

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF WASTAGE IN PUBLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MAGUMONI DIVISION OF MERU SOUTH
DISTRICT IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Despite heavy investment in primary education, wastage in form of dropout and repetition persists. Wastage hampers the attainment of education for all (EFA) goals which the government targets to attain by the year 2015. Socio-economic determinants of wastage in Magumoni Division in Tharaka Nithi County had not been investigated and understood. The purpose of this study was to find out the socio-economic determinants contributing to wastage in public primary schools. The objectives of the study were: to determine social factors that contributes to dropout, to investigate economic factors that contribute to repetition and assess the cultural factors that contribute to education wastage. This study was guided by production theory in economics as revealed by the work of Psachalopoulos and Woodhall (1985). The study was conducted in public primary schools in Magumoni Division in Tharaka Nithi County and adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population for this study was 2848 subjects comprising all 194 teachers, 2653 pupils in 14 public primary schools in Magumoni Division and 1 DEO. The study employed purposive, cluster sampling, proportionate sampling and simple random sampling to select a sample of 370 subjects that comprised 14 headteachers, 90 teachers, 265 pupils and 1 DEO. The instruments for data collection were questionnaires and interview schedule. A pilot study was conducted in one school in Chuka Division in Meru South District which did not participate in the study. The split-half technique of measuring reliability of the instruments was used. A reliability coefficient of 0.7 was obtained with the head teachers, 0.74 for teachers and 0.82 for pupils' questionnaires was deemed reliable for the study. Questionnaires were administered to the head teachers', teachers' and pupils' respectively. The interview schedule was administered to the Education Officer in charge of Meru South District. The researcher got a research permit from National Council for Science and Technology. Data collected using questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely; frequency counts, percentages and means. Data generated from the interview was analyzed and discussed thematically. The findings were presented in form of tables and pie chart. The findings revealed that the main social factors contributing to dropout and repetition included: indiscipline as reported by 58.3% head teachers, 94.1% teachers and 80.4% pupils; poor performance as reported by all head teachers and 89.4% teachers; substance abuse as reported by 85.9% head teachers, 85.9% teachers and 56.3% pupils; pregnancy as reported by 66.7% head teachers, 76.4% teachers and 92% pupils. The main economic factors contributing to dropout and repetition were: poverty as reported by all head teachers, 85.9% teachers and 68.3% pupils; failure to pay other school levies as reported by 68.0% head teachers, 81.2% teachers and 55.6% pupils and child labor as reported by 33% teachers and 34.5% pupils. The study further established that the main cultural determinants of education wastage were initiation and cultural practices as 14.1% teachers and 17.9% pupils; early marriages as reported by 43.6% teachers and 43.6% pupils and lack of community support as reported by 93% head teachers, 31.7% teachers and pupils. Results from interview reveal that poor performance, pupils' indiscipline, pregnancy and substance abuse were the main contributing factor to dropout and repetition. This study concluded that various social, economic and cultural factors contributed to education wastage in the study area. The study recommends strongly that guidance and counseling be strengthened in schools to mitigate wastage among other measures. Guidance and counseling will help pupils to see the essence of avoiding early marriages, indiscipline and substance abuse that have been found to contribute to dropout and repetition.