

Attitude of Students Towards Geography in Public Boarding Secondary Schools in Eneleraï Zone, Narok South Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study determined how the attitude of students towards Geography contributes to their poor performance in Geography in public secondary schools in Eneleraï zone of Narok South Sub-County, Kenya. The study adopted quantitative paradigm and specifically made use of cross-sectional survey research design. One research question guided the study. The study targeted 9 public boarding secondary schools and 3 schools were selected using cluster sampling procedure. Simple random sampling was used to select 45 Form Three students. Questionnaire was used to collect data. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 21. The data were presented in frequencies and percentages. The study established that students had positive attitude towards Geography. Therefore, their poor performance in the subject maybe as a result of other factors such as teachers' methodology and or educational resources. The researchers therefore recommend that students should continue to show positive attitude towards the subject by reading ahead of their teachers. This would sustain their interest in the subject, hence, improved academic performance.

Keywords: Attitude, academic performance, geography, Kenya

Introduction

Academic performance is a very important measure of learning attainment in education. It is through tests - both formative and summative that progress made by students in their studies can best be gauged. Success in education is increasingly being equated with good academic performance. Education being the cornerstone of the economic and social development improves the productive capacity of societies and their political economic and scientific institution. It helps to reduce poverty by mitigating its effect on population, health and nutrition. Education reform efforts in African countries have aimed at making education effective vehicle for national development (UNESCO, 2005). Egunyomi, (2006) observed that education is development; it creates choices and opportunities for people, reduces the twin burden of poverty and diseases and gives a stronger voice to the society. For nations, it creates a dynamic workforce and well-informed citizens able to compete and

cooperate globally, opening doors to economic and social prosperity.

Worldwide, education is viewed as a prominent factor that helps in shaping of the future of individuals. Such an important attachment to education can be established based on the investment that goes towards education in relation to other programs in most countries (Ombok, 2007). Many countries of the world have allocated huge sums of money in their national budgets to enhance attainment of education to the citizens. In Kenya, about 30% of the national budget goes to education (Ngang'a, 2010).

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Performance is an important measure of learning attainment in education. Performance varies according to a variety of factors, such as appropriateness of the evaluation instrument and the motivation of the students to perform. Success in education is increasingly being equated with good academic performance. Geography has continued to play significant role in the national development. It is taught in schools to give learners a sound knowledge of their immediate environment and develop in them the ability to comprehend and explain natural phenomena. Obondo et al. (2013) opined that Geography is seen as a subject that develops learners' critical thinking ability and to comprehend spatial relationship among various features on the surface of the earth, most importantly in problem solving and further prediction of the environmental phenomenon. Geography also enables students to acquire technical skills that can help them in their future. They can acquire statistical skills, logical reasoning as well as imaginary skills.

Geography to the detriment of scientific and experiential approach had made the subject very unclear and boring that, of all the subjects in the school curriculum at secondary level, Geography seems to be the most difficult subject to teach. Some of the reasons for these as put forward are, nature of the subject and the way it is being taught. It is believed that Geography is taught in a way that discourages open questions, inquiry and active participation. The resultant effect of all the above is that the subject no longer attracts young scholars due to the dull, uninspiring and stereotyped approach being adopted (Sofowora & Agbedokun, 2010). It is also observed by the chief examiners' report of National Examination Council (NECO) that, the problem affecting achievement in Geography can be attributed to lack of qualified teachers to handle Geography, poor teaching delivery method of presenting the content of the curriculum to students (NECO, 2010).

The secondary school education system in Kenya has a duty to prepare students towards higher training and specialization in different career fields. The 8-4-4 curriculum exposes students to the study of various subjects. Each of these subjects is unique and important on its own way. Advancement in any given subject leads to a

career field related to that subject they gain knowledge and develop interest and are highly poised to prefer career based in the subjects in secondary school. Geography is one of the subjects offered in secondary schools in Kenya and students' performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education level is of paramount importance (KNEC, 2005; MoEST, 2005).

The students' performance in Geography at the end of the Kenyan secondary school in course has not been satisfactory for some years as seen in Table 1 (KNEC 2010-2014).

Table 1
Overall KCSE Performance in Humanities from year 2010-2014

Year		Geography	History & Government	Christian Religious Education (C.R.E)
2010	Mean Score	37.53%	45.82%	46.13%
	Candidature	111, 646	225, 526	240,220
2011	Mean Score	41.65%	41.83%	48.93%
	Candidature	121,152	267,537	289,529
2012	Mean Score	46.58%	40.94%	44.03%
	Candidature	116,687	293,117	331,816
2013	Mean Score	42.41%	44.72%	47.96%
	Candidature	110,351	309,186	331,046
2014	Mean Score	44.02%	53.83%	53.15%
	Candidature	122,157	334,524	363,132

Source: KNEC (2015)

It has been noted that students' Geography performance and the candidature in KCSE has been comparatively declining in relation to other humanities or elective subjects such as Christian Religious Education (CRE) and History and Government (KNEC, 2015). It is important to note that the performance in Geography in 2012 was higher than that of History and Government and C.R.E. Unfortunately, the performance declined thereafter in the year 2013. It is also important to note that there is also the issue of low candidature in Geography as compared to the other humanities. This raises a question among stakeholders, teachers and students as to why performance in Geography remains low year after year when compared to other humanities.

Improving the performance of Geography education is a great societal need in Kenya not only for industrialization of the country as contained in

the vision 2030 but also for ensuring food security in the country through practices like land reclamation and irrigation farming (Krathwohl, 2008; Omoro & Wakhungu, 2014). The challenge thus has been how to make Geography more “alive”, more “real” and more manageable by secondary school students. It was, therefore important to determine the attitude of students towards the subject.

Attitude can be described as settled behaviour or manner of acting, as representation of feeling or opinion. It refers to certain predisposition to act or react in a positive or negative way towards certain situations and ideas (Issa et al., 2010). Okwilagwe (2002) points out that the development of the right attitude to academic matters is a basic learning outcome of intrinsic worth. Thus, attitude can be seen as a state of preparedness of an individual to respond in one way or another to a particular situation.

However, most of the objects and diagrams in Geography are too abstract for students to easily understand. A teacher’s teaching methodology will either motivate or discourage students from enrolling in Geography as well affecting their performance. Self-set goals are believed to affect students’ performance directly, because it is believed that it motivates individuals who possess the required ability into action. Also, self-set goals determine the choice of tasks and learning strategies a student makes to directly affect performance. Nonetheless, successful academic performance is a contingent upon effective studying and motivational strategies; otherwise, self-set goals would be fruitless and would not be realized.

The study of Geography involves a process of discovery and enables learners to acquire knowledge and develop attitudes of inquiry, critical thinking and decision making. Negative notion on the subject for both teachers and students is disastrous to performance in examination. It is therefore necessary for teachers to relate their Geography instructions to the everyday experience of the learners, thus creating a positive attitude of the learners and a bulge that learners can cross in order to become successful in the mainstream of Geography classes.

In spite of the efforts put by teachers to effectively teach Geography in secondary schools, students’ performance in the subject is not satisfactory. In Nigeria for example, Obondo et. al. (2013) in their study on enhancing learning of Geography: A focus on video use in Jos, Nigeria, revealed that poor performance in Geography is as a result of negative attitude of students towards the subject.

In the same vein, in Kenya, Evelyn (2003) undertook research on the factors influencing the performance of students in Geography in secondary schools in Ngong division of Kenya. The researcher found that negative attitude of the learners towards the subject was the highest contributor to poor performance. In another study on factors affecting academic performance in Geography in Lang’ata high school, Nairobi, Kenya, Lufufu (2005) assessed students’ attitudes towards Geography and possible ways for future improvement in Geography. The researcher found that some topics seemed to be abstract, wide and quite difficult to relate to real life situations. Both learners and teachers had difficulties in such topics. The researcher also discovered that learners had mixed feelings towards Geography and as a result few students who had a positive attitude towards Geography performed well in the subject while most of the students had negative attitude towards the subject performed poorly.

While several studies such as Obondo et al. (2013), Evelyn (2003) and Lufufu (2005) have enumerated on the how negative attitude contributes to poor performance in Geography. There exists very scanty literature on how attitude of students towards Geography contributes to poor performance in secondary schools in Eneleraï zone. Thus, this study determined the attitude of students towards Geography in Eneleraï zone of Narok South sub- County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya and especially in Eneleraï zone of Narok South Sub-County, students’ performance in Geography is poor and does not show any trend for improvement. For some years back, the subject has had a mean score of less than 5.0 (mean grade of C-). The poor performance in the subject is arguably as a result of the students’ attitude towards the subject. This causes a lot of concern to the Ministry

of Education, parents, teachers and students of Geography in particular.

The researchers observed that the poor performance in the subject has also caused fear in some students resulting in some deciding to drop the subject in the second term of Form Two in favour of History and Christian Religious Education. If the issues causing poor performance in Geography is not delineated and improved then the trends of poor performance in the subject will not end resulting to poor subject combinations among students who pass to gain admission at the university. The problem for this study was therefore to determine students' attitude towards Geography in secondary schools in Eneleraï zone, Narok South Sub-County, Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitude of students towards Geography in secondary schools in Eneleraï Zone of Narok South Sub-County, Kenya.

Research Question

The research question that guided this study was: What is the attitude of students towards Geography in secondary schools in Eneleraï Zone of Narok South Sub-County, Kenya?

Method

The study adopted a quantitative paradigm and specifically made use of cross-sectional survey research design. This is because it provided a numeric description of the opinions of the students on their attitude towards Geography. A cross-sectional survey helped to collect data from both male and female students in single and co-educational schools in the study area. Therefore, the design was appropriate for the study.

The target population of the study was Form Three secondary school students that offer Geography in public boarding secondary schools in Eneleraï Zone of Narok South Sub-County, Kenya. There are 9 boarding secondary schools in the zone and 115 Form Three students that offer Geography. The researchers used 10% to determine the sample size for the schools used and 40% for the students that participated in the study. The sample size of the study was 3 schools and 45 students. The researchers used cluster sampling in selecting the 3 schools for the study. Therefore, there was random

selection of intact group which ensured that each school category was represented to take part in the study. Three public secondary schools were randomly selected from the different cluster groups. The cluster groups included: boys boarding secondary schools, girls boarding secondary schools, co-educational boarding secondary schools. The researchers used simple random sampling technique to select the students that participated in the study.

The researchers used questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire focused solely on the students' attitude towards Geography. The instrument was subjected to validation and reliability, and found adequate and reliable before being used for the study. The researchers administered the questionnaire to the students. The teachers of Geography in the three schools also helped the researchers in this activity. Regarding data analysis, the researchers analysed the data using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 21). The data were presented in frequencies and percentages.

The researchers considered ethics in the whole process. They assured the respondents of confidentiality and that the information given were solely for the purpose of the study. The participants were also made aware that they were free to withdraw consent and discontinue their participation in the research at any time. The researchers also arranged with the head teachers to confirm the dates for data collection and also sought the consent of the school administrations to avoid any element of surprise to the schools without prior clarity of the intention of the visit.

Result

Students' Attitude towards Geography

The sole purpose of the study was to determine the attitude of students towards Geography in public secondary schools in Eneleraï zone of Narok South Sub-County, Kenya. It was really to ascertain if students' attitude contributes to the poor performance in the subject as explored in the background to this study. The students were presented with eight items that measured on a four-point attitude scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Students' Attitude towards Geography

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
I enjoy Geography classes and reading Geography books	27 (60.0%)	16 (35.6%)	2 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Geography should be made a compulsory subject	11 (24.4%)	11 (24.4%)	13 (28.9%)	10 (22.2%)
Geography is only useful in boosting my mean score	7 (15.6%)	8 (17.6%)	17 (37.8%)	13 (28.9%)
Given a choice, I would drop Geography	2 (4.4%)	3 (6.7%)	14 (31.1%)	26 (57.8%)
The content in Geography syllabus is too much	16 (35.6%)	10 (22.2%)	14 (31.1%)	5(11.1%)
Geography is an easy subject compared to other humanities	9 (20%)	8 (17.8%)	20 (44.4%)	8 (17.8%)
I don't understand why we study Geography at school	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	20 (44.4%)	25 (55.6%)
I would want to pursue a Geography related course at university	24 (53.3%)	11 (24.4%)	7 (15.6%)	3 (6.7%)

Many of the students 27 (60%) reported that they enjoy Geography classes and reading Geography books, 17 (37.8%) students disagreed that Geography is only useful in boosting mean scores. Despite 16 (35.6%) students strongly agreeing that the content in Geography syllabus is too much, 26 (57.8%) students strongly disagreed that given a choice, they would drop Geography. However, it is important to note that 13 (28.9%) students disagreed that Geography should be made a compulsory subject. Most of the students, 25 (55.6%) students as well as 20 (44.4%) students strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively, that they don't understand why they do Geography at school. Most of the students, 24 (55.3%) strongly agreed that they would want to pursue a Geography related course at university. These responses translate to positive attitude towards Geography as a subject. When they were asked to compare Geography with other humanities (History and Government, Christian Religious Education), 20 (44.4%) of the students disagreed that Geography is easy compared to other humanities. It can therefore be concluded that majority of the students had positive attitude towards Geography, and that poor performance established some years back on the subject Geography in Enelerai zone of Narok South Sub-County, Kenya is not as a result of students' attitude towards the subject.

Discussion

Many of the students (60%) enjoy Geography classes and reading Geography books. 57.8% of the students strongly disagreed that given a choice, they would drop Geography. Most of the students 55.3% strongly agreed that they would want to pursue a Geography related course at university. Therefore, we can conclude that the students' attitude is positive. This finding disagrees with that of Ongaki (2016) who found that students performed poorly in Geography due to their negative attitude towards the subject.

However, Ongaki's study tried to compare performance and enrolment of boys and girls in the subject. The current study looked at the students holistically. That notwithstanding, the current study agrees with the findings of Onuoha and Eze (2013) who studied students' attitude towards the learning of Geography in Nsukka Enugu State, Nigeria. Their study revealed that generally, students had positive attitude towards Geography. More so, that gender had no influence on the students' attitude towards the study of Geography.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The finding has shown that students' attitude towards Geography is positive and the researchers concluded that poor performance of Geography in secondary schools in Enelerai zone is

not based on the attitude of students, but may be arguably on other factors such as teaching methodology, educational resources, attitude of teachers, just to mention a few. Based on the finding, the researchers recommend the following:

1. The school administration should sustain the interest of the students in the subject by providing them with more enabling environment conducive to teaching and learning.
2. Teachers should motivate students the more in the subject by using innovative pedagogical approaches in their classes.
3. Students should continue being focused and retain positive attitude in the subject. This would translate to more positive learning outcomes.

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