CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter, a description of the position and location of the area of study will be made. Also, a brief description of the introduction of formal education in Kenya, and the history of the teaching of the English language to the present is looked at. It is hoped that a background knowledge of the above, will go a long way in assisting the reader in the understanding of the issues that will emerge in the study.

Baringo district is in the republic of Kenya. Administratively, Kenya is divided into eight provinces: the Coast, Central, Nyanza, Western, Eastern, North-Eastern, Nairobi (the capital) and the Rift Valley Province. Each of the seven rural provinces (excluding Nairobi) is divided in a descending order, into districts, divisions, locations and sub-locations. Baringo district, the area of our study is in the Rift Valley province (See the shaded area in the map given overleaf).

1.1 POPULATION GROWTH

The population of Kenya is approximated to be over 27 million and is growing at a rate of 3.8 per annum, one of the highest in the whole of Africa. In the large towns the growth rate has been almost double this figure because of continued migration to them from the rural areas. The population is projected to double to 60 million by 2015. This is however not a mere matter of increase. Socio-economic development is greatly affected by these demographic trends because the more rapid the population increase, the more resources have to be devoted to consumption at the expense of savings and investment (see Cameron et al 1983:135-169). In Kenya about 50% of the population is under the age of 15 years, 25% is of primary school age that is between the ages 6 and 13. In consequence the dependency ratio in Kenya in 1979 was 1:16 and with present trends, will deteriorate to 1:28 or worse (GOK 1995).
LOCATION OF THE AREA OF STUDY

KEY
- International boundary
- Baringo District

Scale: 1:5,000,000

0 100 200 km

36°E 40°E
Indeed, although the vast majority of the people live in rural areas - over 80 per cent - only 17% of Kenya consists of arable land. As a result the population density on arable land was 103 persons per square kilometre in 1969 and it increased to 147 persons in 1979. By 1989 the figure had more than doubled. These increases are inevitably accompanied by growing fragmentation of land holdings on which 75% of Kenya's population lives. The average landholding is less than one hectare in size and 14% of the rural households have no land at all.

Translated into educational terms the implication of Kenya's population are equally grim. The government's declared policy of providing universal primary education has increased enrolments to over 5 million, see table 1 overleaf. By the turn of the century it is projected that there will be over 8 million children of primary school age and so government will be hard pressed indeed to maintain full coverage.

These projected increases in primary school enrolments have further effects. The pressure on secondary school places will correspondingly increase and will lead to even more strident demands by the public for more of these. The government will have to divert even more resources to education in order to cope with the increasing numbers.

1.2 LANGUAGE

Kenya is a multilingual and multiracial society of more than forty ethnic groups each with its own language. It is therefore one of the most complex linguistic areas in Africa rivalled perhaps by the situations obtaining in Ethiopia, South Africa, Zambia, Sudan, Nigeria, Congo, Cameroon, Angola and Mozambique.
Table 1: Enrolment in Schools and Institutions 1986 - 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>4,843,432</td>
<td>5,031,581</td>
<td>5,123,581</td>
<td>5,389,148</td>
<td>5,392,319</td>
<td>5,455,996</td>
<td>5,563,987</td>
<td>5,428396</td>
<td>5,557,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>458,712</td>
<td>522,261</td>
<td>540,192</td>
<td>640,735</td>
<td>618,461</td>
<td>614,161</td>
<td>629,062</td>
<td>531,342</td>
<td>619,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Training**</td>
<td>15,644</td>
<td>17,817</td>
<td>18,430</td>
<td>20,105</td>
<td>21,091</td>
<td>19,161</td>
<td>19,154</td>
<td>17,696</td>
<td>17,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical***</td>
<td>6,118</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,021</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>5,906</td>
<td>6,849</td>
<td>7,654</td>
<td>7,891</td>
<td>8,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>5,323,506</td>
<td>5,571,418</td>
<td>5,686,224</td>
<td>6,054,088</td>
<td>6,037,777</td>
<td>6,096,167</td>
<td>6,219,857</td>
<td>5,985,325</td>
<td>6,202,430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** Includes both Primary and Secondary Teachers' Colleges  
***** Technical Training Institutes  
Source: Ministry of Education GOK 1996
English and Kiswahili are both official languages, with English preponderating, especially in the large towns. Kiswahili is the national language used extensively in business and politics. It is the language spoken widely both in the towns and the small trading centres in the rural areas.

In the lower classes of the primary school, local languages including Kiswahili, which is the local language of the Coast, are used as the medium of instruction.

1.3 HISTORY

Kenya came into existence in the late nineteenth century as the country through which the railway passed through to Uganda. The railway was built by the Imperial British East Africa Company in order to open up the hinterland of Uganda for trade and exploitation and, also for ferrying troops to Lake Victoria, the source of the Nile, then of strategic interest to the British imperialists.

White settlers were encouraged by the British government to come and settle and cultivate the rich farmlands, later referred to as the white highlands, in 1920 the country was declared a British colony and the settlers were also asked to administer the rapidly prospering colony. These settlers and the missionaries were the people who first formulated and started formal education in Kenya.

1.4 KENYA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Formal education in Kenya is a development of this century (Thias and Carnoy 1972:9). It was introduced in the country by Christian missionaries in the middle of the nineteenth century, basically to promote evangelism but later became an instrument for the production of semi-skilled labour for European farms and clerical
staff for the colonial administration. It all started in 1846 with the Church Missionary Society establishing a school at Rabai in the coast province.

The education available to the Africans was only one of the three types stratified on racial lines in matters of system, structure, curricula and resources. The European system which had an entirely academic curriculum based on British traditions, had an upper hand at resources and its main objectives seemed to have been to prepare their youth for leadership positions. The Asian and Arab systems came second while the African system tended to develop as a hybrid of some academic, technical and vocational components designed principally to prepare the youth for servitude, especially on European farms. There were, therefore, great disparities in educational opportunities not only between the races but also between the regions of the country (GOK 1987:1).

The dominant role played by the missionaries in determining the type of education suitable for the Africans persisted throughout the colonial period. They built schools, managed and supervised them, determined the curriculum and influenced the direction of education policy. They also established training colleges for teachers and provided funds for running costs of education, with only a small subsidy from the government in form of grants.

This was the state of affairs in education until Kenya attained its independence. On attainment of independence in 1963 the Government appointed the Kenya Education Commission (Ominde 1963) to undertake an exhaustive inquiry into the system and come up with a schooling system that would not only advance the policies of a newly independent state, but also create a reservoir of indigenous manpower. The Commission in its findings noted that the 'treatment of African education' as a separate entity had led to investment of more capital in European and Asian education'. It argued that during the ten years before independence more capital was invested in European and Asian education representing 3 percent of population, than in the education of Africans who
constitute 97 percent of the population.

The curricula also differed because schooling was supposed to prepare the different racial groups for specific roles in the society. By 1976 the recommendations made by the Commission had served the country well and the indigenous manpower situation had greatly improved. Many more school-age children were attending classes following a deliberate attempt by the Government and Communities to build more Primary and Secondary Schools. Table 2 clearly shows the overall progressive increase in primary enrolment due to this support.

In the early 70s, however other challenges started to emerge. Although the country’s needs in terms of manpower had been met, the problem of relevance of the education system to the changing demands of the economy became a crucial issue. There were concerns that the system had become too elitist and was only producing office workers at the expense of Personnel in technical and vocational areas. It was for this reason that another Commission was set up in 1976 (Gachathi 1976) to look into the Education objectives. The Gachathi Report recommended that more emphasis be put on science and technical - oriented subjects and the ability of the learners to express themselves well in English.

In summary, the Kenya government has continued to assign a high priority to education, and this has brought about fundamental changes in both formal and informal education in the country (GOK 1993:94). After 1963, it became clear that the education system inherited from the colonial era did not meet the social, political and economic needs of independent Kenya as it lacked in quality, quantity and relevance. In its search for a viable and relevant education system, the government subjected the education and training system to more than ten reviews by special commissions and working parties (GoK: op. cit).
Table 2: Enrolment in Primary and Secondary Education, 1959 - 68

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard I</td>
<td>179.0</td>
<td>179.6</td>
<td>190.0</td>
<td>170.0</td>
<td>137.2</td>
<td>180.3</td>
<td>195.7</td>
<td>193.9</td>
<td>228.8</td>
<td>250.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard II</td>
<td>155.8</td>
<td>161.5</td>
<td>168.6</td>
<td>166.3</td>
<td>138.7</td>
<td>144.8</td>
<td>165.8</td>
<td>166.1</td>
<td>183.6</td>
<td>207.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard III</td>
<td>140.9</td>
<td>154.4</td>
<td>163.3</td>
<td>165.0</td>
<td>143.9</td>
<td>139.7</td>
<td>139.3</td>
<td>152.9</td>
<td>165.6</td>
<td>178.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard IV</td>
<td>135.3</td>
<td>156.7</td>
<td>171.1</td>
<td>165.7</td>
<td>140.0</td>
<td>145.0</td>
<td>135.1</td>
<td>130.3</td>
<td>146.9</td>
<td>158.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard V</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>128.7</td>
<td>124.6</td>
<td>134.0</td>
<td>126.4</td>
<td>120.9</td>
<td>124.8</td>
<td>132.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard VI</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>112.8</td>
<td>122.6</td>
<td>122.5</td>
<td>132.7</td>
<td>136.8</td>
<td>134.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard VII</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>114.4</td>
<td>121.3</td>
<td>146.2</td>
<td>147.5</td>
<td>146.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard VIII</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL PRIMARY</td>
<td>719.5</td>
<td>781.3</td>
<td>870.4</td>
<td>935.8</td>
<td>891.6</td>
<td>1,014.7</td>
<td>1,042.1</td>
<td>1,043.4</td>
<td>1,133.2</td>
<td>1,209.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SECONDARY</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>103.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The efforts of these commissions culminated in the introduction of an education system in 1985 which consisted of eight years of primary school, four years of secondary and four years of university education (8-4-4 education system). This constituted the most radical overhaul of the education system since independence. The 8-4-4 system necessitated a change in the structure of education from the former 7-4-2-3 education system (seven years primary, four years secondary, two years high school and three years of university education).

The new system was implemented in phases starting with primary education in 1985. The final phase began in 1990 when the first batch of 8-4-4 students entered the university. The restructuring of the education and training systems was necessitated by the need to make them more practically oriented. The new system lays emphasis on improving and broadening the curriculum on vocational and technical education. It is hoped that the students graduating at every level will have learnt adequate skills that can be used for either self or salaried employment.

The rationale behind the 8-4-4 system was that with the dwindling transition rates from one level of education to the other, there was need to make education terminal at whatever stage the learner left school. It was also realised that with the ever-declining formal employment opportunities, students needed to be prepared for the informal sector where they could be self-employed. Finally, the 8-4-4 system was supposed to cultivate a more scientific, technological and vocational training culture to ensure that there was a reservoir of trained scientists and technicians. To broaden the training of learners, the number of examination papers at the primary level was increased from three to seven. To date the many critics of 8-4-4 system agree that in principle, there was nothing wrong with the objectives. The major problem, it has been acknowledged, is that there were no broad consultations with all the stakeholders. Neither was any pilot studies conducted to see whether the system could work, nor was ample time provided for the preparation of instructional resources before implementation.
Thus, when the system was started in 1985, the first problem was that communities did not have the resources to build workshops, home science rooms, equip them and buy the additional textbooks required. The offshoot of these was discontent from the stakeholders. Parents complained they could not pay various levies imposed while teachers said the curriculum was unrealistically overloaded.

Over the years, it has emerged that these criticisms were not misplaced. The numerous levies have forced poor parents to withdraw their children from school while some cannot even enrol them. Since independence, enrolment had grown steadily and by 1985 Kenya was about to achieve 100 per cent primary schools enrolment. However, since the effects of the 8-4-4 system began to be felt, the enrolment has fallen from 95 per cent in 1989 to 76 per cent currently. In some of the poorer communities as many as 70 per cent of school going age children do not attend school at all (Kamotho 1998:xii).

A unique aspect of Kenya’s education system is the self-help effort through which the community finances schools. This is popularly known as ‘Harambee.’ (let’s pull together) Approximately 70 percent of the students who get secondary education undergo formal schooling in institutions run by local communities. The increasing cost of education in the country has led to a new system of cost sharing where parents in various communities ‘pull together’ to provide physical facilities and equipment while the government provides teachers, supervisory and advisory services.

The expansion in secondary schools has been equally impressive. In 1963 there were only 151 secondary schools with a total of 31,120 pupils. In 1995 the enrolment in secondary schools had risen to 632,388 students, with females forming about 46 percent of the total enrolment (see table 3). This seems to indicate that although the number of boys attending school is high, the number of girls in the school has also been increasing over the years. This in a way also tells us the importance which parents attach to education.
Table 3: Enrolment In Secondary Schools By Form And Sex 1991 - 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FORM</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>MALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 1</td>
<td>95,511</td>
<td>76,126</td>
<td>97,267</td>
<td>78,081</td>
<td>81,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 2</td>
<td>89,181</td>
<td>70,651</td>
<td>91,209</td>
<td>72,774</td>
<td>73,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 3</td>
<td>82,749</td>
<td>64,139</td>
<td>84,429</td>
<td>66,189</td>
<td>72,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>78,347</td>
<td>57,457</td>
<td>80,467</td>
<td>58,646</td>
<td>67,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAND TOTAL</td>
<td>614,161</td>
<td>629,062</td>
<td>531,342</td>
<td>619,839</td>
<td>632,388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There has also been a steep rise in the teacher/pupil ratio from 7:19 in 1963 to 9:27 in 1981 and to about 1:35 in 1987. The ratio for primary schools remained constant at 31 pupils per teacher for 1991 and 1992. Untrained staff constituted 23.2 percent and 24.9 percent of the total primary and secondary teaching force respectively. There has been a continuous drop of untrained teachers while the total teaching force has increased (GOK 1996).

Secondary schools offer a variety of vocational subjects ranging from electrical, technological to industrial skills. English, Kiswahili and Mathematics are compulsory subjects. At the end of form four students sit for a national examination called the Kenya National Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE).

Unlike the old education system a few subjects have been scrapped, others trimmed and some integrated. For instance, literature in English has become part of English language and is graded as one subject. Kiswahili literature (Fasihi) has also been merged into Kiswahili language. These changes are meant to ensure that students sit for eight subjects instead of nine.

Let us now look at the teaching of the English language in Kenya. It is hoped that an understanding of the teaching of this subject will give a background picture to the study.

1.5 THE TEACHING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN KENYA

As described, Kenya's education system, as perhaps to a large extent in most former British colonies, is a product of what the British imported to the country. It is composed of schooling at the primary and secondary levels, middle level colleges and the university. For primary, secondary and middle level colleges, teaching is based on externally prescribed examinations at various defined stages. These examinations act as hurdles which one has to clear before proceeding to a higher grade. The syllabi,
objectives etc. are drafted by the Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E.) - an arm of the Ministry of Education - and given to each institution. The individual teachers are however expected to set specific objectives for particular lessons.

The departments in the various faculties in the universities make their own syllabi for teaching internally. Usually all university programmes are discussed and approved by each university senate. Let us now look at each level of the education system and see the teaching of the English language.

1.5.1 The Primary School Level

In the preceding pages it was indicated that the primary education consists of eight years of schooling, including both the lower and upper sections. The lower section caters to children between ages three (3) and eight (8). This is from class one to three, which form the kindergarten. The language of instruction here is the mother tongue, particularly in the rural schools. The mother tongue may vary from region to region. However in the urban schools, the language of instruction is Kiswahili, a language that is widely used and understood, thus it caters to children from different ethnic groups. English at this level is taught as a subject.

In the upper primary school (from class four onwards) however, English is used as the medium of instruction in all subjects, and is also taught as a subject, one class period being allocated to it everyday. Each lesson usually lasts for forty minutes and students are taught the various skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing. In class eight the pupils are then examined in all the subjects before joining secondary school. It is in this class that the pupils sit for a national examination called the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (K.C.P.E.). Thereafter they join secondary school.
1.5.2. The Secondary School Level

From the colonial period to 1983, the secondary school level was divided into two: the ordinary (O) level - from secondary class - hereafter Form one to Form four where the students would sit for their examinations in order to join the next stage. The second part of the secondary school is the high school which comprises form five and form six. In form six the students would sit for the Advanced (‘A’) level examinations in order to join the university.

In the ordinary level, English was taught as a subject and literature in English was introduced in Form three as a separate subject. Here a prescribed syllabus listing poems, short stories, plays and novels to be taught are indicated. At the end of the fourth year the students would sit for two separate examination papers: English language and literature in English. In the higher ‘A’ level the students who passed the ‘O’ level examination and desire to study literature are taught literary texts from various countries: East Africa, South Africa, West Africa, the Caribbean and Europe. The teacher is expected to choose texts from those prescribed by the K.I.E.

The high school component of the secondary level was however abolished in 1985 when the new 8-4-4 education system was introduced. This new education system had a major impact on the teaching of English. First the two subjects were merged together and the lessons reduced to five periods a week. Teachers were expected to decide the number of lessons to be allocated per week between language and literature from the prescribed five periods in the teaching time-table. It was thought by the curriculum planners that their integration would assist students learn the language and at the same time grasp the literary concepts. It was also believed that if literature was included in the English curriculum, it would assist the learners learn the language and also aid in their reading and creative writing skills. In literature, poems, as well as short and long narratives are taught. For instance, short narratives could be used to
teach Reading and Comprehension.

The interest in a good story, it was thought, could be channelled into language learning, for new words and expressions encountered could often be understood solely from the context, and the reader's mind would become more and more accustomed to the syntax and structural patterns of the new language. It was also believed that the reading of shortened versions of good prose literature would provide language practice and training in the reading skills. The student may learn to use these words himself more effectively, and also more appropriately in different contexts; he would also be able to infer meanings from context. Finally the two subjects were merged in order to accommodate other subjects in the curriculum.

At the end of the secondary school at form four, the students are expected to sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (K.C.S.E) before they join the university. However those who did not attain the required grades may join the middle level colleges for vocational training.

1.5.3 Assessment

The examinations are assessed and reported on a four point scale A to D, where A to C are pass grades and D a fail grade. These grades are used for selecting successful students to universities and training colleges.

1.5.4 The Middle Level Colleges

These may be technical colleges, polytechnics or teacher training colleges. One of the admission requirements in these institutions is that one must have passed the English language among other subjects. Once admitted the students are taught English for academic/specific purposes such as writing laboratory reports, proposals, summaries
The teacher training colleges are divided into two: these are the primary school teacher training colleges and the Diploma teacher training colleges. In the primary teachers training colleges, teachers are trained to teach in the primary schools. English is the language of instruction and the syllabi lays particular emphasis on the methodology of teaching English language: grammar, phonology, phonetics and the various skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. Here the teacher trainees are prepared to teach in the primary schools and by the end of their course they are awarded the Primary One (P1) teaching certificate.

In the Diploma teachers' training colleges, the teacher trainees are prepared to teach English language in the secondary schools. Unlike the primary teachers' training colleges, the diploma teacher trainees are taught advanced grammar, phonetics, phonology, morphology and the teaching methods. On completion of their course they are awarded the Diploma in Education (Dip.Ed) teaching certificate. Once they qualify the teachers are hired by the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) and posted to the secondary schools in various parts of the country. The secondary school students whose work we shall be examining in the study may have been taught by some of these teachers.

1.5.5 The University Level

Apart from one science and technology university, all the other universities in Kenya train students who on their successful qualification, are awarded the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree. They are then employed by an arm of government called the Teachers’ Service Commission (TSC) and are posted to various Secondary schools to teach.
In the University, students specialising in English language and Literature in English are taught in the departments of Linguistics and Literature respectively. The syllabus of each is determined internally by the departments depending on the staff strength, their specialisation and the number of students. In the Faculty of Arts a student could specialise in the study of Linguistics or Literature leading to the award of the Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree in Linguistics or Literature. If these graduates are employed to teach in the secondary schools then they would not be regarded as trained professional teachers.

The Faculty of Education on the other hand teaches education courses, which includes the methods of teaching (for example methodology of English language and Literature teaching). At the end of the course they are awarded the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree, recognised by the government as a professional degree and the salary package is a lot higher than of a person with a B.A degree alone. Quite often B.A graduates try to improve their employment and salary prospects by obtaining a post-graduate Diploma in Education (P.G.Dip.Ed.).

1.5.6 Discussion

As described in the preceding pages, we noted that the education system is a highly structured one and so is the teaching of the English language. The success of the students, in the recruitment for employment, entrance to the next stage of the school system, all depend on their performance at prescribed public examinations.

The government recognises the important role education plays in national development. Indeed while charting out its educational strategies at Independence, it announced its own brand of socialism: Kenya’s African Socialism and its application to planning in Kenya which appeared in 1965 (GOK 1965). Its aims have provided the basis of Kenya’s successive development plan. The policy displays a combined
flavour of idealism and pragmatism: It states inter alia that:

Unlike many countries that have eliminated many successful mechanisms on narrow ideological grounds. Kenya is free to pick and choose those methods that have been proven in practice and are suitable to Kenya’s conditions.

As a result there is, on the one hand, the preservation of high cost secondary schools inherited from the British, and, on the other the emergence of numerous low cost, self financing secondary schools built by local parental effort. This was a highly centralised educational administration, which was greatly modified by local initiative. As indicated in Section 1.5.2 these schools were all designated as public schools in 1985.

The basic development aims for independent Kenya were published in 1965 in Sessional paper No.10 on ‘African Socialism and its application to planning in Kenya.’ In it four fundamental objectives were enunciated; economic growth, a wider sharing of the benefits of prosperity, closer integration and an amelioration of national disparities (see GOK 1965, Cameroon et al 1983).

The country’s first two development plans sought to give practical and appropriate application to these ideas. In 1964-70, for example, the emphasis was on economic expansion, Kenyanisation and, the expansion of education to provide the necessary man-power skills. In 1970-74 the theme of vocational skills for self-employment was given priority in an attempt to provide economic and social balance between the urban and rural areas. The emphasis was originally placed on livestock improvement, water development and agricultural expansion, although in 1972 a revision placed greater significance on tourism and manufacturing. The 1974-78 development plan continued these themes but extended them into other areas. The subsequent plans up to the 1992-96 development plans show no marked change of direction, although these reflect even greater concern about the employment problem and are much more positive about the need for rural development. Like all its predecessors, this plan
emphasises the key role of education in developing human resources to promote economic growth, and so it makes provision for no less than 26 percent of the government recurrent budget being devoted to it. Worse still this is being reduced currently as a result of the educational structural adjustment programmes imposed on Kenya by the World Bank. This has further had a negative impact on education and the quest to provide quality education.

In the education system, much emphasis is placed on the communicative competence of the learners. They are expected not only to be competent orally in the use of the English language but are also expected to have learned the art of reading, writing reports, summaries etc. in good English. Indeed so much premium is placed on the command of this language in the economy that one cannot advance in the economic ladder without it. Whiteley (1984) in reference to Kenya observes that ‘the incentives to acquire and to demonstrate competence in English are very great, since it is from this source that economic and social status are believed to flow.’ People are willing to make great sacrifices to send their children to school because they think education is essential for economic upliftment. Even though people are becoming increasingly aware of the secondary and primary school-leaver problem and know that graduates of lower schools will not necessarily get good jobs, the possibility that they may get a job is still compelling. Therefore many people both inside and outside school strive to learn and master English and other subjects in order to be successful in their education.

In spite of this, however, there is the strong influence of the Kiswahili language now gaining ground in the use of English. Kiswahili is the main language used by the majority of the people in the offices, streets, the market place, in politics and in public administration. It is widely used and understood in most parts of the country. Because of this, certain Kiswahili words have crept into the English language. A new product of this code mixing called “Sheng” that is Swahili-English has emerged and is
used in Urban areas. For example it is now common to find in schools a disjunction between the English language instructional materials used and a predominantly Kiswahili speech used by the learners, Zuengler (1982). This is not good for effective teaching of English, critical of all, for communicative competence. This state of affairs could perhaps explain why students have performed below expectations in national examinations.

Lately, there has been a hue and cry by educationists and members of the public alike over the falling standards of English. For example in the rationale and objectives for In-service seminar on ‘Language for Learning’ in August 1981 (see Brumfit 1983:122-130), the Senior Schools Inspector of English language in Kenya wrote:

The importance of English in the Kenyan School curriculum cannot be gainsaid. However there has been a widely expressed concern voiced by the public, government officials, teachers, university lecturers and others about the gradual decline in the standard of Reading, Spoken and Written English among our secondary school graduates. ‘O’ and ‘A’ level examiners also express this view and sample surveys at the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University reveal the same problem amongst first year undergraduates. All these views point to a lack of competence in the functional use of English amongst our secondary school leavers.

As a reaction to this state of affairs, blame has been placed on several areas. Firstly, some people have raised concern about the curriculum arguing that it was too broad; others have questioned the methodology of teaching English and asserted that its merger with literature in English was ill-advised, while others have questioned the methods of evaluation and the provision of instructional materials.

Secondly, in the same vein, others have argued for an outright overhaul of the education system. These then are the kinds of debates currently going on in Kenya. The study aims at investigating the reading problems of these learners of English. It is hoped that the findings of this research will also contribute to the debate with empirical evidence. In this way decisions would be made based on fact rather than conjecture. The research problem will be described in detail in the next section.
1.6 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 The Problem

The focus of the research problem is to find out, whether the falling standards in examination performance particularly English could be attributed to:

(a) Reading problems and if so what are these problems.

(b) That perhaps the curriculum is overloaded so that in trying to teach the content of the subject, teachers no longer accord attention to the mastery of reading skills that form the basis of education and,

(c) Finally, the methodology of teaching English as a subject may have a bearing on their reading ability.

1.6.2 Scope

The proposed study will specifically focus on Form three (3) pupils in randomly selected schools in Baringo district in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya. The study addresses itself to the classroom teaching of reading which springs from a genuine interest on the part of the teacher to bring about changes in the learner's conceptual understanding of reading, and how to apply the skill to get correct information from texts and draw meaningful understanding.

The teaching of reading in the lower classes\(^1\) of Form one (I) and two (II) is largely based on the following: introduction, definition, description and brief practice of the skills, while in Form three reading is taught in depth and used extensively. Form four (IV) being the final year, will normally be centered on preparations for the national examinations. It is the researcher's hope that after the initial phase in Form I and II, the teaching of reading in form III will provide a forum for serious teaching-learning experience.

\(^1\) In Kenya a Primary School pupil enters Secondary School in Form One and completes in Form Four, then if successful, joins University. Forms One, Two, Three and Four are Secondary School Classes.
Form III classes are generally free from the stress factor national examinations can bring. Thus it should provide an ideal setting for the study. The researcher is also of the opinion that the findings gathered from this class can be seen as meaningful enough to construct a representative picture of the reading problems of secondary school pupils in Kenya.

It is hoped that the research will give empirical evidence as to what exactly are the reading problems of learners. A series of pedagogic implications may be derived from this. For example, the findings may be used by policy makers to arrive at decisions affecting education such as:

(a) teacher training and in-service training
(b) the development of instructional materials
(c) the staffing of teachers in schools
(d) curriculum Planning and Innovation and finally,
(e) the Inspectorate. This is the arm of the Ministry of Education that is charged with the responsibility of inspecting schools to see whether standards are being maintained.

Having established the research problem, let us now look at a review of related literature in the following chapter.