

Abstract

This study intended to isolate the determinant factors for persistent poor performance of students in chemistry in Kwale County in the Kenya certificate of secondary education (KCSE). Data available indicates that performance of students in chemistry in KCSE has continued to be poor over the years. The poor performance both at the County 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 Kwale County in Chemistry has always been below the national average. A sample of 482 forms three students from 9 public secondary schools were randomly selected using both simple and stratified random sampling to participate in a descriptive interactive survey study. The students and their chemistry teachers were provided with questionnaires while Chemistry teachers, their Principals and the District Quality Assurance and Standards Officers [DQASO] were 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 were analysed using SPSS software. Results obtained were presented using both descriptive statistics such as mean, percentages and frequencies as well as inferential statistics including one way ANOVA, chi-square and contingency coefficient (CC) measure of association. Results showed that student's background characteristics; attitude factors particularly Chemistry teacher's negative perception of their learners' abilities; inadequate use of resource in the teaching and learning process and negative socio-cultural factors as well as inappropriate learning environment were the main causes of the students' persistent poor performance in Chemistry in Kwale County. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education through its various agents should, among other things, enhance supervision of curriculum implementation in schools, increase the amount allocated for tuition and release the funds in good time to enable prompt acquisition of learning materials. School managements, in conjunction with other stakeholders, should enhance teacher motivation and provide more and better teaching and learning facilities to enable a more conducive environment for learning. Finally, Chemistry teachers must enhance their teaching approaches by adopting a more practical approach to the teaching and learning practices that would motivate the students to perform better in the subject.