs and interests, and children's social-emotional competence.
- (3) Gender moderated the effect of the home learning environment on children's social emotional competence. Gender moderated not only the indirect effects between parental beliefs and interests and children's social-emotional competence, but also the indirect effects between structural family characteristics and children's social emotional competence. At the same time, gender also moderated the direct effects between parental beliefs and interests and children's social-emotional competence.

The results of this study emphasized the crucial role of the home learning environment in the development of children's early social-emotional competence. Parents were therefore supposed to pay attention to the home learning environment and improve their ability to create a home learning environment which promoted the positive development of children's social-emotional competence.

Just like the current study, this study which was conducted in China dealt with home environment and children's

education. Its main concern was the contribution of Home Learning Environment on Children's Early Social-Emotional Competence. This was a shift from the current study's concern, which was on issues such as availability of ample space at home to do home-work, lighting system that could enable learners to do home-work, domestic chores, food, among others. It also focused on other environmental issues such as physical environment- the topography.

Khan, et al (2019), conducted a study on the 'Relationship of Home Environment with Secondary School Students Performances'. The focus of the study was to find out the relationship of home interactions, physical facilities and students' academic performances. Results obtained from analysis illustrated that a substantial majority of respondents were lacking separate study rooms at their homes, they had a very low interactional opportunities at home in home related matters, but still majority of them were satisfied with their home environment.

This study by Khan, et al that was conducted in Pakistan had a lot of resemblance with the current study for they both focused on effects of home environment on learners' education. Only that the current study focused on primary school learners while Khan's study focus was on secondary school learners. More so, the current study focused on other environmental factors to add to the home environment.

An Evaluation Report of the 2019 Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment (ZELA) Cycle, which was compiled by Zimbabwe's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) and the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) had several research questions. One of these questions that was relevant to this study was: To what extent can improvement in test performance be attributed to location, socio-economic factors, teaching and learning variables? The results revealed that possible changes in location (urban versus rural) only accounted for 16.2% of the amount of variation in English performance. Addition of socio-economic variables (number of home possessions, number of meals at home per day, highest parental education and home educational resources) to the model increased the variation explained to 21.2%. The fact that all these variables explained only 23.5% of the increase in English performance in 2019, imply that 76.5% of the increase is explained by other factors. In Mathematics, the location variables, socio-economic variables, background variables and teaching and learning variable cumulatively explain 16.3% of the amount of variation in Mathematics performance. This also suggests that 83.7% of the mathematics performance could be attributed to other factors.

This study from Zimbabwe is related to current study since it looked at home environment as one of the factors that could influence learners' academic performance in school. The difference between the two studies is that the current study looked at general performance of learners in school, while the study from Zimbabwe was particular on performance in English and Mathematics.

Okech, et al (2020), conducted a study on 'Effects of Home Environment on Children's Development: A Comparative Study'. The main objective of carrying out this study was to compare and determine effects of home environment on children's development.

The study employed a case-control study design where two study groups were used – Nairobi study group and Bratislava (study control) group. Respondents of this study were parents of young children aged 6-10 years.

This study found a difference of means between the two study groups ($p=0.005$, $n=44$). The Bratislava study group had a higher mean (mean =42.35, Standard deviation=6.73) compared to the Nairobi study group (Mean =34.21, Standard deviation= 11.27). The two study groups differed on encouraging maturity, learning materials and opportunity, and physical environment. It also found similarities between the two groups in terms of parental responsiveness, setting of emotional climates, family companionship and family integration.

The study concluded that there were four factors that influence children's development in home environments namely: proximal processes; Characteristics of the caregiver; Environmental context; and time variance from one home to another. This may now explain why developmental trajectories of children are never the same. This comparative study was more of early childhood development, between 6-10 years. The current study targeted grade six learners whose age was around 12 to 14 years.

In the year 2020, the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) conducted a study titled, "Monitoring Learning Achievement at Class 7 Level of Primary School Education in Kenya". This study sought to establish Class 7 pupils' competency levels in English, Kiswahili, Mathematics and Science, as well as their level of acquisition of life skills. It also sought to determine factors that influence pupils' achievement in the assessed subjects. It was conducted in 250 primary schools across the 47 counties of the Republic of Kenya.

Concerning pupil attendance to school, the study revealed prevalence of absenteeism among pupils, with close to two thirds (60.6%) of the pupils reporting to have been absent from school in the third term of the year preceding the study (2018). Prevalence of pupil absenteeism is worth

noting as this study found out that pupils who were absent during the school term scored 0.9 points lower in Mathematics compared to those who had not been absent. On retention and completion, the study revealed that pupil drop out was rampant as evidenced by the more than three quarters (77.7%) of the Head teachers reporting that their schools had experienced cases of pupil dropout in Class 7.

On availability of regular meals, the study established that sizable percentages of pupils did not have regular meals. For instance, 13.2%, 7.5% and 2.4% of the pupils reported that they did not have regular breakfast, lunch and supper respectively. It is notable that Turkana had the highest percentage of pupils reporting not to take the three meals regularly. The study further found out that majority of the schools had assignment/homework policies, with 87.3% of the teachers reporting this. The study, however, established low parental involvement, with more than half (51.9%) of the teachers reporting that parents did not check their children's work.

Further, a third (34.4%) of the pupils indicated that they did not have anyone assisting them in doing homework while at home.

The study by KNEC (2020) had a lot of resemblance with the current study in that its focus was on primary school learners (class 7), just like the current study whose main focus was on primary school learners (grade 6). However, the KNEC study's scope was very wide for it was conducted in all the 47 counties, while the current study was conducted in just one county – West Pokot County. More so, the KNEC study was specific on subject performance – English, Kiswahili, Mathematics and Science, as well as learners' acquisition levels of life skills. The current study was more general for its focus was on quality learning of all aspects of grade 6 learners.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used descriptive survey as its research design. A sample was selected from the target population to which the research outcomes were generalized. The data from closed ended questionnaire items were analyzed quantitatively while that from open ended items and from interview schedules, were analyzed qualitatively. Therefore, the study had aspects of mixed method design as qualitative data were analyzed using narrations while quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

3.2 Area of Study

The study was conducted in West Pokot County. The county borders Republic of Uganda to the west, Trans-Nzoia and Elgeyo Marakwet Counties to the south, Baringo County to the east and Turkana County to the north. It has four Sub-Counties: West Pokot Sub- County (Kapenguria Constituency); North Pokot Sub-County (Kacheliba Constituency), Pokot Central Sub- County (Sigor Constituency), South Pokot Sub- County and Kipkomo Sub County (Although Kipkomo is a sub county was still under Pokot South Constituency). The county has eleven (11) administrative divisions. Kapenguria town is the head-quarter of West-Pokot County.

3.3 Target Population

The target population is defined as a population which the researcher wants to generalize the results of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The target population was drawn from 668 Primary schools in County of West Pokot. It included 668 Primary Schools' Head Teachers, 155,947 Grade 6 pupils, 4994 teachers, 5 Sub County Directors of Education, 21 Curriculum Support Officers, and 1 County Director of Education. 668 Parents' representatives of grades 6 were selected to represent the entire population of parents. This was because such representatives were assumed to have been parents in their respective schools for a good number of years (6 years), to be able to know environmental challenges their respective schools could be facing. A summary of target population is shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: Target Population

S/No	Category of Respondents	Target Population
1	Pupils	155,947
2	Teachers	4994
3	Curriculum Support Officers	21
4	Parents Representatives grade 6	668
5	Head Teachers	668
6	Sub County Directors of Education	05
7	County Director of Education	01
TOTAL POPULATION		161,838

Source: TSC/TMIS, (SEPT. 2021)

3.4 Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Sampling is a process of choosing a sub group from population to participate in the study. It is a process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the selected individuals represent a large group from which they were selected (Ogula, 2005). The researcher employed purposive sampling to sample the County Director of Education and all Sub-County Directors of Education in order to get in depth information on sampled schools. Random sampling was used to sample the Head teachers, teachers, Curriculum Support Officers, parents' representatives and prefects of grade 6 pupils in all the 20 Zones in West Pokot County.

3.5 The Sample Size

Out of 668 Public Primary Schools in West Pokot County, the researcher randomly selected 20% of 668 schools which was 134 that she used to conduct the study

((Neuman, 2007). Consequently, from the 668 schools, the researcher selected randomly a 20% sample of Head Teachers (134), For 668 parents' representatives of pupils in grade 6 one parent per school 134 was selected which was 20%. From 668 schools a sample of 134 pupils of Grade 6 prefects was randomly selected which is 20% of the sample. This is because respondents of each category of the mentioned respondents, was below 1,000 (Neuman, 2007). Grade 6 Class Prefects were selected to participate in this study because it was assumed that they were mature enough to understand and respond well to items. Concerning teachers, the researcher randomly selected 499 teachers (10%) out of 4994 to participate in the study, since their number was more than 1,000 (Neuman, 2007). For Curriculum Support Officers, 7 out of 21 of them were randomly selected to participate in the study, constituting 30% representation. The other two categories of respondents were purposively selected to participate in the study. Thus, the County Director of Education – 1 and Sub County Directors of Education – 5, were purposively

selected. Summary of the respondents that was sampled to participate in the study and their respective percentages is shown in table 3 below:

Table 3: Respondents' Sample size from West Pokot County Zones

S/ No	Category of respondents	Target Population	Sample Size	%
1	Head Teachers	668	134	20%
2	County Director of Education	01	01	
3	Teachers on duty	4,994	499	10%
4	Parents Representatives of grade 6 Prefects	668	134	20%
5	Curriculum Support Officers	21	07	30%
6	Grade 6 Prefects	668	134	20%
7	Sub County Directors of Education	05	05	
TOTAL		6357	914	

Source: TSC/T, (2019)

3.6 Research Instruments

The main research instruments that were used in this study were questionnaires. Questionnaires were used in this study because they were more efficient and permitted collection of data from larger samples (Bhat, 2016). Four sets of questionnaires consisting of both open and closed ended items were constructed for Head teachers, Parents' Representatives of grade 6, Grade six Prefects and Teachers.

Another instrument that was used was Interview schedules. They were used to solicit information from County Director of Education (CDE), Sub County Directors of Education (S/CDEs) and Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs). The interview-schedules enabled the researcher to gather scientific research data by getting more information since it provided opportunity for the researcher to probe the participants where more information is required and asked questions on the research questions (Luenendonk, 2019). Document analysis guide or check list was used to collect and analyze relevant documents from Education Offices.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Total Number of Participants per Each Category and their Respective Percentages

Respondents of this study consisted of County Director of Education (CDE), Sub-County Directors of Education (S/C Des), Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs), Primary Schools' Head Teachers, Grade 6 Parents' Representatives, and Grade 6 Class Prefects. Teachers formed a bulk of the sample while the County Director of Education formed the smallest percentage of the sample. Out of 764 (Seven Hundred and Sixty-Four) participants in this study 427 (55.9%) were teachers, 126 (16.5%) Grade 6 Class Prefects, 100 (13.1%) Grade 6 Parents' Representatives, 98 (12.8%) Head Teachers, 5 (0.7%) Sub-Count Directors of Education, 7 (0.9%) Curriculum Support Officers and 1 (0.13%) County Director of Education.

4.2 How Physical Environment Affects Provision of Quality Learning to Grade 6 Learners

The researcher sought information from respondents concerning effects of physical environment on provision of quality learning to grade 6 learners in West Pokot County. Their responses were as shown in table 4 below:

Table 4: How Physical Environment Affects Provision of Quality Learning

Questionnaire Items	H/Teachers n = 98		Teachers n = 427		Parents' Reps n = 100		Class n = 126		Prefects		TOTAL n = 751								
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%							
<i>Area experiences long dry seasons.</i>	68	3	69	31	28	140	67	33	6	34	6	34	86	4	68	3	507	244	68%
		0		7					6	6			86	0	68	2	507	244	68%
<i>Area experience floods.</i>	69	2	70	30	29	133	69	31	7	29	7	29	86	4	68	3	520	231	69%
		9		4					1	1			86	0	68	2	520	231	69%
<i>School is easily accessed by vehicles</i>	53	4	54	46	21	216	49	51	5	49	5	49	65	6	50	5	380	371	51%
		5		1					1	1			65	1	50	0	380	371	51%

Key

- n- Total number of respondents in each category
- f- Frequencies
- Y – ‘Yes’
- N – ‘No’

Table 4 above show that 68 (69%) head teachers indicated that West Pokot County experienced long dry seasons, while 30 (31%) of them felt that the County did not experience dry seasons. Out of 427 teachers, 287 (67%) agreed, while 140 (33%) of them disagreed that the county experiences dry seasons. On their side, 66 (66%) parents agreed, while 34 (34%) of them disagreed. Out of 126 class prefects, 86 (68%) of them agreed that the area had dry season, while 40 (32%) of them disagreed. Overall, out of 710 respondents, majority of them – 507 (68%) indicated that West Pokot County experienced long dry seasons. This scenario hindered schooling. Since Pokot community is a pastoralist community, during dry season, people migrate in search of greener pastures for their animals. This disrupts children’s learning since they move together with their parents and stop going to school.

Just like a study by Sheffield et al, (2017), the current study found out that dry spells in West Pokot County were disruptive. They were hazardous, since they affected children’s education. Therefore, there was an urgent need to adopt resilient measures to it.

Concerning whether area experienced floods during rain season, 69 (70) of head teachers agreed, while 30 (31%) of them disagreed. About teachers’ responses, 294 (69%)

agreed, while 133 (31%) disagreed. On their part 71 (71%) parents agree, while 29 (29%) disagreed. For class prefects, 86 (68%) of them concurred, while 40 (32%) of them disagreed. Overall total showed that majority of respondents - 520 (69%) indicated that the area experienced floods during rain-season those who disagreed were 231 (31%). These were two extreme scenarios experienced in West Pokot County during two different seasons (severe drought and floods) which had negative impacts on children’s Education. Heavy rains were also known to cause land-slides in West Pokot County, leading to a devastating effect on schools’ infrastructure. This finding was in tandem with that of Hussein (2016), who stated that, “Due to steep hills, some parts of West Pokot County are prone to land - slides when it rains”.

On whether schools were easily accessed by vehicles, most of respondents, 380 (51%) indicated that their schools had some challenges when it came to accessibility, while 371 (49%) said that their schools were accessible. This implied that accessibility was not a very serious challenge for primary schools in West Pokot County since a sizable number of respondents - 371 (49%) indicated that their schools were accessible. This was near a half of respondents. However, for those schools that had

accessibility challenges – which were slightly more (51%), could not easily receive equipment supplied to schools by the government and well-wishers (donors). This affected quality learning in the respective schools.

Further, most of the Education Officers that were interviewed (S/C DEs and CSOs) observed that inaccessible schools affected their supervisory duties. The Officers said that they found it difficult to reach the schools that were not connected to good roads. They said that they normally leave their vehicles at a distance and walked to

such schools, which was a serious challenge. One of them said, “There are some schools in this county that I cannot access using a vehicle. Roads leading to these schools have big rocks that can spoil the vehicle. Others have very steep and slippery sections during rain seasons that a vehicle cannot climb.”

Respondents were further requested to indicate the main source of water for their respective schools. Their responses were as indicated in table 5 below:

Table 5: Main Source of Water

Main Source of Water	H/Teachers <i>n</i> = 98				Teachers <i>n</i> = 427				Parents' Reps <i>n</i> = 100				Class Prefects <i>n</i> = 126				TOTAL <i>n</i> = 751			
	<i>f</i>		%		<i>F</i>		%		<i>f</i>		%		<i>f</i>		%		<i>f</i>		%	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Piped	0	98	0	100	0	427	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	126	0	100	0	751	0	100%
Spring	29	69	30	70	124	303	29	71	31	69	31	69	35	91	28	72	219	532	29%	71%
Rain	37	61	38	62	167	260	39	61	38	62	38	62	50	76	40	60	292	459	39%	61%
River	39	59	40	60	175	252	41	59	40	60	40	60	48	78	38	62	302	449	40%	60%
Bore Hole	25	73	26	74	102	325	24	76	26	74	26	74	29	97	23	77	182	569	24%	76%

Key

- n* - Total number of respondents in each category
- f* - Frequencies
- Y - Yes
- N - No

Table 5 above shows that there was no school in the study area that had piped water. Out of 750 respondents, there wasn't any who said that his/her school had piped water. The main sources of water in the study area were spring, rain, rivers or bore holes. Those whose schools' source of water was spring were 219 (29%), from rain were 292 (39%), from rivers were 302 (40%) and from bore holes were 182 (24%). This means that majority of schools (40%) relied on rivers as their main source of water, while few schools (24%) relied on bore holes. This finding clearly shows that there was a serious challenge of having a reliable source of clean water in the area of study. Most schools depended on rivers for water, yet West Pokot was an ASAL county. Most rivers were therefore seasonal. It

further implied that most learners travel for long distances to fetch water from rivers, which in most cases were not close to their schools. Water from rivers is known to be unclean for direct consumption, posing health challenges. Apart from piped water that is known to be reliable yet it was unavailable in the area of study, another reliable source of water are bore holes which were reported to be few.

4.3 How Home Environment Influences Learners in Public Primary Schools

The researcher sought views from respondents on whether home environment affected children's learning. Their responses were as shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Effects of Home Environment on Learners

Questionnaire Items	H/Teachers <i>n</i> = 98		Teachers <i>n</i> = 427		Parents' Reps <i>n</i> = 100		Class Prefects <i>n</i> = 126		TOTAL <i>n</i> = 751											
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%								
<i>Most pupils live around school?</i>	57	41	58	42	258	169	60	40	49	51	49	59	70	56	56	44	434	317	58%	42%
<i>Teachers give pupils home-work</i>	66	32	67	33	312	115	73	27	94	06	94	06	124	02	98	02	596	155	79%	21%
<i>Most homes use electricity for light</i>	38	60	39	61	152	275	36	64	39	61	39	61	29	97	23	77	258	493	34%	66%
<i>Learners complete home-work</i>	33	65	34	66	143	284	33	67	39	61	39	61	50	76	40	60	265	486	35%	65%
<i>Parents assist learners to do home-work</i>	29	69	30	70	133	294	31	69	34	66	34	66	42	84	33	67	240	511	32%	68%

Key

- n* - Total number of respondents in each category
- f* - Frequencies
- Y - Yes
- N - No

The table above shows that most learners 434 (58%) live around the school. Most respondents – 596 (79%) also said that teachers give homework to learners. However, most learners – 486 (65%) don't complete home-work. Also most parents 511 (68%) don't assist learners in doing home-work. This finding of teachers giving learners home-work and most parents not assisting learners in doing their home-work is similar to the finding of a study conducted Kenya National Examinations Council in the year 2020. The said study by KNEC (2020) found that majority of the schools had assignment/homework policies, with 87.3% of the teachers reporting this. The study, however, established low parental involvement, with more than half (51.9%) of the teachers reporting that parents did not check their children's work. Further, a third (34.4%) of the pupils indicated that they did not have anyone assisting them in doing homework while at home.

From the open-ended segments of the questionnaire of representatives of the parents, most respondents indicated that most parents in the area of study were illiterate, a fact that made them not to check on their children's assignments nor assist them in doing their home-work. From the interview schedules, most of the Education Officers interviewed (CDE, S/C Des & CSOs) concurred that most parents in West Pokot County were illiterate and could not assist their children in doing homework.

On their part, most teachers and head teachers said that some parents were busy with other activities to the extent that they don't have time to look at their children's books. They could not therefore assist their children to do home-work. They are busy looking for food for their children and other school necessities like uniform, exercise books. Some parents are never at home to assist their children with their home-work.

Most respondents also showed that most learners – 486 (65%) do not complete their homework. Respondents gave varied reasons that made learners not to complete home-work. Most teachers and head teachers blamed it to domestic chores. Domestic chores, especially for girls while at home could not give them time to do their homework. Some parents indicated that most homes lacked conducive environment to undertake assignments. Other parents blamed it to lack of light in learners' homes. Lack of enough light at night featured prominently since most homes were not connected to electricity supply. Out of 751 respondents, 493 (66%) indicated that learners' homes were not using electricity for light. Other parents said that most homes were congested and children didn't have separate rooms to conduct their studies, due to small houses with few rooms in their homes. Parents further said that children lacked food at home, which made them not to concentrate on their homework. One parent was quoted to have said:

In some homes, food is a challenge. When children from school arrive home late hungry, late in the evening and find no food, their morel for studies wanes. They can't settle down to do their homework. Instead, they move around and about their home in search of what to eat, leaving books aside.

The KNEC (2020) study also found that learners were not well fed. The study established that sizable percentages of pupils did not have regular meals. For instance, 13.2%, 7.5% and 2.4% of the pupils reported that they did not have regular breakfast, lunch and supper respectively. It is notable that Turkana had the highest percentage of pupils reporting not to take the three meals regularly.

This could be one of the reasons that make them not settle down and concentrate on their home-work. Just like Turkana County, as found by the KNEC study, some parts of West Pokot have food shortage challenges which affect school-going children. Mwangi (2015), states that West Pokot County experiences hunger due to harsh climatic conditions and depends on food aid from World Food program, a scenario that makes provision of education difficult. More so, both National and County Governments have introduced School-Feeding programmes in the county. However, the School feeding programme itself has challenges. A study conducted by Okutu (2019), in West Pokot County found that School-feeding programme had become unreliable because food supply from the government was irregular.

On how home-based challenges can be alleviated, most respondents suggested that: Both governments (National and County) should enhance school-feeding programme in schools in West Pokot County. Teachers said that parents should be encouraged by local administration to assist learners in their home-work, since that was a requirement of the current system of education – CBC. Rural electrification programme should be enhanced in the county, so that many house-holds can access electricity for lighting their homes.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This section presents conclusions that were drawn from the research findings, based on research objectives. The first objective sought to find out how physical environment affected provision of quality learning to Grade 6 learners in Public Primary Schools in West Pokot County. It can be concluded the physical environment adversely affected grade 6 learners bearing in mind that the study found out that West Pokot County's topography was full of rocky

hills. It made it difficult to site schools. Children had to track for long distances through hills and valleys to reach school. Long dry season, floods during rain-season and lack of clean water also impacted negatively on learners' education.

The second objective sought to establish how home environment hindered the quality learning of Grade 6 learners. From the findings, it is safe to conclude that home environment hampered children's learning since some of them could not do or complete home-work given by teachers due to varied reasons that included illiterate parents, lack of adequate light, lack of adequate food and many domestic chores.

5.2 Recommendations

From the findings, this study makes the following recommendations:

1. The study found that the topography of West Pokot County was full of rocky hills and rugged land which hindered children's learning. Further, it found that home environment wasn't conducive for learning due to many reasons. The study thus recommends that Boarding Primary Schools be built in West Pokot County in available conducive environments to keep children in school for a long time and avoid harsh terrain and harsh Home Environment that hindered their learning.
2. The study found out that there was acute shortage of clean water in schools in West Pokot County. It further found out that Pokot Community was a pastoralist community that migrated oftenly in search of greener pasture and water for their animals, which affected children's education. The study recommends that both governments (National and County), together with Non-governmental organizations should prioritize drilling of bore-holes across the county to provide clean and reliable water for drinking and for agriculture. It will make the pastoralists settle down and practice Zero Grazing and crop farming.
3. The study found out that West Pokot County was prone to land-slides during heavy rains which destroyed infrastructure, including schools. The study recommends that the government should move people away from areas that experience land-slides and put up social amenities like schools away from such areas.

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