

ABSTRACT

There has been a growing trend of poor performance of English in Kenyan schools especially in Kisii South Sub-County at KCSE level. Over the past five years, performance of English language in KCSE in Kisii South Sub-County has been rated low. For instance, in the year 2012 and 2013, the sub-county registered low mean scores of 4.74 and 4.39 respectively out of a maximum score of 12. This trend of poor results has caused concern because English is both medium of instruction and compulsory subject in all Kenyan public schools. The national syllabus emphasizes the core status of English but it appears schools implement this policy at different levels, possibly causing varying overall school performance and the performance in English language in particular. The study aimed at examining the role played by individual school covert language policies in the performance of English at KCSE. The objectives of the study were: to identify and describe language practices in Kisii South Sub-County, assess how the language policies are designed and implemented and to examine the relationship between language practices and performance. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Nine (9) schools out of 30 were purposively selected for the study. An equal number of 60 pupils representing form 1-4 were selected randomly from each school (- totaling 540 pupils) to fill out questionnaires. An interview schedule and an observation schedule were applied after the questionnaires had been sent out for cross checking purposes. In addition, KCSE result of English between 2010 and 2014 was analyzed. Data was analyzed within the framework of Language Management Theory (LMT) proposed in Spolsky (2007). The results indicate that covert school language policies correlate positively with performance in English in the sampled schools; a state of affairs that goes a long way in determining overall school performance in Kisii South Sub-County. The study recommends a similar study to be done in public primary schools.