ABSTRACT

In Kenya, one use of public examinations is for selection for further education. The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) is the first public examination used for selecting learners into secondary schools. In 2009, Kisii Central had 8,514 KCPE candidates from 261 schools who scored a mean of 229.34 out of 500 marks. Only 0.36% were selected to join national schools while 35.9% and 39.6% joined provincial and district secondary schools respectively as 24.1% missed secondary school places. When the same cohort sat for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) in 2013 the district had a mean of 5.1 out of 12 points. It was therefore necessary to determine the effectiveness of using KCPE as a selection tool for secondary school admission. The purpose of this study was to determine the predictive validity of KCPE among public secondary school students in Kisii central Sub-county, Kenya: analysis of gender and school differences. Objectives of the study were to: determine the predictive validity of KCPE scores for KCSE scores; investigate gender differences in the predictive validity of KCPE scores for KCSE scores; investigate school category differences in the KCPE-KCSE scores relationship and to investigate school size differences in the KCPE-KCSE scores relationship. This study was guided by a conceptual framework where KCPE was the independent variable, KCSE the dependent variable while students' gender, school category and size were intervening factors. It adopted Correlational and *Ex-post-facto* research designs. The study population was 3,897 KCSE candidates from 55 public secondary schools. Stratified random sampling based on school type and size was used to select 16 public secondary schools for the study. Saturated sampling was employed to include all KCSE candidates whose KCPE marks were available in each sampled school, yielding a sample of 1,391 students. Data used included 2006 KCPE scores and 2010 KCSE scores of the same students under study. Data was collected using a researcher made pro forma. It was analyzed quantitatively using correlations and regression analyses. Validity of the instrument was established by presenting it to experts in the Department of Educational Psychology, School of Education for verification. Reliability indices were not calculated because data used were scores of standardized national examinations which could not be manipulated further. Results showed a strong positive Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r=0.693$; $n=1391$; $p < 0.05$) between KCPE and KCSE scores. There was no statistically significant difference in correlation of KCSE and KCPE scores based on gender, school category and school size. The study concluded that KCPE scores is a good predictor of KCSE scores regardless of learners' gender, school category and size. It recommended that; KCPE should continue to be used as selection tool for secondary school admission; both male and female learners should be accorded equal encouragement to improve their academic outcomes; learners should be encouraged to join any type of school convenient to them regardless of category or size and school evaluation using KCSE examination scores should be based on students' KCPE scores. Significance of the study may be to serve as a reference for stakeholders interested in finding out more about predictive validity of other selection examinations, to help education stakeholders gauge the effectiveness of use of KCPE as a selection tool for secondary school admission, determine the level of value addition to learners by secondary schools and identify weak learners in advance so as to employ special teaching and learning strategies which help them improve their grades.