

Principals' Administrative Roles in Combating School Drop-Outs in Rural Public Day Secondary Schools in Zomba District, Malawi



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Patrick Alberto Phiri

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Jared Anyona

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Kabendera D. Bashungwa

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principals' administrative roles in combating school drop-out in rural public day secondary schools in Zomba district, Malawi. The study employed a mixed method research design where the target population consisted of various stakeholders in secondary school setting. Questionnaires, interview guides and observation checklist were used to collect data. Findings established that the principals performed various roles aimed at curbing school dropout which included: sensitizing community on importance of education as well as guiding and counselling students, ensuring that the school environment is conducive for learning, giving incentives to students, regularly checking students' registers and sourcing for funds to cater for needy students' school fees. The study recommends that the government and other stakeholders in the education sector should increase the funding for secondary education to cater for all the school monetary needs in order to cushion pupils from poor economic background from dropping out of school.

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Keywords-Educational management and leadership; Principals' administrative roles; Malawi; Instructional Supervision; Motivating; School Dropout rates; Neoclassical Organizational Behavioral Motivational Theory; The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Paper Type- Research paper

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. The document states that: everyone has the right to education; education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages; elementary education shall be compulsory; technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit and finally education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In other words, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to an education that develops their "personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (UNESCO, 2000).

Secondary schools are very important institutions as they are organized social arenas for transformation of children to adulthood. This transformation concerns biological, psychological and social processes and that transformation concern has an impact on how each individual relates to others and to the local and wider community. Secondary education is a bridge between primary and higher education and in many ways, from the world of school to the world of work. Secondary education plays an increasingly important role in

spurring economic growth. It provides the country with critical higher level of skills and knowledge for advanced learning and training of technicians, scientists, entrepreneurs and other professionals and yields considerable social and private returns.



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Globally, despite knowing the importance of secondary schools and the efforts made by different governments and educational stakeholders, there are still student (young men and women) dropping out of school (Smith, Nesbakken & Wirak, 2005). As noted by the World Bank report (2010), managing student retention globally, especially in rural secondary school set-up has been and it is still a challenge to many administrators. Student's retention at secondary school's level in Sub Saharan Africa is low because for about 45% of the students who are successful in the secondary school selection process, are able to afford paying for tuition and other formal and informal costs needed at school (Vesper & Bregman, 2007). Evidence shows that: 30% of Tanzanian children enrolled in schools fail to complete primary education, while, in secondary schools, the dropout rate is 20% (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2007). Ethiopia had a dropout rate of 13.3% for primary schools and 14.3% for secondary schools in 1996, and those figures rose to 14.7% for primary schools and 15.4% for secondary schools in 2000 (Kassahun, 2004). On average, the dropout rate for Zimbabwe between 1980 and 2004 was 26% (Zengeya, 2004).

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Moswela and Molosiwa (2012) of the University of Botswana affirm that girls from economically disadvantaged families willingly or unwillingly get into relationships expecting monetary benefit. This goes hand in hand with parents' attitude towards education. Once the parents do not see the value of education, they then treat education as a waste of time. This normally happens in families who have not gone to school and do not have any educational qualification. The support given to students will be minimal and students will be encouraged to drop out of school. Therefore students without adequate resources in terms of parental education are likely to drop out as opposed to those with adequate resources.

Just like many countries in the Sub-Sahara, Malawian schools have been charged with the responsibility of providing education for all. But education for all is hampered by an escalating school dropout in rural day public day secondary schools due to various factors such as socio-economic status, lack of parental support, students' behaviour, poor achievement, the school learning environment, and pregnancy just to name a few (EMIS, 2010; World Bank, 2010). In 2010 there were 202,036 pupils in Standard 8 but the 2011 EMIS (2010) indicated that only 65,541 of these went on to Form 1 (the first year of secondary school).

Indeed access to secondary education and retention in Malawi has been poor, with only about 33% (MNSO, 2012) accessing secondary school. Secondary education system in Malawi displays high level of inefficiency, wastage and inequity. In Malawi although some 87% of those who graduate at the end of the primary school cycle transit to the first grade of lower secondary, only 18% of that number enter the final secondary grade. In other words, Malawi is one of the Sub-Saharan countries facing the serious challenges in terms of student retention and dropout (Yate, 2009; Chimombo, 2013).

Zomba district is one of the 28 districts in Malawi which have a high rural day secondary school dropout due to various challenges people living in the district face. Despite the effort of the government to combat school dropout, the district still has many young boys and girls leaving secondary school before they finish. Indeed to finish secondary school and go to college for specialization or further study is still a dream that is difficult to achieve by many in Zomba rural district, Malawi so soon if Principals, school administrators and different stakeholders do not put up their efforts together (EMIS, 2016-2017).

Problem Statement

Students drop-out in secondary schools is becoming a big concern for many countries around global, especially Africa and Sub-Saharan countries in particular the case of Malawi. Like in any other countries, education in Malawi is the building block for human, political and socioeconomic development. Education is important for poverty reductions because it empowers the poor and any other vulnerable members of the society. However, education (secondary education) which is one of the key pillars of poverty eradication in Malawi is hampered by an escalating number of school dropouts. The southern region of Malawi has the highest percentage (14%) of pupils dropping out of school especially in rural day public secondary schools in Zomba District. It is estimated that in Malawi 87% of pupils who enroll in secondary schools, only 18% of them enter the final year of their secondary education. The escalating school dropout among students in Zomba rural public secondary schools can be attributed to various causes such as lack of parental support, poverty, poor student achievement, school learning environment, early marriages and pregnancy, including the roles played by the school heads (principles) (HIS, 2010-2011). Student dropout in secondary has become a big problem for the government of Malawi, especially in Zomba District. At the same time, there is very limited research on the efforts being made by the various stakeholder to reduce drop out rates in the county. This data is important as a basis for future strategy to eradicate students drop out. Therefore, it is for this reason that this study assesses the principals' administrative role in combating school drop outs in their respective school with particular focus on rural public day secondary schools in Zomba district, Malawi.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent do principals fulfill their roles in combating students' dropout in rural day secondary schools in Zomba District?
- ii. To what extent do the education stakeholders support the school principals' in combating students' dropout in rural day secondary schools in Zomba District?

Review of Empirical Review

Principals' Supervisory Role on Dropouts of Students

Onuma (2016) study established a significant positive relationship between urban and rural secondary school principals in classroom supervision, monitoring students' assessment/ achievement and provision and maintenance of instructional materials. Samoe (2014) study established that principals orient new teaching staff, supervise curriculum timetabling and monitor students' academic progress. These roles were rated very highly as being performed always. Provision of instructional materials was also rated high. Principals were found to rarely provide in-service training for teachers yet this was a needed role considering that most of the teachers were young in the profession. Principals check schemes of work, teachers' records of work and protect student's instructional time through punctuality. However, principals were found to generally refrain from visiting classrooms for lesson observation and hence feedback to teachers was not frequently given. The checking of teachers' punctuality, protection of instructional time and monitoring of students' academic progress was found to be very effective in schools and provide for students' academic achievement. Visits to classrooms to observe teachers lessons by principals was rated as rarely effective.

Murithi (2015) study in Nairobi, Kenya established that the challenges principals encounter in their supervisory role was lack of time to check students' work as well as the teachers records making it hard for the principal to check students' performance as well the



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number of students who might have dropped out of school. Kambadya (2016) revealed that the major causes of student's dropout were poverty, lack of school fees, fishing, early marriages, parents' lack of interest in school and early pregnancies. The findings showed that the administrators use all the four strategies in varying degrees to retain students in schools namely school culture, school motivation, bursary strategy and communication strategy.



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Stakeholders Support to School Principals' in Combating Students' Dropout

The study by Davidson in Georgia (2014) centered on Stakeholders' perceptions of dropout prevention ways in a rural Ninth Grade Academy. The dropout rate among Georgia high school students may be an essential issue within the United States' educational system. As a result, large numbers of programs have been created to scale back the dropout rate.

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This study examined the stakeholders' perceptions of dropout interference ways in a rural ninth grade academy to look at effective dropout interference programs enforced at the school. Participants in the study enclosed administrators, teachers, and students who dropped out of the academy between 2009 and 2012. Interviews were conducted to gather info from the participants. Additionally, school and district documents related to hindrance programs at the academy were reviewed. For data analysis, emerging themes from participants' responses were used to describe participants' views of dropout interference programs at the academy. The results of the study showed that the administrators, teachers, and students were all aware to the programs being implemented at the academy.

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The administrators and the teachers believed that the dropout prevention programs resulted in a reduction of the dropout rate at the academy. However, the students did not agree that the programs reduced the dropout rates. It had been suggested by each teachers and students that dropout programs ought to include a lot of activities to involve parents and encourage students to stay in school.

Mutwiri (2015) did a study on the influence of stakeholders' participation in primary school management on educational performance in Uringu Division, Meru County, Kenya. The study objectives were to assess the head teachers' management skills, teachers' participation, pupils' participation and parents' participation in primary school management on educational performance in Uringu Division. The study used a descriptive survey style. The target population was 2441 lecturers, head lecturers, class eight pupils and parents. This study used stratified sampling to select 331 lecturers, head lecturers, class eight pupils and parents. This study used each primary and secondary information. Secondary information was obtained from KCPE results for the last 5 years. The study used a form because the primary tool for data collection. Data analysis was quantitative. Quantitative information was analyzed by use of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 20). Descriptive statistics was used to analyze quantitative data. Finding established that parents' involvement in their child is learning method offers several opportunities for achievement enhancements on child's morale, attitude, and educational achievement across all subject areas, behaviour and social adjustment. This study wanted to ascertain whether stakeholders support that is the government, NGOs, teachers and parents facilitate in combating school drop-outs.

The study by Toprakci, Beytekin and Chipala (2016) in Malawi focused on an Instructional Leadership in Malawian Secondary Schools. Currently, there's a huge demand for secondary school education worldwide particularly within the developing countries like Malawi. So as to satisfy this for the secondary school education, the Malawian government tries to develop effective school leadership in its education policy agenda. The researchers

conducted a qualitative study involving 2 religious-run secondary schools that are achieving wonderful results in order to look at the academic leadership roles of the principals.

The study consisted of 2 principals, 10 students, six parents and fourteen teachers. As a triangulation of methods, the interviews conducted with principals and educators, observations throughout normal school days, analysis of relevant school documents and a literature management were the strategies utilised in the analysis. the field analysis was done at the schools in the natural location of the participants. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim as an automatically recorded data. Semi-structured interviews have been applied with the principal of every religious secondary school. The main focus group has been interviewed with the teachers, students also as the parents. Observations are made throughout a normal school day in keeping with a pre-developed schedule. Finally, relevant school documents are reviewed. The interviews consisted of open-ended queries. The queries centered on the 2 aspects or dimensions of the principal's educational leadership role, namely, the formal and structured aspects of educational leadership and therefore the informal influence of the principal on the academic program of the school.

The study revealed that the principals established the positive partnership with the parents, students as well as the teachers. Furthermore, researchers additionally discovered that the principals in those schools played a lot of emphasis on the educational results by prioritizing the allocation of enough resources in the teaching and learning because the effective use of time and different resources. Parents play an important role in supporting their children's learning and in the successful implementation of the information. There's an increasingly vital view among educators and other professionals that colleges and oldsters have to be compelled to work along so as to make sure that their children's ability to succeed may be increased. It absolutely was also discovered that the principals' responsibilities in each schools were typically distributed to the teachers as well as their students.

The researchers recommended that; the Malawian government ought to make certain to have several principals which will have effective educational leadership capability so as to enhance the culture of teaching and learning in Malawian secondary schools. Malawian government ought to make certain to possess several principals, which will have effective educational leadership capability to improve the culture of teaching and learning in Malawian secondary schools. The schools value collaboration in the work likewise as positive human relation in the work place. The students are recognized because the important component for the effective teaching and learning culture. The schools press much emphasis on the sufficient delivery of Learner and Teacher Support Materials so as to effectively deliver the information. Teachers are given opportunities for skilled development so as to achieve effective skills for curriculum coverage. The schools ensure that the information is covered so the students have the chance to fulfill the contents of the national examinations. The schools ensures the existence of the strong cordial relationships with the parents so as to finish each other on the addressing the expectations of the students. Teachers as well as students are recognized for their achievements so as to encourage them. For these initiatives to be effective, principals got to empower teachers as well as establishing the effective rapport with alternative stakeholders of their schools so as to effectively fulfill these roles. Since most the schools in Malawi have the supporting employees, it's necessary to have an additional enquiry on how the principals work with them as they provide educational leadership so as to take care of effective teaching and learning culture.

The previous analysis has solely assessed the stakeholders' perceptions of dropout prevention ways and did not establish the extent to which they support principals. Therefore, this study examines the extent to that education stakeholders support the principals so as to combat drop out.



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Research methodology

This study employed mixed method research design. This method helped the researcher to triangulate the methods by directly comparing and contrasting quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings for corroboration and validation purposes. It helped the researcher to have a wider view of the topic through the use of mixture of qualitative and quantitative instruments for data collection.

The target population for this study are all the 34 rural day public secondary schools, 34 Principals, 68 Parents-Teacher Association chairpersons and their deputies, 250 teachers, and 1500 students in Zomba district. In this study, stratified sampling design, simple random sampling design and purposive sampling were used. Ten (10) public secondary schools representing 30% of 34 of the target public secondary schools were sampled using purposive sampling. The researcher used stratified sampling design to sample twenty TPA chairpersons and their deputies. Simple random sampling based on class attendance register of every gender was used to select 150 students. Stratified sampling design was used to sample 75 teachers. The sampling frame is presented in Table 1 below;

Table 1: Sampling and Sample Size

Category	Target population	Sampling procedure	Actual Sample	Percentage (%)
Schools	34	Purposive	10	30%
Principals	34	Simple random	10	30%
TPA chairpersons and deputies	68	Stratified	20	30%
Teachers	250	Stratified	75	30%
Students	1500	Simple random	150	10%

This study used both qualitative and quantitative research instruments. Interview guides and document analysis guide were used to collect qualitative data whereas questionnaire were used to collect quantitative data. Document analysis technique was used by the researcher to collect data on enrollment and class students class attendance.

All quantitative data obtained from questionnaires, interviews, observation were coded and analyzed with the use of a computer in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. On the other hand, qualitative data derived from open ended questions and interview guides were analyzed using content analysis technique.

The researcher adhered to the highest possible standards that guide educational research. He ensured that every step in the study was scientifically, professionally, scholarly and ethically carried out. In this study, the researcher equally abided by all legal procedures that guide conduct of research both in Kenya and Malawi. In Kenya the researcher sought approval and permission of the Catholic University of Eastern and in Malawi the researcher obtain full consent and approval to conduct research from the Zomba South East Division (SEED) Education Manager before going to the field for data collection. The researcher sought for the informed consent of the respondents, explaining to them the reason for the study and how the information they provide would be used only for academic purposes in this thesis, ensuring that they participate in the study voluntarily.



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Summary of Findings

To what extent do principals fulfill their roles in combating students' dropout in rural day secondary schools in Zomba District?



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Principals Strategies to Curb School Drop Rates

The first research question sought to assess the extent to which principals fulfill their roles in combating students' dropout. In order to do this the researcher investigated the strategies that this categories of stakeholders use to curb the menace. The data collected and analyzed is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Principals Strategies to Curb Student Drop Outs (n=7)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Sensitizing community on importance of education	7	100.0
Guiding and counselling students	7	100.0
Ensuring school environment is conducive	6	85.7
Giving incentives to students	5	71.4
Regular checking of students register	4	57.1
Sourcing funds to cater for students school fees	3	42.8

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Table 2 shows that all principals 100% sensitize community on importance of education as well as guiding and counselling students, 85.7% ensure that the school environment is conducive for learning, 71.4% give incentives to students, 57.1% regularly check students' registers and 42.8% of the principals' source funds to cater for needy students' school fees. The principals were for the view that the most effective strategy were assisting needy learners by sourcing funds to cater for their school fees, guiding, and counselling. This implies that the principals in the study area had adopted various strategies to curb students drop out. The findings concur with Achoka, (2013) on supervisory role of principals that the principal should act as a counselor to the students since this could assist all parties interested in the education life of the learner to appreciate the need to be educated.

Frequency of Practicing of Administrative Roles of Curbing Student Dropouts by Principals

Further in order to understand the extent to which principals assist to curb of the problem of student dropout, the study investigated the frequency with which principals engage key administrative roles in bid to curb students' dropout. The data collected is presented in Table 3 below.

Key: Always=1 Often=2, Sometimes=3, Rarely=4 Never=5

Table 3: Principals Responses on Frequency of Practicing Roles (n=7)

Statements	1		2		3		4		5		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Management of teacher and student supervision	5	71.4	0	0	2	28.6	0	0	0	0	1.57
Management of teaching and non-teaching staff motivation	4	57.1	1	14.3	0	0	2	28.6	0	0	2.00
Management of school policy	5	71.4	2	28.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.29
Financial Management of school	4	57.1	1	14.3	0	0	0	0	2	28.6	2.29
Relationship with parents and community	3	42.9	4	57.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.57
Management of school environment and maintenance	3	42.9	2	28.6	2	28.6	0	0	0	0	1.86



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Findings in Table 3 show that 71.4% of the principals always managed teacher and students supervision, 57.1% often managed teaching and non-teaching staff, 71.4% always managed school policy, 57.1% always managed the finances of the school, 57.1% often have relationship with parents and community and 42.9% of the principals always managed school environment and maintained it. This implies that the principals often performed various managerial roles aimed at curbing drop outs. The finding concurs with Onuma (2016) on Principals' performance of internal supervision of instructions and that adequate and effective supervision improves curriculum implementation resulting to high academic achievement and lowered student drop out.

Teachers Opinion on the Effectiveness of Principals in Curbing Dropout Rates

In order to assess the effectiveness of principal managerial and administrative role in curbing student dropout, teachers were asked to give their opinion on the matter. The data collected is presented in Table 4 below.

Key: VE: Very Effective = 1 E: Effective = 2 FE: Fairly Effective3, I: Ineffective = 4

Table 4: Teachers Estimation of the effectiveness of Principals in their role of curbing student dropout (n=56)

Advisory role	EV		E		FE		I		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Visits to classrooms to observe teachers lessons	15	26.8	27	78.8	12	21.4	2	3.6	2.02
Monitoring of Students Academic Progress	37	66.1	15	26.8	4	7.1	-		1.41
Checking teachers' schemes of work	33	58.9	15	26.8	6	10.7	2	3.6	1.59
Checks teacher's record of Work	29	51.8	19	33.9	8	14.3	-		1.63
Provision of feedback to teachers after class observation	24	42.9	22	39.3	6	10.7	4	7.1	1.82
Protecting instructional time by Punctuality	25	44.6	25	44.6	4	7.1	2	3.6	1.70
Checking pupils' attendance register	30	53.6	14	25.0	18	14.3	4	7.1	1.75
Checking pupils' notebooks	22	39.3	24	42.9	6	10.7	4	7.1	1.86
Discussing pupils performance with parents and teachers	25	44.6	21	37.5	4	7.1	6	10.7	1.84
Organizing academic clinic	12	21.4	18	32.1	16	28.6	10	17.9	2.43



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Findings in Table 4 shows that; 65.6% of teachers pointed out that principals visits to classrooms to observe teachers lesson was very effective, 66.1% of the teachers indicated that monitoring of students' academic progress was very effective, 65.6% of the students indicated that checking teachers scheme of work was very effective, 65.6% of the students indicated that checking teachers record of work was very effective, 50% of the students indicated that provision of feedback to teachers after class observation was very effective, 67.8% of the students indicated that protecting instructional time by punctuality was very effective, 53.6% of the teachers indicated that checking pupils' attendance register was very effective, 42.9% of the teachers indicated that checking pupils' notebooks was effective, 44.6% of the teachers indicated that discussing pupils performance with parents and teachers was very effective and 32.1% of the teachers indicated that organizing academic clinic was effective in curbing school dropout.

The teachers also pointed out that so far the principal has fulfilled their supervisory roles by advising students to remain in school, discouraging sexual relationships, guiding and counselling, organizing parents meeting to sensitize on importance of education sourcing donors to sponsor needy children.

To what extent do the education stakeholders support the school principals' in combating students' dropout in rural day secondary schools in Zomba District?

The second research question aimed at assessing the extent to which education stakeholders support the school principals' in combating students' dropout. Respondents were asked to indicate whether stakeholders support principals' role of curbing student drop out and also whether there was need of a working relationship between school principals and school stakeholder.

In order to assess the support of stakeholders in curbing school dropout Principals were asked to give perspective on the matter. The data collected is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Principals Perspective on the Extent of Stakeholders Support in Curbing Student Dropout (n=7)

Resources	Very great extent		Great extent		Moderate extent		Low extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Government	4	57.1	2	28.6	1	14.3	0	0
Non-government organizations	1	14.3	4	57.1	2	28.6	0	0
Teachers	1	14.3	4	57.1	2	28.6	0	0
Parents	5	71.4	2	28.6	0	0	0	0
Suppliers of teaching and learning materials	2	28.6	3	42.9	2	28.6	0	0

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According to data presented in Table 5 the most significant supporters were the government to a very great extent as indicated by 57.1% of the principals, NGOs to a great extent as indicated by 57.1%, teachers to a great extent as indicated by 57.1% and parents to a very great extent to a great extent as indicated by 71.4% of the principals. The government supported the principals through provision of bursaries, employing teachers and providing teaching and learning materials especially the text books which helped retain students from poor backgrounds in school. The NGOS supported the principals by sponsoring needy students, donating school uniforms and shoes as well as sanitary towels for girls.

The teachers supported the principal by advising students during the guiding and counselling sessions. The parents supported the principals by attending meetings and academic clinics and the suppliers supported the principals by supplying the teaching and learning materials. The principals indicated that there was a need of a working relationship between school principals and school stakeholder to successfully curb school dropout.

However, the principals indicated that the bursaries from the NGO and the government were not enough since they only catered for the fees and no other requirements like uniforms, soap, books, and sanitary towels for girls, school bags and shoes. On stakeholders support the TPA representatives said that: “we are called for meetings monthly and we also advocate against early marriages among girls and advise students on importance of education to encourage them to remain in school till completion.”

In order to assess the support the support of stakeholders in curbing school dropout teaching were asked to give perspective on the matter. The data collected is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Teachers' Perspective on the Extent of Stakeholders Support in Curbing student dropout (n=56)

Resources	Very great extent		Great extent		Moderate extent		Low extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Government	16	28.6	24	42.9	16	28.6	0	0
Non-government organizations	32	57.1	19	33.9	5	8.9	0	0
Teachers	30	53.6	24	42.9	2	3.6	0	0
Parents	20	35.7	15	26.8	19	33.9	2	3.6
Suppliers of teaching and learning materials	10	17.9	12	21.4	15	26.8	19	33.9

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According to data presented in Table 6, NGOs supported the principals to a very great extent as indicated by 57.1% of the teachers and they also supported the principals in curbing drop out as indicated 53.6% of the teachers. The teachers further explained that it hard for the principal to curb drop out alone and stakeholder support was very essential.

Students' Perspectives on Stakeholders Support in Curbing Student Drop Out

The researcher further sought to find out from the students whether they were aware of stakeholders support. Data collected is presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Students' Perspective on the Extent of Stakeholders Support in Curbing student dropout (n=90)

Resources	Very great extent		Great extent		Moderate extent		Low extent	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Government	44	48.9	21	23.3	21	23.3	4	4.4
Non-government organizations	69	76.7	9	10.0	12	13.3	0	0
Teachers	49	54.4	25	27.8	8	8.9	8	8.9
Parents	56	62.2	25	27.8	3	3.3	6	6.7
Suppliers of teaching and learning materials	47	52.2	17	18.9	16	17.8	10	11.1

According to data presented in Table 7, the students indicated that NGOs supported the principals to a very great extent as indicated by 76.7%, teachers to a very great extent as indicated by 54.4%, parents to a very great extent as indicated by 62.2% and suppliers to a very great extent as indicated by 52.2% of the students. The students indicated that the government supported the principal to through

provision of bursaries and employing teachers, NGOs supported the principal through supporting needy students by sponsoring their education and providing uniforms and shoes, teachers supported the principal through advising students as well as providing guiding and counselling, parents supported principals by providing basic needs and paying school fees and suppliers supported the principal through supplying teaching and learning materials. The students also opined that there was a need of a working relationship between school principals and school stakeholder in order to combat school drop-outs.

The findings from the principals, teachers and students on stakeholders support imply that stakeholders support is essential for successful curbing of school dropout. The principal, teachers and students indicated that it is very hard for the principal to curb drop out without the help of stakeholders and all education stakeholders are required for successful retention of students in school. This implies that even though the principal is the main administrator in a secondary school setting, he needs assistance from all stakeholders in order to effectively carry out his duties. The finding is in agreement with: Davidson (2014) on stakeholders' perceptions of dropout prevention strategies, that dropout programs should include more activities to involve parents and encourage students to remain in school and Toprakci, Beytekin and Chipala (2016) that positive partnership with education stakeholders lead to attainment of academic goals.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings of this study established that principals in the study area have made efforts to fulfill their roles in combating students' dropout. These roles mainly involved sourcing for funds to retain poor students in school, supervisory roles to ensure that teachers perform their duties effectively leading to high academic performance hence students do not repeat classes, sensitizing the community on importance of education and guiding and counselling students so that they do not engage in sexual practices which lead to early pregnancies school dropout among girls. All these roles which have been to a large extent effective in curbing students drop out.

In the second research question, respondents agreed that the stakeholders who include the government, NGOs, teachers, parents and suppliers are very supportive to the principals' role to curb drop outs. The stakeholders ensured students were retained in school through paying for their school fees, catering for their needs like uniforms and shoes, carrying out awareness campaigns to sensitize local community on importance of education so that they stop marrying off school going girls; guiding and counselling students and providing material required for teaching and learning.

The findings established that some students drop out due to lack of school fees. Therefore the study recommends that the government and stakeholders in education sector should increase the funding for secondary education to cater for all the school monetary needs in order to cushion pupils from poor economic background from dropping out of school. The ministry of education should review bursary policies especially so that they benefit the needy students. This will ensure that poor students do not drop out of school.

Findings also revealed that there are girls who drop out of school as a result of pregnancy. The government should review the effectiveness of sex education being offered in secondary schools. This is with a view to enhance it to sensitize the students on the negative effects of engaging in sexual activities prematurely. The study established that some children



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come from poor backgrounds and the parents could not afford the basic needs (food and clothing) for their children, the government should introduce feeding programme to all rural day secondary schools so as to retain students in school and also motivate them to attend school.



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The findings have established that poor performance which leads to repeating classes contribute to school drop outs, the principals should establish suitable motivation methods such as rewarding academic achievements in order for pupils to maintain their interest in school. In order to ensure girls complete their secondary school education, the principals should enhance guidance and counseling in schools so as to address the challenges facing the male and female students like relationships, peer influence, drugs and substance abuse. This will promote retention of the female students. The schools should create an enabling environment for parenting girls and boys to enhance retention and smooth transition. Findings established that there are school based factors which contribute to students dropping out of school, the researcher recommends that the principal should address the school environment related factors that lead to school dropout. The principals should incorporate views from the pupils to enhance the effectiveness of the strategies they invent to cope with school dropout.

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About the authors

Patrick Alberto Phiri has just completed his M.Ed degree studies at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa. He holds a Bachelor of Theology degree from St. John Vianney Seminary, Pretoria and a Diploma in Philosophy from St. Francis House of Studies, Pretoria, and Postgraduate Certificate in Education from the University of South Africa. He has a wide experience in teaching in schools in both Malawi and South Africa. He can be reached at:

Jared Anyona is a lecturer at the Faculty of Education of The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, where he has taught for the last 11 years. He holds a PhD in research and evaluation from The Catholic University of Eastern Africa and M.Ed. (Research, Training and Research) from the Victoria State University, Australia. He has done extensive consultancy work in research, monitoring, evaluation and training. His current research interests are research methodology, professional development for teachers, educational policy, education for minorities and disadvantaged groups and monitoring and evaluation. Dr. Anyona can be contacted at: jntabo@cuea.edu

Dogbert Kabendera Bashungwa holds a M.Ed degree and a PhD in Education from The Catholic University of eastern Africa where he has taught in the Faculty of Education for 4 years. He is an expert in educational management with intense interest in pedagogy.



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