

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS ON DROP OUT OF STUDENTS FROM SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MARAKWET DISTRICT, KENYA.

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined the influence of teacher characteristics on drop out of students from public secondary schools. The researchers set out to establish the influence of the teacher characteristics on the drop out of students from secondary schools. The study was based on Tinto's (1975) student integration model (SIM). The objectives of the study were to: establish the influence of lesson load and managerial responsibilities on dropout of learners, find out the extent to which teachers give attention to slow learners and finally to investigate the extent to which teachers check students work. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The respondents were 28 teachers drawn from 14 secondary schools. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the 14 schools. Purposive sampling was used to obtain 2 teachers who had stayed for the longest time in each of the selected schools. The reason for this was that those teachers who had stayed long in the selected schools had enough reasons as to why students drop out of school. A teacher questionnaire, head teacher interview schedules and documentary analysis were used to obtain necessary data for the study. The questionnaire was validated through test- retest technique. Data was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS programme. Results from the study was tabulated in frequency tables and converted to percentages. The independent variable was teacher characteristic while the dependent variable was drop out of students from school. The study established that: too much work and managerial responsibilities assigned to teachers, limited attention given to slow learners by teachers in class and the failure of teachers to check students work are some of the factors that were found to influence student drop out in secondary schools. The study recommends first, teachers should give attention to slow learners so that they do not feel neglected and hence opt to drop out of school, second, teachers should frequently check students work in class in order to identify learners with problems so that they can be assisted. Third the government should establish an effective evaluation and monitoring programme to ensure that the school administrative policies do not contribute to wastage and dropout in schools.*

KEYWORDS: Influence, Teacher Characteristics, Drop Outs, Slow Learners.

INTRODUCTION

Education being the key to social and economic growth the government has thus endeavored to promote the expansion of education in public secondary schools. A closer look at the enrolment ratios of students vis a vis retention, promotion and graduation rates depict an anomaly. The

number of students who enroll in a given year is large compared to the same (cohort) who graduate after completing the full four year cycle. Some of them drop out because of various reasons. This paper sought to investigate the influence of teacher characteristics on drop out of students from secondary schools. The objectives of the study were to: establish the influence of lesson load and managerial responsibilities on dropout of learners, find out the extent to which teachers give attention to slow learners and finally to investigate the extent to which teachers check students work.

The table below shows the student enrolment and completion in the study locale from the year 2001 to 2008.

Table 1.1: student enrolment and completion in Marakwet District Secondary Schools

Formal Year	Number of Students enrolled	Form Four Year	Number of Students completed
2001	1245	2004	1164
2002	1304	2005	1269
2003	1342	2006	1303
2004	1526	2007	1404
2005	1706	2008	1567

Source: District Education Office Marakwet District, 2008

Teacher characteristics as a factor of drop out

The concerns in the education institutions include the student teacher ratios, teacher attitude, quality and competence. All these influence completion rates in secondary schools. Poor classroom management, teachers' negative comments like 'try somewhere else or unteachable' and also administration of corporal punishment make students to drop out of school, (Mwema, 2003).

School administrative policies and their influence on completion rates

The ministry of education manual for secondary school heads in Kenya (1975) states that every school should have rules drawn by the head teacher with the help of the teachers. The administration of rules in schools make some students withdraw from school. Some secondary schools force students to repeat classes for failure to attain certain acceptable minimum grade in school examinations.

School curriculum as a factor of drop out

Curriculum is the sum total of all experiences a student undergoes in terms of acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values within and outside school. A considerable percentage of drop out cases of learners feel that the school curriculum over loads them, (Briggs (1972). Koringura (2004) points out that the school curriculum reduces children's playing time and also leads to poor performance hence low achievers become frustrated and then withdrawal from school.

Indiscipline as a factor of drop out from school

Okumbe (1999) defines discipline as the action by management to enforce organizational standards. The causes of indiscipline have been advanced as lack of competent administrators and failure to involve both teachers and students in decision making, (Ayige, 1997).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. Abagi, (1995) as well as Orodho, (2004) argued that the descriptive survey design is useful in describing what is in a social system through data collection by use of interviews and questionnaires. In the study, data was collected by use of teacher questionnaire, head teacher interview schedule and document analysis.

The study employed the use of descriptive survey method since it aims at finding out the influence of teacher characteristics on drop out of students from secondary schools.

In the study 14 out of 45 schools in the district were selected through simple random sampling to take part in the study. The fourteen schools selected were 30% of the total number of secondary schools in the district. Kerlinger and Lee, (2000) point out that a sample of this size is deemed appropriate for research purposes. In the 14 schools, 2 teachers who had stayed in the school for the longest time were purposively selected to take in the study. These teachers were considered to have enough information on the reasons why students drop out of school before completing the full cycle of secondary school education as they have stayed in their respective schools for a length of time. In total the researcher selected 28 teachers to take part in the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Status of lesson load and managerial responsibilities of teachers

The table below summarizes the status of lesson load and managerial responsibilities of teachers.

Table 4.1: status of lesson load and managerial responsibilities

Lesson load	Frequency	Percentage
Under loaded	6	21
Over loaded	13	45
Okay	9	34
Total	28	100

From the tabulated results, 13 (45%) of the teachers stated that they were overloaded with lessons and managerial responsibilities in their respectively schools with regard to teaching efficiently, 6 (21%) stated that they are under loaded and 9 (34%) stated that they are okay with the number of lessons assigned to them and the managerial responsibilities they handle. This implies that majority of the teachers cannot deliver as expected since they are over loaded and hence may over look some important issues in teaching and learning process as they do not have enough time to concentrate in all aspects of the teaching – learning process. The researchers found out that the victims in this process are usually the slow learners. This is because teachers

do not have time to provide personal attention and or repeat a certain concept in class for a long time. The slow learners in this situation may opt to drop out of school since there is limited attention given to them by teachers.

Extent to which teachers give attention to slow learners

Table 4.2 summarizes the extent to which teachers give attention to slow learners in class.

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% of support	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25%	16	56.4
25 – 50%	8	29.7
51-71%	3	9.9
76-100%	1	4.0
Total	28	100

The tabulation above indicate that majority of the teachers 16 (56.4%) allocate below 25% support to slow learners while 8 (29.7%) of the teachers stated that they give between 25-25% support to slow learners. It was also found out that 3 (9.9%) of the teachers stated that they give 51-71% support to slow learners and it was found out that only 1 (4%) of the teacher respondents reported that they give 100% support to slow learners. It can thus be concluded that majority of the teachers do not give support to slow learners.

Occurrence at which teachers check students work.

Table 4.3 summarizes the frequency at which teachers check students work.

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Occurrence	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes	13	45
Often	6	21
Never	9	34
Total	28	100

The findings above indicate that 13 (45%) of the teacher respondents said that they check their students work sometimes, while 6 (21%) of the teachers reported that they often check the work of their students and 9 (34%) of the teachers reported that they never check the work of their learners. Teachers argued that those students whose work is not checked of ten by teachers have a high chance of dropping out of school than those whose work is often checked by their teachers. Most teachers reported that this group of learners is likely to drop out of school because they feel as if they have been neglected by their teachers.

Reasons why teachers do not give attention to slow learners**Table 4.4 summarizes the reasons why teachers do not give attention to slow learners**

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
No time	26	92.2
It is not necessary	10	34.6
I don't care	6	23.0
Any comment	7	24.4

From the study it was found out that majority of the teachers 26 (92.2%) cited that they do not give attention to slow learners because they lack time to do so as they often teach many lessons and the classes are also very large, a moderate number of the teachers 10 (34.6%) reported that they do not give attention to slow learners because they do not see it as necessary. This group of teachers reported that slow learners should be able to cope with the rest in class by finding their own appropriate times to go and read in the library or seek the attention of other learners who are above average in class, a few of the teachers 6 (23%) reported that they do not care as nobody pays them to do extra work while an equally small number of teacher 7 (24.4%) gave no comment as to why they do not give attention to slow learners.

It can therefore be argued that slow learners are most likely to drop out of school than average or above average students because they are less motivated in learning and they cannot engage well with either the teachers or other learners who are either average or above average. The fact that teachers neglect them in class increases their chances leaving school before the full four year cycle of secondary school education.

Table 4.5: dropout prevalence per class in the selected public schools

Cohort	Enrolment	Student dropout per class				Drop out per cohort	No. students completed
		I	II	III	IV		
2001/2004	1245	3	40	26	2	71	1164
2002/2005	1304	2	18	12	3	35	1269
2003/2006	1342	4	22	9	2	37	1303
2004/2007	1526	4	93	22	3	122	1404
2005/2008	1706	5	98	31	2	136	1567
Total dropout		18	271	100	12	401	6707
Percentage (%)		4.9%	67.6%	24.9%	3.0%	100%	

From the documentary analysis, it was revealed that majority of student dropout occurs in the second year of study 271 (67.6%) of the learners dropout at this stage, followed by learners in the third year of study 100 (24.9%), while a small percentage of the learners the first 18(4.9%) and fourth year 12(3.0%) respectively.

The reasons obtained through the interview of the head teacher revealed that most student dropout occurs in form two than any other form due to pregnancies, indiscipline, forced repetitions, and lack of school fees.

CONCLUSION

Some of the teacher characteristics factors that were found to influence student drop out in secondary schools include: large work load and managerial responsibilities given to teachers, limited attention given to slow learners by teachers in class and the failure by teachers to check on their students work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need by teachers to give attention to slow learners in class so that they do not feel neglected and hence opt to drop out of school, teachers should also frequently check students work in class in order to identify learners with problems so that they can be assisted and above all the government should establish an effective evaluation and monitoring programme in order to ensure that the school administrative policies do not contribute to wastage and drop out in schools.

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