

INFLUENCE OF STUDENT BASED FACTORS ON EDUCATIONAL WASTAGE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MBOONI WEST SUB-COUNTY, MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA.

Anthony, A. Nthangu¹, Kimiti, Richard Peter², Ph. D. & Prof. Robert Arasa³

¹Masters Candidate, Machakos University, Email: annthangu@gmail.com.

² Machakos University, Senior Lecturer, Department of Educational Management and Curriculum Studies, Email: prickimiti@gmail.com.

³ Machakos University, Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Email: rarasa4@mksu.ac.ke.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of student based factors on educational wastage in public secondary schools in Mbooni West Sub County, Makueni County. Descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. The target population was 41 public secondary schools. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 15 principals, 15 academic deans and 15 form three class teachers giving a total of 45 respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires and document analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics using SPSS and qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis. The findings of the study established that student based characteristics significantly influence educational wastage in public secondary schools in Mbooni West Sub-County. The researcher recommends that public secondary schools management in Mbooni West Sub County be sensitized on educational wastage to improve efficiency and guidance and counseling to be strengthened to curb wastage.

Keywords: Educational wastage, student based factors and public secondary schools.



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1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education is considered the root to economic prosperity, the key to scientific and technological advancement, the means to combat unemployment, the foundation of social equality, equal wealth distribution and the spearhead of political socialization and cultural diversity (Psacharopoulos, 1998). Investment in education is therefore a key element of the development process of any nation. According to Ojiambo (2009) the benefits of educational development are enormous; accelerated economic growth, more wealth and income distribution, greater equality of opportunity, availability of skilled human power, a decline in population growth, long life, better health outcomes and low crime rates, national unity and political stability. A Report by World Bank (2015) argues that the wealth of nations depend

on their capacity to develop their human resources and not so much on their physical resources. He says that a country which is unable to develop skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them efficiently in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.

The government of Kenya has therefore over the years invested heavily in education with the aim to have a globally competitive and prosperous country with high quality life by the year 2030 and transform the country to an industrializing, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens in a clean and secure environment. Mogambi (2018) argues that the Social Pillar in Vision 2030 singles out education and training as the vehicle that will drive Kenya into becoming a middle-income economy. He further explains that education and training is critical in the achievement of Kenya's big four agenda, that is, manufacturing, housing, food security and universal health care. However, like many other nations, Kenya's education sector experiences numerous challenges which among others include issues of access, quality, equity, inefficiency, cost and financing which manifest themselves in the form of wastage

Gatawa (1998) argues that while developing countries have done remarkably well in terms of expanding educational access to a large percentage of their school going population, school performance measured by dropout rates, progression rates and examination results has been quite discouraging. According to Ajayi & Mbah (2008) wastage arising from repetition and drop out is a sign of internal inefficiency in the education system. Hornby (2001) explains that wastage is the act of losing or destroying something, especially when it has been used or dealt with carelessly. Hence wastage in education connotes inefficiency in the use of educational resources by school administrators. In other words, poor relationship of educational inputs with outputs is wastage. Education wastage creates negative performance or outcomes. Obviously, education wastage is clearly seen in the following negative attitudes: students' drop-out; carry-over of courses because of students' inability to perform as expected, hence failure to achieve; unemployment for graduates; employment without success in the area of work; brain-drain and poor utilization of educational resources such as personnel, time, physical, material and financial resources among others.

Several studies have been conducted on determinants of educational wastage in the Kenyan education System. Student based factors have been established as significant influencers of educational wastage. Since the problem cuts across the nation and there is no proof that such a study has been carried out in Mbooni West, the researcher sought to fill this gap by

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investigating the influence of student based characteristics on educational wastage in public secondary schools in Mbooni West Sub County.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF STUDENT BASED CHARACTERISTICS AND EDUCATIONAL WASTAGE

Students exhibit traits that impede learning leading to poor academic performance, repetition and dropping out of school. These range from low self-esteem, academic ability, absenteeism, indiscipline, age of the student, teenage pregnancies, drug abuse and peer influence. Some studies indicate that poor academic achievement leads to dropping out (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Swanson & Scheider, 1999; Colclough et al 2000; Boyle et al, 2002; Hunter and May, 2003; Liu 2004). Absenteeism from school and student discipline problems are also strong predictors of dropping out, especially at the secondary level of education. Girls who get pregnant and are not supported to resume their studies after delivery normally drop out of school or come back after some years which lead to repetition. Students who also get involved in drug abuse decline in their academic performance, exhibit indiscipline and most drop out of school.

Peer group influence also plays an important role in school dropout among adolescents. It is well recognized that the extent to which an adolescent succeeds in meeting the schools expectations has an important and direct bearing upon his status in the peer group (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). The peer group of an adolescent constitutes a world of its own with its customs, traditions, manners, and even its own language. Peers can exert extraordinary influence over each other particularly in regard to school dropout and attitudes towards school (Gara & Davis, 2006). Peer group influence upon secondary school students' attitudes towards school can be supportive of the formal organizational norms concerning the importance of academic achievement. The more cohesive the peer group is, the greater the influence on its members (Dougherty & Hammack, 1990). Burton, Ray, & Mehta (2003) also noted that these peers pose an influence that is a common source for negative activities for students like experimentation with drugs, drinking, vandalism and stealing.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research adopted descriptive survey design. According to Kombo & Tromp (2006), descriptive survey research describes the key features of an occurrence, people, society or a target population. The researcher therefore found this design appropriate because it gives a great deal of accurate information and is appropriate for educational fact findings.

3.1 TARGET POPULATION

The target population for this study comprised of all the forty one (41) public secondary schools in Mbooni West Sub- County. The Sub-County has 41 public secondary schools, 550 secondary schools teachers, 5200 boys and 4871.

Table 1: Target Population

Category/Frequency	Schools	Principals	Deans	Teachers	Boys	Girls
Girls' boarding	4	4	4	4	54	1355
Boys' boarding	3	3	3	3	39	918
Mixed boarding	2	2	2	2	42	780
Mixed day	25	25	25	25	314	2002
Mixed day and boarding	7	7	7	7	95	1500
Total(N)	4	4	4	41	550	5200

Source: M.O.E, Mbooni West Sub-County (2018)

3.2 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND SAMPLE SIZE

Kothari (2004) defines a sample as a representative part of a population. Thus by studying the sample one can be able to know about the population without having to study the entire population. Stratified random sampling was used to select fifteen (15) schools out of forty one (41) public secondary schools that are in the sub-county. The fifteen (15) schools constituted 37% of the total number of schools. The distribution of the sample is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Sample of the Study

	Girls' boarding	Boys' boarding	Mixed boarding	Mixed day	Mixed day and boarding	Total
Principals	2	2	2	6	3	15
Dean/ Senior teacher	2	2	2	6	3	15
Class teachers	2	2	2	6	3	15
Total	6	6	6	18	9	45

3.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires were used as the tool for collecting primary data and secondary data was obtained through document analysis. Three sets of questionnaires were used; a questionnaire for the principals, academic dean or senior teacher and class teachers. The questionnaires were selected as they covered a wide scope of the research items.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents results of the data obtained from respondents through questionnaires. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to the extent to which Student based characteristics influenced wastage in their schools. This was measured on a Likert scale of 1-5, where Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral =3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree= 5. A summary of the research findings is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Student Based Factors and Educational Wastage

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Academic ability	40	1.00	5.00	3.8000	1.06699
Drug abuse	40	1.00	5.00	3.7500	1.05612
Peer influence	41	1.00	5.00	3.8293	.94611
Teenage pregnancies	39	1.00	5.00	3.5641	1.16517
Valid N (listwise)	38			3.7359	1.0586

From the above table, an average of 38 respondents participated to the questions on student based characteristics. Academic ability was a student based characteristic influencing wastage (mean=3.800; SD=1.06699). Indeed research has shown that poor academic achievement in schools as measured by grades, test scores and grade retention is associated with dropping out (Ekstrom et al, 1986). Students who continuously perform dismally academically lose interest in studies and leave school to attend to other activities of interest mostly income generating activities to assist their poor parents in raising income for a living. Drug abuse was also a student based characteristic that influences educational wastage (mean=3.7500; SD=1.05612). Drug abuse has become a great threat to the education of young people. Students involved in drug abuse drop out of school or end up performing poorly in academics.

Further, peer influence was a student based characteristic influencing wastage (mean=3.8293; SD=0.94611). Previous studies have found that peer influence to be a significant determinant of educational wastage. For instance, Gara & Davis, (2006) concluded that the peer group of an adolescent constitutes a world of its own with its customs, traditions, manners, and even its own language. Peers can exert extraordinary influence over each other particularly in regard to school dropout and attitudes towards school. Further, Burton, Ray, & Mehta (2003) also noted that these peers pose an influence that is a common source for negative activities for students like experimentation with drugs, drinking, vandalism and stealing. Respondents agreed that students in their schools experience peer pressure or influence which contributes to negative decisions of leaving school and practices that jeopardize their education.

Also, teenage pregnancies (mean=3.5641; SD=1.16517) was a student based characteristic that influenced wastage in their schools. Respondents agreed that teenage pregnancies occur in their schools and this leads to dropping out of school for some girls who do not seek re-admission. Teenage pregnancies also contribute to poor academic performance. They may also lead to repetition of a grade if the student does not resume studies immediately after delivery due to the challenge of raising the newborn baby. This is supported by findings of Musangi (2017) who concluded that teenage pregnancy and its associated motherhood are characterized with shame, disgrace and school dropout. Although the policy of re-admission is operating, sometimes pregnancy ends the dreams of a student to achieve higher pursuits. The respondents cited that there was a tendency of more girls leaving their schools than boys. They also opined that maturity and poverty were issues that led to students dropping out of school.

From the findings of the study it was concluded that student based characteristics (mean=3.7359; SD=1.0586) influence educational wastage in public secondary schools in Mbooni West Sub County. This finding concurs with the finding of Wanjiku (2014) that wastage among students can be attributed more to individual student's personal attributes than the school and cultural determinants. This finding also concurs with the finding of Musangi (2017) and Liu (2004) that student based characteristics contribute to educational wastage.

5.0 CONCLUSION

From the study finding presented and discussed in section 4.0 above it was concluded that student based characteristics; academic ability of the student, drug abuse, peer influence and teenage pregnancies influence educational wastage in public secondary schools in Mbooni West Sub County.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research finding, the study recommends that;

- i) The school management should therefore monitor student based factors that are likely to affect the students negatively, such as peer pressure, lack of motivation due to poor academic performance, drug abuse and teenage pregnancies.
- ii) Guidance and counselling in the schools should be intensified to address the students' characteristics that contribute to educational wastage.

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