

**CAUSES OF STUDENTS POOR PERFORMANCE IN CHEMISTRY IN PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MANYATTA ZONE, KANGUNDO DISTRICT,
MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA**

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1 ABSTRACT

This study intends to find out the causes of student poor performance in chemistry in public secondary schools in Manyatta zone, Kangundo District, Machakos County both in internal and external examinations (CATS, MOCKS and KCSE). Data available indicates that performance of students in chemistry in Continuous Assessment Tests, Mocks and KCSE has continued to be poor over the years in this zone. The poor performance both at the district and national level in chemistry persists from the pre to post interventions measures administered by the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education in collaboration with many other education stake holders. Performance of students of Manyatta zone in Chemistry has always been below the national average. A population of 465 students in form two to form four from 3 public secondary schools was randomly selected using both simple and stratified random sampling to participate in a descriptive interactive survey study. The students were provided with questionnaires while Chemistry teachers and their principals will be orally interviewed. Data obtained from the study as well as physical observation of the nature of the teaching and learning resources and the conduct of both the practical and theory chemistry lessons was analyzed using correct data interpretation procedures. Results obtained were presented using descriptive statistics such as mean, percentages and frequencies. Students generally had a negative attitude towards chemistry and those who scored highest in the previous test had the highest score on the elements of attitude. Positive attitude towards the subject teacher has a positive influence on performance in the subject. but on the other hand Manyatta zone chemistry teachers' attitude towards their learners' ability was found to be negative. Use of resources and facilities was found to impact positively on students performance in chemistry particularly performance of average students. In addition, the teachers reported using various teaching methods with demonstration and lecture method being the most commonly used teaching technique. The principals reported admitting to their schools a significant population of students with poor entry behaviour and the prevalence of negative peer influence among their students. The study recommends that school management/administration should provide more teaching and learning facilities to adequately cater for the large student population. Moreover, chemistry teachers ought to adopt a more practical approach to the teaching and learning of the subject particularly improve in the use of charts and other instructional resources in the teaching of the subject. However, a comprehensive study on the causes of chemistry teachers' negative perception of their students' abilities in chemistry was suggested as an area for further study.