

**INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS ON STUDENTS'
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TIGANIA
CENTRAL DIVISION, MERU KENYA**

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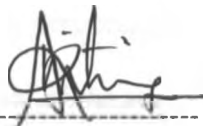
**A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN
PROJECT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.**

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DECLARATION

This research report is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other University.


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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my dear wife Antonina Kanyua who was understanding, supportive and encouraged me to carry on with the work up to the end. It is also dedicated to my dear children Victor Lee Mwandiki, Vincent Evans Murithi and Virgil Joy Makena who were a source of inspiration to me every day. My prayer is that they grow to be responsible citizens who are determined, hard working and dedicated to their daily endeavor for their good and that of the entire society.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xi
ABSTRACT	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 The purpose of the Study	5
1.4 The objective of the Study	5
1.5 Research Questions	5
1.6 Significance of the Study	5
1.7 Limitation of the Study	6
1.8 Delimitation (scope) of the Study	6
1.9 Assumption of the Study	6
1.10 Definition of significant Terms	7
1.11 Organization of the Study	7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Academic Performance	9
2.3 School Leadership	12
2.4 School Social Climate	14
2.5 Teacher Characteristics	16
2.6 School Population	19
2.7 School Location	22
2.8 Conceptual Framework	23
2.9 Summary	25
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	26

3.1 Introduction	26
3.2 Research Design	26
3.3 Target Population	26
3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique	28
3.5 Research Instruments	29
3.5.1 Instrument Validity	30
3.5.2 Instrument Reliability	30
3.6 Data collection Procedure	30
3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation	31
3.8 Operational Definition of Variables	31
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION	36
4.1 Introduction	36
4.2 Questionnaire, Observation Chart and K.C.S.E Score sheet	36
4.3 Demographic Profile	36
4.3.1 Gender	37
4.3.2 Age	37
4.4 Findings of the Study as per Research Objectives	38
4.4.1 Assess the Influence of School Leadership on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools	38
4.4.1.1 Principals' Innovativeness in Policy Making and Implementation	38
4.4.1.2 Principals' Level of Motivating and Empowering Teachers by Offering Support and Training	40
4.4.1.3 Principals' Involvement of other Teachers in Decision Making	41
4.4.1.4 Principals' Level of Communication with Stakeholders	42
4.4.1.5 Principals' Level of Supervising Classroom Attendance	43
4.5.2 Examine the Influence of School Climate on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools	44
4.5.2.1 Relationship between Principals and Teachers	44
4.5.2.2 Students and Teachers Relationship	45
4.5.2.3 Students Level of Interaction with the other students	45
4.5.3 Establish the influence of Teacher Characteristics on Students Academic Performance in Secondary School	47
4.5.3.1 Duration as a Teacher in the Current School	47

4.5.3.2 Teachers' Level of Class Work Preparation	48
4.5.3.3 Teachers Rate of Accomplishing and Meeting Set Deadlines	48
4.5.3.4 Teachers Academic/ Professional Qualification	49
4.5.4 Investigation of the Influence of School Population on the Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools.....	50
4.5.4.1 Number of Students in School.....	51
4.5.4.2 Average Number of Student' Per Class	52
4.5.4.3 Shortfall of Teachers Service Commission Teachers	52
4.5.4.4 Strain on the Resources in the Institutions	53
4.5.5 Assess the Influence of School Location on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary schools	54

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION

AND RECOMMENDATIONS 57

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Summary of the Findings.....

5.3 Discussion of the Findings.....

5.3.1 Influence of school leadership on student academic performance.....

5.3.2 School climate influence on student academic performance.....

5.3.3 Teacher characteristics and students academic performance.....

5.3.4 Influence of school population on students academic achievement.....

5.3.5 School location and influence of students academic performance

5.4 Conclusions.....

5.5 Recommendations

5.6 Suggestions for further Research

REFERENCES..... 65

APPENDICES 80

Appendix A: Letter of Introduction.....

Appendix B: A Questionnaire for Heads of Institution/ Principals and Teachers.....

Appendix C: Observation Chart.....

Appendix D: School K.C.S.E Score Sheet

Appendix E: University Confirmation Letter.....

LIST OF TABLES

	Pages
Table 1.1: KCSE Results for the last three Years	4
Table 3.1: Population Size	27
Table 3.2: Sample Frame	29
Table 3.3: Operationalization of Variables	32
Table 4.1: Response Rate	36
Table 4.2: Gender	37
Table 4.3: Age	38
Table 4.4: Principal's Innovativeness in Policy Making	39
Table 4.5: Principal's Level of Motivation and Support to Teachers	40
Table 4.6: Principal's Involvement of other Teachers on Decision Making	41
Table 4.7: Principal's Communication with the Stakeholders	42
Table 4.8: Principals' Level of Supervising Classroom Attendance	43
Table 4.9: Relationship Between the Principal and the Teachers	44
Table 4.10: Student's Relationship with the Teachers	45
Table 4.11: Student's Level of Interaction with the other Students	46
Table 4.12: Duration as a Teacher in the Current Station	47
Table 4.13: Teachers Level of Class Preparation	48
Table 4.14: Teachers Level of Task Accomplishment and meeting deadlines	49
Table 4.15: Teachers Academic Qualification	50
Table 4.16: Number of Students in the School	51
Table 4.17: Average Number of Students Per Class	52
Table 4.18: Short fall of Teachers Service Commission teachers in school	53
Table 4.19: Strain on Resources in the Institution	54
Table 4.20: Locality of the School	55
Table 5.1: Summary of Objectives, Findings and Recommendations	57

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.....	24
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A.N.C.O.P.S.S:	All Nigerian Conference of principals of Secondary Schools.
C. B. E:	Curriculum Based Establishment
K.C. S.E:	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education.
K.C. P. E:	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education.
S.P.S.S:	Statistical package of social science.
T.S.C:	Teachers Service Commission.
U.N.I.C.E.F:	United Nations Children's Funds.
U.N.D.P:	United Nations Development Programme.
UNESCO:	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization.

ABSTRACT

Schools are not alike but the features of well performing schools tend to be similar for all of them. Schools exert their influence on the students' attachment, commitment, involvement determination among others which are necessary virtues for high academic achievement. This study was carried out in order to find out the influence of school characteristics on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Tigania central division. The study was guided by the following objectives. To: Assess the influence of School leadership on students' academic performance in Secondary schools; Examine the influence of school climate on students' academic performance in secondary schools; Establish the influence of teacher characteristics on students' academic performance in secondary school; Find out the influence of school population on the students' academic performance in secondary schools and assess the influence of school location on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Tigania central division. A descriptive survey was used and the quantitative and qualitative data was obtained and analyzed using descriptive statistics and is presented in tables, frequencies and percentage form. The researcher concludes that there is a high influence of school characteristics on students' academic performance. Based on the findings the researcher concludes that the academic performance of secondary schools in Tigania Central Division is influenced by the leadership, school climate, teachers' characteristics, school population, and location of the school. The researcher recommends the following: The school administration especially the Principals ought be more committed and improve on their leadership skills such as being innovative in policy making and implementation, motivating, monitoring and influencing both teachers and student to perform to their best. A more healthy relationship in school guided by the principal of unity of purpose has to be established between the principal and teachers, student and teachers, and among students and students. The students' be organized into subject clubs and discussion groups in order to improve on the level of interaction amongst them and help one another. The young inexperienced teachers require be properly guided and oriented in the profession, be given time to understand the syllabus and master the subjects gradually from lower classes while the old teachers are reminded to be more committed to their duty. Internal and external inspection ought to be encouraged to enhance effective implementation of the school curriculum. Schools ought to increase enrolment and a maintain school population at a level that is economical and productive and that does not cause strain on the resources. The Ministry of education is advised to employ more teachers to reduce the shortage in order to improve the current situation in secondary schools. The Board of governors and the Government should look for alternative ways of reducing strain on the school resources. The researcher also recommends that schools be located far away from towns and those in urban areas be given closer surveillance to monitor what gets in and out of the schools to reduce their damages on the students. The schools should also promote guidance and counseling to keep the students in the right track and help them concentrate on improving their academic achievement. A school like any other business should adopt the principle of Six Sigma which is a smarter way of managing a business or department aimed at improving customer satisfaction, reducing recycle time and reducing defects. This calls for total management commitment to the process, improvement and operation guided by the philosophy of excellence focused on promoting the students' academic achievement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

During a conference held jointly by executive heads of United Nations Children Funds (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank in Thailand in 1990. It was established that that there was widespread concern over inadequacies of education systems around the world and the growing recognition of vital importance of basic education for social progress. It was also noted that the world declaration on education for all and the framework for action to meet the basic needs provide useful guides for governments, international organizations, educators and development professionals in designing and carrying out policies and strategies to improve basic education services. (Jomtien, Thailand, march 1990). This is in line with the UNICEF effort of defining and providing globally, quality basic education for children, which is an obligation for the convention on rights of the child. (Florence, Italy, June 2000).

According to Karikai (2009), the development of any nation largely depends on the quality of education of such a nation. According to the American students achievement institute (2007) high level of family and community involvement is a common feature of performing schools. Rammala (2009) researching on factors contributing to poor performance of grade 12 learners at Monoshi and Mokwatedi high schools established that home environment is not educationally supportive due to poverty, low level of education, emotional problems and issues related to gender roles. Tsuo (2006) researching on cultural influence on academic achievement in Fiji found that ethnic Fijian parent spent a large amount of time and money on making contribution to ceremonies and church somewhat at the expense of their children education. Consequently Indo-Fijian student generally became better performers than their counterparts.

Asikhia (2010) contributed to this argument by stating that the role of education is to lay a foundation for further education of which if they are of good quality are likely to

be no problems at the consequent levels. It gives a person an opportunity to get into a higher level of education thus gaining useful skills to the country. In the same year he researched on student and teachers perception of the poor performance in Ogun state in Nigeria, found that teachers qualification, student environment do not influence students poor performance according to the teachers response. But to students, teachers' qualification and students' environment influence students' performance while on the other hand teachers' method of teaching and learning material do not. Owoeye (2011) study on school location and academic performance in Ekiti state in Nigeria found that students in urban areas had better academic achievement than their rural counterparts.

Kenya Government under president Kibaki understands the importance of education to its people. That is why as promised under NARC Party manifesto (2002), the government embarked on providing free education as from 2003. The overall objective is to reduce illiteracy and improve transition rate from primary to secondary school and raise the quality and relevance of education Republic of Kenya (2007). Ileri (2007) studied the effects of educational resources on students' performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools and found that there is a connection between teacher experience and student performance while availability of instructional materials such as text books were found necessary to improve academic performance of the students. Yator (2003) investigated on the factors that contributed to poor performance in K.C.S.E in Kabartonjo division in Baringo district which established that many schools had inadequate resources, poor payment of fees, and low parent rate of school visit, poor parents' academic background and high level of indiscipline cases in schools.

Mutuaruchiu (2011) studied on influence of parental characteristics on student academic performance in Abothuguchi central division, Central Imenti District established that income level of the parents, their academic level, attitude, family set up and parental involvement in academic activities influence students academic performance. It is against this background that school characteristics capture the attention of the researcher for it seems not to have been adequately studied. This study will establish the influences of school characteristics on student academic performance in secondary schools in Tigania central district which is in Tigania east

district in Meru County, Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to Ibari (2009), participation of the stakeholders, based on the defined roles and duties determine the level of academic performance of the students in secondary schools. Desforges and Abourchaar, (2003), express their view that students' performance, achievement and adjustment are influenced by many people, processes and institutions. They also point that parents the broader family, peer groups, neighborhoods, churches among others are implicated in shaping children progress towards their self fulfillment and citizenship. Aremu, (2000) expressed that academic failure is not only frustrating to the student and parents, but its effects are equally felt by the society as well in terms of dearth of manpower in all sectors of the economy. According to Ashibi (2005), there is disparity in Performance of students in Secondary Schools that have almost similar resources to an extent that some tend to perform even better while others perform poorly which raise mixed reaction among the people and the Government as to what contribute to that phenomenon.

When children are taken to school it is assumed that they will acquire good education which will make them useful people in the society. It is in school that they learn new knowledge, skills and technology. Different school aspects like the structure, staffing, organization climate among others determine what students achieve in school. With some adjustments here there non performing school are known to do well academically. As established from K.C.S.E. results analysis, secondary schools in Tigania central division are not performing well in academic. For instant 2011 K.C.S.E results analysis according to Tigania East District DEOs office the division managed a mean score of 4.803 which is grade C-. Out of number of students who sat for exams in the year 2011 only 158 of them managed to score C+ and above which is 28.9%. An analysis of KCSE results for six schools that were under investigation for the last three years revealed the same as indicated in Table 1.1

Table 1.1: KCSE results for the last three years.

Description	2009	2010	2011	Average mean	Grade
Mikinduri Girls	6.2	6.8	6.7	6.6	C
Akaiga Mixed	5.3	6.5	6.6	6.1	C
Rware Girls	3.4	4.9	5.4	4.6	D+
Kaliene Mixed	4.3	4.7	4.6	4.5	D+
St. Massimo Mixed	5.3	4.6	5.7	4.7	D+
Miciimikuru	2.9	4.6	5.0	4.2	D+
Division				5.1	C-

There are only two schools that attained an average score of 6 which is grade C compared to the maximum score of 12 points which is grade A. The rest of the schools managed a mean grade of D+. On average the Division has managed a C- which is below average. This results in high wastage of young people who are joining the labour market and would have been very useful to the society. There is no single factor that would account for the students' academic failure or success but a combination of a number of them. A considerable number of researches have been conducted on the factors that influence academic performance, like the one conducted by Mutuaruchiu on influence of parental characteristics on students' academic performance in Abothuguchi central division Imenti central district in 2011. However the influence of school characteristics has not been adequately studied and cannot be generalized for Tigania central division. This study therefore seeks to investigate the influence of school characteristic on students' academic performance in Tigania central division in Tigania East District.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of school characteristics on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Tigania central division in Tigania East District.

1.4 The Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives. To:

- i) Assess the influence of School leadership on students' academic performance in secondary schools.
- ii) Examine the influence of school social climate on students' academic performance in secondary schools.
- iii) Establish the influence of teacher characteristics on students' academic performance in secondary school.
- iv) Find out the influence of school population on the students' academic performance in secondary schools.
- v) Assess the influence of school location on students' academic performance in secondary schools.

1.5 Research questions

This study was attempting to answer the following questions

- i) How does school leadership influence students academic performance in secondary schools?
- ii) What is the relationship between the school climate and the students' academic performance in secondary schools?
- iii) How do teacher characteristics influence students' academic performance in secondary schools?
- iv) What is the relationship between school population and the students' academic performance in secondary schools?
- v) How does school location influence students academic performance in secondary schools?

1.6 Significance of the study

The findings of this study will be useful to the Government and ministry of Education in understanding the internal characteristics of the schools that contribute to

differences in academic performance and develops policies that will narrow variation in academic ranking. The school management team will find the research findings useful in helping them understand the inherent characteristics that contribute to poor performance in schools and adapt methods that will address the situation. The other researchers will use this research as a baseline for future research on poor academic performance in the country.

1.7 Limitation of the study

The study used descriptive survey design which tends to be unpopular for the studies are too detailed through description. The researcher has to have a clear perception of what the study is to cover failure to which results in inappropriate data collection. The respondents in descriptive survey tend not to be truthful and give inappropriate answers. The study is also affected by time limit and financial constraints which limit its efficiency and effectiveness in handling all the variables under investigation. There are other intervening variables like Government policies which influence students' academic performance and therefore would affect the finding thus limiting the study. The sample findings of this study cannot be used for generalization for the whole country.

1.8 Delimitation (scope) of the study

The study focused on Secondary Schools in Tigania central Division. There were 12 secondary schools in the division with 12 principals and 126 teachers thus giving a total of 138 who formed the main body from which the information was obtained. The study concentrated on a few independent variables like school leadership, school climate, teacher characteristics, school population and school location to establish how they influence academic performance in the area. This means that there are other variables which are influential to students' academic performance. A questionnaire, supportive observation chart and KCSE results analysis were used for the purpose of collecting the information.

1.9 Assumptions of the study

The basic assumptions of this study is that school characteristics influence academic performance in Tigania central division and that the instruments used especially the questionnaire, observation and KCSE results analysis are the most appropriate for it.

It is also assumed that the respondents were honest and truthful in their answers thus making the finding true to the situation in the region

1.10 Definition of significant terms

School Characteristic: The qualities or features which make a person, a thing and a place among others. These special and easily recognized qualities differ from item to another. Schools have their own features which differ from place to place.

Social Climate: It's the general situation or attitude of the people involved in a school system as they interact with one another which could be healthy or unhealthy.

School Leadership: The position of the person in charge whose skills and qualities are put into test in running the affairs of the school and organizing human resources which could lead to the success or failure of the institution in its performance.

School Location: It's the place or position where the school is found or situated in relation to whether it is rural or urban based.

Academic Performance: Are standards at which the school or individuals in a learning institution achieve in both local and national exams.

School Population: The size or numbers of students that are found in a certain school which determine the number of people who are using various school resources which could be strained or be used in a healthy manner.

1.11 Organization of the study

This study was organized in five chapters. Chapter one: introduction gives the background to the study, the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study. The other details entailed in the chapter are the objectives of the study, the research questions, significance of the study and the limitations of the study. It also highlights the assumptions of the study and the definition of the significant terms in the context of the study. Chapter two is based on literature review, with the introduction,

academic performance, school leadership, social climate, teacher characteristics, school population and location literature based on secondary and primary sources. It also gives the conceptual or theoretical framework of the study. Chapter three dealt with research methodology which was broken into research design, target population, sampling procedure, and methods of data collection. It dealt with validity and reliability of the methods of data collection, the method of data analysis, and presentation and finally operational definition of variables. Chapter four dealt with data analysis, presentation and interpretation while chapter five gives a summary of the findings, discussion and recommendations for further study after the field research was done.

After establishing the background, stating the problem and establishing the background to the study the researcher embarked on literature review to establish what other researchers have established about the area under investigation. The details are found in chapter two. It is important for laying down the foundation of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives detailed information on features of high academic performing schools. It also deals with school characteristics like leadership, social climate, teacher characteristics, school population and the school location influence on students' academic performance. This is based on researches that have been conducted in different parts of the world by various researchers. The chapter helps the researcher to establish the gaps that need to be addressed by this study.

2.2 Academic performance

An education institution success is measured by its academic performance or how well students meet the standards set out by local government, higher institutions of learning, job market requirement and the institution itself Bell (2012). Shannon and Bylsma (2003) researching on characteristics of high performing schools established that such schools take many years of hard work. According to Keefe, Valentine, clerk and Irvin (1994) school structure and process go hand in hand with level of student academic performance. The school good policy and effective leadership shape and determine quite a number of the core elements which influence students' academic achievement. Effective leaders do more in building teacher excellence by influencing uniformly able staff by sharing the dream of commitment to excellence with them. They communicate the school mission and vision, persistently reinforce them and create a shared sense of purpose with the entire school community. Such leaders establish set of common values and pass them to instructional staff, students and parents. Teachers are given an opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills in the profession by attending workshops, training and conferences that share teachers practice Lezotte (1991). He adds that the leaders model commitment to learning and create an environment that value collaboration and constructive sharing of best practices. Teachers collaboratively scrutinize and review student performance and deliberate over their implication. Therefore the staff accepts the responsibility for the students learning of the school essential curricular goals. The conclusion is that a combination of factors leads to school success but require years of sustained school

commitment which affect school values, beliefs and instructional practice.

As noted by Cary (2000) high performing schools have good teachers in adequate number that meet the school's academic mission. Resources are effectively allocated which maximize the teacher student ratio and good relationship. These schools organize their curriculum effectively in line with their goal for student achievement aligned to national curriculum, testing requirements and ensure that most demanding courses are not scheduled. More time is created to teach complex materials, block schedule, after normal teaching hours and extending to weekend are considered to make time more available. According to Kelly (2012) teachers are known to lead the students learning using multiple forms of assessment that reveal performance and demonstrate competence; student portfolio and test data for analysis and decision making in cycle of continuous school improvement. Teachers spend more time in planning, coordination and staff development by re-organizing the teaching schedule which helps them to focus on school academic mission and engage the staff in fruitful interaction. High effective schools have high set expectations for both teachers and students. This is guided by the belief that all students can learn and meet high standards, Rensulli and Reis (1985). They recognize that students must overcome significant barriers that are seen as surmountable obstacles. Students are offered an ambitious and rigorous course of study and the staffs believe that they have the capability to help students. According to Bauer (1997) students are given challenging curricular and demanding task and they are expected to succeed. Children are regarded as an asset and posses a unique gift to offer to the society.

Anderson (1982) asserts that performing schools have high level of collaboration, communication which promotes a strong teamwork among the members of the school community. This makes it easy to identify the problem and work on them effectively. It promotes a sense of internal community where they share a common goal for the student achievement, work collaboratively to provide challenging instruction and share collective responsibility for the success of each student. It is expressed by Perkins (1995) that high performing schools follow a well planned and actual curriculum which is aligned to essential academic requirements. They stick to research based teaching strategies and materials and a staff that understand the role of classroom and national assessment requirement, assessment measure and how the

work is evaluated. Shannon and Bylsma (2003) add that they limit access to most demanding courses and stick to a sound curriculum that include both the content, process, knowledge and align with world class standards. A curriculum that enables students to succeed at the next educational level, become a responsible and a productive member of the global economy. To the institution this must be properly coordinated between classrooms, grade levels, building levels and disciplines for effectiveness.

High performing schools have frequent monitoring of learning and teaching which help identify students who need help Lezote (2001). More time is created to instruct and support students who need more help. Assessment results are used to focus and improve instructional programmes. Along with this as stated by Baker, Ol zelndam, Gratama and Arington (2005) more emphasis is put in training staff in areas of most need. This is a product of feedback which focuses on an extensive and ongoing professional development. Therefore teachers are given an opportunity to attend workshops, training and conferences that share teachers' practices.

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According to Freiberg (1999) high performing schools have supportive learning environment with safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating environment. Students feel respected and connected to the staff and are engaged in learning instructions that are more personalized and small learning environment that increase student contact with teachers. They embark on firm, fair and timely discipline. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) add that students are made to understand that good behavior is valued, unacceptable conduct is not allowed and how it is punished. The schools emphasizes their commitment to students' achievement, public display of excellent work product and ceremonies and rituals that celebrate excellent individual and collective performance, Cotton (2000).

According to American student achievement institute (2007) and as supported by Shannon and Balsma (2003) high level of family and community involvement is a common feature of high performing schools. The responsibilities of educating students go beyond teachers and the school staff. Both parents, business people, social service agencies, community, colleges and universities are involved These institutions understand and support the basic mission of the schools and are given

opportunity to play in helping the schools achieve their mission. Johnson (1997) adds that parents are involved in mentoring, tutoring, co-teaching and curriculum review. They create partnership between school and community members, provide community events in building the schools and encourage community members to have high expectations for the students which act as the basis for promoting high academic performance.

2.3 School leadership

As indicated by McCormack, Adams and Gamage (2009) many scholars have acknowledged that the role of school leadership is mostly significant in enhancing school performance and students achievement. Such leaders develop school climates and culture that help motivate both student and teachers leading to better teaching and an environment that is conducive for higher levels of student's academic achievement. A school leader is the person occupying various roles in school who work with others to provide direction and exert influence on persons and things in order to achieve the school goals Leith, wood and Rieht, (2003). Mulford (2003) agree that a principal through systematic authorities is required to improve students' learning and his held accountable for it by building commitments in developing a shared vision for motivating and energizing the teachers and students.

According to Cotton (2003) a principal is meant to establish a clear focus on student learning by having a clear vision, learning goals and high expectation for learning for all students' interaction, emotional and interpersonal support, visibility and accessibility and parent or community participation. He is meant to develop a school culture conducive to teaching and learning through shared leadership and decision making, collaboration, risk taking leading to continuous improvements. To him, a principal should provide instructional leadership through discussion of instructional issues, observing classroom teaching and giving feedback, supporting teacher autonomy and protecting instructional time, and being accountable for affecting and supporting continuous improvement through progress and using students' data for programme improvement. Studies conducted by Harris (2004) indicate that successful leadership in schools has resulted in higher levels of both students' attainment and achievement, thus emphasizing importance of distributed leadership.

Gamage, Adams and Maclormack, (2011) cite Townsend conducted a study between Australian and American schools 1997 and concluded that an effective school is primarily characterized by good leadership and good staff, good policies and safe and supportive common goal. They conclude by stating that effective schools improvement require a strong and empowered school leaders who has power to hire, fire, promote teachers and other school members of staff, time and financial management, spiritual and human resources support and school improvement. They also argue that effective principals place high emphasis on achieving high levels of students learning and provide resources towards the effort to improve the achievement and general wellbeing of the residents.

According to Musungu and Nasongo (2009) Head teachers as the school chief executive are charged with the daunting task of managing teachers among other resources. One has the responsibility to promote academic performance for he or she is in charge of running the school in academic or administration matters. She further says that good performance of a school is as a result of good teaching and overall effective headship, by organizing, using quality improvement measures and promoting teamwork. Such a principal should be involved in academic activities by observing and checking the students and teachers work, monitoring students discipline and helping in eradicating cheating in examination. Millete (1988) found that the quality of leadership makes the difference between the success and failure of schools. Musungu and Nasongo (2009) are categorical that head teacher is the leader in a school, the pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve and the person in charge of every detail of running of the school academic or administrative wise.

Mortimore (1998) study on purposeful leadership by the principal found out that outcomes were more favorable when there was a combination of firm leadership and together teachers felt their views are presented. Bergeson (2004) add that effective leadership that is at the core of improved district Schools is committed, persistent, proactive and distributed throughout the system. Ghaffer, Rizvi, Asdaque and Bilal (2002) studying about the factors contributing to high academic performance at secondary school level concluded that to have a high academic Performance, the management must be efficient and quite cooperative. They also went further and said that involvement of teachers and students in managerial matters produced high

academic performance.

On the other hand Davis, Darling and Deyerson (2005), conclude that there is a growing consensus on the attributes of effective school principals which shows that effective school leadership influence students achievements through support and development of effective teachers and the implementation of effective organizational process. They further outlines three sets of core leadership practices. Developing people which refers to enabling teachers and other staff members to do their job effectively, offering intellectual support and stimulation to improve the work and provide model of practice and support. They mention setting direction for the organization performance and promoting effective communication and redesigning the organization. This refers to creating a productive school culture, modifying organizational structure that undermines the work and building collaborative process. The research findings for other places as established in literature review cannot be generalized for Tigania central division. This study therefore will seek to address leadership commitment to setting policies and supervising teaching in classroom which tend to be assumed roles by the leaders.

2.4 School Social Climate

School climate reflects subjective experiences in school, Cohen, (2006). According to Stynon, (2008) a healthy school environment is created by supporting a healthy relationship among the staff members. Healthy relationship produces a climate conducive to honesty, open communication and risk taking. He further states that a true learning community, cooperation and mutual respect is expected of faculty as well as the students. Establishing a supportive environment increases self esteem and achievement Cantwell (2003). Building a sense of community makes students more apt to share perspectives of their teachers ultimately leading to increased academic achievement, Parker, (2002). Lipsitz (1997) state that a warm adolescent centered environment is friendly, relaxed, respectful, calm and energetic thus contributing to better academic performance.

Thomas and Bass (1992) hold to the view that, the overall School climate is enhanced by positive behaviour and the attitude of students and teachers. Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold and Kannas (1999) agree that the students are contented with the schools where

they feel justly treated, safe and supported by the teachers. Makewa (2011) add that, a School climate that is warm, welcoming, supportive and conducive to the learner exist when all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted and secure in an environment where they can interact with caring and trusting people. Positive school climate exist as an essential element in successful schools. Maine, (2004) as cited by Makewa define school climate as the synthesis of policies, procedures, activities, programmes and facilities both formal and informal within a school infrastructure that affects the attitudes and behavior of all people in the school, staff, students, parents, school personnel and the community. To Hoy and Miskel (1996) a school consists of shared assumptions, values or norms while climate is defined as shared perceptions of behavior.

According to Cohen,(2006), and Freiberg (1999) scholarly writing on school climate suggests that there are ten essential dimensions that colour and shape our subjective experience in schools; environmental; structural; safety; teaching and learning; relationship; sense of school community; morale; peer norms; School-home community partnerships; mutual support and ongoing community. Hoge, Smith, Hanson, (1990), commitment to school and positive feedback from the teachers have been shown to affect students self esteem and self concept. As cited in School climate research summary, a series of research have shown a relationship between a school climate and students absenteeism De Jung and Duckworth, (1986); Purkey and Smith (1983) as well as predictive of rate of student suspension, Wu, Pink, Crain and Moles, (1982). It further state that positive School climate is critical dimension linked to effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts as well as teaching and learning, Cohen, (2001). The conclusion is that safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate tends to foster great attachment to the school's academic as well as providing the optimal foundation for social, emotional and academic learning

One of the fundamental dimensions of school climate is relational and how connected people feel to one another in school. Mcneely, Nonnemaker and Blum, (2002) and Whitlock, (2006) Suggests that connectedness is a powerful predictor of adolescent health and academic outcome. Karcher (2002) and prevention of violence, Catalano Haggarty, Oesterie, Fleming and Hawkins (2004) a protective factor in risky, sexual violence and drug abuse use behaviour. School climate promotes or complicates

meaningful student learning. Activities like community service and debates enhance the learning environment by providing student opportunities to effectively participate in learning process and construct their knowledge of social and government system, Purta (2002).

A positive School climate promotes students' ability to learn in that they feel safe, cared for, approximately supported and lovingly pushed to learn, therefore improving academic achievement. It promotes cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect mutual trust or climate for learning, (2003). According to Edgerson and Krtsonis, (2006), it is important for the principals and various faculty groups to work together for mutual support. Wheeland and Kessering (2005) add that the manner in which faculty members worked together as a group, significantly influenced students' outcome in school.

Disney the outstanding teacher of the year, 2000 in America is quoted by Clark (2003), state that life is all about experiences, the ones you make for others. To students he says, guide them in every way as they grow, show them in every way possible that they are cared for, motivate and make special moments for them that will add magic to their lives and that of the others and most important to make them love life. Edgerson and Kristsonis (2006) also agree with such an environment and also conclude that the most successful teacher may be the one inspired by the beautiful relationship developed with their principals, thus motivating them to do their best. With the above background more information need to be sought on the interaction or relationship between teachers and students, teachers and the school principal and the school with the neighbours. The findings for the other places cannot be generalized for Tigania central division. Therefore this raises need to investigate school climate influence on academic performance in the region.

2.5 Teacher characteristics

The quality of education depends on the teachers as it is reflected in their performance of the duty Akiri, Nkechi and Ugborugbo (2009). Teachers have been shown to have an important influence on students' academic achievement. According to Afe, (2001) as cited by Akiri and Ugborugbo, teachers play a crucial role in educational attainment because they are ultimately responsible for translating policies into action

and principles, based on practice during interaction with the students. Akinlenye (2001) and Commeyras (2003) as cited by Oluwadare assert that experience improves teachers, teaching skills while students learn better in the hands of teachers who have taught them continuously over a period of time.

Overtime students' academic performance in internal and external examinations had been used to determine excellence in teachers and teaching Ajao (2001). Oluwadare (2011) state that quality of teacher is related to the level of students' academic performance for the Schools to be efficient and effective. Zuzovsky (2003) assert that quality teachers are often simply seen as good teachers and are considered to be those who exhibit desirable traits and uphold standards and norms of the profession and bring about students learning. As cited by Berliner (2005) Fenstermacher and Richardson states that good teaching means the content taught accords with disciplinary standards of adequacy, completeness and the method applied are age appropriate, morally defensible and undertaken with an intention of enhancing the learners competent with respect to the content. According to Uchefuna (2001) an effective teacher has been conceptualized as the one who produces desired results in the course of his duty as a teacher. That is to say that, successful teaching refers to what the learner acquires which is reasonable and acceptable level of proficiency from what the teacher is engaged in teaching.

Zuzovsky cites Goldhabar and Brewer (2000) who agree that there is a positive relationship between teachers preparation in subject matter they teach and students academic achievement. It is revealed from various studies that there is a relationship between teachers' effectiveness and their years of experience but the level is off after a few years Rivkin, Hunushek and Kain (2000). Zuzovsky (2003) asserts that participation in professional development activities help the teacher update their content, knowledge and teaching skills, so that they can meet the requirement of curricula, consider new research findings on teaching and learning and adapt to changes in need of the student population.

According to Ofeogbu (2004) poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been linked to poor teacher's performance in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, negative attitude to work and poor teaching habits which have been attributed to

poor motivation. Pakistan Government (1998) is categorical in stating that academic qualification, knowledge of the subject matter, competencies and skills and the commitment of a teacher have an impact on the teaching process. This statement is supported by Dahar (2011) who say that Academic qualification, professional qualification, refresher course or training and teacher experience are the important qualities of a teacher.

Olatunde (2009) is of the opinion that the teacher is the most indispensable factor in effective administration of any education system. Ofofuenana (1999) support the same idea by stating that no matter the amount of resources we might put into the nations education system without properly prepared and motivated teachers we can never expect from the system. Olatunde (2009) also argues that it is in the teacher's competence, ability, resourcefulness and ingenuity to efficiently utilize the appropriate language, methodology and available instructional materials to bring out the best from the learners in terms of academic achievement. Teachers are said to be effective when their teaching can lead to student learning Abimbada (1999). Teachers are invariably role models whose behaviors are easily copied by students.

Eso (1998) conceptualizes teacher's effectiveness as the managerial skills essential for enhanced classroom control and discipline. The teaching – learning process revolves around the teacher with him taking the lead in process Ashibi (2005). The teacher influences the students by the way he handles them, by being autocratic, Democratic or laissez faire which has a wide implication on classroom management and great deal of influence on the students. The teacher wields authority over the students and therefore has power to take decisions which influences the students' action. According to Gronund (1985) meaningful learning is achieved when teachers and students interaction is in harmony, since instructional processes involve them. This therefore means teacher's behaviour is the central determinant of student's outcome

The characteristics of a teacher determine his effectiveness in his work while effective teaching is a predictor of students' academic achievement. Onyechu (1996) conclude that teaching effectiveness has been accepted as a multidimensional construct since it measures a variety of different aspects of teaching such as subject mastery, effective communication, lesson preparation and presentation. In the light of

the above studies, it is true that the teacher plays a very important role in determining students' academic performance. The researcher was therefore out to investigate the situation in Tigania central division by looking at teachers' experience, work preparation, task commitment as generalization from studies conducted in other areas cannot for all the situations.

2.6 School Population.

School size increases with increase in enrolment which becomes a challenge to provision of other facilities like classrooms, dormitories, books, space and low classroom utilization rates. According to Owoeye (2011) school population increase class size and therefore the performances of a student becomes an issue. Research conducted by Fabumi (2000), point out the importance of teacher- pupil ratio to cognitive learning in the school. The lower teacher pupil ratio allows for effective communication between the learner and the pupil. Studies conducted by Idienumah (1987) reported that there is a positive relationship between certain variables such as class size, teacher pupils' ratio to student's performance in Examination. Large classes pose problems like difficulty in providing opportunity for discussion or for any other kind of oral input to written work. He also point out that the amount of marking involved can dissuade even the non enthusiastic teacher from setting the amount of written work that he feels would benefit the students.

In depth analysis of previous schools size research by cotton (2001) concluded that smaller schools produce better academic results and provide better climate. This is supported by Raywid (1999) who has further pointed out that the studies indicate smaller schools allow more opportunities for students to be involved in co-curricular activities and offer more personalization and individual attention than larger size. Howley (1996) argue that, though it first appears that large schools are more cost effective to operate if the drop out graduation rate is taken into consideration smaller schools actually are more cost effective to operate. According to Fabunmi, Abu and Adenija (2007) the lower teacher pupil ratio allow for more effective communication between the learner and the teacher, thus making it one of the most important factors that determine good academic performance of the students. Smith and Glass as cited by Oweye (2011) state that compared to larger classes, small classes lead to higher pupils achievement, more favourable teacher effect (morale, attitude towards

students) greater attempts individualized instruction, a better classroom climate and more favorable student effects.

According to Owoeye (1991) study conducted in Ekiti state schools with a small number of students recorded better results than schools with larger student's population. Slate and Johns cite monk (1987) having found that after a school enrolment reached 400 students, no benefits were realized. Thus confirming the statement that increasing size of a school initially brings positive relationship but the trends are reversed as the size continues to increase. Abbott, Jolteman and Stroh (2002) cites Bracy having noted that large schools especially high schools produce their own set of problems which a growing number of researchers and policy makers think can be solved by returning to small schools. In support of small schools argument is raised that they raise students academic achievement especially for minority and low – income students, they reduce incidences of violence and disruptive behavior. Small schools combat anon mighty and isolation and conversely increase the sense of belonging. They also argue that small schools increase attendance and graduation rates, they elevate teacher satisfaction and improve school climates. They operate most cost effectively, increase parents and community involvement and reduce the amount of graffiti on school building. A combination of the above factors contributes to high academic achievement Abbott, Joireman and stroh. (2002).

UNTC Secondary section (1990) has identified the following encouraging results from reducing class size and improving instructional methods. They state that smaller class result in increased teacher student contact, students show more appreciation for one another and more desire to participate in classroom activities more learning takes place, foster greater interaction among students helping them understand one another and increase their desire to assist one another. They add that smaller classes allow for potential disciplinary problems to be identified and resolved quickly, they result in higher teacher morale, reduced stress less retention fewer referral to special education and fewer drop out are the ultimate rewards of class size reduction.

Research by lee and Loeb (2000) in Chicago found that school size influenced students' achievement both directly and indirectly. They reported that teachers in

small schools (less than 400 students) take more responsibility for students' academic and social development and that in turn enhances students' achievements. They noted that small schools facilitate more intimate and personal relationship among teachers and students, a relationship that impacts students learning. Wasley, Tine, Gladden, Holland, King Mosak and Powell (2000) research in Chicago public schools, revealed that small schools increase attendance, Students persistence performance, graduation rates, course completion and parents, teachers, students and community satisfaction. Adeyela (2000) in her study found that large class size is not conducive for serious academic work. The same is supported by Yala (2010) who found that the performance of students in large classes in mathematics was very low compared to those in smaller classes.

In contradiction to the above findings some other researches give a completely different answer to the problem. Campbell (1990) conducting a study in united states remarked that students from large schools were exposed to large number of school activities and the best of them achieved standards that were unequalled by students in small schools. Bolton (1988) confirms that there was no relationship between larger classes and small classes which were found to be negatively related to school academic performance. He also found that there is no significant difference in post test achievement scores between large classes and small class control group in developmental English.

A study conducted by Hoagland (1995) in California Oata suggested that in high schools beyond a certain size, students may not do well in reading performance and that students in poverty may perform better in smaller schools. But statistical analysis led the researcher to conclude that no correlation existed between student's performance in mathematics and writing and school size. Advocates of school consolidation have argued that the ideal high school should have between 1000 and 2000 students because schools with fewer than 1000 students are unable to purchase in quantity and have high per pupil administrative cost Fox (1981). They argue that large schools can offer a broader range of courses including more advanced courses than small schools. A major assumption of the economies of scale argument is that reduced per pupil expenditure translates into greater student achievement because the money saved can be invested in improving the school. From the researches as

captured in literature review, there is need to assess the impact of the school population on students academic performance in secondary schools in Tigania central division. To get the situation of the area the study will consider the number of students in class, their entry behaviour and the students book ratio as information from other findings cannot be generalized for the area.

2.7 School location

Ojoawo (1989) found that location is one of the potent factors that influence the distribution of educational resources. Lack of suitable school location has contributed to the imbalances of western education from one part of the country to another in Nigeria. Zike (1997) state that urban environment is conceptualized as those environments which have high population density containing a high variety and beauty and common place views. On the other hand rural community is characterized by low population, subsistence mode of life which is monotonous and burdensome.

As established by Owolabi (1990) highly qualified teachers prefer to serve urban rather than rural areas because their conditions are not up to expected standards. He points out that parents in the rural areas refuse to send their children to school, because they depend on them for help at home. Some parents fail to entrust their daughters to male teachers, and the fact that some areas are inaccessible which act as a stumbling block to effective learning in rural areas. Mbakwe (1986) the teachers who land in rural areas seek deployment in urban areas which tend to be more concentrated with more facilities and better services.

Boylan (1998) found that rural schools were inferior and lacking the range of facilities with high staff turnover and suffered from lack of continuity in their curriculum. Omisude (1985) also observed a significant positive relationship between size and location of schools and performances in examination in Ogo state. He concludes that large schools in urban areas tend to perform better in examinations than small schools in rural areas. According to Owoeye (2011) some people enjoy minimum travelling distances to acquire education while others in other places suffer by having to cover maximum distances to get to their schools which contribute to variation in academic Performance of the students. Therefore this study is based on how school location in terms whether they are rural or urban based contribute to students' academic

performance in secondary schools in Tigania Central Division of Tigania East District to establish the truth about the situation in the area for the findings in other places cannot be generalized to apply in Tigania.

2.8 Conceptual framework

The framework Figure1 highlights the relation between independent variables that determine academic performance which is the dependent variable. The indentified independent variables in the framework are school leadership which looks at the aspect school policies, supervision of teaching and provision of school equipments. School climate relationship is the second aspect of independent variable that is considered under this study which explores on teacher-student relationships, principal- teachers relationship, school interaction with the neighboring community and student – student relationship. The third independent variable is the teachers character which looks at the teacher’s period of service, work preparation, commitment to task and qualification as they influence on the learners’ academic performance. The framework also considers school population as the fourth independent variable which looks at the number of students in class, their entry behaviour, and their relationship with the available books as part of school resources. The last independent variable is the school location which considers on whether the school is rural or urban based. The researcher identifies Government and stakeholders like the sponsors, parents or the student themselves as moderating variables that influences the results but the researcher has no control over them.

Independent variables

Moderating variable

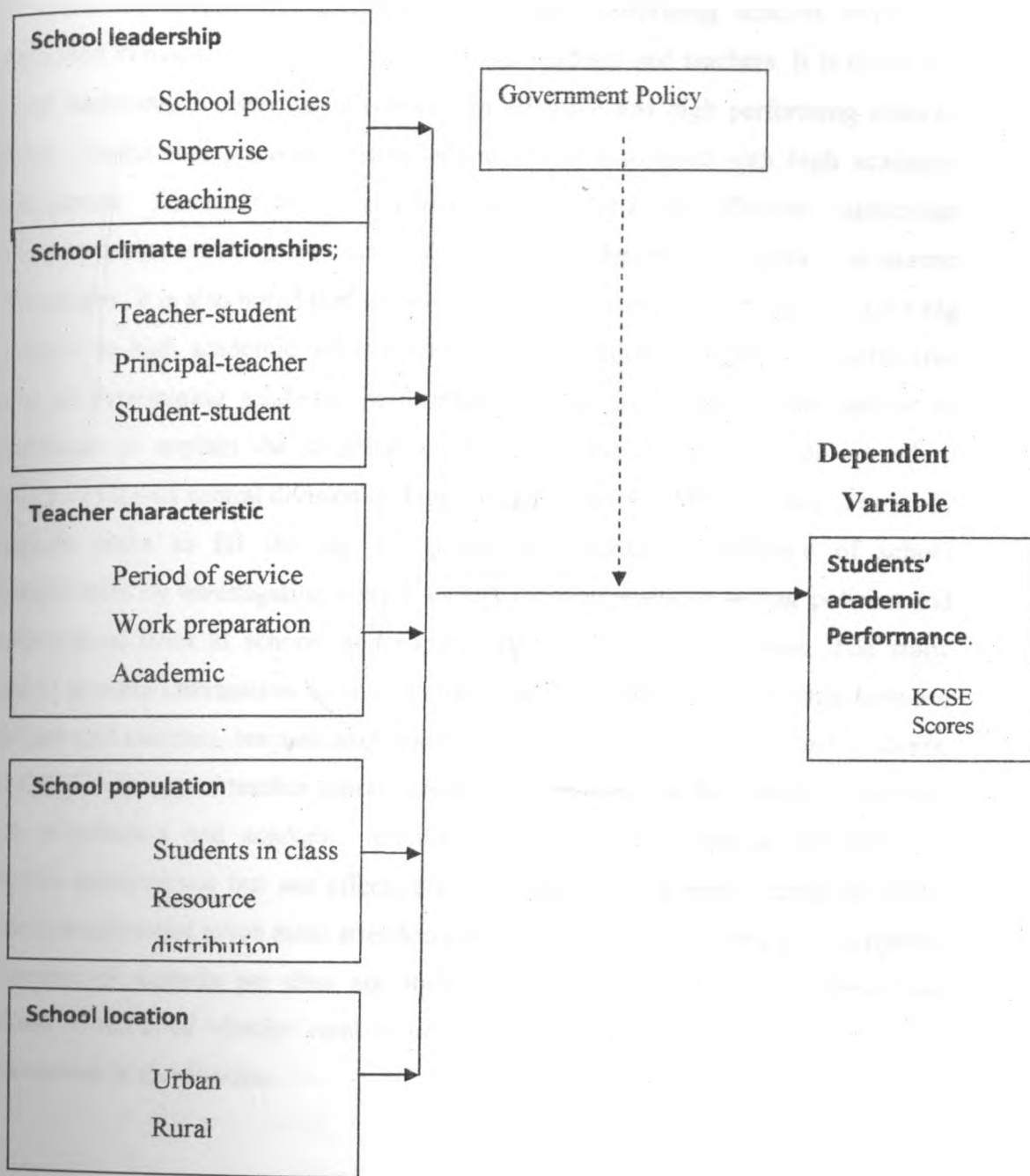


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.9 Summary

The literature review has established that high performing schools have well established systems with committed principals, students and teachers. It is noted that school leadership is essential in running an effective and high performing schools. School climate that promote healthy interaction is associated with high academic achievement. Teachers are established to be crucial in effective curriculum implementation which plays essential roles that determine students' academic achievement. It is also noted that schools and classes with large population pose a big challenge to high academic achievement. School location also plays a contributive factor to determining academic performance. These are situations that cannot be generalized to explain the situation of low academic achievement of secondary schools in Tigania central division of Tigania East District in Meru County. The study therefore seeks to fill the gap of giving an account of influence of school characteristics by investigating school leaders innovativeness in setting policies and implementing them in schools and supervising of classroom activities. The study tends to provide information on school climate by investigating relationship between principal and teachers, teachers and students and teachers and students and students. The study investigates teacher characteristics concentrating on their period of service, work preparation and academic qualifications which are essential elements for effective performance but not effectively investigated for Tigania central division. Other characteristics given more attention are school population giving more attention to number of students per class and their impact on the resources and the school location in terms of whether rural or urban based influence on students' academic achievement in the division.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

3.1 Introduction

The chapter deals with a simple description of the methodology that was used in order to collect data to meet the research objectives of establishing the influence of school characteristics on students' academic performance in Tigania central division of Tigania East district. It gave the details of the research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedure. It also looked at the instruments or the tools and the procedure that were to be employed in collecting data in the field and the measurements of variables and techniques that were to be used in analyzing data and the presentation method.

3.2 Research design

A descriptive survey was used during this research, which facilitated the description of the state of affairs as they were and the causes of the situation in terms of school characteristics which influence on students' academic performance in Tigania central division public secondary schools.

3.3 Target population

The target population for this study comprised principals and teachers of both public boarding and day secondary schools in Tigania Central Division of Tigania East District in Meru County. There are 12 public secondary schools in the division 3 of which are boarding while 9 are day secondary schools. The total numbers of teachers in the division who are engaged in teaching including the principals are 138 which then give the total target population for this study. The principals and teachers were the main target during this study for they play a major role in determining what happens in schools and interact with students, parents and the neighboring school community. They were therefore better suited to give the necessary information that was required during this study. The details are shown in table 3.1.

Table 3. 1: Population size

SCHOOL	TYPE	NO. OF TEACHERS
Mikiduri girls	Boarding	28
Akaiga	Mixed Day	10
Thuuri	Mixed Day	10
Rware girls	Boarding	10
Kaliene mixed	Boarding	14
St. Massimo	Mixed Day	14
Miciimikuru	Mixed Day	10
Kiguchwa	Mixed Day	10
Ametho	Mixed Day	8
Marega	Mixed Day	9
Mutewa	Mixed Day	9
Mukono	Mixed Day	6
TOTAL		138

Source: DEO's office Tigania East District.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

According to Kothari (2008) a sample is the selected respondents from the population under study and sampling technique is the selection process. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) suggest that for descriptive studies 10% or above of the accessible population is enough for study. Therefore the desired sample size was taken to be $n= 69$ which form 50% of the total population under study. Out of the 12 schools consideration was taken to schools that had done KCSE three times and above thus reducing the number to nine. Then a simple random sampling was applied to get six schools that were involved in the study. Stratified sampling was applied to the selected schools to determine the stratum sample size to form the desired sample size. The principles of the six schools were purposely selected because of their position in the schools while the remaining sample sizes of each stratum was taken using simple random sampling to get the desired sample size of $n = 69$.

Based on Cochran (1977) formula for determining sample size, a proportional stratified random sampling was used to obtain the respondents for this study.

$$\text{Therefore } n = \sum_{i=1}^h n_i$$

$$\text{Where } n_i = N_i/N \times n$$

$$\text{And } i = 1+2+3 \dots \dots \dots +nh$$

Let n be the desired sample size

N be the total population under study

N_i be the i th population of the i th stratum

n_i be the i th sample size of the desired sample size

Each of the six schools is considered as a separate stratum.

$$\text{Thus } n_i = N_i/N \times n$$

$$n_1 = 28/86 \times 69 = 22$$

$$n_2 = 10/86 \times 69 = 8$$

$$n_3 = 10/86 \times 69 = 8$$

$$n_4 = 14/86 \times 69 = 11$$

$$n_5 = 14/86 \times 69 = 11$$

$$n_6 = 10/86 \times 69 = 8$$

Table 3. 2: Sampling Frame

CATEGORY	TOTAL NUMBER	SAMPLE SIZE	SAMPLE PERCENTAGE
Mikinduri Girls	28	22	16
Akaiga Mixed	10	8	6
Rware Girls	10	8	6
Kaliene Mixed	14	11	8
St. Massimo Mixed	14	11	8
Miciimikuru Mixed	10	8	6
TOTAL	86	69	50

3.5 Research Instruments

The researcher used a questionnaire for both the principals and the teachers. The researcher found a questionnaire more appropriate because it is free from interviewer's biasness and provides the respondent room to give well thought answers. A questionnaire is quite popular particularly in case of big inquiries. It allows large sample to be used thus making the results more dependable and reliable. The instrument is useful for the people who seem to be busy for personal interview method and to distribute to the respondents at their working and collect them back. The questionnaire had section A which covered details of the respondent, section B on school leadership, section C on school climate, Section D on nature of teachers, Section C on school size and Section F on the school location. The researcher also carried out an observation on school programmes, students' conduct and the general appearance of the school environment to supplement to the data obtained from the questionnaire. He obtained KCSE results analysis for the last three years.

3.5.1 Instrument validity

According to Mbwesa (2006) validity of research instrument refers to the extent to which a test or an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. It is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences which are based on research results. It is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represents the phenomena under study. The researcher prepared a questionnaire for both the principals and teachers, an observation chart and KCSE result analysis score sheet that were used to obtain data from the field. The researcher sought guidance from the supervisors who are experts in the field to help improve on the validity of the instrument. The researcher conducted pre-test to help identify the weaknesses of the instruments and improved them where necessary.

3.5.2 Instrument reliability

Reliability is the measure of the degree at which the research instrument yields consistent results after repeated trials. To test the reliability of the instrument the researcher conducted a test retest on a group of two teachers and two principals of the schools that were not involved in the actual research work and filled the questionnaire and carried the observation. After two week the same exercise was repeated. Inferences were made and similar responses were obtained for the two occasions when the instruments were used thus terming them as reliable.

3.6 Data collection procedure

The researcher sought research clearance from the University of Nairobi a copy of which was attached to each questionnaire in order to create confidence in case respondents doubted the intent for the study. There after questionnaires and KCSE score sheet were hand delivered by the researcher to schools from where particular respondents were identified. The researcher was readily available to give guidance and clarity for successful completion of data collection as planned. The researcher collected back the questionnaires and KCSE score sheet after a period of one week. The researcher also carried out an observation on various items in various institutions and filled what was and was not observed during the field research. This was meant to supplement what was obtained through the use of questionnaires. The data obtained was both qualitative and quantitative in nature

3.7 Data analysis and presentation

The researcher collected the filled up questionnaires, confirmed the number and ensured that they were fully filled up. He edited questionnaires to ensure that they were completely filled up and that all the answers were consistent, legible, uniform and accurate. The gaps for missing data were filled up by consulting the respondent for completeness or filling the obvious missing information. The researcher organized the data in terms of the instruments used that is the questionnaire, observation and K C S.E result analysis for the last three years. The researcher then conceptualized the respondents' information and classified it into meaningful and relevant categories for the purpose of analyses. The categorization was based on the themes that were developed as per the research questions based on relation between school characteristics and students academic performance. The researcher then used descriptive statistics to arrange order and manipulate the data. To allow easy punching and computation and storage of information using a computer statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) the researcher assigned a code number to each of the research questions. Descriptive statistics was used which involved arranging, ordering and manipulation of data to provide descriptive information. The data was presented in form of tables showing frequency and percentage distribution.

3.8 Operational definitions of variables

These were variables that influence the Students performance in secondary schools. These included school leadership, school climate, nature of teachers, size of the school and school location which all determine the students' academic performance in secondary school.

Table 3. 3: Operational definition of Variables

Objective	Type of variable Independent variable	Indicators	Measure ment	Data collection	Level scale
To determine the influence of school leadership on students academic performance in Secondary Schools.	Leadership skills.	Implementation of School rules and policies.	Number of indiscipline cases handled.	Questionnaire. Observation	Ordinal
	Class attendance register.	Classroom register.	Number of entries in class register	Questionnaire.	Ordinal
	Communication skills	Flow of information	Number of conflict cases reported	Questionnaire. Observation	Ordinal
	Principal-teachers relationship	Student performance	School mean	Questionnaire	Ordinal

<p>To examine the influence of schools climate on students academic performance</p> <p>In Secondary Schools</p>	Teacher-Student relationship	Minimal student indiscipline cases.	score Number of students punished	Questionnaire.	Ord
	Student-Student relationship	Level of communication.	The number of reported student to student conflicts	Questionnaire.	Ord

To establish the influence of teacher characteristics on students academic performance in Secondary Schools.	Teachers experience	Period of service	Number of years in teaching.	Questionnaire.	Inter
	Teachers lesson preparation	Level of preparedness.	Class notes and schemes of work.	Questionnaire. Observation	Nomi
	Teacher academic/profession qualification	Level of education attained	Academic certificates	Questionnaire	Ordin
To find out the influence of the school population on the students' academic performance secondary schools.	Students distribution in classes	Class register	No of students recorded per class	Questionnaire.	Inter
	Resource	Delivery records	Number of items per	Questionnaire	Ratio

	distribution		student		
To assess the influence of school location on students academic performance in secondary schools.	Urban based Schools Rural based Schools.	Distance of the school to the Urban center. Far away from urban center	Distance to school in kilometers. Number of kilometers away from urban facilities	Questionnaire. Questionnaire. Observation	Nom Nom

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The chapter deals with the questionnaire, observation and the KCSE score sheet return rate that were used in the field to collect the information. The data was analyzed according to the KCSE score sheet and the questionnaire which was supplemented by the observation sheet in some areas. The findings were presented and interpreted accordingly.

4.2 Questionnaire, observation chart and KCSE score sheet return rate

Questionnaire was the main instrument used for obtaining the information. An observation check list was used to supplement the questionnaire and KCSE results analysis for independent variable academic performance. The responses were recorded as in the Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaire	69	100
Observation check list	6	100
KCSE score sheet	6	100

Out of the 69 questionnaires that were administered to schools were 100% (n=69) returned to the researcher. The KCSE score sheet that were distributed to these schools were also 100% (n=6) returned. The observation check list were filled by the researcher for the six schools so they were 100% (n=6) filled).

4.3 Demographic Profile

This section analyses the gender and the age of the respondents who filled the

questionnaire.

4.3.1 Gender

The respondents were required to indicate their gender in order to get the representation of each of them. This was also meant to provide a balanced view since different sexes have different have different perception on various school management issues. This is shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Gender

Category	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Principals	Male	1	16.7
	Female	5	83.3
Teachers	Male	42	66.7
	Female	21	33.3

Out of the six Principals who responded majority 83% (n=5) were females compared to 16% (n=1) who were males. The opposite was established about the teachers where majority were males 67.7% (n=42) double the number of females who were 33.3% (n=21). Gender was meant to help the researcher to identify the category of respondents in terms of sex.

4.3.2 Age

The researcher sought to establish the age bracket of the respondents. This was supposed to enable the researcher to get age difference of the respondents. This is a shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4. 3: Age

Age years	in Principals	Percentage	Teachers	Percentage
21-30			30	47.6
31-40			20	31.7
41-50	6	100	12	19.1
51-60			1	1.6
Totals	6	100	63	100

All the respondent principals 100% (n=6) in the division fall within the age bracket 41-50 years. This indicates that the principals are mature enough to run the institutions effectively. Majority of the teachers' 47.6 (n=30) fall in the age bracket 21-30 years which is an indication that they are very young in the profession. The others 32% (n=20) fall in age bracket 31-40, 19% (n=19.1) and 1.6% (n=1).

4.4 Findings of the Study as per Research objectives

There were five objectives which were to be investigated under this study. Each of them was analyzed to get the respondents view on the questions they were to respond to.

4.4.1. Assess the Influence of School Leadership on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools.

School leadership was one of the school characteristics under investigation where the following issues were examined.

4.4.1.1. Principals' Innovativeness in Policy Making and Implementation

In efforts to find out the level at which the principal innovates new policies and

whether they are well implemented, the researcher sought the opinion of the staff concerning the same. Details are shown in table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Principal's innovativeness in policy making and implementation

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Bad	1	1.6
Good	33	52.3
Very good	19	31.2
Excellent	10	15.9
Total	63	100

From the responses received 52% (n=33) of the staff thought that the principals innovativeness in policy making and implementation was good (fair), 31.2% (n=19) rated the principal very good while 15.9% (n=10) gave an excellent rating while 1.6% (n=1) gave badly as their view. This suggests that Principals have to go an extra mile in being innovative in policy making and implementing them to effect higher academic performance in the division.

4.4.1.2 Principal's level of motivating and empowering teachers by offering support and training.

In pursuit to establish the extent to which the principal motivates and supports the teaching staff, the researcher asked the respondents to rate the principal's level of empowering teachers by providing them with the necessary support and training to help them grow professionally. Details are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Principal's level of motivating and empowering teachers by offering support and training

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Very low	0	0
Low	0	0
Average	23	36.5
High	29	46
Very high	11	17.5
Total	63	100

Out of the 63 teachers who responded, 46% (n=29) rated the principal as highly empowering, 36.5% (n=23) gave an average rate and 17.5% rated the principals very highly. The principals' motivation and support to teachers determined the performance of the schools. The low rating of principals with very high only 17.5% (n=11) indicate the principals need to do more in order to motivate and empower teachers by offering good support and training to help them grow into effective teachers professionally.

4.4.1.3. Principal's involvement of other teachers in decision making

It was also important for the researcher to find out the level at which the principal involves and incorporates the opinions of the other teacher in decision making in the school. This was to know how much opinion diversity is considered, the flexibility of the set policies and the possibilities of their acceptance by the teachers and the other staff.

Table 4.6: Principal's involvement of other teachers in decision making

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Very low	2	3.2
Low	2	3.2
Average	24	38.1
High	27	42.9
Very high	8	12.8
Total	63	100

Out of the 63 responses received from teachers, 42.9% (n=27) of them confirmed that the principals of the schools in question highly involved the teachers in decisions making, 38.1% (n=24) of them thought the involvement was average, 12.8 % (n=8) rated it as very high, and 3.2 % (n=2) thought it is low and very low. From the information gathered, it can be concluded that the principals of the various secondary schools seek the contributions of the teachers in making crucial decisions though there was high concentration between average and above average but with a low percentage at very high as shown on Table 4.6. This indicates that there is no total involvement of the teachers in decision making thus contributing to the low academic performance in the division.

4.4.1.4. Principal's level of communication with the stakeholders

The researcher inferred to establish the level to which the principal communicates with the teachers, support staff members, students and parents. The respondents were asked to rate the principals communication in order to determine a trait of the school that would show how much cooperation and consultation is there in the running of the school and the flexibility of communications between the management and the staff. This information would be useful in determining the whether there is swift relay of complaints and prompt solution of problems by the management as well as personal attention of the staff by the principal.

Table 4.7: Principal's level of communication with the stakeholders

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Very poor	1	1.6
Poor	1	1.6
Good	28	44.4
Very good	27	42.9
Excellent	6	9.5
Total	63	100

Out of the respondents, 44.4 % (n=28) indicated that principal's communication is good (average), 42.9 % (n=27) of them rated it very good, 9.5 (n=6) rated it excellent while 1.6 % rated it bad and very bad. This indicated that there was much cooperation and consultation in the running of the schools and flexibility in communication between the principals and the stake holders. The details of the results are shown in table 4.7. There is need to improve on communication between the principals and stakeholder to attain a higher level of perfection to attain high academic achievement in the division.

4.4.1.5. Principals' level of supervising classroom attendance

The study also sought to establish the level at which the principals in various schools supervise the attendance of classes by both teachers and students.

Table 4.8: Principals' level of supervising classroom attendance

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Low	1	1.6
Average	17	27
High	34	54
Very high	11	17
Total	63	100

When 54 % (n=34) of the respondent felt that the principal's level of supervising classroom attendance is high (above average), 27% (n=17) of the respondents felt that the supervision was average and 17 % (n=11) of them rating it very high. However, a minority of 1.6 % (n=3) were not satisfied with the principal's supervision and thought that it was low. Detail are shown on Table 4.8. The results as indicated are fair but requires improvement for higher academic attainment.

As per the observation schedule used in this research majority of the intended features were observed. These included a well displayed school motto, mission and vision, notice board, suggestion box and school routine and calendar of events. This indicated that policies were made and effectively communicated to the stakeholders. It also indicated that varied views and opinions of the stakeholders were enhanced through the use of suggestion box which were found in all the schools.

4.5.2 Examine the influence of school climate on students' academic performance in secondary schools

This was the second school characteristic that was included in the study under which the following were investigated.

4.5.2.1. Relationship between the Principal and the teachers

The study also tried to establish the nature of the relationship between the principal and the teachers and the level of the relationship. The respondents were asked to give their rating on what they thought of their relationship with their principals.

Table 4.9: Relationship between the Principal and the teachers

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Bad	3	4.4
Good	32	46.4
Very good	25	36.2
Excellent	9	13
Total	69	100

The results show that 46.4% (n=32) of the respondents felt that the relationship was good (average), 36.2% (n=19) believe that the principal relates very well (above average) with the teachers, with 13 % (n=9) rating the relationship excellent. However, there was a minority of 4.4% (n=2) that felt that the principal's relationship with the teachers was bad. Details are shown by Table 4.9. The results indicate that many of the respondents feel its average which means more efforts need to be done for promoting effective academic performance.

4.5.2.2 Students and teachers relationship

The researcher intended to get an indication of the nature of relationship that exists between the teachers and the students. This was to help deduce the extent to which the student body access personal attention for consultations from the teachers and the willingness of the teachers to assist. The respondents were required to give an indication of their opinions regarding what they thought the relationship was like. An account of the feelings on the nature of relationship that exists between the teachers and the students are shown in table 4.10

Table 4.10: Students and teachers relationship

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Bad	0	0
Good	31	49.9
Very good	31	49.9
Excellent	7	10.2
Total	69	100

The results indicate that 49.9% (n=31) of the participants thought the relationship was good/average, 49.9% (n=31) of them believed that the relationship was very good while 10.8% (n=7) felt that the relationship was excellence. More of the views ranged between average and above average thus suggesting that more attention need to be given to promoting a closer relationship to promote better performance.

4.5.2.3 Students' level of interaction with the other students

Among the goals of the study was to establish the level of interaction that existed among the students themselves. High levels of interaction would indicate the possibility of better performance since the students would be in a position to assist each other through group discussions and person to person consultations. The

respondents being the staff members, the researcher sought their opinions on the level of interaction that they observed among the students. The results of the study are shown in the table 4.11

Table 4.11: Students' level of interaction with the other students

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Too low	0	0
Low	1	1.4
Average	30	43.5
High	26	37.7
Very high	12	17.4
Total	69	100

It was inferred from the respondents that the level of relationship that exists among the students was 43.5% (n=30) average, 37.7 % (n=26) high and 17.4 % (n=12) very high, and 1.4% (n=1) low. These results indicate that the level of interaction is average. This suggest that there is need to promote the level of interaction among students in the division which increase the possibility of better performance since the students would be in a better position to assist each other through group discussions and person to person consultations.

The researcher observed all the sampled schools had neat compounds and were hospitable which provided a good foundation of healthy interaction that is a prerequisite of effective teaching and learning process

4.5.3 Establish the influence of teacher characteristics on students' academic performance in secondary school

This was a third variable that was put under consideration as an aspect of school characteristic that determine students' academic performance. The aspect studied under it includes.

4.5.3.1 Duration as a teacher in the current school

In regard to their profession the researcher inquired for their duration as a teacher in their current schools. Their responses are recorded in table 4.12.

Table 4. 12: Duration as a teacher in the current school

Description	Frequency	Percentage
1 to 3 years	44	63.8
4 to 6 years	8	11.6
7 to 9 years	9	13
10 to 12 years	1	1.5
Above 12 years	7	10.1
Total	68	100

As shown in table 4.13, majority of the teachers 63.8% (n=44) indicated between 1 to 3 years, 13 % (n=8) between 7 to 9 years, 11.6% (n=8) between 4 to 6, 10.1% (n=7) above 12 and 1.5% (n=1) between 10 to 12 years. This indicates that majority of the teachers were new in the station and young in the profession as supported by the information on their age table 4.3. This is likely to explain why the division is experiencing low academic performance

4.5.3.2. Teachers' level of class work preparation

The respondents were to also rate the level of teacher's preparation for class work. Their responses are recorded in table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Teachers' level of class work preparation

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	0	0
Average	38	55.1
High	23	33.3
Very high	8	11.6
Total	68	100

In response 55.1% (n=38) rated as average, 33.3 % (n=23) high while 11.6% (n=8) as very high. The high rating of teachers' level of preparation as average indicate that they are not performing at their best thus contributing to low academic achievement in the division.

4.5.3.3. Teachers' rate of accomplishing tasks and meeting set deadlines

In Regard to the research objectives the researcher sought from the respondents their rating of teachers in accomplishing their tasks and meeting set deadlines. Details of the responses are shown in table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Teachers' tasks accomplishment and meeting set deadlines

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	3	4.4
Average	39	56.5
Very good	22	31.9
Excellent	5	7.2
Total	69	100

Majority the respondents 56.5% (n=39) rated teachers level of accomplishing their tasks and meeting set deadlines as average, 31.9% (n=22) very good or above average, 7.2% (n=5) felt they are excellent while 4.4% (n=3) indicated that they are poor. This clearly indicates that there is more that needs to be done to help the teachers be more committed to accomplishing their task and meeting deadlines as set as it would have negative impact on students performance.

From the observation table in majority of schools it was observed that teachers and students were not swift in responding to the bells which indicated laxity in implementing school programmes which affected schools academic performance as established in the schools score sheet.

4.5.3.4 Teachers' academic/professional Qualification

The researcher also inquired about the teachers' level of academic/professional qualification to establish how well they were suited to handling the curriculum in schools for effective performance. Table 4.15 has the details.

Table 4.15: Teachers' academic/ professional Qualification.

Description	Frequency	Percentage	Mean score
Diploma	9	13.1	5.3
Bachelor Degree	51	73.9	5.6
Masters degree	2	2.9	4.4
Others	7	10.1	4.7
Total	69	100	

Out of the 69 responses received by the researcher, it was discovered that a majority of the secondary school teaching staff 73.9 % (n=51) had a bachelor's degree, 13.1% (n=9) had a diploma, 2.9% (n=2) and 10.1 (n=7) fell in the category of others. This indicate that majority of the teachers are qualified to teach in secondary schools as required by TSC which hires teachers. Teachers with bachelor degree qualification seem to perform better followed by teachers with a diploma qualification than any other categories.

4.5.4 Investigate the influence of school population on the students' academic performance in secondary schools.

School population was also included under investigation as a crucial aspect of school characteristic that contribute to students academic performance

4.5.4.1. The number of student in the school

The research also sought to find out the number of students in the schools.

Table 4.16: The number of student in the school

Description	Frequency	Percentage	Mean score
Below 100	0	0	0
101-200	1	16.7	4.6
201-300	3	50	5.0
301-400	1	16.7	4.6
401 and above	1	16.6	6.6
Totals	6	100	

Out of the 6 schools that were sampled for the study, 50% (n=3) were noted to have a population of between 201 to 300 students, 16.7% (n=1) for schools with a population of between 101-200, 301-400 and 401 and above as shown in table 4.16. The table also shows that schools with a big population perform better.

5.4.2. Average number of student per class

The respondents were further asked to give the average number of students in their particular schools as per class. Responses are shown in Table 4.17

Table 4.17: Average number of student per class

Description	Frequency	Percentage	Mean score
Less than 20	0	0	0
21-30	2	33.3	5.0
31-40	0	0	0
41-50	4	66.7	5.4
	6	100	

It was pointed in response by 66.7% (n=6) that they have an average of 41 – 50 students per class and by 33% (n=2) had within 21 – 30. The table indicates that smaller classes tend to perform poorer than larger ones though the difference is not much. The observation made by the researcher indicated that all the schools had neat and uncongested classrooms which were conducive for effective teaching and learning.

4.5.4.3. Shortfall of Teachers Service Commission Teachers

The researcher inquired from the respondents the shortfall of Teachers Service Commission teachers in the schools in order to get how well they were established in terms of competent human resource that was serving in the school,

Table 4.18: Shortfall of Teachers Service Commission Teachers

Description	Frequency	Percentage	Mean score
1-3	1	16.7	4.6
4-6	2	33.3	5.4
7-9	1	16.7	4.6
10-12	2	33.3	5.7
	6	100	

Majority of the respondent principals 33.3% (n=2) indicated that their schools experienced Teachers Service Commission Teachers shortage of within the range 4-6 and the same number within 10-12 the others 16.7% (n=1) gave range between 1-3 and 10-12. This indicates a high shortage of Teachers Service Commission teachers which could be contributing to low performance in the division as indicated in the table 4.18.

4.5.4.4 Strain on Resources in the Institutions

The researcher inferred to get an indication of the rate of strain that is experienced on resources in these institutions from the respondents.

Table 4.19: Strain on Resources in the Institutions

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Low	9	13
Average	38	55.1
High	20	29
Very high	2	2.9
Total	69	100

The result in table 4.19 show that the rate of strain caused on the resources is average according to 55.1 % (n=38) of the respondents while 29.0% (n=20) rated it high. The remaining 13 % (n=9) and 2.9 % (n=2) in turn rated level of strain as low and very high respectively. This level of strain impacts on academic performance in the schools in the division which are low as established from KCSE results analysis for the last three years.

4.5.5 Assess the Influence of School Location on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Tigania Central Division.

The research also sought to find out from the respondents the locality of the schools in respect to whether it was urban or rural based.

Table 4.20: Locality of the School

Description	Frequency	Percentage	Average mean score
Rural	5	83.3	5.22
Urban	1	16.7	4.7
Total	6	100	

In response to this, a majority at 83.3% (n=5) indicated their schools as being rural based while the remaining 16.7% (n=1) as urban based. The schools in rural areas tend to perform better than schools in urban areas as shown in table 4.20.

a) The respondents were required to indicate whether the location of the school had influence on the school academic performance. Those located in urban areas indicated the following as positive effects of urban location.

- i) *They are easily accessible due to good means of transport and communication.*
- ii) *The towns provide closer residential places for teachers in schools that cannot accommodate them.*

They mentioned the following to impact negatively on the students which contribute to poor performance.

- i) *Students are exposed to the risk of drugs and substance abuse which are easily supplied from the town.*
- ii) *There is high temptation of students to have money for personal use which results to high reported cases of stealing among students.*
- iii) *Noise pollution from the urban area which interferes with the school systems especially during the market days or when there are road shows.*

b) While those located in Rural areas associated the area with the following advantages for the good academic performance

- i) *Cool and undisturbed environment as would be the case in towns.*

- ii) *Students lack a lot of exposure as the highest percentage come from the neighborhoods.*
- c) Though they mentioned the following as challenges that impact on them negatively thus interfering with their academic performance.
 - i) *Effect of traditional practices and high level of illiteracy in the area.*
 - ii) *High poverty level that increases on the students' rate of absenteeism.*
 - iii) *Poor means of transport that makes accessibility difficult.*
 - iv) *Strain on students who have to cover long distances.*

From the observation majority of the schools could not be seen from the town or in the neighborhoods of the town which indicated that most of them were rural based.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives the study's summary of the findings, conclusions and appropriate recommendations in line with the objectives and the elements of the study. It also gives suggestions on the areas that the researcher considered required more attentions for further investigation.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The study was intended to investigate the influence of school characteristics on students' academic performance in Tigania central division which was guided by five objectives and a few identified elements of those characteristics whose summary is presented below.

Table 5.1 Summary of objectives, findings

Objective	Findings
1. Assess the influence of school leadership on students academic performance in students in secondary schools	School leadership influences students' academic performance through formulation and implementation of school policies and supervision of teaching/learning process which were rated as average in the area under study.
2. Examine the influence of school climate on student academic performance in secondary schools	The school climate influences the students' academic performance as established through principal-teacher, teacher-student and student-student interaction which were rated at average by the respondents.
3. Establish the influence of teachers' characteristics on students' academic performance in secondary schools.	Teacher characteristics influence students' academic performance as found through teachers' period of service, work preparation and teachers academic/professional

	<p>qualification. Majority of the teachers were found to be qualified for the service with bachelor degree and diploma. The best performing teachers were bachelor degree holders followed by diploma holders. Many of the teachers were young and inexperienced. Majority of the teachers were rated as average in class work preparation and accomplishing of their tasks.</p>
<p>4. Find out the influence of school population on the students' academic performance in secondary schools</p>	<p>The school population influences students' academic performance as established through school population, class size number of TSC teachers and the strain caused on the resources. Majority of the schools had a population between 41-50 students per class and performed better than schools with few students in class though the general performance is low in the region. The study also revealed that schools experienced high shortage of TSC teachers and experienced average strain on the resources thus contributing to the low level of academic achievement in the division.</p>
<p>5. Assess the influence of school characteristics on students academic performance in secondary schools</p>	<p>The location of the schools influences the academic performance of the students. The study revealed that majority of the schools were located in rural areas and performed better than the schools in urban area. Both sites were noted to have challenges which impacted on them negatively thus contributing to the low performance in the division</p>

5.3 Discussion of the findings

The discussion of the findings is as follow.

5.3.1 Influence of school leadership on student academic performance

The study revealed that leadership influenced academic achievement in the division. According to the study the principles were noted to be innovative in policy making and implementation, motivating and empowered teachers by supporting and facilitating their in-service training. The principals involve teachers in decision making as a way of incorporating their opinion in decision making. The principals also played the role of supervising classroom activities effectively. But the study reveals that most of these activities are rated average or below average by the respondents which explains why the academic performance is below average in the division. This is in agreement with McCormack, Adams and Gamage (2009) who indicated that many scholars have acknowledged the role of school leadership is mostly significant in enhancing school performance and students achievement.

5.3.2 School climate influence on students' academic performance

According to the study, school social climate of the schools in the division was established through the investigation of the relationship between the principal and the teachers, students and teachers, students and students. The study revealed that interaction was highly developed in these schools but were rated at average level according to the respondents. This revealed that the school climate played a role in contributing to the low level of academic achievement in the division. This is in line with Stynon (2008) who state that a healthy school climate is created by a supportive healthy relationship among staff members, student relate well with teachers and among themselves which lead to good performance.

5.3.3 Teacher characteristics and students' academic performance

Teacher characteristics influence on students' academic performance was studied

through teachers' professional qualification which revealed that majority 75% had bachelor of Education and 13% had attained diploma which indicated that they were highly qualified for the job. The bachelor degree holders perform better followed by teachers with a diploma qualification. Investigation on their age bracket revealed that majority 47% were between 21-30 years and majority 63% had served in their current station for 3 years and below. This indicated that many were young and inexperienced in the profession and in their current places of work. Teacher level of preparation for class work and accomplishment of tasks were rated average by the majority of the respondents at 55% for the two of them. This indicates that teachers' characteristics influence students' academic performance and contribute to the low academic achievement in the region. This is in agreement with Akiri, Nkechi and Ugborugbo (2009) who said quality of education depends on the teachers as it is reflected in their performance of the duty. Teachers have been shown to have an important influence on students' academic achievement. According to Afe, (2001) as cited by Akiri and Ugborugbo, teachers play a crucial role in educational attainment because they are ultimately responsible for translating policies into action and principles, based on practice during interaction with the students.

5.3.4 Influence of school population on students academic achievement

Investigation on influence of school population on students academic performance was done by considering the number of students per class which revealed that majority of the schools 66% had an average of between 41-50 students and performed slightly better compared to small schools with students between 21-30 per class. The study also indicated that schools had a high shortage of TSC teachers thus increasing the teacher student ratio in the division. The teachers rated the strain experienced on

the resources in those schools as average but tending towards high. It is therefore clear that the school population influenced academic performance as supported by number of students in class, teacher- students' ratio and the strain it causes on the resources. The study is in line with Slate and Jones (2000) who confirmed that increase in size of a school initially brings positive relationship but the trends are reversed as the size continues to increase. Abbott, Jolteman and Stroh (2002) cites Bracy (2001) having noted that large schools especially high schools produce their own set of problems which a growing number of researchers and policy makers think can be solved by returning to small schools.

5.3.5 School location influence on students' academic performance

The research also sought to find out from the respondents the location of the schools in respect to whether they were urban or rural based. Most of the schools in the region are rural based 83% compared to 16% which are urban based. The research revealed that rural schools performed better than urban schools. The respondents cited that the rural area provided cool and undisturbed environment for studies as opposed to the urban environment. They also stated that the many of the students lacked destructive exposure that would affect their learning as many of they came from the neighborhoods. This negates Omisude (1985) contribution that large schools in urban areas tend to perform better in examinations than small schools in rural areas. It is also noted from the study that urban and rural schools had factors that negatively impacted on them thus resulting to low academic performance because the difference in academic achievement is minimal.

5.4 Conclusions

Following the study analysis the researcher concludes that school leadership plays a key role in determining students' academic performance. The study revealed that principals fared fairly in being innovative in policy making and implementation and in motivating and empowering teachers by offering support and training that they required in performing their duty effectively. They were average in involving other teachers in decision making, communicating with stakeholders and in supervising class attendance by both teachers and students. This meant that the principals have to improve their leadership tactics for promoting better improved academic performance.

The study also revealed that school climate is critical in determining the students' academic performance through principal-teachers interaction, teacher-student relationship and student -student interaction which was rated average. This implies that high interaction rate has to be promoted throughout to create a better school climate for higher academic achievement.

It is also noted that teachers' characteristics are essential for effective implementation of school curriculum. The teachers have to be of high level of professional qualification a bachelor degree holder or at least a diploma certificate for effective handling of secondary school students. Teachers have to be more committed to accomplishing their task and meeting the set deadlines on time for better academic achievement in their schools thus improving on the division achievement.

It is clear from the study that schools with average population with an average of 45 students in a class or below are reasonable for effective management and better academic performance. Very small or too high populations pose big challenges that impact negatively on schools academic performance.

It's also established that the location of the school is crucial to determining its academic performance. Schools in rural areas seem to perform better compared to urban schools, though both locations have their own challenges that impacts negatively on their academic performance that need to be handled separately.

According to the study's findings the researcher concludes that the performance of secondary schools in Tigania Central Division is influenced by the leadership, school

climate, teachers' characteristics, school population, and location of school.

5.5 Recommendations

From the above study the researcher recommends the following:

- i. The school administration especially the Principals ought to be more committed to their work, improve on their leadership skills, be more innovative in formulation and implementation of school policies, motivate, and promote team work and be more efficient and effective in supervising teaching learning process which would influence both teachers and student to perform to their best.
- ii. Improve on promoting a healthy interaction between the principals and teachers, teachers and students and students and students. Students should be organized into subject clubs and discussion groups in order to improve their level of interaction. These will create a good school climate which is essential for improved academic achievement.
- iii. Bachelor degree and diploma holders are best qualified for curriculum implementation in secondary schools. The young and inexperienced teachers should be given proper guidance and orientation in the profession and in school policies. They need to get more time to understand the syllabus, master the content and skills in their subject areas gradually from the lower classes upward. Teachers need to be more committed to their work in preparing for the classes and accomplishing their tasks on time. More external supervision through school inspection needs to be encouraged for better academic performance.
- iv. The schools with small population and few students in class should be encouraged to increase the enrolment to a level that is economical and productive for them. The Ministry of education should employ more teachers to help reduce the high shortage and improve the curriculum establishment of

the schools in the division. The Board of management should look at the alternative means of reducing the strain on school resources through strategic plan to improve the situation for high academic achievement.

- v. Schools need to be located far away from towns for they are found to affect their performance. Those located in towns require more surveillance to keep away harmful substances from getting into schools. Whether urban or rural schools have their own challenges most of which can be addressed to through guidance and counseling in order to win the minds of students, teachers and support staff for.

5.6 Suggestions for further Research

As a result of this study, the researcher suggests that further research need to be carried out to determine the influence of students' characteristics on their academic performance. Similar study on school characteristics can be conducted at wider area than a division level.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Introductory Letter

Muriuki Ambrose

P.O. Box 58

Mikinduri.

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am a student at the University of Nairobi pursuing a master degree course in Project Planning and Management. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for this degree, I am supposed to carry out a research project and submit it to the university. The study is based on school characteristics influence on academic performance of the students. The findings of this research will be useful to the Government and the Ministry of Education, the school management and other researchers in a number of ways. The information provided will be treated with utmost confidence, especially the identity of the people involved. Please respond positively and most probably today so as to make it easy to collect the questionnaires without complications.

Thank you.



Muriuki Ambrose Mwati

0725 89 69 09

Appendix B

A Questionnaire for Heads of Institution/ Principals and Teachers.

Please respond to the items of this questionnaire by ticking next to the appropriate answer or writing a brief explanation in the spaces provided. This document is intended for the research work only. So please be truthful to the facts as much as possible for valid deductions.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

1. Name of the institution

2. State your status in the school

3. Gender

a). Male

b). Female

3. Age bracket:

a). 21 – 30

b). 31 – 40

c). 41 – 50

d). 51 – 60

e). others (please specify) _____

SECTION B: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

4. How do you rate the principal's openness and innovativeness in making and implementing school policies?

a). Very bad

b). Bad

c). Good

d). Very good

e). Excellent

5. What is your rating of the principal's level of empowering teachers by providing them with the necessary support and training to help them grow professionally?

a). Very Low

b). Low

d) Average

c). High

d). Very high

11. How would you regard the principal's policy of involving other teachers in decision making?

a). Very low

b). Low

c). Average

d). High

e). Very high

7. How would you rate honesty and frequency of communication between the principal, the teachers, parents, non-teaching staff and students?

a). Very bad

b). Bad

c). Good

d). Very good

e). Excellent

8. What is your rating on the principal's level of supervising classroom attendance?

a). Very Low

b). Low

c) Average

d). High

e). Very high

SECTION C: SCHOOL SOCIAL CLIMATE

9. How would you regard the relationship between the principal and the teachers?

a). Very bad

b). Bad

c). Good

d). Very good

e). Excellent

10. How would you rate students' relationship with the teachers in the school?

a). Very bad

b). Bad

c). Good

d). Very good

e). Excellent

12. How would you regard students' level of interaction with other students?

a). too low

b). low

c). average

d). high

e). very high

SECTION D: TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

13. Give the number of years you have served in the current station as a teacher. ____
Years.

14. How would you rate the level of teachers' preparation for the class work in your school?

- a). Very bad
- b). Bad
- c). Good
- d). Very good
- e). Excellent

15) How do you rate teachers in accomplishing their tasks and meeting set deadlines?

- a) Very poor
- b) Poor
- c) Average
- c) Very good
- e) Excellent

16. Academic qualifications:

- a). Diploma
- b). Bachelors Degree
- c). Masters Degree
- d). PhD
- e). others (please specify) _____

SECTION E: SCHOOL POPULATION

17) Give the number of students in your school_____

18) What is the average number of students per class?

- a) Less than 20
- b) 21-30
- c) 41-50
- e) Above 51 of

19) Give the shortfall of teachers based on curriculum establishment in your school—

20) How would you rate the strain experienced on resources in the institution

- a) Too low
- b) Low
- c) Average
- d) high
- e) Very high

SECTION F: LOCATION OF THE SCHOOL

21) Is your school rural or urban based?

- a) Rural
- b) Urban based

22) List some of the major effects based on the answer in question 39 above.

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Thank you so much for sparing your precious time to support this exercise.

Appendix C
Observation Chart.

Table 1: Observation chart

Things to be observed	observed	Not observed
Well displayed school motto mission and vision		
School notice board		
Suggestion box		
Displayed school routine and terms calendar of events		
Neat compound		
Friendly and hospitable students		
Swift response to bells by teachers and students		
Neat and uncongested classrooms		
Equipped and spacious laboratory		
Neat and uncongested classrooms		
Full view of the town		

Appendix D

KCSE score sheet

Name of the school

Number of candidate in the class- boys

Number of candidate in the class- girls

Students performance mean based on gender for the last three years

Genders	mean 2009	mean 2010	mean 2011
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Boys

Girls

School mean for the last three years

2009	2010	2011
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APPENDIX E



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND EXTERNAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING AND DISTANCE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTRA-MURAL STUDIES

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

21st July, 2012

REF: Uon/Cees/Memc/3/2

RE: MURIUKI AMBROSE MWITI – ADM NO - L50/66282/2010

This is to confirm that the above named person is a Masters student at the University of Nairobi, School of Continuing and Distance Education, Department of Extra-Mural Studies.

He has been pursuing a M.A in *Project Planning and Management* at the Meru Extra-Mural Centre since *September 2010*. He has completed his course work units, did the exams and awaiting results.

He is currently working on his Research Project and would request your assistance to gather research information from your organization.

Any assistance accorded to him will be highly appreciated.



CHANDI J. RUGENDO
RESIDENT LECTURER
MERU EXTRA-MURAL CENTRE AND ITS ENVIRONS