

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors related to achievement in written English composition among secondary school students. The setting of the study was Busia district. Data was collected from students, English language teachers, headteachers and trained national examiners of written composition for the Kenya National Examinations Council by means of a test, questionnaires, interviews and observation schedules.

The study revealed that performance in written English composition in Busia district was generally low and that students in government maintained schools performed relatively better than those in government assisted and harambee schools. However, students from harambee schools had the lowest performance.

The study revealed that certain factors affected achievement in written English composition. Some of these factors were the linguistic environment of students, lack of adequate preparation of students for examinations, lack of adequate reading materials, the poor quality of students, lack of a proper foundation in primary schools, the presence of Kiswahili, lack of concerted efforts by teachers, limited time for learning English, poor interpretation of questions and shortage of trained English teachers.

It was also found out that certain selected factors had strong relationship with achievement in written English composition while others did not because performance was relatively high or low depending on these factors. Some of the factors which indicated strong relationship with achievement were the professional training of English teachers, availability of learning resources such as class textbooks, class readers and school libraries, school type, education of older siblings and the performance of students in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Examination. The academic qualification of English teachers, teaching experience, teaching load, the formal education of parents, availability of English textbooks in the home and student sex did not appear to have any particular relationship with achievement of students in written composition.

These findings have important implications for the teaching of written composition which should be taken seriously by English teachers, curriculum developers and policy makers if achievement has to be improved.