

Didactic Approaches of Teaching and Classroom Environment Influence on Academic Performance: A Perception of Gifted Students in Secondary Schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: *Academic performance is multifaceted variable including modes of teaching, classroom environment and students' ability. Therefore, many gifted students may face myriads of academic challenges, which may however, be masked by their academic prowess, yet research into this realm is limited in Kenya. Therefore, the objectives of the study was to establish the perception of gifted students on teacher - centred teaching methods and classroom environment influence on academic performance. Findings indicated that a majority 84% (88) of respondents were uncomfortable with didactic approaches of teaching. Further, greater majority of the gifted students 81% (85) perceived the classroom environment as uncondusive for effective learning. This means gifted learners due to their exceptional speed to comprehend facts and information fast tend to get bored and switch off resulting to poor academic performance. This implies that gifted students tend to enjoy application of interactive or engaging methods approaches of teaching and a conducive class environment to realise their academic prowess.*

KEY WORDS: didactic, teaching, classroom environment, perception, gifted

INTRODUCTION

Persons who are gifted and talented are those who at any educational level are identified as possessing or demonstrating outstanding potential abilities, that give evidence of high-performance in areas such as general intellectual abilities, specific academic aptitude, creative and productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts and psychomotor abilities (National Association for Gifted Children, 2019). Given that Kenya is a signatory to several international commitments on provision of education for all children including those who are gifted and talented she committed to implement the stipulated agreements and policies. The membership include the following: The UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991), Dakar Framework for Action (2000) as the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), emphasizes on the development of personality, talents, and creativity, as well as mental and physical abilities to fullest potential (Republic of Kenya, 2018, United Nations, 2008). The government of Kenya is committed to implementing actions and practices to enable individuals who are gifted and talented to access quality basic and higher education. The Basic Education Act, 2013 clearly articulates provisions for identification of children who are gifted and talented for purposes of providing education that would harness their potential. Further, the government committed itself to strengthen assessment and identification of giftedness and talentedness as stated in Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 and Sessional Paper No. of 2019.

Additionally, in September 2015, the United Nations adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and committed to implementing them by 2030. Goal 4, which reads, "By 2030, ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning opportunities," is the source of the global education agenda for 2016 to 2030. UNESCO coordinates the implementation and is responsible for monitoring of this critical goal (UNESCO, 2021). This means globally, education is fundamental in the development of the human persons and has therefore, been viewed principally in light of a fundamental human right (World Bank, 2018) and continues to play a significant role in imparting knowledge to many people, which portends a good future. Therefore, challenges facing learning among the students remain a major and a fundamental issue among policy makers. On attainment of political independence in 1963, the Government of Kenya (GK), households and the private sector collectively endeavored to enhance the development of education in the country. The rapid development of education and training in Kenya was a result of the *Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, which emphasized combating ignorance, disease and poverty. This was based on two long-standing concerns that: (1) every Kenyan child, irrespective of sex, religion and ethnicity has the inalienable

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right to access basic welfare provision, including education; and (2) the GK had an obligation to provide opportunity to all citizens to fully participate in socio-economic and political development of the country and also to empower them to improve their welfare (Republic of Kenya, 1965).

Statement of the problem

Kenya has maneuvered through three education curriculums since independence with the latest being, the Competency-Based Curriculum, rolled out in 2017 to replace the 8-4-4 Curriculum that has been in practice since 1985. The 8-4-4 Curriculum philosophy was “education for self-reliance” but turned out to be an education model of performance based on evaluation of end of course examinations (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2021, Ministry of Education, 2019). With the 8-4-4 curriculum, the future progress of the students in academic echelons was tied to their academic performance. The bias behind this principle was that a student to was viewed to have academically excelled by passing the examinations or if they cannot manage, then would not progress beyond certain thresholds of education levels. Furthermore, many potential employers prioritize formal education performance or results as a yardstick for employment in their firms (International Labour Organization, 2018, Sutherland, & Price, 2019). However, there is scares research known to the researcher with regard to the teaching methods and learning environment influence on Academic performance of intellectually gifted students in Kenya. This study seeks to contribute to this existing knowledge gap.

General objective

To determine didactic approaches of teaching and classroom environment influence on academic performance.

The objectives of this project are to:

1. Determine the didactic approaches of teaching influence on academic performance of gifted learners.
2. Determine the classroom environment influence on academic performance of gifted learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic performance is a facet of many interrelated variables key among them is the inherent students’ efforts, teachers’ inputs, school environment and students attitudes. Many schools that are performing well in Kenya often attribute their “excellent students’ performance” on students working hard and discipline in the school (Simiyu & Wasanga, 2020, Kariuki & Njeru, 2020).

Successes for a number of the schools come through heavy investment in the learning materials such as books and laboratory facilities; employment of extra tuition to the students during holidays. Emphasizing the utilization of more time and resources to encourage improved academic performance looks farfetched in line with Kariuki and Njeru (2019) as well as Boit (2001, p .15) assertion that “there exist a linkage between students’ attitudes and academic performance”. Exploring the path of students attitudes in shaping their academic performance look a viable alternative in a country where schools lack essential resources and funds to keep an upward investment in improving students’ performance.

National Association for Gifted Children (2021) stated that United States have schools tailored towards developing the student’s talent. The White Paper (2005) set out Britain’s ambition that every student- gifted and talented, struggling or average should have the right of personalized support to reach the limits of their capacity. Recognizing the unique needs of students with high potential in U.S.A, classes have been developed to help students develop their cognitive (thinking) such as logical reasoning, problem-solving critical thinking and creative thinking. Department for Education (2020) noted that there are many facets of giftedness and no single child demonstrates all of them. In Kenya, based on statistics provided by Ndurumo (1993) which pegs the proportion of gifted learners at 3-5% of the students population in Kenya, it could be possible that in Kenya where the gross enrollment was 7 million in Primary school and 1.2 million in secondary schools by the year 2008. There are approximately 210,000 to 350,000 and 42,000 to 60,000 gifted learners in primary and secondary schools respectively in the year 2008. To maximize their potential, a well-designed system of education, which is adequate, is a necessary condition. This necessitates the need for quality not quantity education for the gifted and talented since the backbone of any development desired is a sound education systems. There is need for a conducive environment for the gifted and talented persons to think and reason. However, the Kenyan education system lacks such provisions for the academically talented hence their gifts may lie either unnoticed or under-utilized (Ondigi, 2021, Mwangi & Kiriimi, 2020).

The problem with giftedness in Kenya is that it has always been seen in a cultural, social, political and educational context. This is true of all the three areas of research study namely, highly gifted, quasi giftedness and pseudo giftedness (Wanjohi, 2021, Nyamwamu, 2019). Therefore, a research work is important for identification, classification as well as intervention measures to be taken for successful performance of gifts and talents amongst Kenyan secondary schools learners. Also it is not clear as to whether these individuals are being identified in schools and being provided with appropriate curriculum and other academic opportunities that advance their academic giftedness.

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According to Waweru and Kimamo (2021) constraints to academic performance of gifted students' are numerous and needs to be investigated. There is a general consensus that there is need for intellectual ability; creative and productive thinking and specific academic aptitude; through provision of differentiated curriculum, motivation and encouragement, and provision of adequate and ideal facilities as well as opportunities to advance the gifted students. Assessment and detection of the giftedness as well as the encouragement of performance by means of challenge and guidance is very necessary, research work is thus crucial in this area. These points to the fact such learners have unique needs that require government interventions through policies to address these unique needs or challenges. This is despite the myth that gifted learners have fewer problems than other ordinary students do. As a result, they lack essential attention from the teachers (Rockwell, 2010). Other challenges include ethnicity value on education, ethnic sub culture, social economic status, perception of the subject, parental education and occupation, parenting styles, social stratification and family size affects the overall performance of such individuals (Mureithi, 2020).

The academically talented students in Kenya are placed in the mainstream with the rest of the students, which makes it difficult to recognize their needs hence making it impossible for them to exercise their academic potential to the full. On the contrary, Gifted and Talented Education (2006) stated that United States have schools tailored towards developing the student's talent. As such, the unique needs of students with high potential in U.S.A has led to special classes being set aside to help students develop their cognitive (thinking) such as logical reasoning, problem-solving critical thinking and creative thinking. The White Paper (2005) set out Britain's ambition that every student- gifted and talented, struggling or average should have the right of personalized support to reach the limits of their capacity. VanTassel-Baska and Callahan (2021) as well as Matthews and Foster (2021) who noted that special arrangements have to be organized if ever the brightest learners in a school are to find their school experience intellectually rewarding. This arrangement needs to be as varied as the particular situation demands, and might include the range and opportunities provided within any schools like debating club, special interests club, drama groups, writing workshops, music groups' science congress groups as well as other extra-curriculum activities that usually take place. With these programmes and activities gifted students unique needs would have been partly met.

Despite government commitment to make Basic Education compulsory and accessible to all children, the special needs education programme does not currently provide a specialized programme for learners who are gifted and talented. The Government and public have clearly expressed concern for establishment of educational programmes and other related services for gifted and talented individuals (Matthews, 2021). Much as the Basic Education Act 2013 provides

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK for establishment of academic centres or relevant educational institutions to cater for gifted and talented learners not much has been done by the government to this end. Further, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2019, recognizes education and training as a right for every Kenyan. This mandates the Government to ensure access to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This can be achieved by strengthening functional assessment for early identification, referral and placement. Based on the above, there is an evident gap in education provision for learners who are gifted and talented as stipulated in various legal frameworks. This situation calls for a proactive approach to address the needs of persons who are gifted and talented in Kenya. It is important to have relevant tools that can be used for functional assessment of persons who are gifted and talented for purposes of appropriate placement and provision of relevant services. Therefore, there is a need to carry out a needs assessment of giftedness and talentedness in Kenya to form a basis for development of appropriate functional assessment tools and thereafter meet the unique educational needs of gifted and talented learners (Gituma & Ogeng'o, 2021; Kariuki & Wanjohi, 2020).

Russia launched the space satellite Sputnik in 1957, and this awoken the promotion of specialized education services in the USA in 1960s. In fact, in 1960, Federal funding was appropriated to identify and establish programs for students with high academic performance especially in mathematics and sciences. Research work was conducted to establish the most effective methods for providing excellent special educational experiences to gifted learners. In the late 1980s, there was landmark registration which emphasized Congress belief that unless the special abilities of gifted and talented students are recognized and developed during their elementary and secondary school years, much of special contribution to the national interest were lost. In 1990, an Act providing \$11million for research demonstration and personnel preparation in this field was passed. To date, USA has become quite concerned about the quality of its education and the development of gifts and talents amongst its learners. Kenya can borrow a leave from these countries in her provision of specialized education for her gifted and talented students. This is because intellectually gifted and talented learners may have special needs or more aspects of their development and may experience a number of special stresses and difficulties. These may include frustration caused by having skills at different stages of development (e.g. having advanced cognitive skills but only normal for age handwriting skills); Difficulties in gaining access to a challenging level of education or curriculum appropriate to their needs; Increased fear of failure and sense of failure if not 'perfect' among other difficulties.

METHODOLOGY

Geographical Location of the Study

Uasin Gishu County is one of the counties established by the Constitution of Kenya (2010). It is situated in the Rift Valley region of Kenya and covers a total area of 3,345.2 Km². It extends between longitudes 34° 50' East and 35° 37' East and latitudes 0° 03' South and 0° 55' North. It borders Trans Nzoia to the North, Elgeyo-Marakwet to the East, Baringo to the South East, Kericho to the South, Nandi to the South West and Kakamega County to the North West. The County headquarters; Eldoret town is approximately 350 Km from Nairobi. (Republic of Kenya, 2010). It has urban and rural settings with cosmopolitan populace. Students admitted to secondary schools in Uasin Gishu county are from varied backgrounds with different cultures and socio-economic status, thus varied giftedness. The county was chosen for the study because it covers both urban and rural characteristics. The county is well known for milk, maize and wheat production as well as industrialization. This means it a land of boundless opportunities, nestled in the heart of Kenya's Rift Valleys. With regard to educational institutions, it has a good number of universities and colleges within Eldoret town, county headquarters, and its environs. The county boasts of a cosmopolitan population, therefore, appropriate for the study. The area was also selected for the study because there is no research on selected academic factors affecting academic performance of gifted students in secondary schools in the county that has been carried out known to the researcher. In addition, the county has over 200 secondary schools which is an adequate number of schools with all the categories of schools required present. They included national, extra-county, county and private schools.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

A survey design was deemed the most appropriate because this was an exploratory and descriptive study meant to examine the perception of gifted students on selected academic factors. A survey design is normally applicable where systematic gathering of factual quantifiable information is necessary for decision-making about characteristics of populations. Further, this design was adopted because it allowed the researcher to cover a wide area during data collection. This makes it possible for the findings for the study be generalized and cover the entire group of gifted students in the country. The entire county has a student population of 15,342. The target population in the current study was 153 students and 100 teachers incorporated from all categories of schools in the county. These one hundred and fifty three students were arrived at based on the assertion that in every normally distributed population the gifted students consists of one percent (1%) (Pfeiffer, 2015). Simple random sampling technique was used to select 30 schools from the geographical location of the study. This technique ensured equal chances to all categories of schools to participate in the study. The respondents comprise of Form 3 & 4 gifted students. This group of students was

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK chosen for the study because they had stayed long enough in secondary school and their performance record could easily be tracked revealing their potential. Their outstanding academic performance was used as a yardstick in identifying them. This meant ability for one to remain at top position (1-5 in class) and acquire quality grades (A's & B's) in more than five external examinations (Zonal exams). Further, a checklist was issued to teachers to use in identifying these students.

FINDINGS

This section focused on analysis, presentation and interpretation of the data collected from the field. The study used questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The study had a sample of thirty (30) teachers and one hundred and twenty (120) students. Each of the respondents was given the appropriate questionnaire. The response rate was as provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Response return rates of the respondents in Uasin Gishu during the study.

Respondents	Response rate	Response Frequency
Teachers	28	93.3
Students	105	87.5

(Source Survey 2023)

The response return rate was highest among the teachers than among the students. Lower response rate among students was attributed to the time of sampling where the students were already starting their exams. The students had indicated their willingness to respond to the questionnaire after finishing their examinations. However, after the examinations some of the schools closed and therefore students went home with the questionnaires.

Background of Respondents

To establish the nature of the respondents sampled, the study sought the background information of the respondents sampled during the study. The background information sought included the sex, age and the class of the respondents.

Distribution of the Respondents Gender

First, the information sought from the respondents was concerned with their sex. Results of the sex distribution of the students and teachers sampled during the study are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Gender of the students and teachers sampled during the study

Gender	Students		Teachers	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Male	52	49.5	16	57.1
Female	53	50.5	12	42.9
Total	105	100	28	100

(Source: Survey data, 2023)

From table 4.2, a total of 105 students' respondents were sampled, out of which (49.5%) were male while the rest (50.5%) were females. There were (57%) male and (42.9%) and female teachers sampled. This is indicative that there were more female respondents than male. For teachers the opposite was observed the male were more compared to female teachers' respondents.

Distribution of the Respondents by Age

The study also determined the distribution of the students by age. Table 4.3 provides information on the age distribution of the students sampled for the study.

Table 4.3: Age distribution of the students' respondents

Age distribution	Frequency	Percent
13-14 yrs	13	12.4
15-16 yrs	46	43.8
17-18 yrs	33	31.4
19-20 yrs	13	12.4
Total	105	100

(Source: Survey data, 2023)

Out of the 105 students sampled, 12.4% were in the age bracket of 13-14 years while (43.8%) were aged 15-16 years, 31.4% were aged 17-18 years while the rest 12.4% were aged 19-20 years. This is indicative that majority of the students were in the age bracket of 15-16, followed by 17-18 years old. Therefore, their reasoning is mature enough and the response would be reliable. Also, the research was conducted among the form 3 and 4 students and most of them naturally fall in this age bracket.

Distribution of the Respondents by Class

Finally, the study determined the distribution of the students by class. Information concerning the class where the students' respondents were sampled from is shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Class from where the respondents were sampled

Class	Frequency	Percent
Form 3	51	48.6
Form 4	54	51.4
Total	105	100

From table 4.4, which consists of 105 students,(48.6%) were sampled from Form 3 while the remaining (51.4%)were sampled from Form 4. This is indicative that Form 4 were majority of the respondents in the study. These was an advantage to the sturdy because the teachers were certain that students were truly academically gifted based on their performance records and teachers observations over the years.

Naturally, different students have selective methods that they like and which make them understand their studies (Dunn & Dunn, 2019). Teacher-centered methods are often characterized by a traditional approach where the teacher is the primary source of knowledge and students are passive recipients, can have several disadvantages for intellectually gifted learners. Do gifted students perceive teacher centered teaching method as a booster or hindrance to academic performance? This question sought to establish on the perception of such students on teacher-centred teaching methods on performance. The question was sought because not all teaching methods are suitable to all students. To answer the question participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire by ticking the most appropriate choice in the column which represents their perception. The responses of the participants have been presented in Table 4.

Table 4.4. Perception of the intellectually gifted learners of teacher-centered/ didactic teaching methods on Academic performance

Statement	SD [1]	D [2]	U [3]	A [4]	SA [5]	Totals
Teaching methods used are easy to understand thus boosting my performance.	2%	10%	6%	36%	46%	100%
Laboratory experiments are adequate therefore improving performance	23%	27%	17%	18%	15%	100%

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Individual attention is given during teaching thus boosting my performance	52%	48%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Class teaching provides for individual independent studies thus boosting my performance attention.	35%	24%	12%	22%	7%	100%
Classroom teaching is activity based thus enhance my performance.	45%	35%	0%	10%	10%	100%
Group activities are adequate in all subjects thus boosting my performance.	34%	27%	10%	15%	14%	100%
I like group discussion with because boost any performance.	17%	22%	5%	26%	30%	100%
I find the teaching methods employed by teachers interesting hence my performance is boosted.	53%	20%	9%	6%	12%	100%
A lot of teaching materials are used by teachers	40%	25%	12%	19%	4%	100%
Would you rank teaching by lecture method good	48%	36%	8%	8%	0%	100%
Would you rank teaching by dictation good	59%	20%	6%	10%	5%	100%
Would you rank description teaching method good	63%	37%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Assessment of learning that include performance based approaches like use of real world problems for students to comprehend and transfer of ideas and processes motivates and boosts any performance	50%	25%	12%	4%	9%	100%
School administrators are friendly to the students	39%	25%	10%	20%	6%	100%
The school environment encourage learning thus enhancing my performance.	44%	32%	5%	12%	7%	100%
The School routine allows time for personal study thus enhancing my performance.	50%	27%	7%	12%	4%	100%
The library is well equipped and students are encouraged to spend time there thus enhancing my performance.	48%	25%	13%	5%	9%	100%
The school provide multiple texts and supplementary materials for content	12%	16%	9%	20%	43%	100%

preparation performance.	thus	enhancing	my						
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(Source survey data, 2023)

Key

Strongly Disagree D = Disagree U = Not sure A = Agree SA = Strongly Agree

From the findings it is evident that 36% (38) of the respondents perceived that teaching methods used were easy to understand, 43% (45) of the respondents strongly disagreed that they found the teaching methods employed to be interesting, 27% (28) of the respondents disagreed that group activities are adequate in all subjects. In addition, 48% (50) of the respondents strongly disagreed that individual attention is given to students during teaching and learning as 27% (28) agreed that the school provide materials that are appropriate for gifted students while 38% (40) of the respondents strongly disagreed that the library is well equipped and students are encouraged to spend time there. Additionally, 39% (41) of the respondents disagreed that school administrators are friendly to the students. From the registered percentages, a majority of this students perceived the teacher centred method as not favouring them hence influencing their academic performance negatively. Moreover, these teachers centred method are found not to be interesting by students instead they are boring since they leave gifted the students out. They do not give room for self-expression by the student. From the findings it can be deduced that most schools do not have libraries and those with them do not allow access to it by students. Students are restricted on when to visit the library and how many books to borrow at a time. This implied that the current teaching methods being used in schools are not suitable and they do not enhance student’s studies. Figure 1. indicate rank of teaching by lecture method.

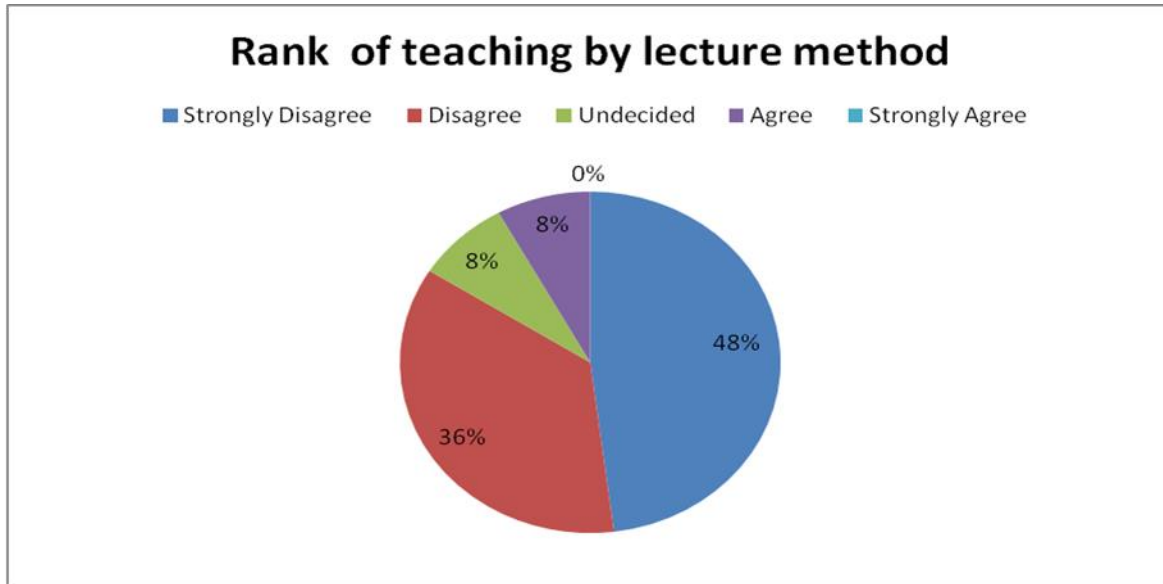


Figure 1. Rank of teaching by lecture method

From the findings it was further evident that a majority of intellectually gifted students that is 48% (50) perceived that the lecture method was not the best way of teaching and learning. Moreover, 36% (38) of the respondents did not perceive that lecture method was preferred method of teaching. From the findings, it can be deduced that lecture method was not a popular method of teaching and learning especially among the gifted learners. Figure 2. indicate the findings on description teaching method.

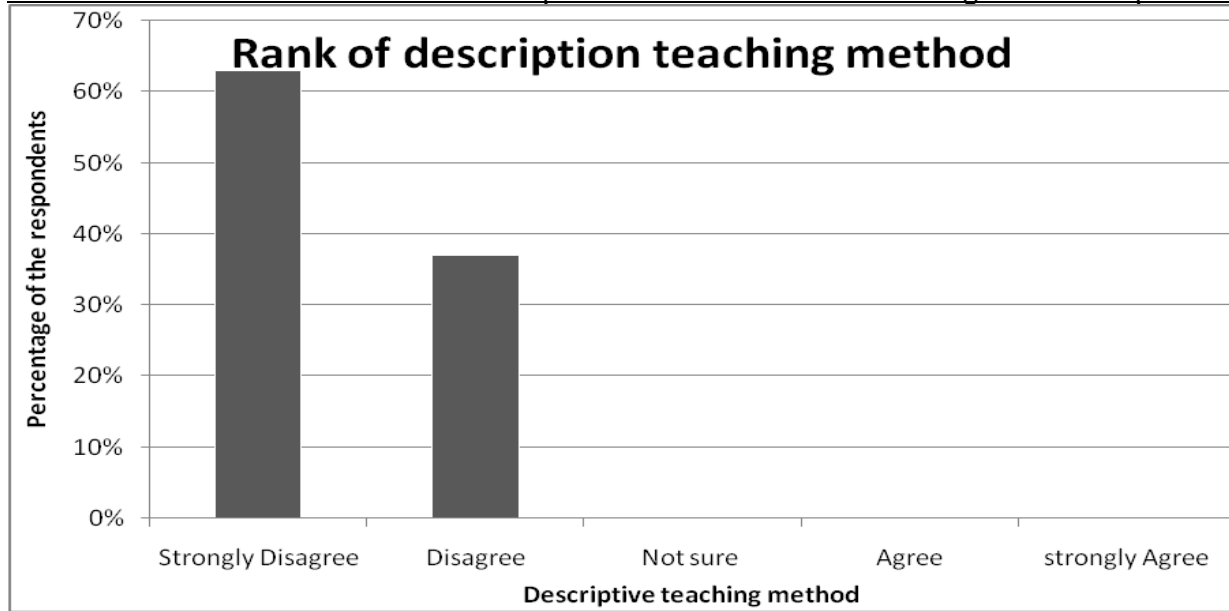


Figure 2. Description teaching method

From the findings, it was evident that 63% (66) of the respondents perceived that teaching by description was not a suitable method of learning while 37% (34) disagreed that descriptive method of teaching was beneficial to their learning. This implied that descriptive teaching method was a least preferred method of teaching by a majority of the intellectually gifted learners. The findings on perception of gifted learners on the classroom environment is given on Fig. 3 below.

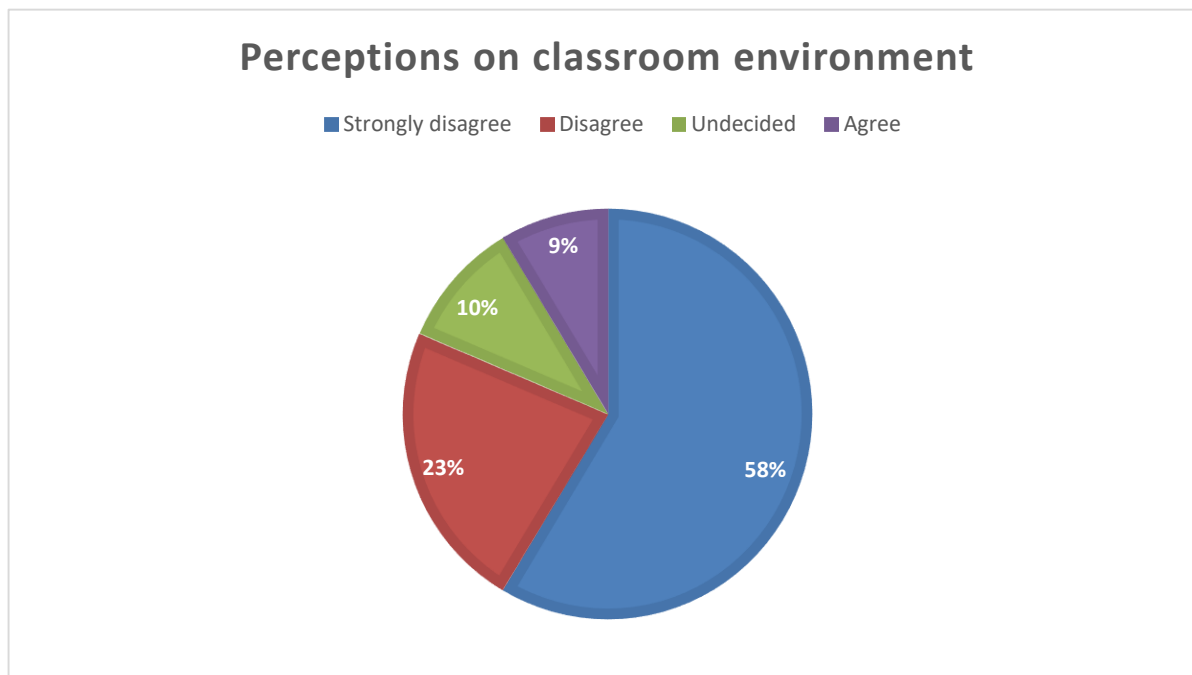


Figure 3. Perception of gifted learners on the classroom environment

It was evident that from the findings that a majority of the respondents 58%, which translate to (61), perceived that the classroom environment was not favourable for effective learning while 23% that is equivalent to (24) gifted students disagreed that the enjoyed their classroom environment provides by their schools. This implied that these learners were not comfortable with their current classroom environment. They may be certain things that are lacking with which their academic performance was affected negatively.

Qualification of teachers

The study found it important to establish the qualification of teachers. This information was meant to help relate academic performance of gifted learners and teachers contribution towards the same. Data collected has been presented in table 4.5

Table 4.5 Teachers qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
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Diploma	4	15
University Degree	15	55
Masters	8	30
Totals	28	100

(Source: Survey data 2023)

The study found out that the teachers are very qualified with (55%) of them being university graduates (30%) having Masters Degree in various fields and (15%) being diploma holders. This shows that they are able to handle and attend to the gifted learners with much ease in a number of ways. This include; assigning them individual work like research in a certain subject topic and then present to the class. The presenters are thereafter to answer question from the class as per the presentation, as well as group projects in line with the curriculum.

DISCUSSIONS

The first finding of this study was that a greater percentage 59% (61) of the participants perceived that dictation method of teaching was not good at all. This perception carried the day concerning lecture and description methods just to mention a few. The intellectually gifted learners due to their exceptional speed to comprehend facts and information fast tend to get bored and switch off which is in line with what Cross (2016) established. This implies that this group of students would be more comfortable with the teaching methods that give room for learners' participation in the learning process. Perhaps application of discussion, learners being assigned topics to research on thereafter present in class among other learner-centred methods would appeal more to these students. According to Tomlinson (2017), gifted students often have unique learning needs and paces. This means a one-size-fits-all approach does not accommodate the individual learning styles and speeds of gifted students thus leading to boredom and disengagement.

Peters and Matthews (2016), assert that a conducive learning environment that gives room for thinking and reflection is essential for educating gifted persons. Conducive learning environment can be achieved through the collective responsibility of the school administration and manager. The school administration should allocate adequate funds, teaching and learning resources and space within which the gifted students can nurture their gifts and talents. Schools policies are believed to shape students (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2019). Even though training of potentially gifted learners in a conducive environment is capital intensive, in the long run it outweighs its cost. It leads to rapid progress in the society and from training of the gifted persons, new politicians, doctors, scientists, lawyers, artists and the likes emerge (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius & Worrell, 2019). Therefore, for a society to have the listed professionals among others, a supportive and

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enriched classroom environment is necessary so as to significantly enhances their academic performance. In fact, curriculum diversification for the gifted students is important. Key changes are expected especially in the content, skills and learning environment. It is normally essential for the gifted and talented students to have a content designed to allow them exercise fully their advanced intellectual abilities (Robinson, Shore & Enersen, 2021). Koech (1999) noted the need for the education system to accommodate the special needs of the gifted learners but, up to date very little has been done by government towards realising this recommendation by the commission.

The majority 63% (66) of the gifted students stated that teacher-centred teaching methodology had a negative effect on the academic performance. However, when the actual performances of the students were obtained in correspondence to the teaching methods, it was established that these teaching method directly impacted on the student's performance in examinations. The examination results did not reflect their advanced intellectual level. They poorly or averagely performed in examinations as indicated by the study findings. The students were also asked whether there were independent/personal study programmes and individual attention among others as mentioned in the student questionnaire. The responses clearly indicated that these programmes were not present in schools since only 4% (4) admitted to its presence while a greater majority 50% (52) denied allocation for personal studies in the class timetable. This was probably because the school routines were highly packed and did not allow for any independent study time. The reason for congested school routines and the timetable was perhaps to give room for syllabus coverage hence all the time was allocated for the lessons.

This findings concurs with the study conducted by (Van & Tassel Baska, 2006) that teachers should seek to arrange alternate learning placements for gifted learners such as placement in Laboratories and individual research projects. These promote active rather than passive learning which gifted learners enjoy. However, this findings is a contrary to the results of a study by Nguru (2007) which established that teachers employ teacher – centred methods of teaching so as to cover the syllabus on time in schools at the expense of the learners' gain/benefit. The National Examination Council dictates that a learner should have been taken through the required syllabus before presentation for national examination. Perhaps it is against this pressure that teachers tend to bother more on completion of syllabus as prerequisite for learners to sit for the exams. The study was unable to draw a clear line on whether the coverage of syllabus should override the students gain in the learning process. Perhaps a research work on the influence of the examination body KNEC and coverage of the syllabus on academic performance of the gifted learners would be necessary to unveil the position syllabus coverage plays on academic performance. But with this scenario in place the gifted learners did not seem to enjoy teacher-centred teaching methods. Then probably

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student-centred ones would have been more ideal for excellent academic performance of the gifted learners. These seem more appropriate approach to teaching since they bring the students on board as they become involved in the teaching learning process.

The study further observed that most of the teachers from the sampled schools were qualified and experienced with 85% (24) being holders of Bachelor and Masters Degrees. This implies that they had the knowledge and skills on how to handle and enhance gifted learners academic performance. This study finding further concurs with Subotnik et al., (2019) observation that qualified and experienced teachers enhance performance in their subject area. Gifted students are at risk of failure in many school setting due to inadequate educational opportunities, untrained or under-trained staff and the perception that gifted learners farewell on their own. The study established that teachers play a key role in the learning process. Therefore, as a matter of fact their qualifications and experience are issues that require attention by the government. World Bank (2021) observes that schools in urban areas are known to perform better than those in rural settings due to availability of a wide range of learning resources, qualified teachers and admission of students with quality grades among other factors.

Implications to Research and Practice

The study noted that future research should focus on developing and testing innovative teaching strategies tailored for gifted students. The strategies should emphasize engaging learning approaches and problem-solving. With regard to teachers' qualifications, the government should prioritize training of teachers and professional development programs. These trainings should be informed by recognizing and addressing the unique needs of gifted students. Further, curriculum design should offer flexibility and opportunities for gifted students to explore subjects in-depth, aligning with their interests and abilities, which is hoped that the current Kenyan Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) will address this concern. Classroom environment should be inclusive by fostering curiosity and intellectual growth thus help gifted students reach their full potential. Finally, Kenyan educational policies should support the continuous assessment and adaptation of teaching methods to meet the evolving needs of gifted students.

CONCLUSION

The study therefore concludes that teaching methods plays a key role and affect gifted students performance. Teachers' qualification is also key in enhancing academic performance of gifted students. Conversely, teachers' qualification factor needs attention in the teaching and learning process of the gifted learners. Further, a conducive learning environment with essential resources is crucial if such student is to fully realise their potentials. These means that understanding the

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impact of didactic approaches and classroom environments on the academic performance of gifted students is crucial in enhancing their educational experience and cannot be ignored in any society that desires and plans for socio-economic development of its citizens. By adopting research-informed practices, educators can create a more effective and engaging learning environment for gifted learners.

Future Research

The study noted that future research should focus on developing and testing innovative teaching strategies tailored for gifted students. Also, an in-depth research concerning teacher factor is necessary in understanding fully the influence of teachers in academic performance of gifted students.

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Appendix 1: Map of Kenya showing the locations of Uasin Gishu County



Appendix 2: Map Uasin Gishu County

