

Assessment of guidelines on continuous assessment tests and its influence on academic performance in secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya

Management of academic programmes in schools is key to effective realization of schools' objectives. Principals and teachers are the planners and managers of activities that take place in schools. The purpose of this study was to establish whether guidelines provided in schools on continuous assessment tests influence student academic performance. The study was guided by signaling theory. The theory posits that, one party, the sender, must choose whether and how to communicate (or signal) information, and the other party, the receiver, must choose how to interpret the signal. The theory applied to this study since it describes two parties who were the continuous assessment tests managers and the students. The study employed descriptive survey design. The target population was eighty three principals (83), eighty three teachers (83) and one thousand eighty hundred and ninety-nine (1899) form four students. To select samples, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to ensure equal representation of sub county, county, extra county and national schools. The school principals and teachers were selected using purposive sampling technique, while in mixed schools, respondents were selected using stratified sampling techniques to ensure gender equality. The study utilized questionnaires and interview schedules as tools for data collection. To test for reliability and validity of the research tools, a pilot study was carried out on two schools in the county which were not used in the main study. The two schools chosen were in the category of County and Sub County because they constitute majority of the schools in the County, therefore samples likely to give representative information on the variables under study. A reliability coefficient greater than 0.75 was accepted for the study. The responses in open ended items were reported in descriptive narrative. The data collected was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics namely frequencies, percentages and inferential statistics which involved Chi-square test and Binomial test. The study found out that most schools were provided with guidelines for tests which significantly influenced students' academic performance while a small percentage of the schools in the county did not provide guidelines. The conclusions made from the study were; schools in the County had come up with their own test guidelines, the principal as the manager of the school influences the provision of continuous assessment tests for academic performance and that secondary schools experience a lot of challenges in relation to tests. It is recommended that schools be given uniform test implementation guidelines.