THE ROLE OF SOCIETY CHANGES IN PUTTING LEARNERS AT RISK
OF SCHOOL FAILURE. A CASE STUDY OF GATAMAIYU DIVISION,
LARI DISTRICT IN KENYA.

BY

MILCAH WANJIRU WAINAINA

BED/20174/81/DF

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO INSTITUTE OF OPEN AND
DISTANCE LEARNING IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF A DEGREE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION
WITH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING OF KAMPALA
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER 2010

DECLARATION

I **Milcah Wanjiru Wainaina,** declare that this is my original work and has never been presented for any award.

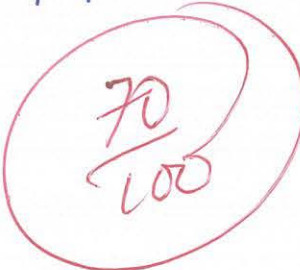Signature........................... Date. 19/08/2010

MILCAH WANJIRU WAINAINA

BED/20174/81/DF

APPROVAL

This is a report on **the role of changes in society in putting learners at risk of school failure. A case study of Gatamaiyu Division, Lari District in Kenya** was submitted for examination purpose with my approval as University supervisor.

Signature................................. Date....19/8/10....................

Mrs. NAMUSISI JUSTINE

SUPERVISOR

70/100

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved husband George Kimani Chege, my Head Teacher Paul Njaaga for their encouragement and support rendered to me during this study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

This study set out to investigate the society changes in placing learners at risk of school failure. The following objectives guided the study; to establish the prevalence of learners who are at risk of school failure; to identify the dominant factors responsible for putting learners at risk of school failure; to find out how these learners have been affected by risk factors and to assess the way teachers have interviewed for these learners who are at risk. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used and respondents were picked at random.

Findings revealed that a number of learners who had the characteristics that put them at risk of school failure although some were low. Research revealed that among the pupils each teacher was teaching, a high number of children were being exposed to drugs and substance abuse.

Research has indicated that many pupils in school were coming from poor families, whose parents were unemployed and did not have high educational attainments. Death of parents was also established to be another way in which pupils are put at risk of school failure. With no one to provide for the children's basic needs and security as well as social needs. Recommendations were also made.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

The issue of changes in our society has attracted a number of studies because of the paramount influences; they impose on educational achievement of pupils in primary school. Today teaching as well as learning is more challenging than it has been before in history. Because of the changes in society diversity of pupils in classroom has increase in Kenya, there are those children who are not officially eligible for special education services yet they need them. These children do not manifest problems severe enough to result in disability classification, yet they are at risk of developing achievement and behavioral problems that could limit their success in school and as young adults. These have been now classified as at risk students (Oneisten and Levine, 2000).

Researchers have established that the plight of at risk students, stems home the complex environment factors which exist within their ever changing society, that complicate these young people's effects to get education.

Our goal as teachers is to provide the best education possible for all primary school pupils. And almost all pupils would want to enjoy school and learn as much as they can, yet this happens for some, because they come from stable and supportive families, and they have experiences that prepare them for achievement. For others, unfortunately, this is not the case. Problems in their families' neighborhoods and even communities limit their chances for success. In addition, societal influences, such as changes in the economy, work place and people's attitude have all impacted these learners ability to benefit from schooling.

The concern about at risk learners is although educators generally agree that many of them are at risk, they do not necessary agree on who these learners are or how to deal with their problems (Lewis and Doorlag, 1999).

More still, unfortunately, rather than receiving appropriate interventions, they have been neglected in the classroom and consigned to failure. Although not eligible for special education and related services, learners who are at risk need special interventions, for without them, many will be retained year after year and become behavior problems or even drop out of school.

In Kenya, these children are all over in our primary schools, but little has been done to address the issue of at risk learners and their plight. This research has been carried out to highlight this problem to the education policy makers and to the rest of child educators.

1.1 Statement of the problem

At risk learners in primary schools are one of the controversial issues in the Kenyan primary school education. It has been observed that critical problems affect many school age-children in our society and directly influence their lives and frequently spilling over into their educational achievements. It has been established that a number of children are living under extreme poverty, some abused, some abuse drugs and alcohol at an early age, while others indulge in early sex and at times fall pregnant. Vandalism and violence are also part of the common incidences in primary schools and school dropout rates have increased despite the implementation of free primary education. We need to ensure

that the children are retained in school and complete primary education and hence the need to carry out this study.

1.2 General objective

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of changes in society in putting learners at risk of school failure.

1.3 Specific objectives

The following objectives guided my study:

i. To establish the prevalence of learners who are at risk of school failure

ii. To identify the dominant factors responsible for putting learners at risk of school failure

iii. To find out how these learners have been affected by risk factors.

iv. To assess the way teachers have interviewed for these learners who are at risk.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions were formulated to further guide my study;

i. What is the prevalence of learners who are at risk of school failure?

ii. What are the contributing factors for at risk behavior among learners in primary schools?

iii. How have these learners been affected by the at risk factors?

iv. How have the teachers intervened for at risk learners in their classrooms?

1.5 Scope

The study was carried out in selected primary schools of Gatamaiyu division, Lari district in Kenya. The study investigated the role of changes in society in influencing the pupils to be risk of school failure. The study observed and measured the following variables; poverty, family, alcohol and drug abuse, early sex and pregnancy. The study begun in January 2010 and ended in August the same year.

1.6 Significance of the study

The study if successfully completed will benefit the following people, in the following ways;

The teachers of the diverse learners with unique background where these children who are at risk belong. The research contains the risk factors and how it greatly affects learning of the children at risk.

The parents and guardians of these children who are at risk. This will be a means sensitization about what negatively affects their children's education, putting their lives at risk.

The pupils themselves will be helped to cope with their situations and thus make better decisions about their lives and academic progress.

The researcher is also to benefit because she is carrying out this research to have a better understanding of the diverse problems which children face. She is also carrying out the study as partial fulfillment for the award of a Bachelor of Education Degree in primary education.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

This chapter presents what was reviewed about the problem of at risk students and how this affects their performance in school.

It has been observed that pupils, who stream into teachers classrooms every beginning of term, bring their own personal histories. Although they may wish to start a fresh with the new term, much of who they wrapped up in their past and their current out of school lives. It is likely that some of these pupils bear scars from their past experience and that some are currently caught up in desperate widespread social problems (Ryan and Cooper, 2004).

According to Smith et al (1998), many factors place pupils at risk for developing school problems. These factors include poverty, homelessness, single parent homes, abusive parents, substance abuse and alcohol.
The above category of pupils is the ones regarded as those who are at risk of school failure (Lewis and Doorlag, 1999).

According to Kauchack, Egen and Carter (2002), students placed at risk are those in danger of failing to complete their education, with the necessary skills to survive in modern society. The term has been borrowed from medicine, where it refers to individuals who do not have any specific disease but are likely to develop it. A which question arises is what puts them at risk of failing in school?

2.1 Risk factors experienced by children

Research has been conducted by experts and it has been established that many factors put the children at risk of developing school problems (Smith et al, 1998.)

Ryan and Cooper (2004) highlighted the following factors as being responsible for putting children at risk of school failure; poverty, homelessness, child abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, violence and school dropout.

Ryan and Cooper adopted six key measures as follows:-
When a child is not living with his/her two parents is in at risk. Second that when a child comes from a family where the household head is school dropout. A child from a family where the income is below the poverty line.
A child is living with a parent or parents who do not have steady, full-time employment. The family is receiving welfare benefits. The child does not have health insurance
The above citation was referred to the at risk students in the United States of America, and therefore the last two key measures may not be applicable to the Kenyan State of Economy.
Where majority of the parents are not employed, and there is no policy of giving welfare benefits and no child has health insurance, except for the rich.

McCown (1992), contributed that the above mentioned problems deny pupils the measure of security at comfort that most of them need to pursue their goals. Other problems threaten their health and safety.

Smith et al (1998) however highlighted that certain factors have a clear correlation with school problems. The authors cited McPartland and Slavin (1990) report about third graders, who read one year below grade level, have been retained in one grade, come from low socio economic backgrounds and who attend school with many other poor children who have almost no chance of graduating from high schools.

2.2 How the factors work to put children at risk of failing in school?

Scholars have examined the previous mentioned factors and established how they interact with the children's life experiences.

2.2.1 Poverty and at risk behavior

According to Smith et al (1999), poverty is a social condition associated with many different kinds of problems. Poverty can be related to crime, physical abuse, learning problems, and emotional problems. Lewis and Doorlag (1999) also associated poverty with poor nutrition, and cited a Kindergartener who comes to school hungry yet poor nutrition has also been observed to have a negative effect on children's health, and consequently their academic performance.

Poverty has also been associated with different kinds of disabilities such as mental retardation and learning disabilities (Smith and Luckasson, 1992). Poverty has also been associate with poor prenatal care, poor parenting, and hunger, limited health care, single parent household and poor living conditions (Smith et al, 1998).

It was also observed that some young girls have been made vulnerable to unsafe se exploitation by poverty. Some have had to indulge into live sex

7

with males because they have to survive. The results have either been contracting of venereal diseases and HIV/AIDS as well as falling pregnant, worse of all early marriages.

2.2.2 Family composition and pupils at risk behavior

The type of family from which children hail may place them at risk of school failure. The nature of family relationship becomes then a major factor in this context.

Research indicates that there is a rising number of children being raised by single parents. For those parents of younger children not yet in school, working outside the home raises the issue of inadequate child care. Limited amount of time is spent with the children (Ryan and Cooper, 2004).

Further more, researchers have established that usually single mothers raising children, sometimes do not have adequate finances to take care of them. This therefore becomes a factor that prevents parental involvement in the children's schooling.

Divorce on the other had can act as stress factor, which puts children's educational achievement at risk. Divorce offers the potentials growth and new integrations, but too often it creates only problems for children and although some children cope very well with the trauma surrounding divorce, many react with major academic problems. The central dilemma in many divorces is that in the conflict of interest between the child's need for continuity of the family unit and the parents decision to breakup the family that provided the child's main supports.

According to Smith et al (1998), children react in different ways to divorce, including the following; feeling guilt, anxiety, exhibiting social

problems, experiencing of grief, becoming angry and hostile. The foregoing characteristics of course interfere with the academic progress of children in terms of their ability to relate with the rest of their peers as well as the teachers who teach them.

Death of parents also places pupils at risk of academic failure. When a child's parent dies external events impinge on the child's personality in three ways; the child has to deal with the reality of death itself; must adapt to the resulting changes of the family and has to contend with the perpetual absence of the lost parent (Smith ET al, 1998).

2.2.3 Abuse and neglected children

Giving up in an abusive family places children at a significant risk for problems. Child abuse occurs in families from every socio-economic status, rare religion and ethnic background in society. Family members, acquaintances, or even strangers may be a source of abuse. Children have been abused in several different ways that places them at risk for problems in school. Abuse can take form of emotional abuse involving unreasonable demands placed on children by either parents, siblings' peers or teachers, that can not possibly be met (Smith et al, 1998).

Characteristics such as absence of positive self image, behavioral extremes, depression, defiant and antisocial behavior, aggressiveness are all attributes of emotional abusive to children (DeHart, Sroufe and Cooper, 2004).

Physical abuse of children which includes beating, strangulations, burns to the body and other forms of physical brutalization, makes affects the academic progress of children by failure of grade, finding difficulty in establishing peer relationships and substance abuse. Some children have

sustained injuries which have disabled their cognitive functioning (DeHart et al, 2004).

2.2.4 Substance abuse and at risk behavior

Drug use and alcohol abuse has been reported a problem for pupils. Accurate statistics are hard to find but estimates indicate that 92% of our pupils abuse drugs and smoke cigarettes (Woolfolk, 1998).

Factors such as having friends who provide the drugs and encourage their use, low socioeconomic status, disturbed families, adult family members using the drugs, poor school performance, stressful life events, deviant behavior, depression or anxiety can all contribute to the possibility that an individual will be at risk for use or abuse of alcohol and drugs. The greater the number of these factors influencing a specific student the more likely that the student is to abuse alcohol and other drugs (Lewis and Doorlag, 1999).

2.3 Interventions for learners at risk

Experts have advised that schools put in place a conducive learning environment for pupils who have been put at risk of failure in school.

Griffith (2002) for example advised that effective schools for students placed at risk should focus on mutual respect between teachers and students, personal responsibility, and cooperation.

Barr and Parrett (2001) and Griffith (2002) on this not emphasized the following;

- A safe and orderly school climate in which the students understand the meaning behind the purpose of school and classroom rules;

- Academic objectives focusing on the mastery of content;
- Caring and demanding teachers and high expectations for all students;
- Cooperation, a sense of community and pro-social values
- Students responsibility and self regulation decreased emphasize on external controls

According to Smith et al (1998) there are four primary approaches to dealing with pupils at risk for failure in schools. These include the following compulsory or make up for existing or past risk factors and their effects in learner's lives. Morrison (1997) advises that reading programs are examples of efforts to reduce on the impact of poverty on children.

Prevention programs on the other hand focus on keeping certain negative factors from having an impact on learners drug prevention programs, anti smoking educational efforts and sex education programs are examples of efforts designed to keep learners from developing problem behaviors.

Intervention programs focus on eliminating risk factors. They include teaching teenagers how to be good parents.
Early intervention programs target preschool children.

Transition is designed to help learners see the real world. Schools to work programs, which help pupils to move from school to work, are effective transition programs.

Schools should therefore provide a variety of programs to prevent problems from developing and to address problems that do develop.

11

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods used to collect data. It discusses the design, study area, sample size and sampling procedure, instruments, data collection procedure and data processing and analysis.

3.1 Research design

This study used a descriptive survey. The research drew from both the qualitative and quantitative analysis approaches in order to get a bigger picture both in number and data.

3.2 Study area

This study was conducted in selected primary schools of Gatamaiyu division, Lari district in Kenya to investigate on the role of changes in society in putting learners at risk of school failure. These schools include: Kamuchege primary school, Nyamuthaga primary school, Muthandi primary school, Wangware primary school, Karigui-ini primary school, Kagwe primary and Karatina primary school.

3.3 Sample framework

3.3.1 Sample size

This study obtained information from upper primary classes(forms) and teachers acted as key informants to this study because they were the ones who were closer to the children they teach.

3.3.2 Sample technique

Using a convenient sampling technique, a total of thirty six respondents were picked at random to participate in this study.

3.3.3 Sample procedure

In carrying out the research, the researcher obtained a release letter from the course administrator which he presented to the schools under study.

3.4 Methods for data collection

3.4.1 Instruments

Questionnaires

These were used to extract information from teachers, learners and interviews for parents. Open ended questionnaires were suitable for investigating deeper the subject matter. Observation was also done on the status of the children.

3.4.2 Sources of data

This study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected using questionnaires and interviews were carried out with both learners and teachers. Secondary data were gathered through document analysis in the form of reports, training manual, news papers, and journals for the period under study was read and the required data collected from them.

3.5 Data processing and analysis

Qualitative data involved three sets of activities which included; editing, coding and frequency tabulations. Editing was done by looking through each of the field responses from interview guides ascertaining that every applicable question has an answer and all errors eliminated for the completeness, accuracy and uniformity.

The researcher then proceeded onto coding the various responses given to particular questions that lack coding frames, she then established how many times each alternative response category was given an answer using tally marks which was later added up.

Data were then presented in frequency tabulations rendering it ready for interpretation. Quotations and field notes made were also included.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0   Introduction

The study was carried out in Gatamaiyu division, Lari district in Kenya to investigate the role of changes in society in putting learners at risk of school failure. The research observed and measured the following variables; prevalence of children at risk of school failure; poverty in families, the family relationships, and composition, abuse and neglect, alcohol and substance abuse. The study measured the pupil's retention in school, their participation in school and their sexuality. Chapter four is all about the presentation of data and the analysis of the data that were collected from the field.

4.0.1 Response rate

Teachers acted s key informants to this study, since they were the ones who were closer to the children they teach, thirty six questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and all of them were filled in.

4.1   Prevalence of learners at risk of school failure in selected primary schools

Oneisten and Lavine (2000), observed that in schools, there were some children who did not manifest any problems severe enough to result in disability, yet they are at risk of developing achievement

and behavioral problems that can limit their success in school and as young adults. The study therefore investigated the existence of children with the following characteristics.

Table 1: Showing prevalence of learners at risk of school failure

Prevalence of learners with at risk behavior	High	Low
Come to school hungry	4	32
Perform poorly in class	15	21
Truants	-	36
Have negative attitude towards school	5	31
Low participation in classroom activities	1	34
Sexually active	16	19
Pregnant	1	35
Abuse drugs or alcohol	21	15
Come from divorced families	4	32

Source: Field data 2010

From the above table, statistics revealed that according to the majority respondents there were fewer pupils who reported to school hungry although handful of teachers said the number was high. Fifteen teachers shared that they had a high number of pupils who performed poorly in class, while the remaining twenty one said they were few.

According to all the teachers, the number of truant pupils was low. But thirty one of them suggested that the number of pupils who disliked school was low, although five of them said it was high. Further more, thirty four teachers claimed that the number of students with low participation in classroom activities was low.

About those pupils who were sexually active, sixteen teachers claimed the number was high; while the remaining nineteen said their numbers were lower. About pregnancy among the female pupils, thirty five teachers rated the occurrence as low. For drug and alcohol abuse; the teachers who rated it as high were twenty one, while the remaining twenty one said the figures were much lower. Thirty two teachers shared that the number of pupils who hailed from broken relationships was low.

All in all, there are pupils out there in primary schools who are indeed at risk of dropping out of school and therefore have to be helped before it is too late.

4.2 Dominant factors responsible for putting children at risk of school failure

According to Smith et al (1998), a number of factors are responsible for putting children at risk of school failure. These factors include home environmental, individual as well as biological. This was therefore investigated by rating the number of children experiencing the risk factors.

4.2.1 Home environment and learners at risk of school failure

The factors within the child's home, specifically the socio-economic status have a great influence on the child's academic progress in school further, even the type of family relationships greatly affect this child's educational achievement and progress in school and completion..

Table 2: Presents the respondents view on how the home environment has influenced the pupils at risk of school failure

At risk factors within the home	Many	Few	None
Children coming from poor families	34	2	-
Children coming from families whose parents are unemployed	34	1	1
Children coming from homes where the father has low educational attainment	31	4	1
Children are coming from a home where one or two parents abuse alcohol and drugs	28	6	2
Children are coming from single parent families	20	16	-
Children are from a family where parental guidance is poor	34	2	-
Children are from a family where the parents have either broken up or are about to	26	8	2

Source: Field data 2010

From the data in the above table; thirty four teachers said that there were many pupils, they were teaching and were coming from poor families, only two teachers said they were few. Secondly thirty four teachers admitted that they taught children whose parents are unemployed. Only one said that they were few and another one said that such children were not in existence.

4.3 How factors have worked to put the learners at risk of school failure

Experts in the field out there have investigated, and established that the risk factors interact with the children's lives and well being

and then create educational problems for the learners. The research therefore at this point investigated how the at risk factors were negatively impacting the educational attainment of learner.

4.3.1 Poverty and at risk of school failure

Scholars have named poverty as one of the social conditions which create many problems to individuals and in particular young children.

Table 3: Presents the responses as to how poverty manifests itself in different problems which pupils face

How poverty influences the academic progress of learners	Yes	No	Do not know
Children who are poor do not feed well and therefore perform poorly in class	15	19	3
Children from poor families do not attend school regularly because they lack scholar materials	21	11	4
Poor parents are stressed and can not guide the behavior and education of their children	18	6	12
Because of poverty some children are malnourished and therefore perform poorly	31	4	1
Malnourished children are always sickly and therefore do not attend school regularly	32	4	-
Poor parents lack high academic qualifications and therefore can not help their children with reading	36	-	-

Source: Field data 2010

From the analysis in table 3, it was discovered that fifteen teachers were in agreement that some children from poor families were not feeding well

and therefore performed poorly at school. Nineteen however disagreed with the statement and the remaining three did not know.

This finding is in agreement Doorlag (1999) who lamented that some children come to school hungry and therefore pay little attention in class.

Secondly, twenty one teachers were in support of the item that poor pupils do not attend school regularly. The eleven however were in disagreement with the statement and the remaining four did not know what to believe.

One again the above finding can be explained by researchers who have established that children from poor families will always be kept at home to provide labor which can not be afforded. It also can be due to parents failing to provide for their children's requirements for school, such as books and pens.

About poor parents being stressed, and not being able to provide for their children's educational and behavioral guidance, eighteen teachers agreed to the statement, only six disagreed and the remaining twelve did not know. No matter what the response was to those who admitted, there is some truth in the finding because it is cited that some children lack proper guidance both academically and morally because of the stress that their parents experience. This of course negatively affects their relationship with other children at school as well as their academic performance (Ormond, 2003).

About malnutrition due to poverty among pupils, and poor performance, many teachers (31) agreed to this statement. Only four disagreed and one did not know. Further still thirty two teachers agreed that the malnourished pupils are often sickly and therefore do not attend school regularly and the remaining four disagreed. True poor nutrition

negatively affects the brain functioning of children and also leads to physical impairment in the body thereby resulting into poor academic performance.

Teachers were also in agreement that low educational status parents can not provide adequate educational support to their children. This is the reason as to why some children can not read effectively and therefore poor performance in class (Ormond, 2003).

4.3.2 Family composition and school failure

The type of family in which the young child grows from; the relationship of parents, and other circumstances such as death and sickness, moral conduct of adults all put the children at risk of school failure.

Table 4: Presents the respondents views on how family has put children at risk of school failure

How families increase at risk behavior among children	Yes	No	Do not know
Working parents do not have time to help the children	9	29	8
Divorced families affect the education of their children	27	7	2
Children from single parent families are affected academically	15	11	10
Children from abusive families are poor performers in school	36	-	-
Death and sickness of parents affect the academic performance of pupils	34	-	-

Source: Field data 2010

From the analysis of data that were presented in table 4, it was established that some working parents did not have enough time to be with their children (9). This of course pts them at risk of school failure. The number of respondents was low because most parents within this place do not have jobs; instead they work in their gardens. Secondly twenty nine respondents did not agree to the statement and the remaining eight did not know what to believe.

About divorce of parents putting children twenty seven teachers agreed that school failure was eminent if the parents of children separated, although the seven disagreed and the remaining two did not agree.

Fifteen teachers agreed that children of single parents are at risk of failing in school, the eleven said no, and the remaining did not know. On the foregoing note, Ryan and Cooper (2004) gave reason of how single parenting can put learners are risk in that when a mother can not support her children financially and emotionally, then this child is exposed to harsh conditions.

Further more, twenty eight teachers agreed that they taught many pupils whose parents were abusing drugs and alcohol, although six teachers said they were fewer and the last two said such children were not in existence.

Thirty teachers rated the number of pupils coming from single parent families as high and the remaining six being fewer. For the pupils who came from families without proper parental guidance, thirty four teachers said they were many and the remaining two said that they were few. For the children from broken families twenty six teachers rated them as many while eight said they were few and the two said they did not exist.

From the above finding there are many children living under adverse home conditions. The dominant home conditions which are putting the children at more risk include poverty, occupational status of parents and poor parental guidance. These put children at risk in many ways; poverty for example limits the opportunities of children to fully participate in free primary education, because these children can not afford educational materials, or they are left at home to supplement income.

4.4 How schools have handled learners at risk of school failure

Well run and academically focused schools are needed to address the educational needs of learners placed at risk of dropping out of school. The problem however is that since the pupils are diverse in characteristics, with diverse sets of needs, there is no single strategy that can keep them in school. The researcher therefore wanted to establish how this is being done in the different schools in the study.

Table 5: Contains information about what schools have adopted to cater for he needs of at risk learners

Programs established to help at risk pupils in school	Yes	No
Giving remedial lessons	20	16
Extra reading lessons	20	16
School organizes debates , seminars on sexuality and pregnancy	17	19
Seminars for alcohol and drug abuse	17	19
Teaching of vocational subjects	18	18

Source: Field data 2010

From the foregoing analysis in table 5 it was established that only twenty out of the thirty respondents were helping their learners to catch up with the rest of the pupils. The remaining sixteen did not for reasons such as there is no time for them due to an overload.

Twenty teachers agreed that they offer extra reading lessons to their learners and the rest did not. Further more, only seventeen of the respondents organized seminars, workshops and debates for learners to sensitize and empower them about the dangers of the risk factors such as early sex and pregnancy as well as drug and alcohol abuse.

Further more half of the teachers admitted teaching vocational subjects and the remaining half did not.

The above finding shows that schools are performing, on average to include the pupils at risk of school failure in effective learning. The reason which the respondents have given is that they have an overwhelming task of carrying out instruction to, an overwhelming number of learners with diverse characteristics.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0   Introduction

This study set out to investigate the society changes in placing learners at risk of school failure. Chapter four presented analyzed and interpreted data that were collected from the field. In chapter five, the analyzed data were summarized, a conclusion made and recommendations were given.

5.1   Summary of findings

Prevalence of learners at risk of school failure

Findings revealed that a number of learners who had the characteristics that put them at risk of school failure although some were low. Research revealed that among the pupils each teacher was teaching, a high number of children were being exposed to drugs and substance abuse. Another high number was not as being sexually active and were performing poorly in classroom activities. It was established that there were fewer pupils who came to school hungry, who were truants, who had a negative attitude towards school, who had fallen pregnant and who came from divorce families.

Much as findings revealed a smaller number, however minimal the number of the children was, it is important to note that in schools where we teach there are some children who are most likely to fail in education because they are experiencing problems at home and there fore need to be helped out. These children are most likely to drop out of school.

Dominant factors responsible for placing children at risk of school failure

Research has indicated that many pupils in school were coming from poor families, whose parents were unemployed and did not have high educational attainments.

Further finings revealed that there were some children who hailed from single parent families and some came from families where one or both of the parents abused drugs and alcohol and many came from families without parental guidance and some families had broken up.

The above findings raise questions about the effectiveness of child care on the emotional and intellectual development of children (Kauchack, 2002).

Poverty and at risk of school failure

Studies revealed that there were some pupils who were from poor families, were not feeding well and were therefore performing poorly in class. This was according to the 15 teachers. This agrees with Doorlag (1999) because he explained that a hungry child pays little attention in class. Findings however also show that nineteen teachers were in disagreement that poverty caused hunger among the children, to the extent of them paying little attention in school and the remaining three had no idea.

Further, it was established that there were some children from poor families who did not attend school regularly although another handful of teachers did not agree. This finding concurs with a number of reports which have highlighted that children are sometimes kept at home to helped with domestic work and taking care of siblings (UNICEF, 2000). This has an impact on the learner's academic progress and capability.

Findings further revealed that poor parents are sometimes stressed due to financial problems they face. Hence they find no time to guide and counsel their children. This further exposes their children to other problems such as early sex and marriage and school dropout.

Majority of the teacher agreed that some pupils are visibly malnourished and sickly and hence the poor performance. Malnutrition according to UNICEF (2000) affects the mental ability of learners as well as their physical health, thereby leading to poor grades and irregular school attendance.

All teachers accepted that children from poor families usually have parents with low educational attainments, meaning that they are most likely to get low paying jobs and hence earn minimal wages which can not support their families fully. This of course exposes the young children to risky behavior.

Family composition and at risk of school failure

Findings showed a little relationship between working parents and pupils at risk of school failure, as evidence from the twenty nine respondents who disagreed with the statement. The finding did not fully agree with what was earlier on cited in Ryan and Cooper (2004). But this can be attributed to the study area which is rural in nature and most adults are peasants.

Divorce among the parents was found to be one social factor which greatly affects the pupil's academic performance. According to Cobb (2000), many children find it hard to cope after the separation of their parents. This affects their academic performance in terms of how they relate with other children and the teachers at school. In other words,

27

these children lack psychological attachment to school as earlier on cited by Ormond (2003).

From findings, there were mixed feeling s about children from single parents being at risk of school failure. This can be attributed to the nature of most African families, whereby most women remain married. But the fifteen respondents represent those few single parents who put their children at risk by not adequately providing for their basic needs so as to progress favorably in school. In fact these children lack enough security both at home and at school and hence the poor performance.

Death of parents was also established to be another way in which pupils are put at risk of school failure. With no one to provide for the children's basic needs and security as well as social needs.

Abuse and neglect of children

It was also established that child abuse and neglect paused problems to pupils in school and the respondents identified some children who had been abused by parents or relatives and also shared that such victims of abuse have behavioral disorders such as being aggressive to other children and were not socializing well with other children. This concurs with a number of citations for example in Smith et al 1998; Cobbs 2000; and Dehart, Snoufe and Cooper 2004. The educational implications of child abuse and neglect is that an antisocial child is most likely to reject by the peers, and teachers at school and hence the poor performance.

Substance abuse and at risk behavior

Studies revealed that fewer if not none of the primary pupils were involved in drug and alcohol abuse. But according to the analysis most respondents agreed that many of the pupils they taught had parents who were using drugs and were drinking alcohol. Sometimes alcohol

consumption can turn adults to potential abusers of young children and hence putting them at risk of school failure (Doorlag, 1999).

Pregnancy and early sex

Teachers contributed that there are an average number of pupils who had fallen pregnant and left school. The chances of such children re-entering school are slum. Beside early marriage being cherished in Kenya, there could be no other chance of these young mothers ever stepping in school again.

Further more the teachers contributed that many pupils were sexually active. This in turn put them at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and infections, as well as failing pregnant at a very early age (Doorlag, 1999).

What schools have put in place to help learners placed at risk to succeed in academics?

Experts in this field have advised that instructors adopt special strategies and approaches to deal effectively with learners placed at risk of school failure. These programs, in order to be rated as effective they need to have certain agreed upon characteristics as follows.

The findings in my study indicated that over a half of the respondents gave remedial lessons to learners who were believed to be at risk. This was what Marrison (1997) termed as compensatory education, which can help to make up for the existing or past risk factors among the learners, surprisingly the remaining half did not, and the reason given was because of too much work.

Twenty more teachers shared that they gave extra reading lessons to children. This could help the children from poor families to improve upon

their reading skills and perform better as advised by Ormond (2003). Sixteen teachers however did not bother and the reason they gave was too much work to do.

Findings further revealed that half of the schools organize debates, workshops and seminars about sexuality, pregnancy, and drug and alcohol abuse. The remaining half did not. This undermines prevention strategies which would otherwise prevent the risk factors from taking place. More so little was being done to prepare the victims of risk factors to succeed beyond their problems.

Smith et al (1998) on this note advised that schools design programs to help pupils see the relationship between what they learn in school and how it will be used in the real world.

All in all schools were not running effective programs for the pupils placed at risk of school failure because they did not have a clear academic emission. Besides some of them did not have enough time to restructure their school program because of an overloaded curriculum and an overwhelming number of learners with diverse needs to handle.

5.2 Conclusion

Pupils who are at risk of school failure are indeed in existence in our primary schools. The dominant risk factors which have put them at risk include poverty, drug and alcohol abuse. Others include family composition. These factors reduce the social security of children, as well as their limiting their chances to grow healthily because of deprivation of nutritious food.

The reduction in social security and good health not only lowers their chances of equitably participating in basic primary education, but also

reduces their intellectual capability to succeed in school. What is appalling though is that inclusive primary schools have done little to help compensate for the lost opportunities of these children to succeed in education. Neither has the schools taken responsibility to intervene for these children by reducing the effects of risk factors, or preventing them from taking effect on the children. Lastly no clear plan has been made to prepare the pupils at risk to succeed in future.

5.3 Recommendations

Pupils with at risk behavior are adverse group of individuals with a diverse set on of needs and there is probably no single strategy which can keep these children in school. Nevertheless something can be done to help them succeed and stay in school.

Teacher should identify the at risk learners, as early as possible. They should be on alert for the indicators, mentioned earlier on in chapter two. This will help to intervene for these children early enough. For as it is said early intervention is more effective than later intervention efforts (Ormond, 2003).

Teachers must create a warm and supportive school and classroom atmosphere. Schools that have high success rates with learners at risk for academic failure are those that communicate a sense of caring, concern and high regard for pupils.

For children who might be abused, teachers should report any incident to the appropriate agencies. School personnel must be aware that they have a moral and legal obligation to report a suspected child abuse. This can be well executed if the school personnel understand the procedures to be undertaken.

It is also important for the teachers to organize workshops in school to sensitize the learners and parents about child abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, early pregnancy and premarital sex among others.

School authorities should get involved in teenage pregnancy issues before pregnancy occurs. Sex education, information on HIV/AIDS and the consequences of unprotected sex should be the focus. School must therefore put in place a pregnancy prevention program.

Schools should provide counseling for girls who become pregnant and must enough girls who become pregnant to remain in school.

Teachers have to work with families of those girls who have fallen pregnant to ensure that they get the necessary family support they need.

For children whose families abuse drugs and alcohol and who have already started abusing themselves the following should be done:-

Teachers must establish a clear, well defined policy for pupils, spelling out how these children will be dealt with. The learners must be sensitized on the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

An intervention program for drug and alcohol abuse, involving families as well as learners must be established. It could be undertaken by offering both one-to-one and group counseling centers and drop-in centers at school.

Teachers should make the curriculum relevant to pupils lives and needs, because they are more likely to stay in school, and also learn and achieve at high levels, if they find the curriculum relevant to their needs, life

experiences and cultural values. To do this, teachers have to place academic skills within the context of the real world tasks and particularly within the context of the children's local environment.

Teachers must communicate high expectations for the pupils at risk of school failure. It is now established that a number of these at risk pupils have a history of academic failure. Teacher however must not discourage such pupils. Instead they should assure them that school success is possible and expected and further more, that they are capable of achieving at high levels.

School authorities are also reminded to provide academic support for learners at risk. It known that some of these children receive little or no academic support from home. Therefore they need more than usual amount of assistance from teachers and other school personnel to succeed. Teachers have helped these children develop more effective reading and learning strategies. One-on-one teacher learner interactions should be increase.

REFERENCS

DeHart G.B, Sroufe L.A and R.G Cooper (2003). Child development: Its nature and course 5th ed. McGraw Hill publishers

Smith C.T, E.A Polloway, J.R. Patton and C,A Dowdy (1998). Teaching students with special needs in inclusive settings, 2nd edition Allyn and Bacon

Woolfolk A.E (1999). Educational Psychology 7th edition, Allyn and Bacon publishers

Griffith J (2002). A multilevel analysis of the relation of school learning and social environments to minority achievement in public elementary schools: The elementary school journal U.S.A

Barr, R and Parret. W (2001). Hope, fulfilled for At risk youth. Boston, Allyn and Bacon publishers

Morrison G (1993). Contemporarily curriculum Boston, Allyn and Bacon.

Kauchack D, P. Eggen and C. Carter (2002). Introduction to teaching: Becoming a profession, Pearson education Inc.

Lewis R.B, D.H Doorlag (1999). Teaching special students in general education classrooms, 5th edition Merill, Prentice Hall..

Lewis R.B, D.H Doorlag (1991). Teaching special students in Mainstream, 3rd ed. Merill Prentice Hall

Ryan K and J.M Cooper (2001). Those who can teach. 9th ed. Houghton and Mifflin

McCown R, M.Driscoll and P.G Roop (1996). Educational psychology: A learning Centered Approach to classroom practice, 2nd ed. Allyn and Bacon publishers

Ormond J.E (2003). Educational psychology: Developing Learners, 5th ed. Mrill prentice Hall.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaires for Teachers

Dear Teachers

I am carrying out a research on the role of social problems in placing pupils at risk of school failure. Any information given to me shall highly be appreciated and will be kept confidential.

Instruction

The respondent is to either fill in or circle

1. Do you have children in school with the following characteristics?

Responses	May	Few
Come to school hungry		
Perform poorly in class		
Truants		
Have a negative attitude towards school		
Sexually active		
Do not participate in classroom activities		
Pregnant and left school		
Abuse drug		
Come from broken families		

Dominant factors responsible for placing child at risk of school failure

2. Do you teach children who;

Responses	May	Few	None
Come from poor families			
Come from families whose parents are unemployed			
Come from homes where one or two parents abuse drugs			
Come from a single parent family			
Come from a family which can not provide parental guidance			
Families which have broken up or are about to break up			

How factors have worked to place pupils at risk of school failure?

3. Is it true that children from poor families do not feed well and therefore perform poorly in class?

Yes

No

Do not know

That children from poor families do not attend school regularly because they lack school requirements

Yes

No

Do not know

That poor parents are stressed and can not guide the behavior and education of their children?

Yes

No

Do not know

Because of poverty, some children are malnourished and therefore perform poorly

Yes

No

Do not know

Malnourished children are always ill and therefore do not attend school regularly

Yes

No

Do not know

Poor parents lack high academic qualification and can not help their children with reading?

Yes

No

Do not know

Working parents do not have time for their children's guidance?

Yes

No

Do not know

Divorced parents affect the education of their children?

Yes

No

Do not know

Child from single parents are affected academically

Yes

No

Do not know

Children from abusive families are poor performers in school

Yes

No

Do not know

Do you have children who have lost parents and are performing poorly in class?

Many

Few

None

Do you have any girls who have dropped out of school due to pregnancy?

Many

Few

None

How about those who are sexually active?

Many

Few

None

How schools are dealing with learners at risk of school failure

Do you offer any compensatory academic programs to help the at risk learners eat up with the rest of the pupils?

Yes

No

If yes please explain what you offer

....

....

Have you established any school programs which can help the children to avoid problems such as; drug and alcohol abuse, early sex and pregnancy?

Yes

No

Specify which ones put in place

....

Do you teach your learners about good parenting?

Yes

No

Do you take time to assist your academically weak learners?

Yes

No

Nott possible

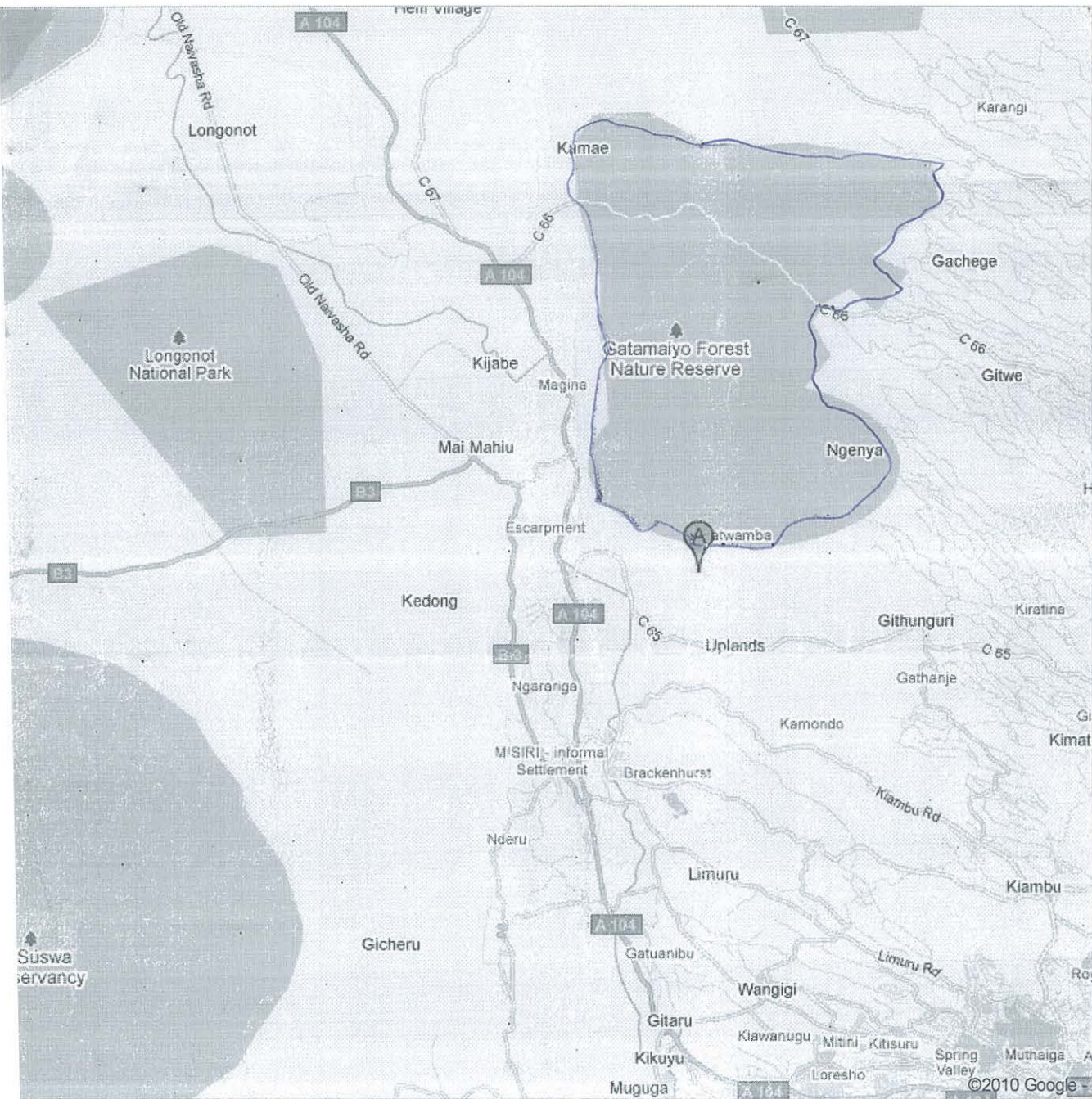Do you frequently monitor your pupil's academic progress and conduct in school?

Yes

No

Google maps
Uganda | beta

Address **Lari Forest
Kenya**

Notes LARI DISTRICT ,GATAMAIYU
DIVISION

(N.B) THE AREA OF STUDY
GATAMAIYU ZONE
INDICATED BY (A)

☐ Area Of Study