FACTORS THAT CAUSE DIFFERENTIATION IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN IGEMBE NORTH SUBCOUNTY, MERU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Learners' academic performance has lured the interest of scholars, parents, policy makers, planners and curriculum implementers. The main objective of schools is to ensure that learners achieve academic excellence. Private primary schools in Igembe North have been performing far much better than public primary schools. It was not clear as to what factors that cause this difference. This study aimed at investigating the factors that caused differentiation in academic performance between public and private primary schools in Igembe North sub county of Meru County, Kenya. The study employed expost-*facto* research design. The target population included 83 head teachers, 83 senior teachers and 3550 pupils, making a total of 3716 subjects. A sample of 250 respondents - 25 head teachers, 25 senior teachers, 200 pupils was randomly and proportionately drawn from the target population. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from the respondents. Pilot study was done in two schools outside Igembe North Sub County, to assess the quality of the instruments.
Once the quality of the instruments was ascertained, the researcher visited the selected primary schools and planned with the school head teachers on data collection in their respective schools. After all the respective data was collected it was sorted out and then analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18. Descriptive, t – test, and Chi square statistics, as well as, Pearson correlation analyses were used to analyze factors that cause differentiation in Academic performance between public and private primary schools in Igembe North Sub County. It was established that eight of the ten head teachers' characteristics items significantly varied between private and public primary schools. Besides, six of the ten teachers' characteristics items, nine of the ten pupils' characteristics items and all the eleven parents' characteristics items differed significantly between private and public primary schools. The study established that the 2017 KCPE mean score of private primary schools was significantly higher than the mean score of the public primary schools. A positive correlation was established between the head teachers characteristics and 2017 KCPE mean score by use of a Pearson product-moment correlation. Equally, a positive correlation was also established between the teachers' characteristics and 2017 KCPE mean score. It was further established that the scores for head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents characteristics were significantly higher in private primary schools than for public primary schools. The study concluded that the variations in head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents characteristics were significantly associated with disparity in academic performance between pupils in public and private primary schools in Igembe North Sub County. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should find ways of motivating the head teachers in public primary schools for them to perform their leadership role passionately as their counterparts in private primary schools. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Education should ensure that the recommended class size of 40 pupils per class is attained in public primary schools for the teachers to effectively spearhead the learning process. Besides, the Ministry of Education should put in place measures to improve the learning environment in public primary schools for the pupils to enjoy and appreciate learning. In addition, the head teachers in public primary schools should invent ways of educating parents in their schools on importance of parental involvement in pupils' academic achievement.