

ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN REDUCING SCHOOL DROPOUT IN PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MARAKWET EAST DISTRICT, KENYA

BY

KAYAP CHESIR JULIUS



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of the principal in reducing school dropout in public secondary schools in Marakwet East District. Effective school management and leadership practices by principals in secondary schools have become a matter of concern following the persistent prevalence of high school dropout among students in Marakwet East District. The cost of dropping out of high school can have a profound effect on a young person's life. Therefore, the success of what is done in the school is attributed to the roles of the principals as a pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve, be it management, administrative, leadership or academic (Sushilla, 2010). The study was conducted using descriptive research design. Questionnaires were used to obtain important information about the population. The questionnaires were in five sections A, B, C, D and E. The respondents comprised of the principals, deputy principals and teachers. Stratified random sampling was used to categorize the schools while simple random sampling was applied to sample the principals and their deputies. A convenient sample of 10% of the 108 teachers in the district was utilized by the study as a representative of the population and without bias. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The qualitative analysis was done using qualitative analysis techniques that involved patterns and relationships among variables in a narrative form. The quantitative data was done with the aid of Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was then reported in percentages, frequencies and distribution tables. The response rate was good since all the forty one sampled respondents from the fifteen public secondary schools sent back the questionnaires on time. Majority of the respondents (83%) had Bachelors of Education Degree and had taught in the current institutions between 0-3 years with a teaching experience of 11-15 years. The findings of the study showed that principals need to use their specific professional roles as managers, educators, administrators, leaders and innovators to reduce school dropout in their respective schools. School factors which contribute to school dropout such as indiscipline among students, peer influence, poor academic achievement, forced repetition, retention and indifferent leaderships by principals which does not pay attention to individual student interests and challenges were revealed as the major influences which contribute to the school dropout. The study also revealed that principals need to blend their leadership styles in order to effectively manage the schools with minimum wastage of students. On the other hand, the findings of the study revealed that some of the possible strategies that principals can use to reduce school dropout include working closely with provincial administration, provision of bursaries to genuinely needy students, liaison with line ministries and NGOs for support. The study recommended that principals take up their roles as managers, educators, administrators, leaders and innovators to ensure that there is adequate supervision of all the resources in the school, re-admit girls who become pregnant while at school, establish Guiding and Counseling sessions in the schools and seek to employ parents who are not able to pay their children's school fees as casuals in the school.