

You Can Influence Good Examination Results For Your Child.

Written by admin

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By Maina, T. E. N.

“Do not forget what you have learnt. Education is your life- guard it well. (Prov. 4:13)



There is a lot of emphasis laid on good national examination results in our country. How a child performs in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) largely determines his future success. While examinations are not a perfect way to determine the best candidates for advancement in education, a better way has yet to be found and therefore one must aspire to pass these examinations.

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If you are a student, parent or guardian bringing up a child, a teacher or other stakeholder in education, you must realize that there is a lot you can do to ensure good examination results. But first you need to understand your role and other phenomenon that contribute to the candidates' performance in the national examinations.

The Candidates: They are undoubtedly the major stakeholders in examination performance, yet often appear reluctant to perform to the expectations of the other stake-holders. It is unfortunate that our candidates are subjected to national examinations at times in their lives when many natural changes are occurring in their bodies- phenomena that raise concerns to majority of them.

Their first national examination - K.C.P.E comes at the age of 12-14 years. At this time the period of puberty is establishing itself or is on-going.

Many strange things happen to the candidates, and especially the girls, that may disrupt their learning and affect performance. It is important that the pupils are facilitated through counselling and information about the changes in their bodies and how to handle themselves. Sex education is important and so are interventions such as provision of sanitary pads for girls in order to ensure they do not drop out due to pregnancy or miss school days when they are having their periods.

The second major examination is KCSE which comes as the candidate is "struggling" with the ongoing qualitative and quantitative changes in physical cognitive social and moral behaviour- the peak of dolescence. During this period, one becomes extremely self- conscious (egocentric), critical and rebellious against adults (idealistic rebellion) and lacks creativity. The lack of creativity is especially disturbing because, it is at this stage that they have greater creativity potential than ever before. The candidate goes on to waste time trying to discover what they wrongly think the adults don't know. They procrastinate on important educational matters thinking that they have a lot of time. In their adolescent wisdom, they resent the fact that it is their parents, who formulate their educational plans. they think they are doing it all for their parents. They start demanding autonomy. This hidden resistance if left unchecked creates room for failure in the examinations for otherwise bright students.

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The point is illustrated by for example students who leave Form IV with say a C- in Mathematics , and after joining bridging courses at various universities, emerge with As. This is because reality is taking the place of the adolescent fantasies. They are taking charge of their lives. To add value to their secondary education, the students must shed the "don't care attitude" and work hard, be obedient, focused and confident. This has to start as soon as one joins secondary school.

The role of the parent: The parents must play their upbringing roles from the birth of the child. All parents are teachers, and majority are successful, as far as teaching the child the onerous tasks of walking and talking. Beyond these two, many especially men abandon their roles, but still await good results at every development stage of the child. More often than not they get disappointed. Parents should motivate their children by being concerned about them and paying close attention to their performance.

The parents should take the "drivers seat" in growth and educational formulation of children from the day the child is born up to the time he/she completes Form IV. They should expect increasing resistance as the child grows up, but must never give up. Setting unrealistic goals for the child is being unfair and unrealistic. A caring parent understands the limits of their children at all levels of life. Parental concern right from birth, results in a confident child who ends up excelling in the examinations.

This concern is evident in many primary school teachers (my own observation) whose children usually perform well in examinations. Poverty, parent's level of education and social status should not be impediments to the parents in playing their roles successfully. My father for example was illiterate, but followed up on the education of his children with passion. He did the unimaginable at the time- renting his land to get fees to educate his children. To many, this was a foolish and worthless venture. However, all his children did well in school and reached Form IV (not a mean achievement at the time) with some going on for higher education in various universities.

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The role of teachers: *“A student is neither above his teacher nor a servant below his master (Matthew 10:14)”.*

The teachers have a big influence on the pupils/student. Teachers love success and will enthusiastically celebrate the success of their students regardless of their backgrounds.

The teachers to a large extent influence the choice of secondary school for pupils and the subject specialization for students in secondary schools. Teacher's who relate their subjects to careers and life applications get their students motivated and eager to learn. Teachers may wear a harsh face while in the classroom, but they become friendly and welcoming to the pupils/students who make individual efforts to follow them for clarification on various issues in a topic or even giving them work to mark.

They are a special group of human beings- perhaps they are aware of the harsh punishment awaiting teachers who do not deliver! *“Not many of you should presume to be teachers... those who teach will be judged more strictly (James 3:1).”*

The teachers can help add a lot of value to students. For example in some schools students are admitted with low marks in Form 1 and rise to pass well to University. For example, a student in my former school (Ruiru Day) entered Form I with 343 marks and left Form 4 with an A-. This is what I'd term as value added performance and many can achieve the same. “It is the work that is put into hours and not the hours put into work that matters.”

The role of peers: The influence of peers is a force to reckon with in the pupils/ students social and academic life. The composition of peers is complex and its influence very powerful and sometimes ruthless. It is countered by the forces of the individual, teachers, parents, the society to mention just a few, yet it sometimes overcomes all these to be detriment of the pupil/ student who falls victim. There is usually a very small percentage of destructive peers that is so powerful and conspicuous that it masks the larger percentage which is constructive and beneficial. The former group goes out full- blast to spoil others. They lead in truancy, deviance, incitement against teachers and authority, and strikes. They end up performing poorly academically, and lead followers down the same line. However peers are a necessary part and parcel of the society and have many other positive aspects.

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Role models: According to Bandura (1977), human learning is a function of observing and imitating behaviours of others. These could be teachers, family members, class mates and prominent people in the society. The role models are usually high achievers or have appealing characteristics to the pupils /students.

During the Head teacher's seminars, we visited many schools in different provinces. In Nyanza Province we visited schools like Sawagongo, St. Mary's Yala, Hawinga and Ngiya Girls to mention but a few. I noted quite clearly that many students had identified their role models and were literally working hard to achieve the success of their role models- mainly from the province and in prestigious jobs. This is a clear case positive role modelling. The observation was different in Central, Rift Valley, and Eastern provinces where many students in well-to-do schools seemed to lack ambition and focus.

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