ABSTRACT
Composition writing helps learners to acquire writing skills. However, students’ performance in Kiswahili composition at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination shows that national performance has been fluctuating with a mean of 14.20 in 2008, 15.40 in 2009, 14.32 in 2010, 16.43 in 2011 and 10.43 in 2012 out of 40 marks. From year 2008 to 2012, Kisumu West Sub-County students’ performance in the Joint Evaluation Test (JET) shows that performance was lower compared to other sub-counties in Kisumu County with a mean of 11.20 which was below the county mean of 13.49. Although studies have established that teachers, students, and resources are key determinants of performance, students’ academic performance in Kiswahili composition has remained below average in public secondary schools in Kisumu West Sub-County. The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of selected factors on students’ academic performance in Kiswahili composition in public secondary schools in Kisumu West Sub County. Objectives of the study were to: establish the influence of teacher related factors; ascertain the influence of student related factors, and determine the influence of resource related factors on students’ academic performance in Kiswahili composition. This study was guided by the production function theory of education advanced by Cobb and Douglas (1928), where a school is seen as a firm which receives inputs (teachers, students and resources) and transforms them to educational outputs through a process. This theory measures output (students’ academic performance) by standardized achievement test scores. The study also used a conceptual framework showing various factors influencing students’ academic performance in Kiswahili composition. The study employed descriptive survey and correlation designs. Target population was 1622 Form 4 students, 54 teachers of Kiswahili Language, 33 Heads of Department (HOD) and 1 Sub-County Curriculum Support Officer (SCCSO). Purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 48 teachers, 29 HOD and 1 SCCSO. Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) formula was used to select a sample of 310 Form 4 students. Teacher and student questionnaire, HOD/SCCSO interview schedule and Kiswahili composition test were used for data collection. Face and content validity was established by consulting experts from Maseno University, Department of Educational Communication, Technology and Curriculum Studies. Test-retest technique was used to establish reliability of the questionnaire. Pearson’s correlation gave ‘r’ value of .805, which was above the threshold of 0.7, and this was acceptable. Correlation was used to establish the relationship between the selected factors and students academic performance. The study found a positive strong relationship between teacher related factors (r=.538, p≤.05; 2-tailed), student related factors (r=.523, p≤.05; 2-tailed) and resource related factors (r=.821, p≤.05; 2-tailed) and students’ academic performance. Multiple-regression was used to assess the strength of relationship between the selected factors and students’ academic performance and found that $R^2=.694$. This implied that improvement in the selected factors would increase students’ academic performance in Kiswahili composition. This was supported by HODS’ and SCCSO through interview. It is hoped that the findings of this study would provide information that is to be a base for corrective measures to arrest the unexpected dismal performance in Kiswahili composition in public secondary schools in Kisumu West Sub-County. This study will also increase available knowledge in the field of education about the factors influencing students’ academic performance Kiswahili composition in Kisumu West Sub-County, thus increasing the literature on factors that influence students’ academic performance in Kiswahili composition. Finally, the findings from this study will add to the knowledge on which further research on related issues can be based.