ABSTRACT

The intent of this study was to examine the strength of the relationship between English language proficiency and performance in Biology examinations and tests in secondary school students who do not have English as their first language. The study purposed to determine if students in urban secondary schools had higher English language proficiency compared to their rural counterparts.

The research was done by use of questionnaires administered to a sample of teachers of English and Biology in secondary schools and forms three students in the larger Kakamega district. In addition, the students were given Biology and English tests which were marked and scores recorded. The level of the academic performance in the English and Biology tests was measured using the scores obtained in the two tests. The level of English language proficiency was measured by how well the students communicated in writing when answering questions in the English and Biology tests. The results from the study were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS).

The analysis revealed a significant positive co-relation between English language proficiency and academic performance in Biology examinations and tests. There was no significant co-relation between performance in English and Biology and school location (rural or urban).

The findings from this study can be used by policy makers in the Ministry of Education to offer recommendations to school administrators and professional organizations about ways to improve the teaching of English language in secondary schools to improve academic performance in other subjects especially biology. The ministry of Education could use findings from these study to restructure its policies on the teaching of English language to develop the academic language proficiency needed to improve on the academic performance in Biology-exams.