

A COMPARISON OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WARENG DISTRICT, KENYA**Samuel K. Rong'uno**

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ABSTRACT: *Good performances in private schools have not only attracted many parents but also left the public wondering what secret could be behind their success. Despite government investing heavily in public schools, not much in terms of performance is yet realized. Most public schools, especially in urban areas, are well staffed. Teachers in public schools are better paid compared to those in private. This paper undertakes a comparison between Public and Private secondary schools in terms of academic performance. The paper is based on a study carried out to determine the level of variation in academic performance between public and private primary schools in Wareng District and the major possible causes of such variations. The study covered a total of 55 public and 17 private schools distributed evenly among the five education Zones in the district. The figures translate to 52% and 68% of public and private schools respectively. Data collection was by means of questionnaire administered to teachers and head teachers. Results on performance were collected from District Education Office. Performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) was used because it is a national examination that is not biased. The duration covered three years, 2007-2009 inclusive. The findings of the study revealed that despite government investing generously in public schools private schools still outshine them. It is clear that private schools perform much better in academics than public schools. KCPE results for the three years (2007-2009) where private schools were ahead of public ones consecutively – in all the zones. Moreover, public schools in the District are relatively well staffed with pupil-teacher ratio in urban areas at 21:1 in rural areas in average pupil-teacher ratio in the District was 31:1. The research findings are of significance to Ministry of Education policy makers and public schools.*

KEYWORDS: Academic Performance, Public, Private Primary Schools, Wareng District

INTRODUCTION

Formal education was introduced in Kenya mainly by early Christian missionaries. The first school was established by Ludwig Krapf of Church Missionary Society at Rabai (Coast) in 1848. Later, several other missionaries, Europeans and Asians established schools in various parts of the country. The first African independent school was established in 1901 at Guba (Taita).

Throughout the colonial era, education in Kenya was racially stratified along racial lines, with varying curricular and different facilities for Europeans, Asians and Africans. Sentiment in the colonial government was strongly in favour of such segregation (Saunders & Mbithi, 1980). The European and mission schools were well catered for in terms of resources and management. Their teachers were motivated and committed to work because of good working environment, high salaries and other privileges. The next were the Asian schools. Just as it was in other parts of Africa, native schools were established in remote areas, with poor structures,

inadequately trained and paid teachers. Their academic achievements remained low compared to European and Asian schools (Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001).

After independence in 1963, the government placed a lot of emphasis on education as a major tool for reducing ignorance, poverty and diseases in the country. The curriculum was unified and a department – the then Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) – was established under Ministry of Education. The department was charged with the responsibility of ensuring quality education in the country. However, a number of Europeans, Asians and Missionary groups, opted to run their schools on private basis. Although the government subsidized the cost of education, performance in private schools continued to outshine performance in public schools at all levels of education. To many, this variation was due to inadequate resources, low pay to teachers and poor working conditions in public schools. Teachers in public schools were, therefore, demoralized and not committed to work.

The Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) kept advocating for improved salaries and terms and conditions of work for teachers, an effort that has seen some probes. However, given the high cost of living due to inflation, the progress is still relatively low. When the government launched Free Primary education (FPE) in 2003, the prime aim was to reduce the burden of cost of education to parents and improve enrolment in primary schools (Kenya, 2008). Indeed, public primary schools are now well equipped with books, stationery and all other facilities necessary for improvement of standards of education. However, private schools still outshine the public in performance.

One of the things that the Kenya government promised upon independence in 1963 was that it would use education to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. This was clearly articulated in Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 (Education Watch, 2006, p. 28). The entrenchment of private school system, though desirable and democratic, has ensured that the very disparities continue to increase day by day. Despite provision of Free Primary Education (FPE) which has seen a significant increase in the provision of instructional materials in the public schools, the academic fortunes of these institutions still remain in doldrums. Although pupils in private schools are composed of not more than 10 percent of the KCPE candidates, they take up almost 60 percent of places in the best public secondary schools (Education Watch, 2006, p. 31).

Many hold that public primary schools have what it takes to perform well in national examinations. This is because they have trained human resource, abundant teaching and learning materials, among other issues, yet these schools still trail behind private schools. The ranking of schools based on national examinations reveals that private schools dominate top brass positions both nationally and locally.

Theoretical Aspect of Teacher Motivation and Performance

Private schools seem to embrace the ideas proposed by Scientific Management Theory. Fredrick Taylor (1911), the proponent of the Scientific Management Theory, analyzed the management of work place and came up with a number of elements. Among them is determination of standards performance. Taylor observed that prior to the scientific management there was no one who could exactly know how much work an employee was expected to do within a specified period of time. Since management, however, performance management approaches have been developed including the use of appraisal system.

Concerning evaluation, Taylor (1911) emphasizes that work must be evaluated by judging the results against the objectives. He further proposes that in organizations, workers who produce maximum output should be rewarded accordingly. To overcome the problem of underpayment, Taylor develops the device of differential piece where the employee should be paid according to hours he/she has worked. This method of performance management is in many cases not upheld as it encourages extrinsic motivation while neglecting intrinsic motivation.

Under the Scientific Management Theory, workers are seen as motivated by both economic and non-economic rewards. The economic rewards that motivate employees as put forward by Taylor include salary allowances, overtime packages and the pension scheme. The non-economic rewards include the work itself, the nature of supervision and fringed benefits such as accommodation and medical cover scheme.

The private schools seem to have borrowed a lot from the foregoing ideas of Taylor. Although they neither pay their teacher high salaries nor attractive allowances, they tie their payment to the performance of the teachers. However, most private schools give their teachers the non-economic rewards such as accommodation, meals and scholarships in form of reduced fees to children whose parents work in the same institution. The non-financial rewards do not involve direct payment to the teachers but they help in reducing the cost of living expenditure which will eventually enhance motivation.

Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) Performance

A look at KCPE results for the years 2005 and 2007 shows that in the year 2005, the leading public primary school in Rift Valley Province was Kericho Primary, placed at 173th position nationally. In 2007, the leading school in the same Province was AIC Cheribis in 136th position nationally. The table below shows the top public schools at provincial level in the year 2005 and 2007.

Table 1: Top Public Schools at Provincial Level (2005 & 2007)

School	Percentage	Position Score (%)	Position in Province	Nationally out of 16871
2005				
Nairobi	Moi Forces Academy	64.58	73	993
Central	Moi Nyeri Complex	75.00	29	104
Rift Valley	Kericho Primary	73.18	25	173
Nyanza	Chemelil Sugar Primary	71.74	15	226
Western	Eshakhulu Primary	66.72	44	664
Coast	Nyali Primary	69.70	25	401
Eastern	Kanyakine Primary	74.40	10	122
North Eastern	Jirabo Primary	50.60	16	1971
2007				
Nairobi	Nairobi Primary Sch	68.20	55	364
Central	Kerugoya Primary Sch	73.12	27	165
Rift Valley	AIC Cheribis Primary	73.90	31	136
Nyanza	Victoria Primary	69.06	43	303
Western	Vokoli Primary	69.76	34	241
Coast	Amani Primary	67.58	62	392

Eastern	Jirabu Primary	69.48	26	271
North Eastern	Jirabo Primary	54.42	11	1803

Source: Education Watch, 2006 & 2008

Private Schools verses Public Schools: The View of some Kenya Educationists

According to Sammy Bor, Executive Secretary – Kenya National Union of Teachers - Uasin Gishu County, large enrolments in schools have led to high pupil-teacher ratio making it difficult for teachers to cope (Education Watch, 2008). However, Mukhwan Malach – Head Teacher of Precious Hope Academy – claims that the matter has nothing to do with ratios. He states:

Because of affordability, private schools mainly admit children from well-off families, most of them with elite parents – who coincidentally happen to know the real value of education. Pupils in private schools are exposed through educational trips. Teachers in private schools are always with their employers who monitor their work with greater scrutiny. Teachers in private schools have an average 15-17 lessons a week compared to those in public with 30-40 lessons weekly. Most pupils in public schools come from poor families where getting a meal is more of a privilege than a basic need (Education Watch, 2008).

Public versus Private Schools – A Case Study of Mukono District Kampala (Uganda)

According to John Kibet (as cited in Education Watch, 2008), a student in Makerere University, it is a do-or-die affair between public and private schools. Government-aided schools are finding it rough maintaining the high level of academic race. Studies show that the effect of Universal Primary Education (UPE) weighs down most of the public schools. Implementation of UPE has seen public schools enrol high number of pupils leading to large classes that have overwhelmed the teaching force. Consequently, performance has continued to drop. On the other hand, private schools have an edge over their counterparts as they are more organized in terms of pupil enrolment and teaching/learning facilities. These enable them to “poach” bright pupils from the public schools who end up scoring high marks in national examinations.

Statement of the Problem

Good performances in private schools have not only attracted many parents but also left the public wondering what secret could be behind their success. Despite government investing heavily in public schools, not much in terms of performance is yet realized. Most public schools, especially in urban areas, are well staffed. Teachers in public schools are better paid compared to those in private. The environmental conditions in some private schools are pathetic. Some learn in very small rooms while others are taught in rooms behind shops. Recreational facilities in most private schools are lacking. Despite all these variations, private schools still outshine public schools in academic achievements. The big question in the minds of many people is what could be causing the differences in performance between the two categories of schools as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Top Four Schools in KCPE 2008 – Wareng District

School	Type	Percentage score (%)	Position
Solace Academy	Private day	66.40	1
Hill School	Private Boarding	62.32	2
Moi University	Semi private	59.25	3
Ngeria Hill Academy	Private boarding	58.62	4

This research was therefore conducted to establish the factors behind better performance in private schools as compared to public schools in Wareng Sub-County in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study majorly used descriptive survey research, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It aimed at establishing and analyzing managerial approaches applied in both public and private primary schools. Secondary data was gathered from published reports, books magazines and bulletins and it helped in collection of primary data. The main method used in data collection was the questionnaire. The study was based on the performance of Standard Eight pupils in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) in Wareng District. The duration covered the years 2007-2009. KCPE performance was chosen as a standard measure in performance between public and private primary schools because it is a national exam and therefore not biased.

Two sample methods were used; cluster and stratified sampling. The District is sub-divided into five educational zones. Each zone, therefore, was taken to be a cluster. The study covered four private schools in each zone except Cheptiret zone where there was no private school that presented candidates for national examination. To ensure their participation, only two of their young private schools were involved. In total 17 private schools were covered. These translated to 68% of all the private schools in the District. In the category of public schools, Cheptiret, Kessess and Kapsaret zones had 12 schools covered in each while Tulwet and Timboroa had 9 and 10 respectively. In total, 55 schools were covered. This translated to 52% of all the public primary schools in the District.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

School Type and Academic Performance in Private Schools

The study sought to establish the relationship between school management and academic performance in both private and public schools. To ascertain this, performance records for the schools in the five zones were obtained from the educational office at the district level. An analysis of Kenya Certificate of Primary Educational results for the three years 2007, 2008 and 2009 was carried out per zone and finally per district. However, Cheptiret Zone had no private schools. The findings were as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 3: School Type and Academic Performance in Kesses Zone

School	Type of school	Percentage
2007		
Solace	Private	70.80
Ngeria Hill	Private	65.89
Moi University	Semi	61.14
Belakenya	Public	55.38
2008		
Solace	Private	73.39
Ngeria Hill	Private	65.52
Moi University	Semi	60.29
Songolet	Public	56.72
2009		
Solace	Private	66.4
Ngeria Hill	Private	65.1
Moi University	Semi	62.3
SDA Asururiet	Private	55.5

Table 2 above shows that in Kesses Zone public schools featured in the 3rd and 4th position in 2007 and 2008 while there were none among top four in 2009. The general impression is that private schools performed better than public schools in the three years consecutively.

The table below shows the findings on the relationship between the school type and academic performance in Kapseret Zone.

Table 3: School Type and Academic Performance in Kapseret Zone

2007		2008		2009	
School	Percentage	School	Percentage	School	Percentage
Kapseret Zone					
1. Disney (Private)	70.26	Hill school (Prv)	64.86	Hill School (Prv)	68.4
2. Hill school (Private)	67.56	Disney (Prv)	64.12	Disney (Prv)	62.8
3. Tartar (Private)	61.59	Patrician (Prv)	62.82	Tartar (Prv)	61.7
4. Kermetio (Private)	59.15	Tartar	62.04	Patrician (Prv)	60.9
5. Koriomat (Public)	53.49	Ngara Fall (Prv)	57.31	Kermetio (Prv)	56.8
Tulwet zone					
1. Sambu (Private)	60.90	Asurnet (Prv)	60.56	Kibadja (Prv)	64.7
2. Asurueti (Private)	58.58	Barakerwo (Prv)	60.45	Barnkeiyo (Prv)	62.1
3. Tulwet (Public)	58.33	Kibadja (Prv)	60.44	Asurnet (Prv)	60.8
4. Kapilat Public)	56.01	Clebororo (Pub)	57.31	Koamet (Pub)	57.2
5. Kormaet (Private)	55.50	Tulwet (Pub)	53.68	Sambul (Pub)	56.9
Timboroa zone					
1. Saruge (Private)	65.5	Nabkoi (Pub)	60.56	Kibadja (Prv)	64.7
2. Nabkoi (Public)	64.9	St. Patrick (Prv)	60.45	Barnkeiyo (Prv)	62.1
3. Boror (Public)	60.2	Saonge (Prv)	63.7	Saonge (Prv)	64.8
4. Toror (Public)	58.2	Kiptenga (Pub)	54.1	Nabkoi (Pub)	64.1
5. Kiptenga (Public)	57.3	Kiptenga (Pub)	53.7	Kaptenga (Pub)	58.4

Table 3 shows that in Kapsaret Zone there was only one public school that featured among top five (5th position) in 2007; the rest were private schools for the three years. The table also shows how schools in Tulwet Zone featured among top five schools in the three years. This is a zone situated in the interior part of the District, hence there were few private schools. Table 3 further displays the performance of top five schools in Timboroa zone not only situated in the interior part of the District but was also heavily affected by post election violence of 2007/2008. The zone has several public schools featuring among top five, though the number went down in 2009. It was found out during data collection that most schools, both public and private, were vandalized during the post-election violence, and recovery is still in process hence the reason for low performance.

The findings in the table below show the performance of both private and public schools within the top 10 ranking in the District.

Table 4: Top 10 at District Level

No	2007		2008		2009	
	School	Percentage	School	Percentage	School	Percentage
1.	Solace (Prv)	70.80	Hill-School	67.81	Hill-School	68.44
2.	Disney (Prv)	70.26	Solale (Prv)	67.39	St Patick)	67.21
3.	Hill-School	67.6	Nabkoi boys (Pub)	67.13	Solale (Prv)	66.43
4.	Ngeria	65.89	St Patick	66.40	Ngeria hill	65.18
5.	Nabkoi boys (Pub)	65.45	Ngeria hill	65.52	Sarage	64.81
6.	Samge	64.91	Disney Land	64.12	Kibadija	64.76
7.	Tartar (Prv)	61.59	Samge	63.66	Disney Land	62.84
8.	Moi Univ	61.14	Patricia	62.82	Barakeino	62.15
9.	Sambu (Prv)	60.90	Tartar	62.04	Tartar	61.73
10.	Kerita	59.81	Asuret	60.56	Patrician	60.90

The information on Table 4 above show that in the year 2007, the only public schools that featured among top ten schools in the district were Nabkoi (5th) and Kerita (10th). In 2008, the same Nabkoi featured in 3rd position and as the only public school among top 10. The results show that generally private schools were better than public schools in the District for the three years.

In 2009, all the top ten positions in the District were taken by Private schools. Performance in the five zones were summarized and presented inform of bar graphs as shown in Figure 1 below.

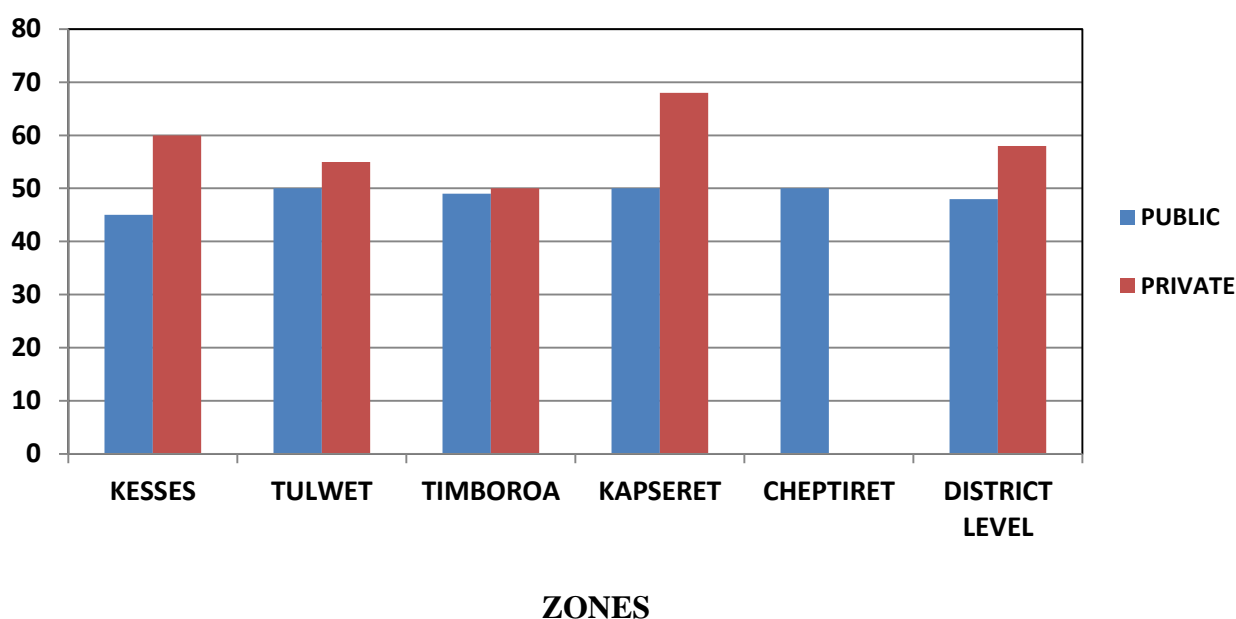


Figure 1: A comparison of zonal performance

The table below shows performance summary for 2007-2009.

Table 5: Performance Summary Code for 2007-2009

	Kessess	Tulwet	Tomborooa	Kapseret	Cheptiret	District Level
2007 Public	45.67	51.58	50.17	51.09	52.10	50.12
2007 Private	63.49	54.78	54.54	68.67	0	59.12
2007 Variation	17.85	3.2	4.37	17.58	0	9.00
2008 Public	51.55	53.01	46.6	52.1	56.8	52.41
2008 Private	63.85	55.42	52.85	64.92	0	59.26
2008 Variation	12.3	2.41	4.25	12.82	0	6.85
2009 Public	54.06	52.18	47.55	56.41	54.22	52.88
2009 Private	58.80	58.14	56.33	68.01	0	60.32
2009 Variation	4.74	5.96	8.78	11.60	0	7.44

The findings in Figure 1 show that in 2007, private schools performed much better compared to public schools. In Kesses zone, private schools were ahead of public schools by 17.82%; in the neighbouring zone, Tulwet, private schools outshined public schools by 3.2%. In Timborooa, similar trend was witnessed. Private schools were ahead of public ones by 4.3%. Similarly, in Kapsaret zone private schools outshined public schools by 12.5%. As indicted earlier Cheptiret zone had no private schools that presented candidates for KCPE that year. However, the public schools had a mean percentage of 52%.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study sought to establish the difference between public and private schools in terms of performance. From the findings of the study it is clear that private schools perform much better in academics than public schools. KCPE results for the three years (2007-2009) where private

schools were ahead of public ones consecutively – in all the zones. Moreover, public schools in the District are relatively well staffed with pupil-teacher ratio in urban areas at 21:1 in rural areas in average pupil-teacher ratio in the District was 31:1.

In terms of instructional materials and other educational equipment, the study found out that the two categories of schools are fairly equipped. In terms of service delivery, the study found out that teachers in private schools work tirelessly from early in the morning to late in the evening in order to produce attractive academic results as a prerequisite for retaining the job. Those in public schools work with some laxity as there is no strict supervision or punishment against non performers.

Based on the results of the study, it is clear that private schools outshine public schools in academic performance. It has been often argued that pupils in private schools are from either middle class or high class families. Therefore, it is recommended that further research should be carried out to determine the relationship between socio-economic status and academic performance. Research can also be carried out to establish the relationship between school environment and academic performance.

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