



## East African Journal of Education Studies

[eajes.eanso.org](http://eajes.eanso.org)

Volume 5, Issue 2, 2022

Print ISSN: 2707-3939 | Online ISSN: 2707-3947

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-3947>



EAST AFRICAN  
NATURE &  
SCIENCE  
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

## Islamic Integrated Schools: Enhancing Access and Quality in Garissa County-Kenya

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.5.2.649>

Date Published: **ABSTRACT**

04 May 2022

**Keywords:**

*Islamic Integrated Schools, Quality Education, Performance, National Examination.*

This article discusses the role of Islamic Integrated schools in enhancing access to schooling and quality education in Garissa. The article is subdivided into three parts. Part one, presents the role of Islamic Integrated Schools in enhancing access to formal education, whereby, a brief analysis is made on how the schools have improved access to education in Garissa County. It also discusses the role of Islamic Integrated Schools in improving the performance in the national examination. This part examines the mean scores attained by the selected Islamic integrated schools showing their position in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) vis-a-vis the public schools between 2008 and 2014. The impacts of the schools' performance on the overall KCPE performance of Garissa are also analysed. Finally, the article discusses the role of the schools in changing Garissa community's perception toward formal education. This perception is observed through parents' contribution toward their children education in Islamic Integrated Schools.

### APA CITATION

Abdinur, A. Y., Mwakimako, H. & Ahmed, A. H. (2022). Islamic Integrated Schools: Enhancing Access and Quality in Garissa County-Kenya. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 5(2), 24-40. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.5.2.649>.

### CHICAGO CITATION

Abdinur, Abdirizack Yussuf, Hassan Mwakimako & Ahmed Hussein Ahmed. 2022. "Islamic Integrated Schools: Enhancing Access and Quality in Garissa County-Kenya". *East African Journal of Education Studies* 5 (2), 24-40. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.5.2.649>.

### HARVARD CITATION

Abdinur, A. Y., Mwakimako, H. & Ahmed, A. H. (2022) "Islamic Integrated Schools: Enhancing Access and Quality in Garissa County-Kenya", *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 5(2), pp. 24-40. doi: 10.37284/eajes.5.2.649.

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A. Y. Abdinur, H. Mwakimako & A. H. Ahmed. "Islamic Integrated Schools: Enhancing Access and Quality in Garissa County-Kenya", *EAJES*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 24-40, May. 2022.

#### MLA CITATION

Abdinur, Abdirizack Yussuf, Hassan Mwakimako & Ahmed Hussein Ahmed. "Islamic Integrated Schools: Enhancing Access and Quality in Garissa County-Kenya". *East African Journal of Education Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 2, May. 2022, pp. 24-40, doi:10.37284/eajes.5.2.649.

## INTRODUCTION

There is evidence that Islamic integrated schools have increased the access to formal elementary education particularly in Muslim majority towns like Garissa, Wajir, Mombasa, Mandera and some parts of Nairobi majorly settled by Muslims. In Garissa alone, the number of Islamic integrated schools have grown to 34 schools and makes up 30% of the total students' enrolment in primary schools, despite the free primary education offered in public schools. The services offered by the schools are often regarded as higher quality compared to that of public schools. Consequently, the schools boost not only the performance of individual schools but that of Garissa too and equally improved the parents' and community's perception towards formal education. The county and national governments should support Islamic Integrated Education. This support may come in several ways among them; direct subsidy, investment incentives and support in form of zero interest loans, sponsoring students attending such schools, tax-free imports for school supplies

Kenya is a country in Eastern Africa and the world's 48th largest country by area. It has a land mass of 580,367 square kilometres (224,081 sq mi). Kenya shares common borders with five other nations: Tanzania to the south, Uganda to the west, Sudan to the northwest, Ethiopia to the north, and Somalia to the east. The Indian Ocean coastline that forms the Eastern border stretches some 480 kilometres from the Somali border to the Tanzania border. The country is best known for forests, wildlife, and fertile agricultural regions. In terms of population, Kenya is the 29th most populous country in the world with a population of more than 47.6 million (KNBS, 2019). The Kenya's capital and largest city is Nairobi, other main cities include: Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru and Eldoret. As of 2020, Kenya was the third-largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa after Nigeria and South Africa.

Religion wise, the Country is estimated to have approximately 85.5 percent of the total population as Christian and 11 percent Muslim. Other religious denominations are: Hindus, Sikhs, Baha'is, and those adhering to various traditional religious beliefs and are all to be estimated have less than 2% of the population. However, the constitution stipulates that there shall be no state religion and prohibits religious discrimination. It provides for freedom of religion and belief individually or in communities, including the freedom to manifest any religion through worship, practice, teaching, or observance, and to debate religious questions (Constitution of Kenya, 2010)

In 2010, Kenyans enacted a new constitution, which established of a system of devolved government with 47 County governments. The operation of the county governments started soon after the March 2013 elections. In these 47 Counties in Kenya, Muslims majority counties are: Mombasa, Kwale, Tana River, Lamu, Garissa, Wajir and Mandera. Muslims are also found sporadically throughout Nairobi, eastern, central, and western parts of Kenya.

## ROLE OF ISLAMIC INTEGRATED SCHOOLS IN INCREASING ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN GARISSA

This study used numerous methods of data gathering so as to increase the validity and reliability. To protect against the limitations leveled against qualitative methods that restrict the generalization of data gathered, a cautious design of tools was done. Internal validity was protected by use of several approaches of data gathering that included: interviews, document analysis, questionnaire, and use of different data. Reliability is the dependability of an instrument to produce the same results at different duration. Consistency was ensured by using simple quantitative statistical analytical tools such as frequencies and percentages

as a means of enhancing the credibility of the results arrived through qualitative methods like questionnaires and interviews (Baumgartner, Strong & Hensley, 2002). This was then strengthened by using split-half technique.

The Islamic Integrated Schools that were chosen for the study represents 25% of the total Islamic integrated schools in Garissa. The sample of the study consisted of six categories of research participants namely, Ministry of Education officials, religious leaders, parents, head teachers, teachers and students. The selection of these participants was based on their ability to contribute to the concept and understanding of Islamic Integrated Schools. The assumption was that the Islamic Integrated schools, as a phenomenon in both education and religion, was subject to various interpretations by various social actors depending on their perspectives. Informed by this assumption, the six categories of the research participants were selected to shade light on the role played by these selected schools.

This study targeted four Islamic Integrated Schools in Garissa as unit of analysis. They are Young Muslim Academy, Al-Ibrahim Academy, Al-Hakim Integrated Academy and Sumeya Integrated Academy. The key respondents comprised the students in the four sampled Islamic Integrated Schools, Head teachers, teachers, parents, Education officers and Religious leaders in Garissa.

The study population included 80 pupils from the 4 sampled Islamic Integrated Schools, 4 Head teachers, 32 teachers (8 from each sampled schools), 3 officers from education office, 12 parents (4 from each school) and 3 religious leaders representing Islamic organization in Kenya; Muslim organizations whose members participated in the study were: Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, The Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya and Muslim Education Council.

Despite numerous efforts by the Kenyan government to increase access to education for all citizens, it has not provided clear frameworks and policies to enable minorities, or groups with special religious needs, to effectively participate in education. The government's single tract education, which emphasizes the secular national curriculum, does not adequately take care of the needs of the

Muslim population, which demands provision of Islamic religious knowledge. Although the government has accommodated Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in to the Curriculum a long with Christian and Hindu religious education, a section of the Kenyan Muslims was not convinced with its content which they consider it to be inadequate. To better understand the contributions of Islamic integrated schools on access to education in Garissa, we first make a quick review of the overall education access trend of students in Garissa.

### **Students' Enrolment in Primary Schools in Garissa**

Following a Pre-Independence pledge to provide every child with a minimum of seven years free education, successive Kenyan Governments harnessed popular support to expand primary education (Makau, 1995). The government encouraged community initiatives to set up primary schools and became the expression of a public policy that led to significant and sustained growth in provision of education and enrolment (Eshiwani, 1993).

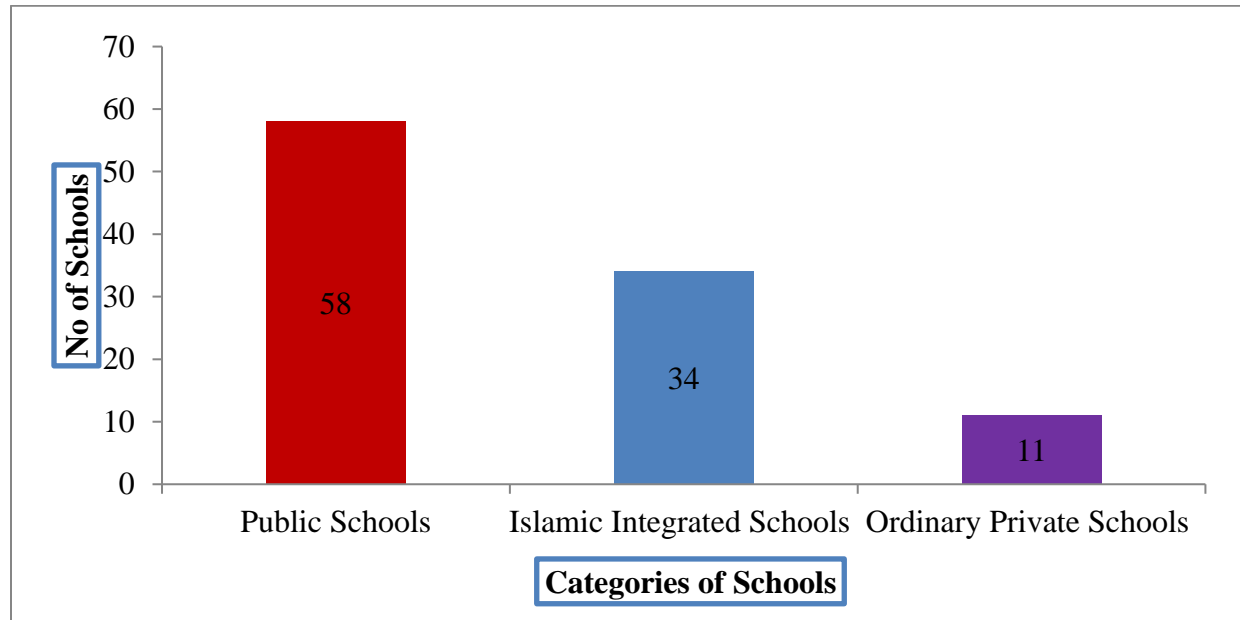
This expansion, however, soon reflected significant geographical inequalities (Nkinyangi, 1982). By 1977 just six districts in the whole country were enrolling less than 50 per cent of their estimated school-age population. All of them were pastoral districts: Marsabit, Samburu, Turkana, and the three districts (Mandera, Wajir, and Garissa) of North Eastern Province. Twenty years later, in 1998, almost nothing much had changed, since the above-mentioned districts remained to be the six lowest-achieving districts in education (Republic of Kenya & FAWE, 2000).

The World Declaration on Education for All (1990) drew attention to the need to remove educational disparities within countries (UNESCO, 1990). In the year 2003, Kenya introduced free and compulsory primary education for all; the response from the public and international donors was overwhelming. According to the Ministry of Education (2009), enrolment increased from 6.0 million in 2002 to 7.2 million pupils in 2003 representing a 20% increase. Since 2003, the enrolment has further increased to 8.6 million as at 2008. Completion rate rose from 62.8% in 2002 to

81.0% in 2007 and marginally dropping to 79.5% in 2008. North Eastern region was not left behind in this national students' enrolment increase even though it has the lowest PCR (prescribed coursework report) recording of 36.5% compared to

the other provinces. In Garissa District, the students are enrolled in three different types of schools; Public schools, Islamic Integrated schools, and ordinary private schools

**Figure 1: Number of Schools in Garissa as at Dec, 2013**



**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer's Office, Garissa (2015)

Figure 1 illustrates that by the end of year 2013, there were a total of 103 registered primary schools in Garissa; they were made up of: 58 public schools, 34 Islamic Integrated schools, and 11 ordinary

private schools. The growth of Islamic Integrated schools to 35 in a span of 15 years of its existence with the presence of free primary education is a point to deliberate on.

**Table 1: Students' Enrolment at public primary schools in Garissa**

Year	Boys	Girls	Total	Incr/Decr
2002	8,625	4,155	12,780	-
2003	11,397	5,539	16,936	4,156
2004	12,063	6,174	18,237	1,301
2005	12,631	6,620	19,251	1,014
2006	13,214	7,120	20,334	1,083
2007	14,867	8,071	22,938	2,604
2008	13,330	8,109	21,439	-1499
2009	14,320	8,587	22,907	1,468
2010	13,245	7,936	21,181	(-1,726)

**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer's Office, Garissa (2015)

The above table illustrates the students' enrolment in public schools in Garissa since the inception of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 until the year

2010. The trend in the students' enrolment seems not to be stable. In 2003 when the Free Primary was introduced, we observe a substantial increase of the

enrolment to 16936 up from 12780 in 2002 shortly before the introduction of FPE, an increase of 4156 pupils. However, the range systematically decreased as days go by. In 2010, the decrease in the range hit its climax of (-1,726) (see *Table 1*). This is an indication that many parents in Garissa have opted for the free Primary education immediately it was introduced but several years down the line, however they soon realized a down fall of the quality of education in the schools due to the over

enrolment of learners. The increase in the enrolment has over stretched the learning facilities available in schools. Many parents have opted for other providers of education services such as Islamic Integrated and other ordinary private schools.

In this section a comparison in enrolment is made between Islamic Integrated Schools and ordinary private schools in Garissa.

**Table 2: Students’ enrolment of non-Islamic integrated private primary schools in Garissa**

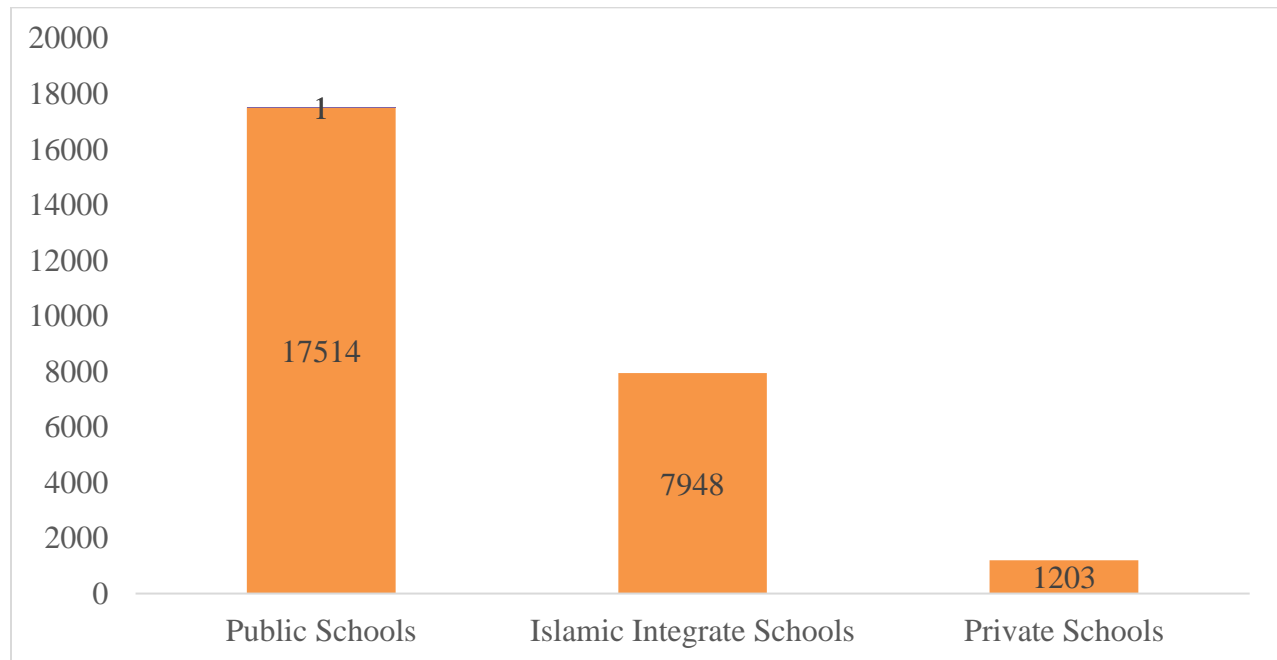
Year	School	Total Students’ enrolment
2015	Islamic Integrated Schools	7,948
	Non-Islamic integrated Private Schools	1,203

**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

The total students’ enrolment at Islamic integrated schools in Garissa as of January 2015 stood at 7,948 learners compared to the non-Islamic private

schools having 1203 learners as shown in *Table 2* above.

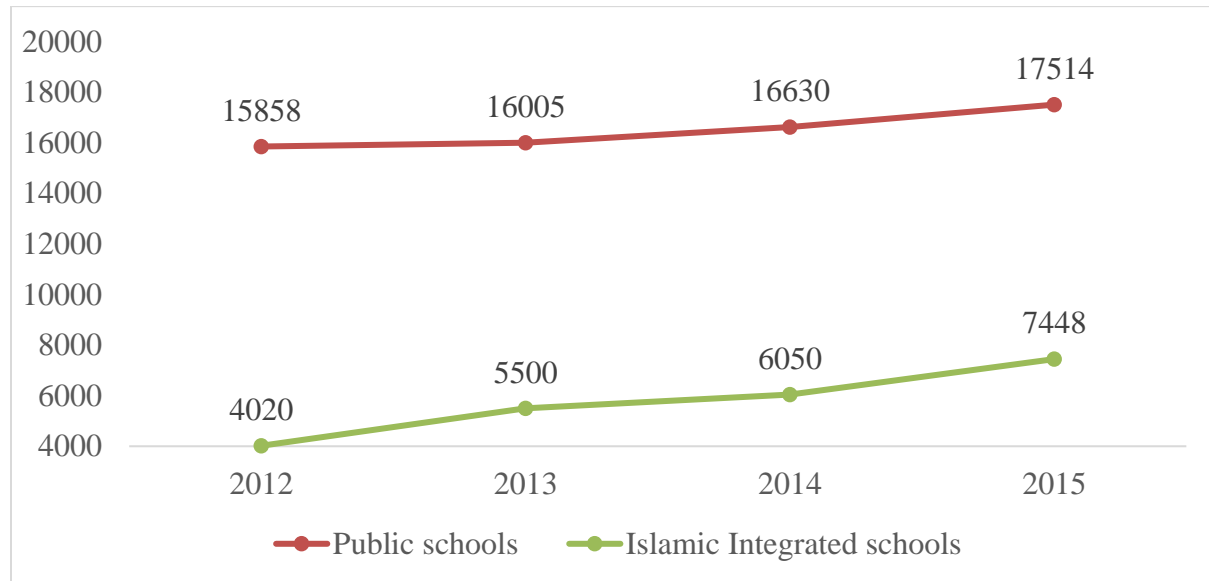
**Figure 2: Comparison in enrollment between Public and Private Schools in Garissa in 2015**



**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

*Figure 2* shows a comparison in students’ enrolment between public primary schools, Islamic Integrated schools, and the ordinary private schools in Garissa in 2015. The total students’ enrolment at public

schools in Garissa as of January 2015 was 17514, compared to Islamic integrated schools which had 7,948 learners and 1,203 in the ordinary private schools.

**Figure 3: Comparison of Public and Islamic Integrated schools' Enrolment in Garissa from 2012 to 2015**

**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer's Office, Garissa (2015)

Figure 3 shows an increase in students' enrolment in both public and Islamic Integrated schools however, the extent of growth in Islamic Integrated Schools is faster than the public. The increase in the enrolment for both public and Islamic Integrated schools signify the existence of a general positive awareness on formal education by Garissa community. Irrespective of the providers, the credit goes to Islamic Integrated Schools for playing a major role in this awareness. The basis of the awareness was that formal education is equally important as religious education and can both be pursued concurrently. Those who can meet the cost of education in Islamic integrated schools enrol their children in such schools, while those who cannot, take their children to public schools.

#### ***Students Enrolment at the Four Sampled Islamic Integrated Schools in Garissa***

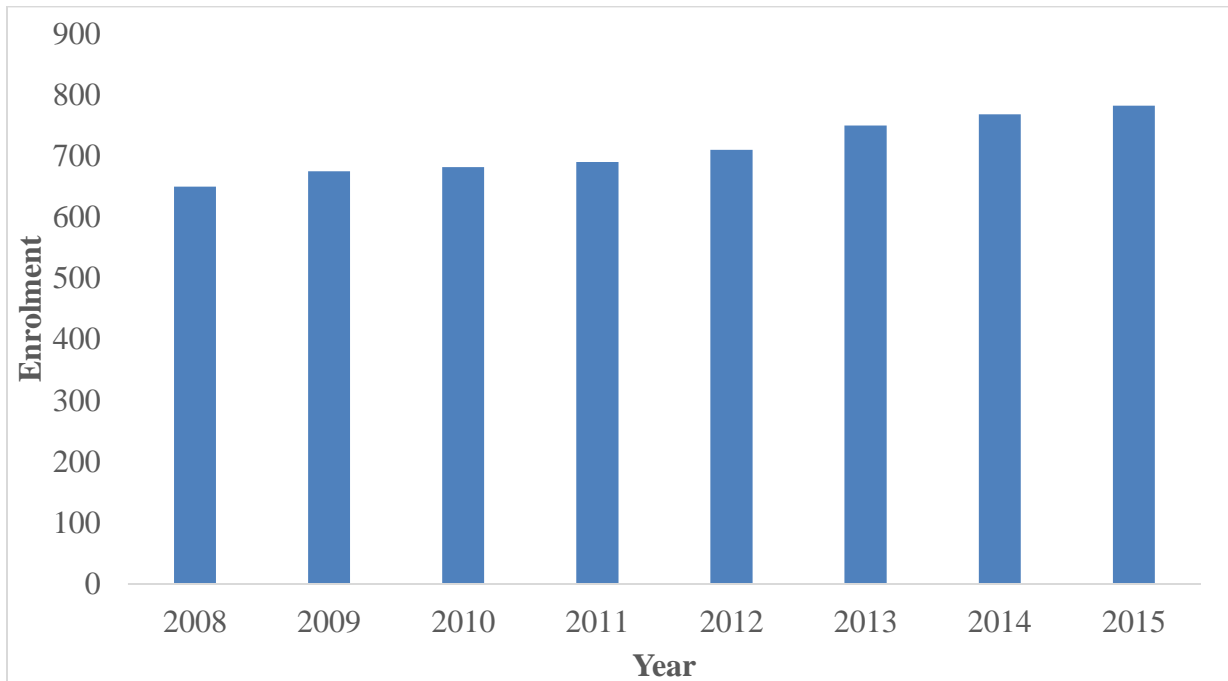
This section deals with the students' enrolment in the four sampled Islamic Integrated Schools in Garissa. They are; Young Muslim Academy, Sumaya Academy, Al-Ibrahim Academy and Al-Hakim Integrated Academy. The information was gathered from examination files of the respective schools and the office of the County Director of Education. The enrolment trend is strictly from 2008 to 2015.

#### ***Students' Enrolment at Young Muslim Academy***

The figure below illustrates the enrolment trend of Young Muslim Academy from 2008 to 2015



**Figure 4: Students’ enrolment at Young Muslim Academy**



**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

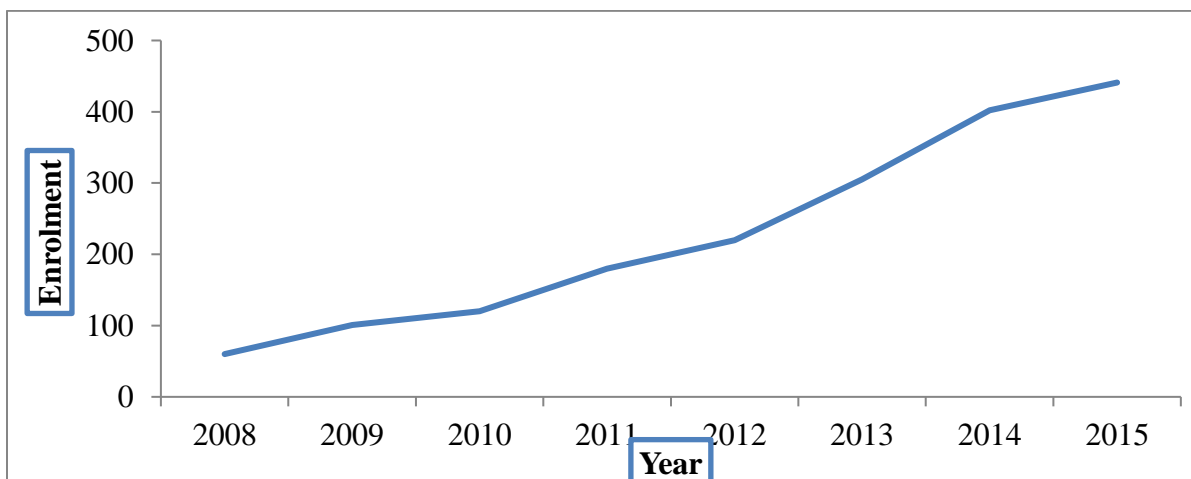
As shown in the graph, the students’ enrolment at Young Muslim Academy was progressively going up indicating positive growth in the student’s enrolment up to an enrolment of 782 by 2015. Most of the students in the school preferred to remain in the school after it was converted to a fully-fledged private school in 2009, the school do not offer lunch

or transport since majority of the students come from the neighbourhood.

**Students’ enrolment at Sumeya Academy**

The graph below illustrates the students’ enrolment at Sumeya academy:

**Figure 5: Students enrolment at Sumeya Academy**



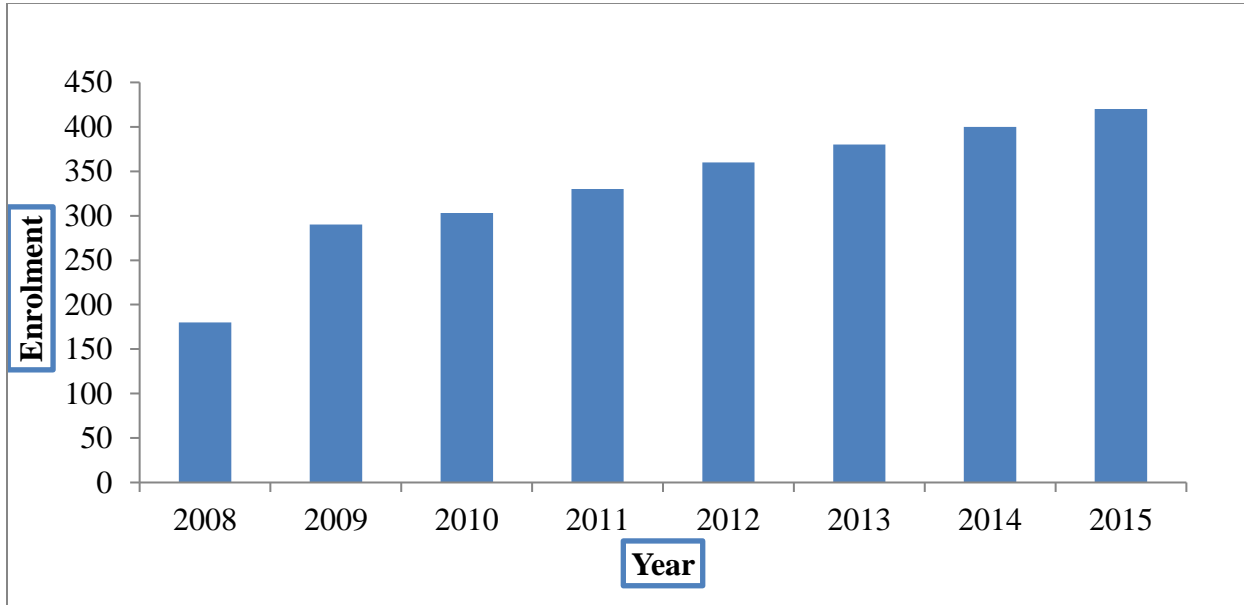
**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

The students' enrolment at Sumeya academy has significantly grown throughout the years of its existence. The enrolment shot from only 50 learners in 2008 to 441 learners in January 2015.

**Students' Enrolment at Al-Ibrahim Academy**

Figure 6 below illustrates students' enrolment at Al-Ibrahim Academy:

**Figure 6: Students enrolment at Al-Ibrahim Academy**



**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer's Office, Garissa (2015)

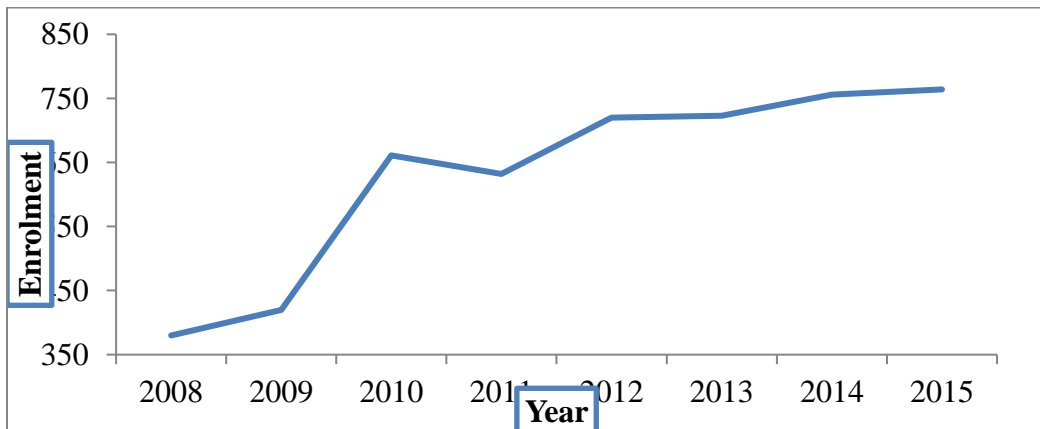
The enrolment of Al-Ibrahim academy has also notably grown as shown in the graph down from 180 in 2008 to its current enrolment of 420.

enrolment has made the school open two more branches which are: Al-Hakim 2 and Al-Hakim 3. By 2015, the school had a total students' enrolment of 1085.

**Students' enrolment at Al-Hakim Academy**

The students' enrolment at Al-Hakim Academy has been systematically growing. The growth in the

**Figure 7: Students enrolment at Al-Hakim Academy**



**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer's Office, Garissa (2015)

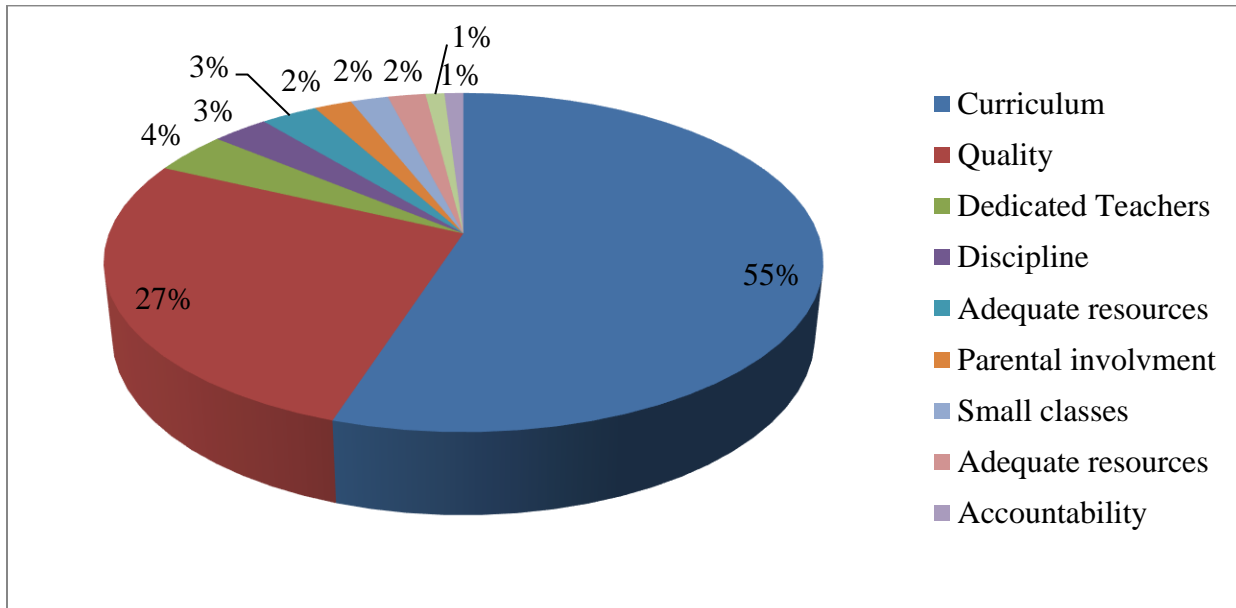


In summary the students' enrolment at the four sampled Islamic Integrated Schools was progressively growing which is an indication that Islamic Integrated Schools makes a positive contribution towards access to formal education in Garissa.

**Reasons for Choosing Islamic Integrated Schools**

The respondents gave different reasons for choosing the Islamic Integrated Schools over the public and ordinary private schools. The reasons are summed up in the chart below;

**Figure 8: Main reasons for choosing Islamic Integrated Schools**



Most of the respondents among the parents have attributed their choice for Islamic Integrated schools to the integrated curriculum. They maintained that teaching of religious studies side by side with the formal education offered a great chance to their children to pursue their careers while at the same time learning their religion. This group constituted 55% of the total respondents. The preference of the integrated curriculum also emerges from comments made by parents:

*Some parents prefer Islamic schools because they teach Islamic and formal education concurrently (Abdi, Private Conversation, Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015).*

*When the children complete this type of school, they will be knowledgeable in both Secular and Islamic studies (Saadia, Private Conversation, Dec 5<sup>th</sup> 2015).*

The main second reason given for preference for Islamic Integrated Schools is the quality of education provided at Islamic Integrated schools. The quality of education is gauged by the

performance in the national examination (KCPE). It is on the basis of the KCPE examination results those decisions on admission to the limited secondary school places are made. The results of such exam are also used in predicting students' potential for continued learning and occupational competencies. In 2013, about 200,000 candidates who sat for KCPE examination missed form one place. The transition rate from primary to secondary schools stood at 70%. (Kaimenyi, 2014 12). Furthermore, in the year 2014 KCPE examination results, the Education cabinet secretary Prof Kaimenyi revealed that 687,000 candidates out of the 880,486 who sat for the 2014 KCPE examination shall be admitted to Form One. The national transition was 78% of the total candidates who sat for the KCPE examination. This indicates that 193,486 primary school graduates were to miss the opportunity to further their education. So, under this competitive environment, 27% of the parents of Islamic Integrated schools in Garissa maintained that the main reason for choosing Islamic Integrated Schools over other schools is because of their good

performance and their ability to secure a place for their children in secondary schools with good performing record.

Other factors such as availability of committed and competent teachers, good discipline, adequate learning facilities, small number of pupils that allows the teachers to give personalized attention to both fast and slow learners, parental involvement on school activities and their children progress, approachability of school administration and a great sense of accountability were also cited as reasons for preferring Islamic Integrated Schools over the non-integrated ones. Some parents cited lack of

books/supplies, poor teaching, lack of enough teachers, facilities in bad condition, overcrowding and poor performance as reasons for their non-satisfaction in public schools.

**Role of Islamic Integrated Schools in Improving Performance in Garissa**

The performance by students in national examinations within the North Eastern Region is far below all the other Regions in Kenya. Below is year on year account of the KCPE performance In Garissa:

**Table 3: Mean scores of public primary schools in Garissa from 2006 – 2010**

Year	No. Of Candidates	No. Of Schools	Mean Scores
2006	1537	27	243
2007	1628	30	233
2008	1361	30	257
2009	1433	20	259
2010	1826	21	237

**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

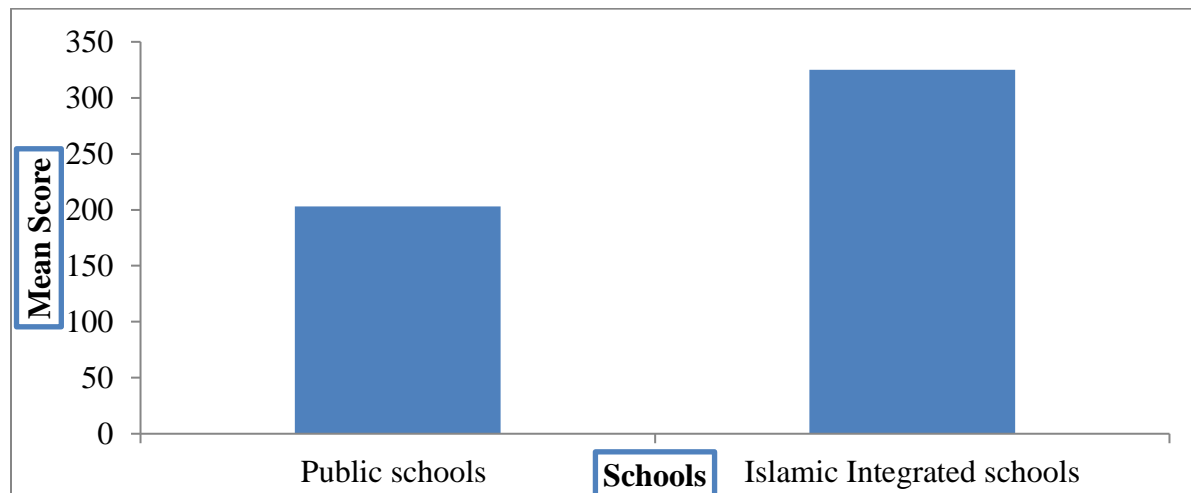
NB: In 2009, the numbers of schools have reduced because Garissa district was divided into various districts.

It is evident that performance in Garissa Municipality has not been pleasing well since it is only in 2008 and 2009 that the mean scores were higher than 250 marks. This implies that quality

education in Garissa Municipality is facing challenges that needs to be sorted out.

Below is a comparison between the KCPE performance between the best ten public and Islamic Integrated schools in Garissa in the year 2013.

**Figure 9: Public-Islamic Integrated schools performance Comparison in KCPE in Garissa**



**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

The comparison in the performance was made between the best ten public schools out of the total 58 and the best 10 Islamic Integrated schools out of the 34 in Garissa in the year 2013. The public schools include: Bour Argi primary, Kazuko, Jaribu, Umul-Khair girls, Garissa Primary, Bulaftin Pimary, Najah Primary, Hyuga girls and Sambul Primary School. The Islamic Integrated schools include: Young Muslim Academy, Abu-Ubaida Academy, Mwangaza Academy, Mnara Junior Academy, Al-Ibrahim Integrated Academy, Sunshine Integrated Academy, IbnSina Academy, Al-Hakim Integrated Academy, Ibn Mubarak Academy and Manhal Academy. The best ten public schools had a total mean score of 203 (out of 500 marks). While Islamic Integrated schools obtained a total mean of 325 which seems to be very impressive.

The combined mean score for the ten public schools and the ten Islamic Integrated schools in Garissa is 264 which is above the average mark of 250. We can therefore deduce from the analysis that the Islamic Integrated schools in Garissa do not only perform better than public schools but they also help improve the overall KCPE performance in Garissa.

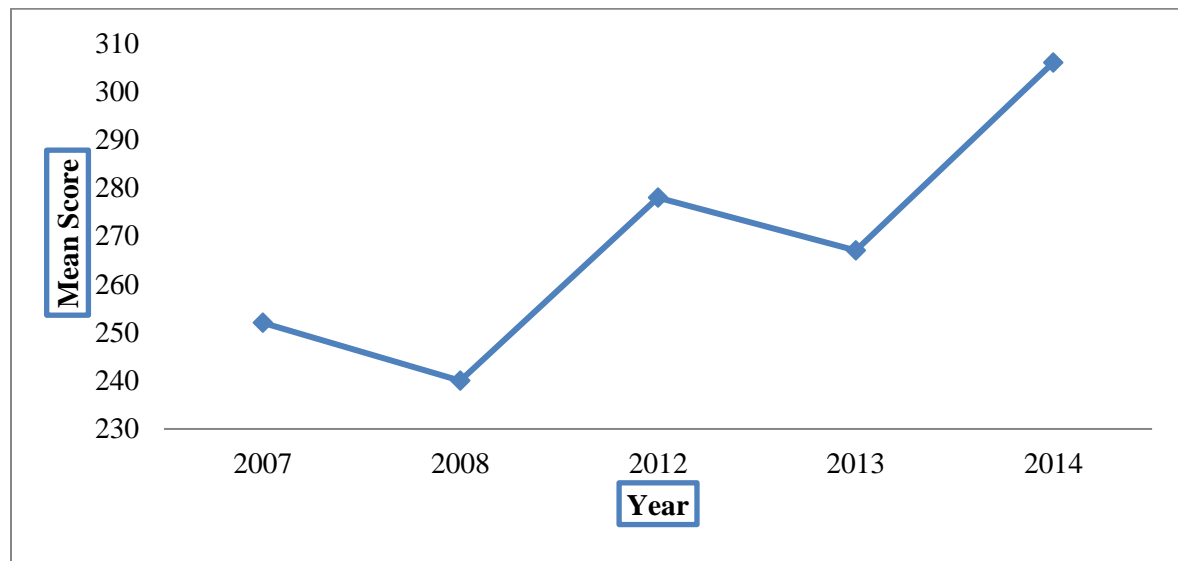
**Performance of Islamic Integrated Schools in Garissa**

The KCPE performance of the four selected Islamic Integrated Schools in Garissa are analysed and presented in charts and graphs as shown below.

**1. KCPE Performance of Young Muslim Academy**

The graph below shows the performance of Young Muslim Academy in KCPE from 2007 to 2014

**Figure 10: KCPE performance of Young Muslim Academy**



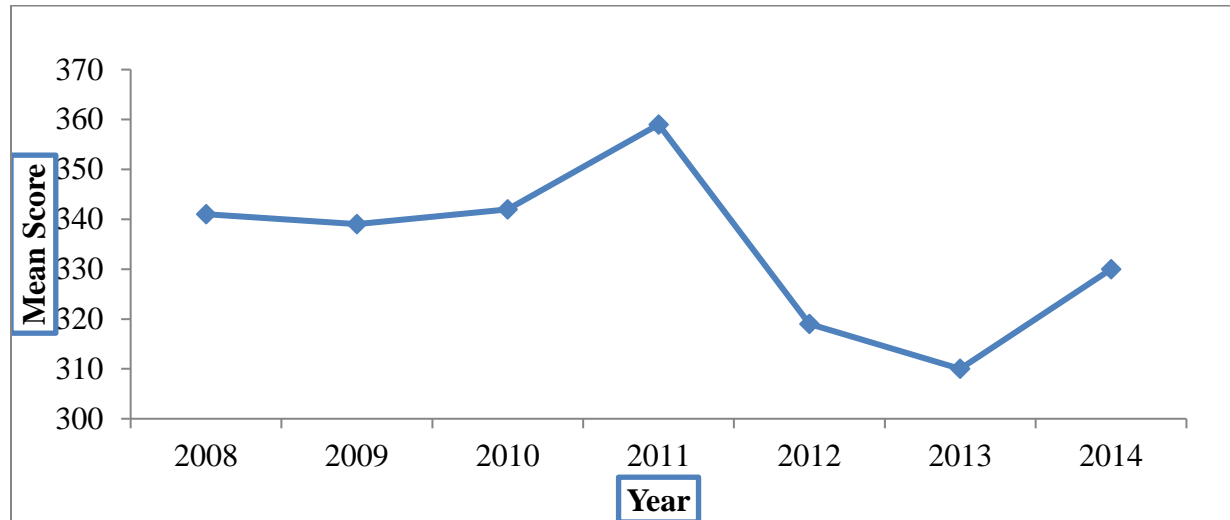
**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

The above graph shows the performance of Young Muslim Academy when it was public school and after it was made an Islamic Integrated school. The school attained a mean score of 252 and 240 in the year 2007 and 2008 respectively, which are its last two years as a public school, however the performance improved after it was made an Islamic Integrated School as from the year 2009. The school attained a mean score of 278, 267, and 306 in the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively. The head

teachers maintained that with the merging of Madrassa and school curriculums and by extension absorbing all Madrassa teachers in to the school, the learners got ample time to concentrate on their studies and prepare well for the exam. He also attributed the good performance due to the good cooperation between the parents and the teachers. He reported that most of the parents are determined to do proper follow-up on their children’s progress

as well as provide the necessary requirement for the learners throughout their learning process on time. **Performance of Sumeya Integrated Academy**

**Figure 11: KCPE Performance of Sumeya Academy**



**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

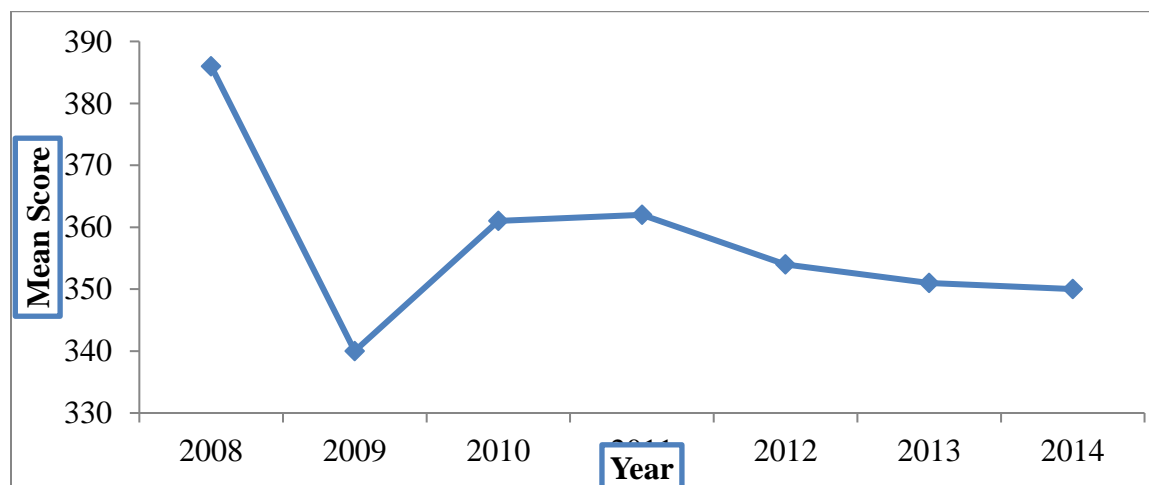
Despite the heavy workload and combining two different curriculums, Sumeya integrated Academy’s performance in the national examination is good.

The school performed its best in KCPE examination in 2011. However, a drastic drop was witnessed in 2012 and 2013. The drop was attributed to the high turnover of the most experienced teachers in the school through “poaching” by other competing

academies in the town. The teachers were enticed with a better pay. The other factor was the increase of the number of candidates compared to the year 2012 (Wafula, Private Conversation, Jan 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015). However, with all the challenges mentioned by the head teacher, the school maintained a mean score of 310 and above in the KCPE since its inceptions in 2002.

**Performance for Al-Ibrahim Academy**

**Figure 12: KCPE performance of Al-Ibrahim Academy**



**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

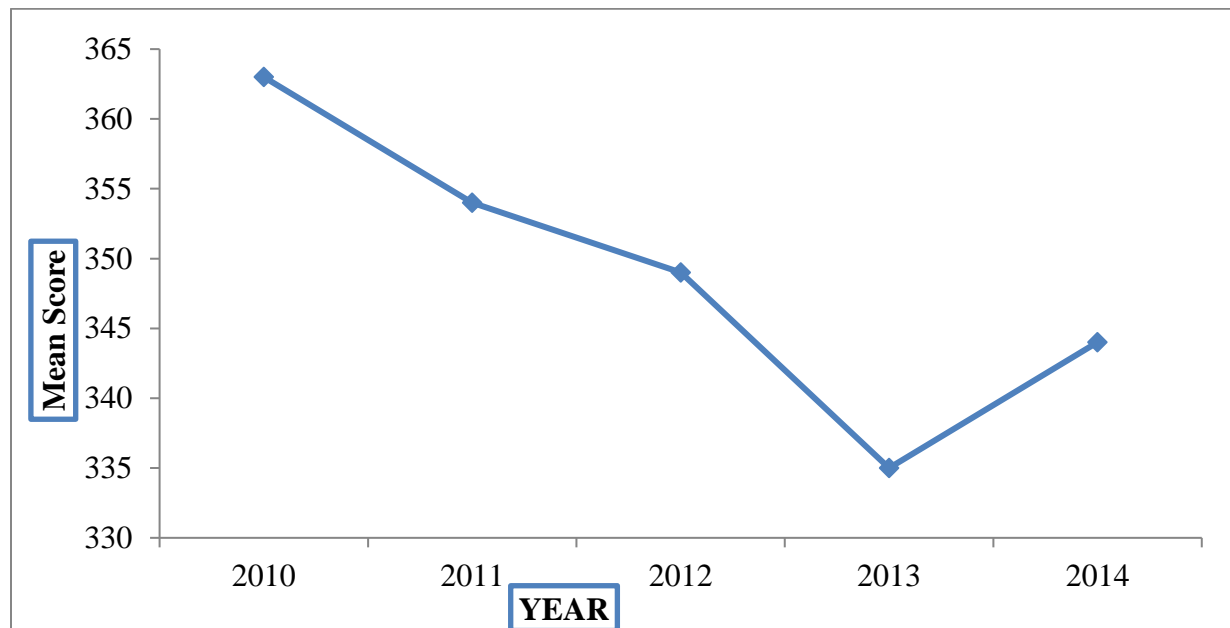
Al-Ibrahim Academy had maintained a good performance in KCPE examinations. The school scored a mean score of 386,340,361,362,354,351 and 350 in the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively. The school performed its best in 2008 when it topped the North Eastern region and produced the second and the third best students in the region attaining a mean score of 386. The school’s mean score dropped from 386 to 340 in 2009, the lowest since its inception. This was attributed to an increase in the number of candidates from twelve in 2008 to thirty in 2009. However, the

school maintained an average mean score of 350 and above which is quite impressive.

The head teacher attributed the overall good performance to a number of factors among which is a teacher who are dedicated to their work, good school-parents relationship, constant follow up of individual learner’s progress, and high level of discipline in the school. (Luke, Private Conversation, Jan, 12<sup>th</sup> 2015)

**Performance for Al-Hakim Academy**

**Figure 13: KCPE Performance of Al-Hakim Academy**



**Source:** Sub-County Education Officer’s Office, Garissa (2015)

Although the school’s mean score was dropping from 2010 to 2013, from a mean score of 363 in 2010 to a mean of 340 in 2013, its average mean was always above 340 marks out of the 500. In 2010 KCPE, the school was the best in Garissa beating the academic giants, such as Getune, Garissa Academy, Mwangaza Academy of Garissa town.

their enrolment. To realize that, the schools register few selected candidates only. Secondly, once a school performs the best, it loses its best teachers to other schools that are ready to offer a better pay.

**Role of Islamic Integrated Schools in Enhancing Perception of Parents and Local Community towards Formal Education**

It is important to note that upon the scrutiny of the performance culture of the four schools, you will observe that most of them performed the best in their first attempt of KCPE exam. This is often caused by two factors. The first one is the fact that the new schools strive to impress the public by performing their best in first KCPE exam to increase

The role of the parent in their children education is very significant. Most accurate predictor of a student’s achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to: create a home environment that encourages learning; express high but realistic

expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and become involved in their children's education at school and in the community (Henderson & Berla, 1994). They maintain that when parents are involved in their children's education at home they do better in school. A three-year study by Steinberg (2006) involving 12,000 students in nine high schools in the US revealed that, "community involvement draws parents into the schools physically and are most effective in improving academic achievement through attending school programs, extracurricular activities, conferences, and 'back to school' nights. Steinberg concluded that when parents come to school regularly, it reinforces the view in the child's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life" (Steinberg, 2006)

Measuring perception is not easy as analysis based on surveys suffers from self-selection bias since students/parents who choose to go to a particular facility are more likely to be having positive attitude with that facility. Much of the analysis presented in this section also suffers from this selection bias.

To capture the perception of the parents and the local community towards education, the researcher has administered a questionnaire and interviewed the parents and the local community on their personal feelings and judgment on the integrated schools. In addition to that, the head teachers and teachers of the sampled schools were also interviewed on the level of involvement and participation of parents in school activities and programs. This has formed the yardstick to measure the level of perception of community towards formal education in general.

### ***Parental Involvement and Participation in Islamic Integrated Schools***

The involvement of parents and families in their children's education is critical to students' academic success. Parents and other interested members of the broader community have much to contribute to the articulation of the school's values, vision, and purpose statements. "Broad-based consultation that includes all stakeholders is imperative if a school is to serve its community effectively. For such partnerships (with parents) to be meaningful, the

parents must move beyond fundraising, compliance with homework and school policies and be supportive to the core values of the institution" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). "Schools are encouraged to work with parents because families are the first and the most important sources for students' joy, creativity, purpose and all the other gateways to soul in education. Parents' wisdom and modelling continue to shape these young people throughout their lives (Kessler, 2000) The participation of parents in schools depends on how contented the parents are in school activities and how they are involved in the school programs and activities. It is therefore two-way traffic. A part from being integrated, Islamic integrated schools in Garissa are also private institutions and in contrast to public schools, they are taken to be accountable by the community it serves and therefore their existence depends on the quality of education they offer.

The four Islamic integrated schools in Garissa under study i.e., Young Muslim, Sumeya, Al- Ibrahim and Al-Hakim integrated academy strive to involve the parents and the community at large in school activities through the following ways:

#### ***Communication: Establishing Effective School-To-Home and Home-To-School***

Communication is ensured through providing printed information for parents on homework policies and on monitoring and supporting student work at home where the school send diary books to parents specifying the learners' daily and weekly assignments, home work, and school policies for parent review and comment. The schools also established formal mechanisms for families to communicate to administrators and teachers as needed (e.g., direct phone numbers, e-mail addresses etc)

**Reception:** Creating a welcoming school climate by allowing the parents to visit the schools at any hour of the day to meet their children's teachers, tour the school facilities and participates in school activities.

**Engagement:** The schools involve parents in school planning, leadership, and meaningful volunteer opportunities by creating roles for parents on all decision-making and advisory committees, training them properly for the areas in which they will serve



(e.g., curriculum, disciplinary, budget or school safety). The schools also provide equal representation for parents on school governing bodies. This is ensured through Parents Teachers Association (PTA) where schools structure a network that links every parent with a designated parent representative in specific classes.

**Meetings:** Organizing parents meeting through different stages of school activities i.e., closing day, prize giving day, graduation day, and sport days where parents are invited in taking part in such activities.

**Consultation:** One to one meeting of the parent with the school administration and class teacher to discuss the conduct or progress of specific learner depending on the circumstance.

The parents in return reciprocate the active involvement in school activities through the following initiatives:

**Attendance:** Parents ensure the attendance of their child in school and on time because they have control over their child's attendance since these schools are day schools.

**Attitude:** Most of the parents display a positive attitude toward school in general. Their positive

attitude consciously or unconsciously shapes the child's opinions and attitudes about learning, although some parents are challenged by lack of formal education.

**Commitment:** Most parents give a top priority to education and given the fact that majority of them may not have gotten the opportunity to go to school; they do not wish for their children to go through the same experience.

**Support:** Most of the parents support their children by making sure that their children arrive at school on time, and are well-fed. In addition, the parents provide the necessary learning resources and pay their fees.

**Communication:** Majority of parents keep in touch with their children in school and have a positive relationship with the teachers. They have the telephone contacts of the class teachers and maintain a good contact.

This level of parental support in Garissa towards the education of their children is a sign of a good will that gives us the clue on the parents' perception towards their show of appreciation on the offered curriculum in such schools.

**Table 4: Community perception towards Islamic Integrated schools in Garissa.**

Community perception	Head teachers		Teachers	
	F	%	F	%
Excellent	3	75	10	31.25%
Very good	1	25	13	40.6%
Good	0	0	5	15.6%
Average	0	0	4	12.5%
Below average	0	0	0	0
Total	4	100	32	100%

Ranking terminologies of excellent, very good, good, average and below average were used to establish the level of community's participation and support for Islamic integrated schools. 75% of the head teachers rated the community's support and participation as excellent while 31.25% of the teachers gave the same rating. The head teachers-parent contact is more than teachers-parents' contact in schools for that reason head teachers' ratings seem to be more accurate. Majority of the teacher

who constitute nearly 40.6% rated the support to be very good. It is significant to note that there are no ratings that are below average. The indicators of support are portrayed in several aspects such as: Students enrolment in school, timely school fees payment, regular follow up of parents with the school about their children progress, attending parent meetings and other school functions, provision of the necessary learning resources for



their children and finally ensuring that their children attend to their homework and assignments.

## CONCLUSION

Islamic Integrated schools, an initiative of Muslim organizations and individual Muslim entrepreneurs, have become an alternative avenue of provision of education for Muslims in Kenya. The schools began as private academies incorporating the Islamic education curricula as taught in the Madrasa and Qur'anic schools. There is evidence that Islamic integrated schools have increased the access to formal elementary education particularly in Muslim majority towns like Garissa, Wajir, Mombasa, Mandera, and some parts of Nairobi majorly settled by Muslims. In Garissa alone, the number of Islamic integrated schools have grown to 34 schools and makes up 30% of the total students' enrolment in primary schools, despite the free primary education offered in public schools. The services offered by the schools are often regarded as higher quality compared to that of public schools. Consequently, the schools' boosts not only the performance of individual schools but that of Garissa too and equally improved the parent's and community's perception towards formal education. Several reasons are given by the parents for choosing Muslim private integrated schools over the public and the non-integrated private ones as; Concurrent teaching of formal and religious education, quality of the education provided by the school, high level of discipline, small class enrolment, reasonable student teacher ratio quality teachers and conducive learning environment.

The Ministry of Education has recognized the place of Islamic education in the country's education system and passed the necessary legislation, including the education Act, 2012 which calls for integration of Qur'anic schools and Madrasa into the national education system. However, the Act has not been operationalized through provision of adequate resources and manpower. Integration as envisaged by section 95 of the Basic Education Act, has not been realized almost four years after the act was passed. In order to make this a reality, the Ministry of Education needs to collaborate with Muslim scholars, who have the technical knowhow, to design the integrated curriculum and help establish Integrated Islamic schools in Muslim

majority regions. This will attract Muslim parents whose children are either studying Madrasa and Qur'anic schools simply because they cannot afford the fees demanded by the Islamic integrated schools or because they find the public national schools inadequate in the socialization of their children. This will greatly enhance access to education for Muslims, in line with the government's commitment to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA)

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