

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SOCIOECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS ON
GRADE RETENTION OF BOYS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN
EKALAKALA ZONE, MASINGA
DISTRICT, KENYA

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A Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of Master of Education Degree in (Educational Planning
Management and Administration) of Mount Kenya University

MAY, 2013

ABSTRACT

The universal declaration on human rights in 1948 by the United Nations organization embraces education as a basic human right. Kenya subscribes to the declaration. However grade retention of students in school is increasing at an alarming rate and this has been aggravated a great deal by the socioeconomic constraints facing these learners and especially boys in public primary schools in Ekalakala zone, Masinga District. The objectives of this study were to investigate the parents and family socioeconomic background and its impact on grade retention, school based factors and their role on repetition and lastly, on the pupils personal characteristics and how they influence grade retention. The study viewed grade retention through the social learning theory by Albert Bandura (1995). The conceptual framework looked at how these factors were interrelated and how they influenced grade retention of boys in Ekalakala primary schools. The study used the descriptive survey research design. Stratified random sampling was used to select the schools. The study was carried out in Ekalakala Zone; Masinga District in Machakos County. The target population of this study was all public primary schools, headteachers, teachers and standard seven boys in Ekalakala zone. Simple stratified random sampling was used to select schools where the students sample size came from. Five schools were selected out of the 21 schools. Standard seven class teachers and the head teachers participated from every school selected. The sample size therefore consisted of 99 respondents. The research instruments that were used in the study for data collection was the questionnaire. A pilot study was done in Ekalakala Zone Masinga District in two schools which were not included in the sample size. Test - retest technique of assessing reliability of a research instrument were employed. The developed questionnaire was scored manually and a comparison between answers obtained in the two administered tests made using the Pearson's coefficient of correlation formula to compute the correlation coefficient. The researcher then booked appointments with headteachers of the sampled schools then visited and administered the questionnaires. Data was analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. The study revealed the following factors as leading to pupil's grade retention due to the parent's socioeconomic factors which interfered with pupil's school attendance thus leading to grade retention. Pupils being sent home for school levies recorded a total of 56 %. parental decision to absent pupils 34%, absenteeism due to sickness was at 10%. This study revealed that lack of school levy payment was a major contributing factor of absenteeism, a precursor to grade retention. The study concluded that although the government has provided free primary education, parents are expected to pay certain levies.. The study also looked at school based factors influencing grade retention and grade retention by gender. The study reviewed that class seven boys were more affected by grade retention than girls. The study found out that the major cause of grade retention was a failure to attain the required pass mark. The researcher concluded that the academic targets set by the schools, had to be reviewed so that they take into account the pupils potentials. The study recommended that the government through the Ministry of Education should continue to develop and implement policies to ensure that grade retention is abolished in primary schools because it leads to wastage.