

**TITLE: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO POOR KCPE
PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN
MATUNGULU DIVISION**

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Ochieng, Z (2005), the introduction of free primary education led to the deterioration of performance in public primary schools, formerly considered academic giants. Although the Kenya government denies it, the hurried introduction of free primary education by the National Rainbow Coalition [NARC] in 2003 compromised quality standards in public schools. Touted as the greatest achievement of the NARC administration, the policy saw previously award winning public primary schools being outshone by private ones patronized by the rich, in a country where 56 per cent of the population live below the poverty line. Nothing illustrated the grim scenario better than the results of 2005's Kenya Certificate of Primary Education [KCPE] – the qualifying exam for joining secondary schools. Out of the top 100 candidates nationally, only one came from a public primary school while the rest were from private schools.

Since that period, public primary schools have performed badly in KCPE to an extent that almost 90 percent of students selected to join national secondary schools are from private institutions. According to Kigotho, W (2009), new evidence indicates that poor early childhood education, poverty, high teacher-student ratio and other opportunistic behaviours as well as inadequate supervision by both the teacher and parents contribute significantly to falling academic standards. According to a recent study in western Kenya by the International Child Support Fund, on average 20 percent of public primary school teachers are always absent compared to six percent of their counterparts in private schools. This issue is important because of its impact on pupils' learning and future career development.

The study was based in Matungulu Division in the Eastern province of Kenya. The division has 79 primary schools, with an enrollment average of 450 pupils per school. Amid the falling standards, parents as well as education experts are now worried that education will soon remain a preserve of the rich, whose children go to private schools with highly qualified teachers and all the requisite facilities. Students from these schools are also the ones who secure positions in the best secondary schools in the country and eventually make it to the university, leaving their counterparts from the public schools with no option but to drop out.

1.1.1 MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

The main purpose of the study was to determine the factors contributing to poor KCPE performance in public primary schools in Matungulu division.

1.1.2 Specific objectives

- i. To determine if poor quality early childhood education was a factor contributing to poor KCPE performance in public primary schools.