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## Prefects' Academic Work Performance before and after Appointment as Prefects in Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru Sub-County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*Prefects are student leaders elected or appointed and assigned administrative duties in schools. Besides their school responsibilities, prefects are expected to perform their academic work well and attain good grades in class tests and national examinations like other students. According to reports in Nakuru District Education Office, achievement in examinations of public secondary school students decline when they take up prefects' responsibilities. Perhaps this may be due to the influence of school responsibilities on their academic work. This study sought to investigate the influence of school responsibilities on prefects' academic work performance in public secondary schools in Nakuru Sub-County. The study used descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 15 secondary schools and 15 deputy headteachers that participated in the study. A sample of 150 school prefects was selected using simple random sampling technique. Two instruments; the Deputy Headteachers' interview guide (DHTIG) and Prefects' questionnaires (PQ) were used to collect data. The two data collection tools were checked for content and face validity by a team of four experts from the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Management, Egerton University. DHTIG and PQ were piloted for reliability, their reliability coefficients were 0.70 and 0.73 respectively. The reliability was calculated using the Cronbach's Alpha. Data were analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.2. Descriptive statistics and t-test were used to analyze data. The results showed that there was no significant difference in mean scores of students' academic work performance before and after appointment as a prefect. The study recommended that; there is need for the school administration and teachers to train prefects (after their appointment) on leadership and study skills; and there is need for the teachers to provide remedial teaching and academic counseling to prefects so that they can attain good grades in national examinations for entry to higher education.*

**Keywords:** Academic work performance, Prefects, School responsibilities

### **1. Introduction**

Education is a fundamental human right, a key to sustainable development, peace and stability within and among countries (Wolfenson, 2000). It ensures an individual a productive future, helps in making decisions and bolsters confidence. Education also provides a ladder for achieving success in life and enables one to utilize skills and caliber in a constructive way. It is a welfare indicator, a key determinant of earnings, an important exit route from poverty and can reduce social and economic inequality (Government of Kenya [GOK], 2005). The role of education is not just to impart knowledge and skills that enable the beneficiaries to function as economies and social change agents in society, but also to impart values, ideas, attitudes and aspirations important for natural development (Nsubuga, 2003).

Secondary education is regarded as the most important stage in the educational cycle of a child in Kenya. It is the level at which learners are expected to acquire proficiency in both academic and applied subjects. Secondary school education is important because it is the foundation for further education, training and work (Koech, 2006). It is expected to provide for an all round mental, social, moral and spiritual development and ensure balanced development in cognitive, psycho-motor and affective skills of students. Secondary education is expected to lead to the acquisition of positive attitudes, self-respect, self-reliance, cooperation, adaptability, sense of purpose, integrity and self-discipline, respect and consideration for others, service to family, society and nation (Bogonko, 1994).

In Kenya, secondary schools are categorized as; public schools which are established, owned or operated by the Government and include sponsored schools; and private schools as those established, owned or operated by private individuals, entrepreneurs and institutions. Secondary schools are managed by Boards of Management (BOMs) (Republic of Kenya [ROK], 2013). The BOM is in charge of decision-making and policy making whereas the school administration assisted by the senior teachers, head of departments (HODs) and the prefects carry out the day-to-day administrative tasks (Wango, 2009).

In secondary schools, prefects are student leaders who are elected or appointed and assigned specific duties and responsibilities by the school administration. In many British and Commonwealth schools, prefects have considerable power and effectively run the school outside the classroom. The roles and responsibilities of prefects are to: assist in maintaining acceptable behaviors standards, discipline and order among students in the school (Berger, 2002; Griffin, 1994 & Otieno, 2010). Prefects' responsibilities in Kenyan schools include; giving directions, management of daily routine, presenting students' issues for attention and action as well as enforcing school rules and regulations. The responsibilities and duties for position of school captain, deputy school captain, games prefect, dining hall prefect, library prefect, compound prefect, dormitory prefect, entertainment prefect and class prefect are clearly defined (Otieno, 2010).

Prefects like other students are expected to attain good grades in class tests and national examinations besides their responsibilities as prefects. Good grades can only be attained if they perform their academic work diligently. Prefects are supposed to observe academic discipline by handing in homework on time, being attentive in class, preparing adequately for examinations and other activities related to academic pursuits (Bakhda, 2006).

Students' academic work include the following: essay-writing, notes-making, writing up an experiment, mathematical exercises, diagrams and graphs, reading assignments, practical work in practical subjects, projects, study group activities, tests and examinations (GOK, 1987). Indicators of students' performance in academic work include: regular class attendance, active participation in class discussions, completion and handing in class assignment on time and scores in tests and examinations Muriithi (2007).

Some of prefects' responsibilities in Kenyan schools include; taking roll call, reporting absentees, organizing co-curricular activities, awarding minor offences punishment and ensuring that all students follow school rules and regulations at all times. The prefects are expected to perform those duties on top of the normal class work. Besides their prefects' responsibilities, prefects like other students are expected to attain good grades in class tests and national examinations. Research studies conducted in Kenya by Chepchieng, Kiboss and Gichuru found that achievement in examinations is affected by factors like teaching methods, learning resources, environment, attitudes and motivation. It is also affected by how well a student has performed his/her academic work before being assessed. Students who attend classes regularly, actively participate in class, study well and do all class work/assignments generally perform well in tests and examinations. This study therefore sought to establish the prefects' performance of their academic work before and after appointment as prefects in public secondary schools in Nakuru Sub-County.

## 2. Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The design was chosen because it is suitable for collecting information that describes an existing phenomenon through which individuals are asked about their perceptions and opinions (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Kathuri and Pal (1993) recommended the design in situations where the purpose of a study is to explain or explore the existing status of a situation. The design was chosen because the researcher will not be able to manipulate the variables for the simple reason that they have already occurred. The study was carried out in public day secondary schools in Nakuru Sub-County.

The population of study included 25 deputy headteachers and 450 school prefects in public secondary schools in Nakuru Sub-County. Nakuru Sub-County has 25 public secondary schools (Nakuru County Education Office, 2013). Out of this number 23 are day schools and 2 are boarding schools. Only day schools participated in this study since there are variations in responsibilities between prefects in boarding and day schools. Purposive sampling was used to select 15 public day secondary schools in Nakuru Sub-County. All the deputy head teachers of the 15 public day secondary schools participated in this study. The sample size of prefects was determined using the recommendation of Kothari (2004) which asserts that one third of the total population is considered a representative of the population under study. On the basis of the recommendation, a sample of 150 school prefects was drawn from the population. A list of school prefects was obtained from the deputy headteachers. Simple random sampling was used to select 10 school prefects from each school.

Prefects' Questionnaires (PQ) on five-point Likert- scale and the Deputy Headteachers' Interview Guide (DHTIG) were used to collect data. PQ and DHTIG were checked for content and face validity by a team of four experts from the Faculty of Education and Community Studies Egerton University. Piloting was done in order to check the reliability of the research instruments. The reliability of PQ was estimated using the Cronbach's alpha. DHTIG and PQ questionnaires had a reliability of 0.70 and 0.73 respectively; hence, the interview guide and the questionnaires were accepted as reliable.

The questionnaires and interview guides used to collected data were coded. A data sheet was prepared using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 17.4 computer application. The coded data was keyed into the computer and analyzed. Data was described and summarized using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. Classification of the mean rating was done using ranking of the index on a scale of 1(lowest) to 5(highest) where 2.33 and below was ranked poor, 2.34 to 3.66 average and 3.67 to 5.00 good. The study ascertained whether there was a statistically significant difference between mean scores of prefects' performance of their academic work before and after appointment as a prefect using t- test.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The study sought to provide an answer to how prefects have performed their academic work before and after appointment as prefects. Prefects' questionnaire was used to generate data on prefects' performance of their academic work before and after appointment as a prefect. Prefects' performance of academic work included: setting academic goals with realistic chances of success, developing interest in learning, attending lessons regularly, active participation during lessons, performing laboratory assignments and visiting the library whenever the need arises. Others included: developing good study skills and habits, preparing personal study time, following the prepared study time, doing all the class assignments on time, sitting for all the tests/exams as

scheduled, using the tests/exams results to plan for academic progress and managing time well. The tool to measure the prefects' performance of their academic work before appointment as a prefect consisted 13 items (statements). The prefects responded to the 13 statements on 1-5 point Likert type. The mean and standard deviation for each item was computed. In addition, the overall mean and standard deviation for the 13 items were computed. Classification of the mean rating was done using ranking of the index on a scale of 1 to 5 where 2.33 and below was ranked poor, 2.34 to 3.66 average and 3.67 to 5.00 good. The results are presented in Table 1.

<b>Performance of academic work</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Set academic goals with realistic chances of success	130	3.66	1.02
Develop interest in learning	133	4.08	0.95
Attend lessons regularly	132	4.42	0.96
Actively participate during lessons	137	4.01	1.07
Perform my laboratory assignments	131	3.79	1.11
Visit the library whenever the need arises	132	3.28	1.18
Develop good study skills and habits	133	3.80	0.96
Prepare personal study time	132	3.81	1.10
Follow the prepared study time	131	3.50	1.15
Do all the class assignments on time	134	3.70	1.18
Sit for all the tests/exams as scheduled	133	4.64	0.71
Use the tests/exams results to plan for academic progress	134	3.84	1.09
Manage time well (balance academic, co-curriculum and my responsibilities as a prefect)	133	3.71	1.08
Overall mean of academic work performance before appointment as a prefect	140	3.67	0.73

*Table 1: Prefects' Performance of their Academic Work before Appointment as a Prefect*

The results in Table 1 indicate that prefects' performance of their academic work before appointment as a prefect was average (mean rating index- 2.34 to 3.66) in; setting academic goals with realistic chances of success (3.66), following the prepared study time (3.50) and visiting the library whenever the need arises (3.28). The study further revealed that prefects' performance of their academic work before appointment as a prefect was good (mean rating index-3.67 to 5.00) in; doing all the class assignments on time (3.70), managing time well (3.71), performing laboratory assignments (3.79), developing good study skills and habits (3.80), preparing personal study time (3.81), using the tests/exams results to plan for academic progress (3.84), actively participating during lessons (4.01), developing interest in learning (3.80), attending lessons regularly (4.42) and sitting for all the tests/exams as scheduled (4.64). The overall mean of academic work performance before appointment as a prefect was 3.67; this indicates a good performance of academic work.

The study further sought to find out the prefects' performance of their academic work after appointment as a prefect. The prefects were asked to rate their performance of academic work after appointment as a prefect. The results are summarized in Table 2.

<b>Performance of academic work</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Set academic goals with realistic chances of success	135	3.94	0.94
Develop interest in learning	135	4.16	0.89
Attend lessons regularly	134	4.37	0.91
Actively participate during lessons	136	4.17	0.97
Perform my laboratory assignments	132	3.84	1.03
Visit the library whenever the need arises	133	3.50	1.14
Develop good study skills and habits	135	3.87	0.98
Prepare personal study time	136	3.91	1.07
Follow the prepared study time	136	3.71	1.09
Do all the class assignments on time	134	4.00	1.05
Sit for all the tests/exams as scheduled	137	4.61	0.73
Use the tests/exams results to plan for academic progress	133	4.02	0.99
Manage time well( balance academic, co-curriculum and my responsibilities as a prefect)	135	3.89	1.04
Overall mean of academic work performance after appointment as a prefect	141	3.82	0.74

*Table 2: Prefects' Performance of their Academic Work after Appointment as Prefects*

The results in Table 2 showed that prefects' performance of their academic work after appointment as a prefect was good (mean rating index-3.67 to 5.00) in: following the prepared timetable (3.91), performing laboratory assignments (3.84), developing good study skills and habits (3.87), managing time well (3.89), preparing personal study time (3.91) and setting academic goals with realistic chances of success (3.94). Others included; doing all class assignments on time (4.00), using the tests/exams results to plan for academic progress (4.02), and developing interest in learning (3.87), actively participating during lessons (4.17),

attending lessons regularly (4.37) and sitting for all tests/exams as scheduled (4.61). The study further found that prefects' academic work performance after appointment as a prefect that was average (mean rating index- 2.34 to 3.66) was visiting the library whenever the need arises (3.50). The study found that the overall mean of academic work performance before and after appointment as a prefect was 3.67 and 3.82 respectively. The performance index was relatively higher after appointment as a prefect. This indicates a good performance of academic work. This implies that appointment as a prefect led to improved performance of academic work.

The study further sought to ascertain whether there was a statistically significant difference between mean scores of prefects' performance of their academic work before and after appointment as a prefect using t- test. The results are presented in Table 3.

Period	N	Mean	S.D	df	t- value	p- value
Before appointment	128	3.67	0.75	267	1.881	0.061
After appointment	141	3.82	0.74			

Table 3: Comparison of the Prefects' Performance of their Academic Work Mean Scores before and after Appointment as a Prefect

The results in Table 3 revealed that the prefects' performance of their academic work mean scores (mean= 3.67, S.D= 0.75) before appointment as a prefect was slightly lower than the mean score (mean= 3.82, S.D= 0.74) after appointment as a prefect. The difference between the 2 mean scores were however not significant at the 0.05 level,  $t(267) = 1.881$ ,  $p = 0.061$ . This suggests that the appointment as a prefect did not affect their academic work performance.

The study further sought information on prefects' performance of academic work before appointment as a prefect from the deputy headteachers. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Average	1	7.7
Fluctuate	3	23.1
Good	9	61.5
Poor	1	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4: Deputy Headteachers' rating of Performance of Academic Work of Students before Appointment as a Prefect

The results in Table 4 revealed that majority 9 (61.5%) of the deputy headteachers rated performance of academic work of students before appointment as a prefect as being good, 3 (23.1%) indicated that the performance fluctuated, 1 (7.7%) rated the performance as average and 1 (7.7%) rated performance of academic work of students before appointment as a prefect as poor.

The study further sought information on prefects' performance of academic work after appointment as a prefect from the deputy headteachers. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Performance of Academic Work	Frequency	Percent
No change noted	3	21.4
Improved	5	35.7
Decline	4	28.6
Good	2	14.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5: Deputy Headteachers' rating of Performance of Academic Work of Students after Appointment as a Prefect

The results in Table 5 revealed that majority 5 (35.7%) of the deputy headteachers indicated performance of academic work of students after appointment as a prefect improved. However, 3 (21.4%) said no change was noted, 4 (28.6%) indicated that performance declined and 2 (14.3%) indicated that performance of academic work of students after appointment as a prefect was good.

The study revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in prefects' performance of academic work before appointment and after appointment as a prefect. The study also found that when deputy headteachers were asked to rate performance of academic work of students after appointment as a prefect, they had varying responses, the highest percentage 35.7% (5) of the deputy head teachers indicated that performance of academic work improved. In the open ended questions, when the prefects were asked how appointment as a prefect has affected their academic work, 16.7% (25) of the prefects indicated that they were motivated to work harder. The findings agree with Otieno (2010) who noted that a prefect should be hardworking in class and that a prefect who does well in class commands respect from other students. The results also agree with Muriithi (2007) and Sadker (1994) assertion that achievement in examinations is affected by the extent to which a student has covered the topics that are being examined, attends all classes, actively participates in class and diligently completes assignment on time. A student leader should observe these academic disciplines to enhance academic achievement. The results also agree with Hudley and Gottfried (2008) who noted that being liked and appreciated by others is likely to result to in more academic help and assistance from teachers and peers, which in turn lead to higher grades and academic achievement. Teachers and students need to appreciate students' leaders and offer academic help which in turn will lead to higher academic achievement. The results also agree with

Ahiatrogah and Koomson (n.d) who noted that some student leaders are always seen performing their leadership duties and yet end up with very good grades. Student leaders are looked to as model students as such, it is important that student leaders exemplify a balance between academics and leadership.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that the prefects' performance of their academic work mean scores (mean= 3.67, S.D= 0.75) before appointment as a prefect was slightly lower than the mean score (mean= 3.82, S.D= 0.74) after appointment as a prefect. The difference between the 2 mean scores were however not significant at the 0.05 level,  $t(267) = 1.881$ ,  $p = 0.061$ . This suggests that the appointment as a prefect did not affect their academic work performance. The study concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in performance of academic work before and after appointment as a prefect.

On the basis of the findings and conclusion discussed herein, the following recommendations were made:

- There is need for the school administration to train prefects (after their appointment) on leadership and study skills.
- There is need for the teachers to provide remedial teaching and academic counseling to prefects so that they can attain good grades in national examinations for entry to higher education.

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