

Evaluating the Influence of Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project (SEQIP) on Quality Education in Public Primary and Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Case of Marigat Sub-County

Alfred Yator Komen¹
Kefa Nyandoro²

¹alfredkomen90@gmail.com

²onyandoro@mku.ac.ke

¹Student, ²Lecturer - School of Social Science, Department of Social and Development Studies, Mount Kenya University

ABSTRACT

In Kenya, many projects have been done in the education sector to improve the quality of education, and among these projects is the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project (SEQIP). Since the SEQIP inception in 2017, much has been done in public primary and secondary schools and little has been reported. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the influences of the SEQIP on the education sector in Marigat Sub-County in Kenya. A descriptive survey design was used where structured questionnaires alongside interviews were administered to the sampled respondents to collect the data which was analyzed using Excel. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the data. The data were collected from 68 schools; 17 from each zone and 3 teachers from each school, all 4 curriculum support officers (CSOs) from each Zone, an SCDE, and a TSC Sub-County director which formed the sample size. The study found that the SEQIP project has helped in the improvement of quality as said by 73% of the respondents. The project also was found to have improved the rate of retention in classes 7 and 8 and also the transition to secondary school as said by 60% of the respondents. It was further established that 93% of the respondents agreed that the project has enhanced the adoption of new curriculum reforms. The study came to the conclusion that SEQIP made a significant contribution to the creation of curriculum designs and teacher training. The study suggests that the School-Based Teacher Support System (SBTSS) application in teaching should be monitored and reported on. The Sub-County education quality assurance officers should be tasked with checking the proper implementation of the training's contents in school by the teachers.

Key Words: Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project (SEQIP), Quality Education, Public Schools

I. INTRODUCTION

In addition to the many other World Bank financed programs that came before it, such as GPE- PRIEDE and TUSOME, the Marigat sub-county was chosen to be one of the thirty sub-counties in Kenya to execute the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project (SEQIP), Government of Kenya (GOK, 2017). This is because of the adverse effects that its climate and economy have. Due to the tremendous constraints posed by distance, inadequate infrastructural and sociocultural resources, the sub-county has been posting poor national examination results for a number of years. This is in comparison to the results posted by other sub-counties that are located within Baringo County.

According to Sifuna and Kaime (2007) and UNESCO (2000), a lack of resources is one of the most significant factors that contribute to a decline in educational quality. As is to be anticipated, the performance of the sub-county should be about comparable to that of the other sub-counties, such as Mogotio, Elda Ravine, Baringo Central, and Baringo North, which are, sadly, not privileged with the SEQIP. It is not yet known how Marigat Sub-County is adapting to the new curriculum. Considering that Kenyan education has been the one inherited from the colonial master and that it entirely concentrates on general education rather than the development of competencies, it is not yet known how Marigat Sub-County will adapt to the new curriculum (Gould, 1993).

Onyango-Ouma (2006) posits that the lackluster result on the national test is partly attributed to the manner in which the learning content is presented. Lelei and Weidman (2012) argue that the primary focus of education in Kenya is on conveying the material, with minimal attention paid to the development of skills and capabilities. However, Slade and Griffith (2013) aver that learners stand to gain a great deal when the education they receive contributes to ongoing education and the enhancement of their quality of life. As a result, the projects aimed at improving the quality of the service should be closely watched and assessed to see whether the learners will be positively or negatively affected by them. The implementation of a methodical Monitoring and Evaluation procedure is what will determine whether or not the projects in the education sector will be successful. According to the UNDP (2009), evaluation is a crucial part of any project since it allows stakeholders from the community to be involved in checking on the impact

and the measurable outcomes of project operations. The wider picture of how the project outcomes are relevant to the community in which the project is executed, as well as the initiative's impact and ability to be sustainable, can be gleaned through monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

The evaluation of a project is a method that provides a standard criticism of the project based on measurable outcomes and the advancement towards its objectives and targets (Haass & Guzman (2019). Evaluation makes it possible to ascertain whether or not a project was successful and, as a result, whether or not it had any influence. As a result, it is advisable to conduct a study that assesses the effects of the SEQIP while it is still in the process of being put into action. When the components of SEQIP are evaluated, any flaws that do not have the desired effect on the educational system becomes apparent, at which point the County Project Coordination Unit (CPCU) is given suggestions regarding additional corrective actions to take (UNDP, 2009).

The impact of the SEQIP was analyzed in this study so as to have a better understanding of its scope. This study would help close the knowledge and assessment gaps that now exist in the field of education, and it would also pave the way for additional studies to be conducted in the future on projects that are carried out within the education sector.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A study by Baker (1988) states that monitoring is a way in which project on – going activities are tracked to find progress against planned tasks. It therefore meant that a regular oversight should be undertaken on the project implementation and all its cycle. According to Chen (1997), project monitoring concerns itself with activities of the intervention such as field visits, stakeholders' meetings, activities documentation and regular reporting. A quality teaching is often taken to entail a raft of measures that should be carried out in a diligent manner. Quality teaching bears quality learning. Lack of enough quality classroom practices and a recommended textbook ratio as well as student teacher ratio can adversely affect the quality of teaching in a learning institution.

Kennedy (2010) postulates that there should not be much underscore on teaching quality at the expense of teacher quality simply because teachers' ability to enhanced and effective process of teaching and learner development is greatly influenced by not only the individual characteristics but also the working condition of the teacher. According to recent studies carried out by majority of researchers, it is suggested that teachers' ability to enact quality teaching is in tandem with the years of teaching experience and that it is seen to improve gradually after the first few years in the classroom (Harris & Sass, 2011). Further improvement is experienced when teacher work in supportive school conditions.

Furthermore, other studies suggest that teachers' effectiveness in carrying out quality teaching does not notably, being influenced by teachers' individual characteristics nor the teacher to student ratio nor textbook – student ratio nor the quantity and quality of classroom alone, but also the supportive school environment plays a significant role. This is where a teacher is allowed to gain experience, participate in professional development and learning as well as mentoring programs that include professional learning communities. Different studies also shed light on the conditions that support increase in teacher productivity over time (Kennedy, 2010).

Scholars agree that teachers are linchpin in students' learning process; however, there is still a lot of disagreement on how to best strengthen the teaching quality (Johnson, 2012). Again, it is clear from most studies that teachers' effectiveness varies from one teacher to another, forming a basis for ongoing unending debate on factors that are key to teacher quality. Studies have also tried to examine individual teacher characteristics such as; academic qualification, the time in service and general mastery of the subject matter for the reason of understanding the differences in teachers' abilities and that which contributed to learners' achievement on a standardized test (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015).

All these studies sought to answer the question related to the general characteristics of teachers which may have included a check on whether long serving teachers were more effective than novice teachers – who were newly employed. A thorough review on this line of literature suggested that the above aforementioned characteristics provided insufficient differences when it comes to teachers' influence on student performance.

By providing equal access to a quality education, extreme poverty is addressed which is assumed to be caused by high rates of unemployment. This is also championed by Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 which suggests that each country shall at least ensure an education system that is all inclusive, equitable and quality and able to enhance continuous learning opportunities for lifelong by the year 2030 (UNESCO, 2011). Further, this literature notes that in sub – Saharan Africa, about 49 million girls drop out of primary school due to pregnancy or early marriages and a significant number of boys again do not transit to secondary school due to the fact they engage in activities that could earn them little money to meet their financial needs. This reasonably, could have been the

obligations of the parents, but unfortunately, at a given age, boys are taken to be big enough to fend for themselves (UNESCO, 2011).

To mitigate the high rate of drop out and enhance the rate of transition, the government of Kenya is fronting two interventions; first, ensuring child friendly school infrastructures which are cost effective and secure and accessible; secondly, establishing advocacy and social, providing scholarships and student mentoring programmes as well as sensitization on Gender Based Violence. These will help in ensuring learners from poor and vulnerable arid and semi – arid areas benefit according to the World Bank report on SEQIP (World Bank, 2017). From the report, quality education is expected to spur economic development and reduce the gap that exists between the rich and the poor and further promote social transformation.

According to Migosi (2017), the government of Kenya as from 2017 has been in the race to put in place a curriculum that is responsive and in line with the expectation of the vision 2030. The main object of curriculum reforms is to ensure development of skills and address the menace of unemployment through introduction of vocational education and at the same time promoting social transformation. Kenya's move towards implementing a new curriculum competence – based education system is on the basis of developing learners' skills. This assumes education as a vehicle to countries economic development and growth. It is with this view that reforms in education emphasize individual capabilities which makes them competitive in job markets (Migosi 2017).

Lewin (2009) concludes that for quality of education to be achieved in any curriculum reform, much is demanded from the classroom experiences. This harbors the activities carried in the classroom while learning is on-going. Quality is only achieved where these activities are carried out by an experienced well- prepared teacher and a ready learner with enthusiasm with commitment. Fullan and Fullan (1993), opined that, it is only skills and technical know-how which is much needed for change to be experienced. The studies opposed use of workshops in equipping teachers with skills and mastery of the subject matter.

However, with all the anticipated progress in the new dispensation, it is evident that there still may be some inevitable challenges which may provide the fluidity of implementation with slow bumps. As noted by various studies, most countries envisaged change by moving from the traditional learning and teaching methodologies to a more progressive and constructive methodologies, but still a drift to status quo can be observed (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019; Waweru, 2018; Koskei & Chepchumba, 2020 ; Njeru & Itegi, 2018).

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Baringo South constituency, commonly known as Marigat Sub-County. Data were gathered using a descriptive study design and mixed research approach. Open ended questionnaires served as the source of the quantitative data. Data gathered by participant observation, semi-structured interviews, direct participant observation, and the distribution of questionnaires to teachers. The qualitative data, on the other hand, is based on the opinions of the curriculum support officers and directors of education as verbally expressed in interviews or focus group discussions with the school board of management and SEQIP committee. Data analysis techniques that are inductive were employed. The researcher transcribed the debate after listening to the participants' explanations and applying analytical induction to identify any common patterns. These topics were then coded and finally tallied. With the use of statistical techniques, the quantifiable data were further examined in an effort to provide objective results. This study sampled 68 schools using the purposive sampling method, with 17 schools from each zone and 5 teachers from each school chosen to create a sample size of 334 teachers. It also included all four curriculum support offices (CSOs) from each Zone and two Sub-County directors, one for education and the other from the TSC. Quantitative data analysis was done using SPSS version 24 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Tables and figures were used to present the findings. In the data analysis, specific descriptive statistics were employed. These included the means, frequencies, and percentages.

IV. RESULT

4.1 Improvement of Quality Teaching

The study sought to assess the effects of SEQIP implementation on the quality of teaching in secondary and primary schools in Marigat Sub – county. The findings show that 73% of the respondents agreed that SEQIP implementation improved the quality of teaching, while 27% responded that the implementation has no effect in improving the quality of education in Marigat Sub-County. It is then clear that, most of the respondents see SEQIP implementation as the cause of improved teaching in Kenya. The 27% simply did not see the number of textbook and teachers being enough in their school as shown in figure 5.1 below.

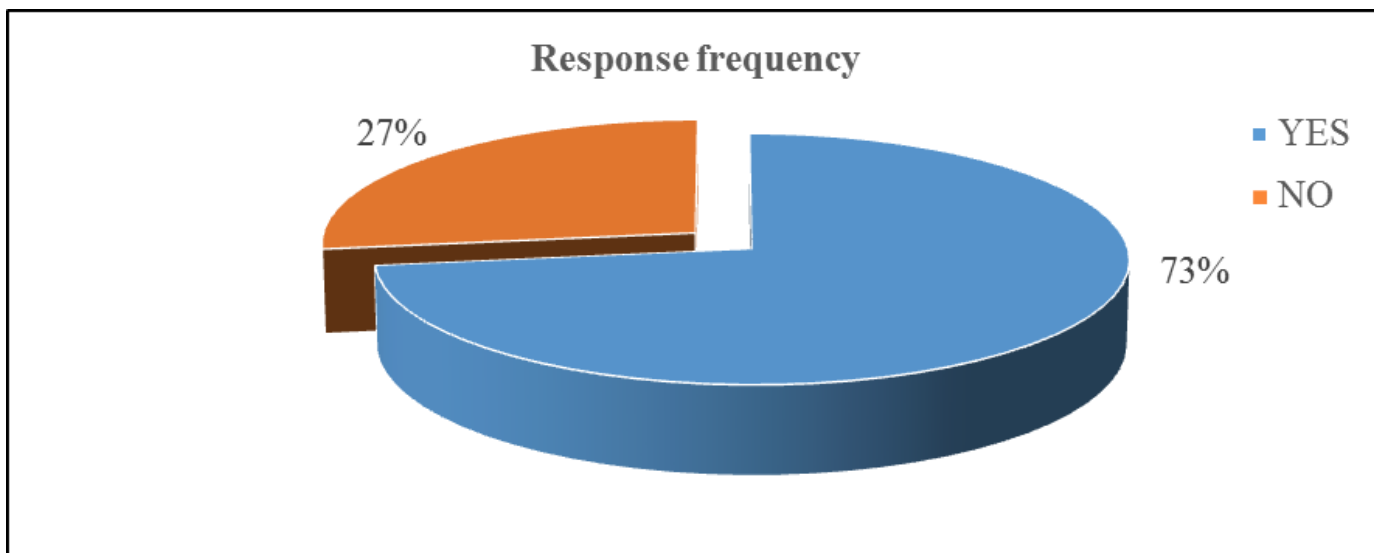


Figure 1
Whether SEQIP Implementation Improved Quality of Teaching

4.2 Rate of Learners’ Retention in Upper Primary and Transition to Secondary School

The second objective was to determine how SEQIP has influenced the rate of learners' retention in upper primary school and their transfer to secondary school in the Marigat sub-county. The findings indicate that most of the respondent (60%) agreed that SEQIP has played part in the retention at upper primary and transitions to secondary school. However, it is also seen that a big but lesser percentage (40%) are discontented with the impact of the project in retaining students in upper primary school (class 7 and 8) as well as its contribution in transition of learners to secondary school. The 40% of those who were interviewed or filled the questionnaires readily gave credit to government initiative of transiting learners without basically basing on their class performance and the many scholarships offered by corporate entities as shown in table 5.1 below.

Table 1
Influence of SEQIP on Rate of Learners’ Retention in Primary School and Transition to Secondary School

Category	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Yes	128	60
No	86	40
Total	214	100

4.3 Adoption to New Curriculum Reforms

The third objective of the study was to assess the level of adoption to new curriculum reforms in Marigat Sub – county. The findings as shown in figure 5.2 indicate that the respondents’ views on how SEQIP has strengthened the implementation of new education curriculum reform. The majority of the respondents, 93% agreed that SEQIP is truly enhancing the implementation of the CBC, while a mere, 7% disagreed to project’s contribution to implementation of new curriculum reforms in public school within Marigat Sub – county. The 7% in their interview or filling of questionnaires, suggested that implementation rested squarely on the shoulders of the ministry of education – basically the cabinet secretary for education. They did not hear anywhere in minister’s speech giving credence to SEQIP. *‘the show is almost entirely run by the cabinet secretary for education and of late the presidential working party, and it’s therefore hard to pinpoint exactly where SEQIP comes in to support the CBC’* as one of the respondent commented.

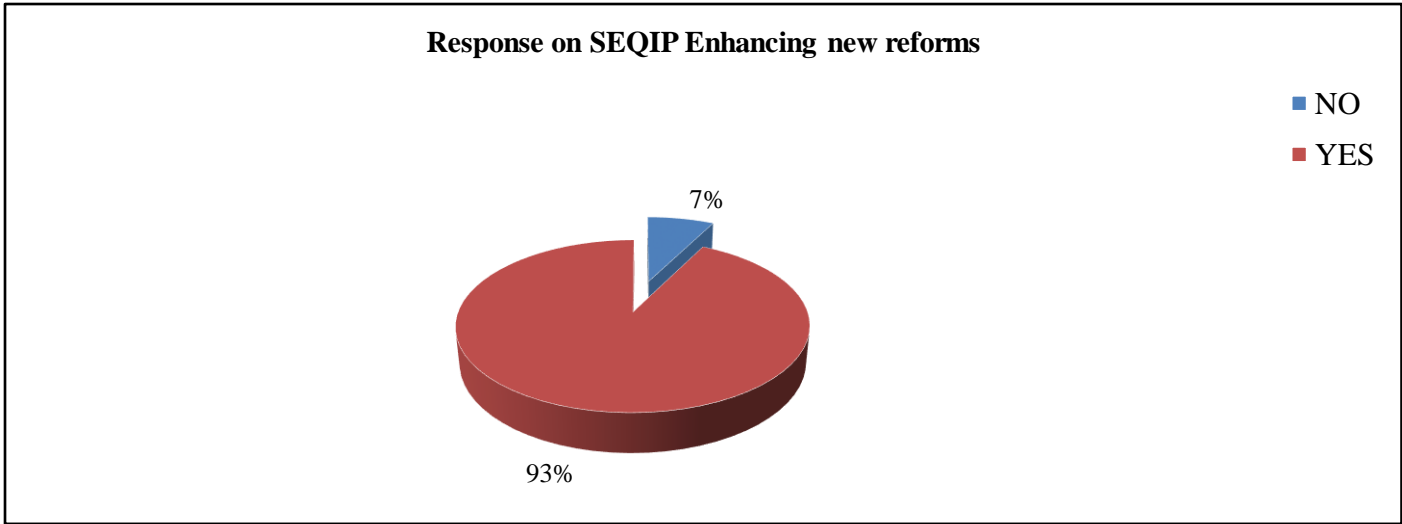


Figure 2
Whether SEQIP has Strengthened Adoption to New Curriculum Reform

4.4 Stakeholder Involvement in Project Management and M&E

The fourth objective of the study was to assess the level of stakeholders’ participation in SEQIP management, coordination and M&E process in Marigat Sub – County. The result as shown in figure 5.3 shows that majority of the respondent, 98% agreed to have been involved in the processes of implementation of the secondary quality improvement projects. It is only 2% of the respondents who did not agree to have participated in either the management or monitoring of the project. The 2% of the respondent who disagreed opined to have never met the county project coordinators. In the interview with the SEQIP selection committee, it occurred that most of the members were not fully involved in the projects decision making. One of the dissatisfied respondents said, *‘In fact I wonder how these projects are monitored. It looks like the contractor is overwhelmed by this contract. It is surprising that you even find building materials meant for the construction dumped by the roadside, in some other instance, the structures are substandard and end up showing big and worrying cracks even before completion! They are made to redo the work in some other places.... It is a total mess.’*

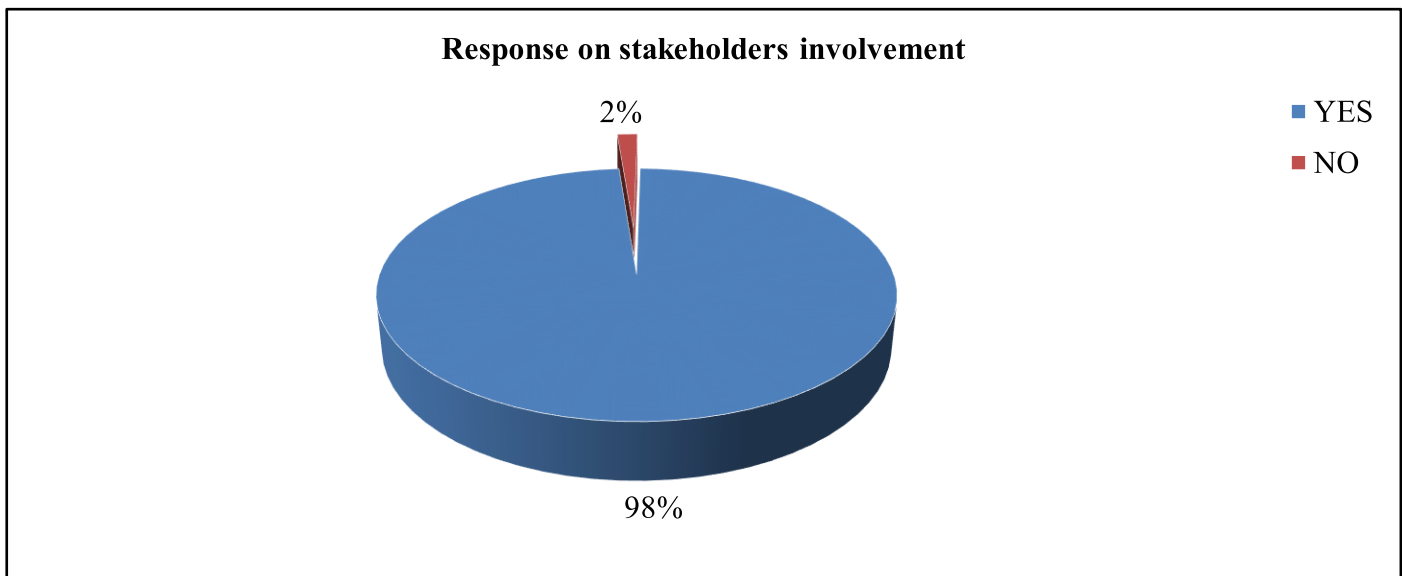


Figure 3
Whether stakeholders are involved in SEQIP management and M&E

V. DISCUSSION

According to the findings, the degree to which SEQIP is successful in improving the quality of teaching is on the moderate end of the spectrum. The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of Ngware and Ndirangu (2005), which discovered that great teaching can only be attained in a school when a watchful eye is kept on the execution of the curriculum. The teachers are the most important people in the process, as they are the ones who will really apply the curriculum. Inquiry-based learning (IBL), virtual groups, ICT-integrated lesson plans, and the 5E instructional model are some examples of successful instructional approaches that have contributed to an improvement in the overall quality of teaching. The findings, on the other hand, contradict those of a study conducted by Balan (2011), who discovered that the majority of educators continue to rely on their traditional teaching pedagogies. They pointed to incompetence in the monitoring and follow up of the after training implementation as the problem.

The finding of the study also shows that the ratio of textbooks to pupils and the number of teachers also contribute to an increase in the overall quality of instruction. According to the respondents, the Government of Kenya, acting through the Ministry of Education, has contributed textbooks in the subjects of English, mathematics, and the sciences to the educational institutions in Marigat Sub-County. This study is in line with the findings that were presented by Bediako (2019), who argues that successful teaching requires the supply of sufficient teaching and learning materials across all subject areas. In addition, having sufficient human resources readily available is of the utmost significance for enhancing the quality of education. However, the findings do not concur with the findings of Konga and Cheboi (2021), who contend that the majority of day schools in Marigat Sub-County do not have enough teachers due to the insecurity in the area. As a consequence of this, the findings lend credence to the proposition that the government ought to place a sufficient number of educators in underserved regions in order to realise its objective of enhancing the level of instruction provided in educational institutions.

A majority of respondents were in agreement that SEQIP was responsible for an increase in the percentage of learners who remained in upper primary school and made a successful transfer to secondary schools in Marigat Sub-County. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Okungu, Orwa, and Mung'atu (2014), who concluded that support programmes for enhancing teaching quality in school were worthy courses targeted towards increasing retention of learners in schools and boosting the morale of the learners. In addition to this, they offer a pathway for students to progress from one level of education to the next without having to abandon their academic pursuits. However, the finding differ from the by Philemon and Mkulu (2020) who argue that provision of enough learning facilities and scholarship, is key in ensuring retention and transition of learners. In addition, decongested classrooms and enough latrines are main factors that make most girls to stay around school. Furthermore, scholarships also tent to enhance transition to secondary school especially to those bright needy learners.

The project has enhanced adoption and execution of the new competency-based curriculum, a majority of respondents highly agreed. It was discovered that the initiative supported KICD in the creation and posting of curricular designs on its website. Once more, all primary school teachers in public schools received training in curriculum-based assessment, and the majority of them are familiar with survey and assessment tools. Further research revealed that the distribution of MLP tools to various learner categories is carried out efficiently and on schedule. These results are consistent with those of Muchira et al. (2023) who found that effective teacher training and the provision of curriculum monitoring and support tools are necessary for the proper implementation and adoption of curricula.

For the successful implementation of projects' activities and consequently transparent and accountable process of any intervention, stakeholders' involvement is crucial. Alternately, projects may be successful in its strategies implementation and in the achievement of its core objective, but without stakeholders' involvement and even training, its sustainability is doubtful. It was found out that stakeholders of the SEQIP were trained however; their involvement in the project monitoring and evaluation was minimal. It was also evident from the findings that, grievances redress mechanism was not well understood by many stakeholders and that majority of them were not aware of any channels of reporting inefficiencies or complaints.

VI. CONCLUSION & RECCOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project (SEQIP) on the quality of education provided by public primary and secondary schools in Marigat Sub-County. According to the findings, SEQIP was partially successful in achieving its goal of improving the overall quality of secondary education. The supply of adequate infrastructure as well as teaching and learning materials injects fresh life

into the educational process, which is essential for achieving quality in educational settings. In addition, improved training for educators to acquire modern and 21st-century pedagogical approaches had a significant impact on both the quality of the content that was delivered in the classroom and the methods that were used to learn it. In addition, it was determined that stakeholders did not perform a significant amount of monitoring and reporting of the activities associated with the project, despite the fact that they were involved in both decision making and implementation.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends continuous monitoring and reporting of School Based Teacher Support System (SBTSS) program should be undertaken. This will help the teachers to implement what they have learned during the training and hence change from the traditional teaching methodologies. The Sub-County education quality assurance officers should be tasked with checking the proper implementations of the trainings' contents in school by the teachers.

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