

LEARNER RETENTION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN MKONGANI ZONE KWALE COUNTY KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The research analyzed retention and its effects on academic performance of learners in primary schools. Retaining all primary school learners in school is becoming a huge task for the Kenyan government taking into consideration that the rate of dropout has become a major concern. Primary education level is faced by challenges; retention of learners from admission in class one to completion in class eight and poor academic performance being among them. Kenyans cannot afford to ignore this thus there arise an immediate need to conduct an investigation on the issues of retention of pupils in primary schools and its effect so as to improve on their academic performance as well as the rate of completion of primary education cycle. Mkongani zone is in Kubo division, Kwale County, Coast province, Kenya. The zone has twenty-three schools. This study employed a descriptive survey research design. Questionnaires and observational checklists were administered. The research targeted head teachers and class teachers from standard one to eight. The study was conducted in eight schools randomly selected. Out of 936 learners who were admitted in standard one 2003, 76% did not complete standard 8 in 2010 and out of 802 learners who were admitted in class one 2004, 72% did not complete standard 8 in 2011. This was attributed to various reasons such as poverty, shortage of infrastructure, and lack of awareness to stakeholders on importance of education. Provincial administration not assisting in following up parents whose children dropped out of school as well as the school age going children who are not in school. Various strategies were suggested which include provision of regular feeding programme, sensitization on importance of education to all the stakeholders, community mobilization as well as motivating performing learners and teachers. The data was captured and thereafter analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12.0. A better understanding of learner's retention and its effects in performance in primary schools enables the policy makers, planners and other stakeholders put in place appropriate measures and strategies so as to improve retention levels as well as performance.