

An analysis of History teaching methodology in High schools: A case of Tigania and Igembe districts, Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

This is a part of a larger study that was set out to establish pedagogical and other factors which influenced academic performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) History examination in Tigania and Igembe Districts, Meru County Kenya. This study was aimed at establishing History teaching methods which influenced academic performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) History examination in Tigania and Igembe Districts, Meru County Kenya. The study was carried out using descriptive survey design. The study used probability sampling where simple random sampling was used. Data collection employed questionnaires for teachers, and focus group discussion for the form three History students. The respondents for the study included forty (40) teachers, and four hundred (400) students who formed sixty (60) groups. The data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) computer program and descriptive statistics. Chi square was used to test the null hypotheses. Although some teaching methods were found to be commonly used while others were often or rarely used, the impact of teaching methods on KCSE History examination performance was only significant for debate, brainstorming and panel methods.

Key Words: History teaching methods in High Schools, Tigania and Igembe Districts.

Introduction

Proper teaching is characterized by narration, discussion, reciting, identifying, explaining, role playing, dramatization, audio visual, and modeling (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Sessional Paper No 1 of 2005). Teaching methods are strategies or approaches employed to convey knowledge and skills in order to enhance and guide successful learning (McCleish, 1968). Nasibi and Kiio (2005) spelt out various History teaching methods that can enable teachers attain better student performance in national examinations. These include lecture method, discussion, narrating, reciting, identifying, role playing, explaining, audio visual, visiting, modelling, dramatizing, note-making, practicing observation, participating, reading and group projects. The didactic method (lecture method): the Jug and Mug has been the most preferred teaching method in the past (Bishop 1985:104). The method is still predominant today. The method relies on the teacher (the jug) as the sole source of wisdom, and knowledge who transmutes it to the child (the mug). This method is often non-interactive and boring to the students. As a consequent, students are taught but they do not learn and hence they perform poorly in national examinations is poor. The lecture method has been criticised for being outdated, being passive mode of learning which restrict learners to listening and note taking, and it is a poor way of enhancing the memory of learners (Nasibi and Kiio, 2005:21). Bishop (1985) asserted that learning techniques in many parts of the world are rote. He argued that these methods emphasise cramming for the purpose of passing examination rather than motivating learning. Bishop reiterated that most teachers use the 'jug and mug' technique when teaching even though it does not conform to psychological and pedagogical principles of learning. This has been attributed partly to the actual physical conditions of schooling in some countries making it impossible to utilize more enlightened and progressive methods of teaching. In some instances the classes are often packed and noisy. The only method that can be used is the lecture method to the disadvantage of learning (Bishop 1985). The lecture method has also been criticised for being disadvantageous to students who are not skilled in note taking. Moreover, the method is not effective in enhancing learning values and attitudes since learners are expected to accept facts and memorise them. McCleish (1968) argues that lecture method usually entails repeating what is written in books and that it is ineffective. The method also requires learners to utilize large part of their memory because learners are taught a lot of things at ones. As a result, when this method is utilised, learners forget what they are taught quickly resulting in poor performance in national examinations (McCleish, 1968). The limitations attributed to lecture method have however been attributed to being used by teachers who are unimaginative and inexperienced (Nasibi and Kiio, 2005:21).

Nasibi and Kiio (2005) asserts that Story –Telling / Narrative is one of the most suitable and important methods of teaching History. They argue that the method allows learners to acquire knowledge in a comprehensible, vibrant, appealing and chronological manner. The method is said to be good at encouraging learners' imagination, visualization, and stimulating their interest in learning. The method in addition enables learners to be enormous characters in the story recitation and hence enables them to relate the story to their community and

country. Nasibi and Kiio (2005) argue that the method vital in learners' emotional development since it enables them to appreciate and even sympathise with what others have done in the society.

Another History teaching method that is commonly used is question and answer (Nasibi and Kiio, 2005). Studies have shown that classroom questioning considerably affects the performance and achievement of students (Mujtaba et al, 2013). Mujtaba et al (2013) established that classroom questioning are positively related to student achievement and performance especially when effective questions are used. Mujtaba et al (2013) points out that the question and answer method encourages interactive learning and that it enhances the ability of learners to remember what they are taught. They also argue that the method provides a learning situation in which student views are promoted and inquiry among students is inspired.

Discussion method is another History teaching method. The method involves exchange of information amongst students and between students and teachers. It allows learners and teachers to compare, evaluate and analyse ideas. In most cases the teacher acts as guide to the discussion. The method is hailed for being able to enhance memory of learners and hence contributing positively to performance of the students (Nasibi and Kiio, 2005). The method is said to be capable of inspiring active learning and enhancing communication skills of learners as well as enhancing their self esteem. Since most discussion groups are led by students, the method allows learners to develop leadership skills. Social values such as being tolerant to other peoples' ideas, team spirit and being responsible are enhanced by discussion teaching method (Nasibi and Kiio, 2005). However, the method is criticised for not being suitable for weak and shy students who may not participate actively in the discussion.

Other methods that may be used in teaching and learning History would be: Group report, Brainstorming, debates, Panel discussion, role play method, educational visits, imaginary educational visit and project method.

The researcher wanted to investigate whether these accepted methods of teaching History were applied in teaching of History in Tigania and Igembe districts, Meru County Kenya.

Statement of the problem

With the advent of free secondary education, the government has been committed to ensuring schools are taught by qualified teachers. During teacher training, teachers are exposed to various teaching methods. For schools which do not have teachers hired by the government, they often hire trained or untrained graduates to teach various subjects. Moreover, head teachers of many schools are often determined to ensure that teachers attend their classes regularly. In spite of this; the performance of students in KCSE History examination has been dwindling in Igembe and Tigania districts. Once hired to teach, in most cases the teachers adopt a teaching method that they are more comfortable with. Even though some teachers integrate several teaching methods in classrooms, it is possible that some methods are more used than others and that some methods are more effective in improving performance of students in the national examinations. Therefore, there was need to investigate History teaching methods that can enhance performance of students in KCSE History examinations.

Methodology

Research design

The study was conducted using descriptive survey design. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) defined a survey as an attempt to collect data from members of population in order to determine the correct status of that population with respect to one or more variables. This design was appropriate for the study because it enabled the investigator to identify the History teaching methods that impact on performance in the KCSE History examinations. The target population of the study was one thousand six hundred forty (1640) form three students in eighty two (82) secondary schools. The target population also included all the teachers of History from the eighty two (82) secondary schools in Tigania and Igembe districts. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), a sample must be large enough to represent the salient characteristics of the accessible population. In this study probability sampling using simple random sampling was used. Schools according to their categories were sampled (Provincial boarding schools, District boarding schools, private Boarding Schools and mixed day schools). The sample comprised of twenty (20) secondary schools, forty (40) History teachers, and four hundred (400) students (twenty from each of the twenty secondary schools) were sampled.

The data was quantitative and qualitative in nature. It was analyzed using descriptive statistics, that is, means, percentages and inferential statistics. A Chi- Square was used to test the Null Hypotheses. The researcher did raw data editing. Raw data editing is the procedure that improves the quality of data for coding. The researcher did data tabulation which was part of the technical procedure, where the classified data are put in the form of tables. The researcher coded the data on the Computer Coding Sheets commonly used, using SPSS-X Computer Programme. The SPSS-X is a comprehensive integrated collection of computer programmes for managing, analyzing and displaying data (Orodho 2004:250). The data was then presented using pie charts, tables, and bar graphs.

Results and Discussion

Various methods are used by History teachers. Table 1 summarizes the frequency of how each method is employed by History teachers in the schools sampled in this study.

Table 1: Frequency table for teaching methods

	Very often (%)	Often (%)	Occasionally (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)	Total (%)
Print media	72.5	15.0	10.0	2.5	0	100
Non projected media	65.0	20.0	2.5	7.5	5.0	100
Silent projected media	5.0	7.5	10.0	0	77.5	100
Audio media	10.0	0	0	10.0	80.0	100
Regalia	5.0	5.0	17.5	40.0	32.5	100
Models	2.5	5.0	12.5	30.0	50.0	100
Mass media	2.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	75.0	100
Lecture	65.0	17.5	12.5	2.5	2.5	100
Narrative	27.5	35.0	27.5	10.0	0	100
Question and answer	40.0	37.5	20.0	2.5	0	100
Discussion	12.5	47.5	35.5	5.0	0	100
Brainstorming	22.5	27.5	32.5	10.0	7.5	100
Debate	2.5	12.5	32.5	5.0	47.5	100
Panel	2.5	2.5	12.5	17.5	65.0	100
Role play	2.5	25.0	30.0	42.5	0	100
Educational visits	0	0	12.5	47.5	40.0	100
Imaginary educational visits	7.5	10.0	15.0	40.0	27.5	100
Projected method	0	5.0	12.5	15.0	67.5	100

The findings indicate that print media (72.5%), non projected media (65%) and lecture (65%) methods are the most used teaching methods by teachers of History in the schools sampled. Narrative (27.5%); question and answer (40%), brainstorming (22.5%), and discussion (12.5%) methods are often used to teach History subject in the sampled schools even though they are not popular. On the other hand, silent projected media, audio media, mass media and panel methods form the main methods that are never used by History teachers in the schools sampled. This data supports Bishop (1985) argument that lecture method is still the most preferred method by many teachers. Given the disadvantages associated with this method, it can be asserted that the use of this method has contributed to progressively lower performance in KCSE History examination in Tigania and Igembe districts. However, Formwalt (2002) argues that lecture method can still be effective in spearheading good performance in History as a subject if the teacher inspires zeal or favour into students while teaching. Print media also encourages cramming and hence its common use in the region could explain why the results in KCSE History examination in the district s are dwindling.

The following null hypothesis was tested by the investigator to help in understanding the relationship between teaching method and performance in KCSE History examinations, the investigator sought to test the following null hypothesis using chi square test.

HO2: History teaching methods used in teaching-learning process do not influence students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) History examinations.

Table 2 is a summary of the chi square analysis for the relation between History teaching methods and the KCSE History examinations.

From the results it is apparent that the relations between most learning/teaching methods and KCSE History examination performances have a significant level greater than.05. This implies that the relationship is insignificant and hence the null hypothesis was true for methods which had significant levels greater than.05. It is worthy noting that the significant levels for debate and panel methods for the KCSE History results in 2007 were less than.05. This indicates that the relation between learning/teaching methods and KCSE History examination performances for 2007 are significant. This implies that the use of these methods positively improved the KCSE History examination results. The two methods allow active participation of learners in the teaching and learning process and hence could explain why they affect performance positively. Another method that had a significant level less than.05 is brainstorming in the year 2008. This indicates a positive relation between the 2008 KCSE History results and the use of brainstorming as a learning and teaching method. Brainstorming also allows active participation of the learner in the learning process. Thus, it can be asserted that

methods which allow active participation of learners in the learning and teaching process could enhance performance of students in KCSE History examinations in Igembe and Tigania districts.

The study also sought to establish the perspective of students on how History is taught in schools. As mentioned above, 87.5% of student focus groups were happy with the way History is taught. Students who were happy with the way History was being taught were asked to outline reasons as to why they were happy with the way History was taught. Various reasons emerged that were related to teaching methods as summarized in table 3 below.

Table 2: Chi square for the teaching methods used and KCSE History examination results

	2009 (mean score 6.06, mean grade C)		2008 (mean score 6.42, mean grade C)		2007(mean score 6.031, mean grade C)		2006 (mean score 5.09, mean grade C)	
	Pearson Chi-Square	Significant level	Pearson Chi-Square	Significant level	Pearson Chi-Square	Significant level	Pearson Chi-Square	Significant level
Print media	12.971	.605	15.167	.086	14.027	.523	14.539	.485
Non projected media	22.466	.316	10.043	.612	21.650	.360	11.513	.932
Silent projected media	13.575	.558	8.751	.461	22.004	.108	9.211	.866
Audio media	8.206	.609	6.369	.383	16.333	.090	15.625	.111
Regalia	14.913	.781	14.067	.296	20.378	.435	26.800	.141
Models	20.789	.410	14.794	.253	37.933	.009	19.898	.464
Mass media	18.942	.526	11.238	.509	24.978	.202	14.671	.795
Lecture	19.967	.460	10.836	.543	25.704	.176	13.109	.873
Narrative	17.057	.315	9.332	.407	12.957	.606	13.249	.583
Question and answer	9.488	.851	9.881	.360	18.172	.254	17.587	.285
Discussion	10.224	.805	8.132	.521	15.161	.440	13.667	.551
Brainstorming	16.579	.680	21.491	.044	18.351	.564	14.272	.816
Debate	23.580	.261	19.122	.086	32.467	.039	11.001	.946
Panel	21.604	.362	15.696	.206	33.140	.033	14.494	.805
Role play	10.798	.767	8.831	.453	18.179	.253	16.596	.344
Educational visits	9.339	.500	5.912	.433	13.787	.183	12.601	.247
Imaginary educational visits	15.205	.765	7.377	.832	14.917	.781	21.105	.391
Projected method	13.801	.541	4.035	.909	18.237	.250	11.298	.731

Table 3: Why students are happy with the way History is taught

Reason	Frequency	%
Teacher jovial and innovative	2	3.3
The teacher employees group discussion	8	13.3
Students are taught by experienced teacher	8	13.3
Teacher is able to explain subject content and allow student participation in class	15	25
Teachers uses detailed illustrations	12	20
Teachers follows syllabus	2	3.3
The teacher motivates students	5	8.3
The teacher uses questions and answers sessions during teaching	5	8.3
The teacher provides revision questions at the end of every lesson	6	10
The teacher organizes field trips	2	3.3
The teacher marks assignments	3	5
The teacher regularly attends lessons	6	10

It is clear from the reasons given above that the teaching methods used by teachers of History such as use of detailed illustrations; question and answer, group discussions, student participation and use of field trips are valued by History students. This implies that History teachers need to emphasize various teaching methods, especially those that allow active participation of students, to enhance both attitude and performance of History. Teacher's subject matter also emerged from the reasons given by students. Therefore, teachers ought to be well equipped in terms of subject content in order to be able to provide detailed explanation during the process of teaching to allow students to understand and perform better. Student evaluation is also imminent among the reasons given by students as to why they are happy with the way History is taught in their schools. This calls upon teachers of History to regularly evaluate their learners through tests and assignments after the end of each lesson. This had enhanced comprehension and performance of students in History as a subject.

Students were also asked to outline ways through which teaching of History could be improved. The students proposed various ways. These are summarized in table 4 below.

Table 4: How to improve teaching of History

How to improve teaching of History	Frequency	% of focus groups
Provision of text books and revision books	36	60
Group discussion	9	15
Participation in History symposiums and going on field trips	21	35
Use of Question and answer teaching method	11	18.3
Adoption of new teaching technologies such as audio/visual	8	12.5
Being taught by well trained teachers	8	13.3
Listening to motivational speakers	3	5
Use of demonstrations and detailed explanation during teaching process	5	8.3
Being taught by creative teachers	3	5
Regular evaluation through continuous assessment tests	14	23.3
Extra tuition	6	10
Regular attendance of lessons by teachers	6	10
adherence to syllabus coverage	5	8.3
Outlining the learning objectives at the beginning of the topic	2	3.3

A critical look at the proposals indicate that adequate resource provision, proper teaching methods, teacher qualification, regular student evaluation and commitment of teachers to their work can enhance learning of History in schools. The resources that were mainly highlighted in the focus groups include provision of text books and revision books. The teaching methods that were outlined in the study include group discussion, use of question and answer methods, and use of audio visual methods. Students also argued that use of regular tests based on topics covered could greatly enhance teaching of History. Teacher absenteeism emerged as a symptom of various head not playing their roles as supervisor effectively and hence compromising teaching. This is also an indication that teachers in Igembe and Tigania are not committed to their work.

Conclusion and recommendation

This study sought to establish the impact of teaching methods used by teachers on KCSE History examination performance. It was established that lecture method is one mostly used by teachers of History in the districts. This is followed by narrative, question and answer, brainstorming, and discussion methods. On the other hand, silent projected media, audio media, mass media, non-projected media and panel methods are teaching techniques that are never used by History teachers in the schools sampled. Use of these would assist to clarify difficult concepts when used properly. The impact of teaching methods on KCSE History examination performance was only significant for debate, brainstorming and panel methods. It is worth noting that most focus groups spontaneously stated that they value teaching methods such as group discussion, use of question and answer methods, and use of audio visual materials. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is need to use various teaching techniques, especially those that are learner centered like group work, discussion, and question and answer, in order to improve performance in History. The teaching methods were a major factor that contributed to the poor performance in KCSE History examinations in the districts.

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