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An Assessment of the Causes of Drop Outs in Primary Schools of Mountainous Areas of District Swat

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Abstract

The study was conducted in the mountainous areas of district Swat in the year 2010 to assess the causes of drop outs in primary schools of mountainous areas. Primary data was obtained through three different structured questionnaires using a sample of size sixty allocating to fifty government schools of three districts of the research area. The schools and respondents in the hilly area were randomly selected. The findings of the study showed that the major causes of drop outs in the research area were crowded and large schools; uncaring, untrained and irresponsible teachers; usage of passive teaching methods; inappropriate curriculum design; inappropriate evaluation procedure; lack of parents' involvement; lack of checks and bureaucratic system and long distance and lack of extra co curricular activities. It is recommended that the government authorities should have strict checks on these schools. The presence of the staff, usage of audio visual aids in teaching process and students' involvement in co-curriculum activities should be ensured.

Keywords: Primary Schools, Education, Swat

Introduction

Good quality education can play active role in the enhancement of productivity, efficiency and social and economic development of a country. It brings a change in the individuals for promoting greater

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productivity and cultivating modern attitude, value and beliefs about work and quality of life (Jan, et al, 2002). In district Swat the number of male Primary, Middle, High and Higher Secondary Schools are 1017, 69, 65 and 10 respectively. Similarly the female Primary, Middle, High and Higher Secondary Schools are 601, 29, 17 and 1 respectively (District Census Report, 1998). The ratio of drop outs in mountainous areas is more than plain areas. The need is to overcome the problem of excessive drop outs in the whole district in general and in the research area in particular. However different educationists highlighted the different aspects of the issue. Sherman & Sherman, 1990, found small class and program size, low pupil-teacher ratios, program autonomy, and a supportive school environment associated with successful dropout prevention. Platero, et al., 1986, reported that the main cause of drop out was traveling long distances to get to school. Deyhle, (1989) stated that teachers did not care about the students or help them in school which cause high drop out ratio. He suggested that teachers also need to use interactive teaching strategies to develop positive relationships with their students. Studies (Coburn & Nelson, 1989, clearly showed that the problem of drop out could be overcome with supportive teachers. According to Senate, 1989, not being good at memorizing facts, boredom, larger class sizes, and unsupportive teachers were the major problems of drop outs. Coladarci, 1983, studied that inappropriate curriculum was a responsible factor for drop out. Inappropriate testing procedure was also the major cause of drop outs in schools (Bearden, Spencer & Moracco, 1989).

In the present study attempt has been made to investigate the causes of drop outs in mountainous areas of district Swat because no such work has been undertaken in this area.

Data and Methodology

The study has been conducted in district Swat during 2010. Fifty government schools from three tehsils of the district namely Kabal, Barikot and Matta were selected. Schools situated in mountainous areas of the study area were selected for the relevant information. A sample of size sixty was used and primary data was personally collected from the respondents (i.e. teachers, students and community members) through three different structured questionnaires. Sample size was allocated proportionally to these schools. The respondents were selected randomly, selecting 16 teachers, 32 students and 12 community members. The information was usually collected in the schools or in community centers (Hujras). Their perceptions regarding causes of drop outs were observed and presented with the help of percentages and pie charts.

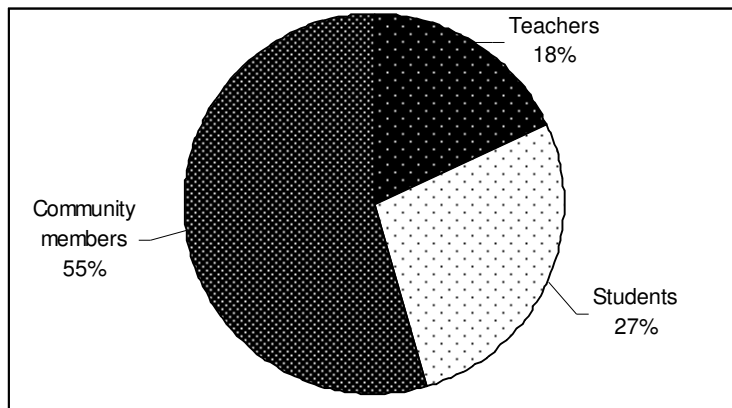
Results and Discussions

Having observed the research area the following results were obtained. The following major causes of drop outs in the research area were observed.

Crowded and large schools

Students created conditions conducive to dropping out due to crowded and large schools. They were not involved in the learning process appropriately. Students were found deprived from participating in extra-curricular activities as well as in learning process in large schools. In the field survey, 55% of teachers, 27% of teachers and 18% of teachers stated that the main cause of drop outs was crowded and large schools, as given in figure 1. It indicated that such schools were rare because only 18.33% of the total respondents were told that drop out were mainly due to crowded and large schools.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents made crowded and large schools responsible for drop outs.

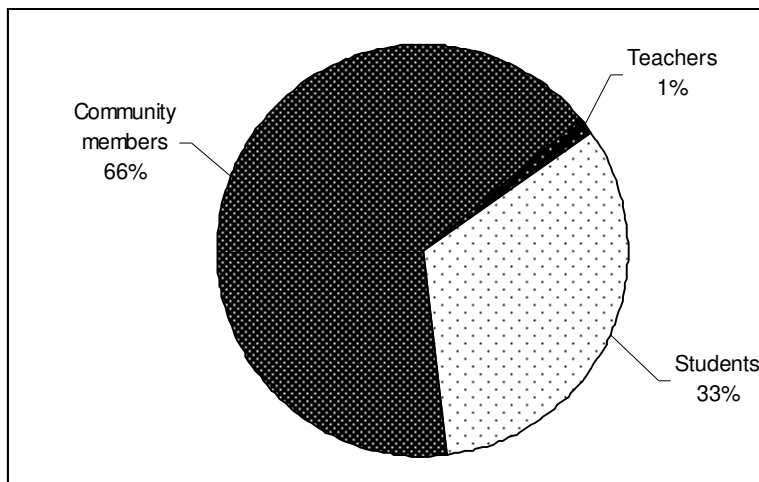


Uncaring, untrained and irresponsible teachers

In the research area it was observed the teachers did not care about the students or help them in school. The role of education department in giving training was of great significance. Some of the teachers were given training through departmental programmes like PIPLE, but still there were untrained teachers also. The teachers were also found attending the schools with mutual arrangement with their colleagues which have badly affected the school students and ultimately used to leave the schools. The corporal punishment was also observed as a major cause of drop outs in these mountainous areas. In the study area, it was

observed that 66% of the community, 1% of the total teachers and 33% of the total students drop out due to corporal punishment, untrained and uncaring teachers. The statistics are given in figure 2. The teachers opposed the view and only a small portion of teachers (1%) told that drop outs were due to this reason.

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents stated that drop outs are due to corporal punishment, untrained and uncaring teachers.

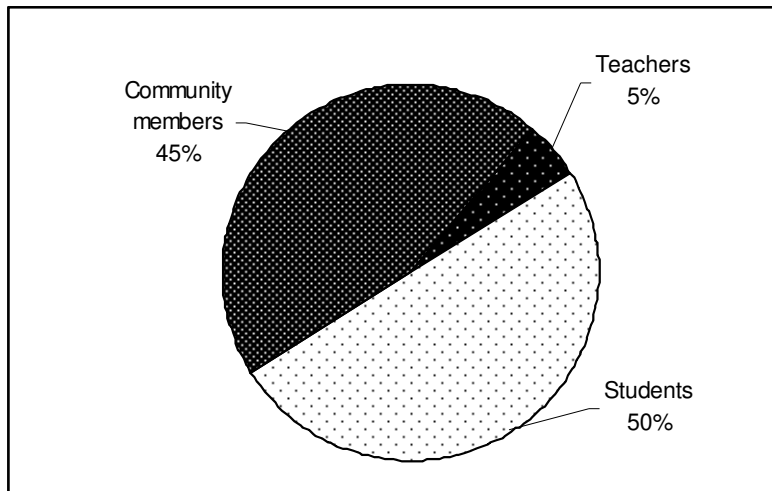


Usage of passive teaching methods

In almost all the schools it was observed that the teachers were using passive teaching methods for communication. Students were not taught according to their potential and psyche. A lot of Audio Visual aids were found lying in the schools but these were not utilized at all. Due to lack of students' interest, they used to leave the schools.

In the study area, 5% of the total teachers, 50% of the students and 45% of the total community members stated that the teachers were not using Audio Visual aids in teaching process and the students were not in a position to learn easily and ultimately the drops out. The statistics are given in figure 3.

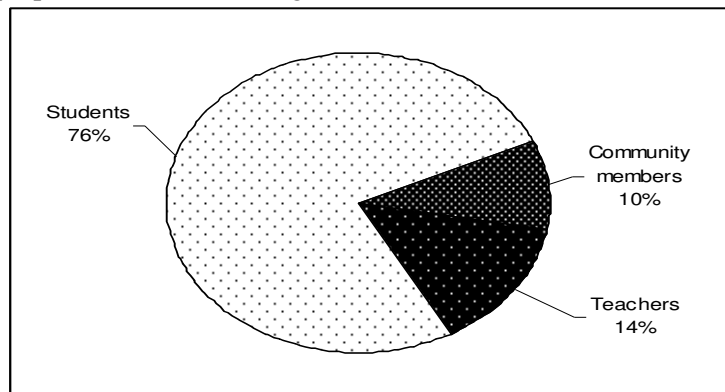
Figure 3: Percentage of respondents stated that drop outs are due to passive teaching methods



Inappropriate curriculum design

According to teachers' perceptions, the curriculum was unstable. From time to time changes in the curriculum made the situation difficult for both the teachers and students. The students were discouraged to take admission in the next classes when failed in the subject once and ultimately caused to drop out. In the study area, 76% of the students blamed that the curriculum was unsuitable. Similarly, 10% of the community members and 14% of teachers stated that drop out was mainly due to inappropriate curriculum, as given in figure 4.

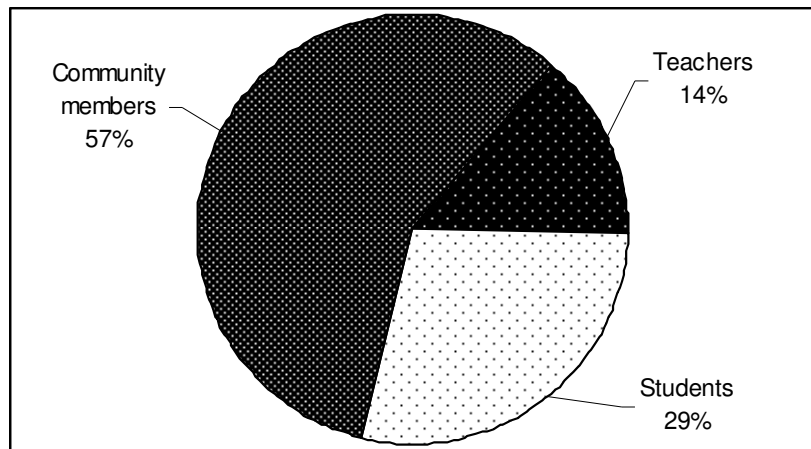
Figure 4: Percentage of respondents stated that drop outs are due to inappropriate curriculum design



Inappropriate evaluation procedure

The students' performance was inappropriately tested and evaluated. Standardized tests were not carried out honestly. Cultural biases were common practice in these hilly areas of the district. Relatives, friends and community members used to compel the teachers to pass their students. The differences and distinctions among students caused the students to leave the schools. In the study area, only the small portion possessed this view. Fifty seven percent of the total students, 14% of the total teachers and 57% of the total community members stated that drop out were due to inappropriate evaluation procedure, as given in figure 5.

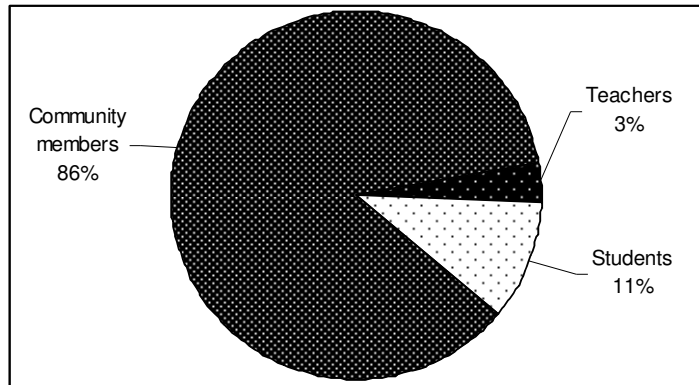
Figure 5: Percentage of respondents stated that drop outs are due to inappropriate evaluation procedure



Lack of parents' involvement

The parents were not taking keen interest in children's education and used to give attention to education as a secondary thing. No checks were given to the students by their parents neither in the schools nor in home which caused failing the student and ultimately leaving the schools. In the field survey, 3% of teachers, 11% of students and 88% of community members stated that student drop outs due to lack of parents' involvement and interest, as given in figure 6.

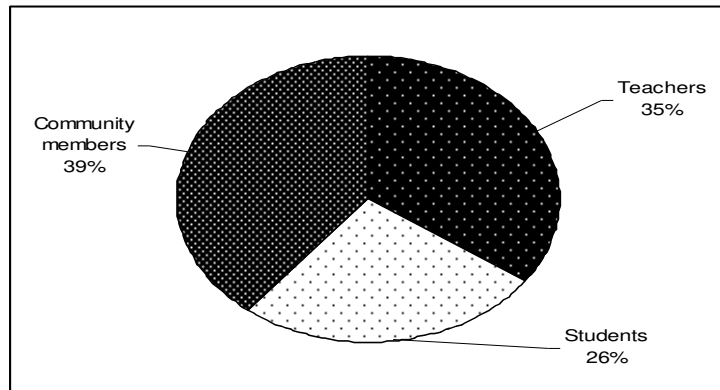
Figure 6: Percentage of respondents stated that drop outs are due to lack of parents' involvement



Lack of checks and Bureaucratic system

The checks in research area through education department were also observed as a major cause. However, most recently the department started a well planned programme to admit all the children in primary schools through primary schools teachers of the district. Many schools were found constructed on the basis of political pressure and interference. The attendance of students and teachers was very difficult there. The number of students was too low. The number of teachers did not match with the number of students and ultimately compelled the students to leave the schools. This view has been supported by 39% of community members, 35% of teachers and 26% of the total students, as given in figure 7.

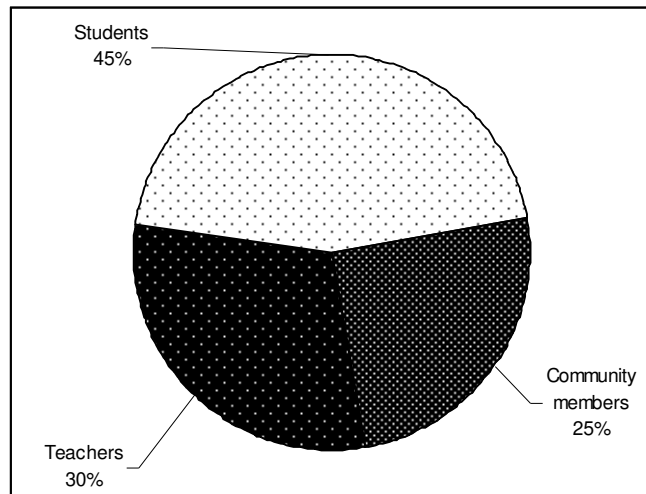
Figure 7: Percentage of respondents stated that drop outs are due to lack of checks and bureaucratic system



Long distance and lack of extra co curricular activities

Dispersed primary schools with long distance, some students used to travel, and thus increased their risk of dropping out. More of the students did not come due to long distance or outside villages, which caused the students to leave the schools. Similarly, many schools do not have drama, clubs, debate teams, and other non-sport extra-curricular activities which caused lack of students' interest and ultimately caused to leave the schools in the study area. In the field survey, 45% of the students, 25% of the community members and 30% of the teachers stated that students drop outs due to long distance and lack of extra co curricular activities. The statistics are given in figure 8.

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents stated that drop outs are due to long distance and lack of extra co curricular activities



Conclusion and Recommendations

The study observed that the major causes of drop outs in the research area were over-crowded large schools; uncaring, untrained and irresponsible teachers; usage of passive teaching methods; inappropriate curriculum design; inappropriate evaluation procedure; lack of parents' involvement; lack of checks and bureaucratic system and long distance and lack of extra co curricular activities.

It is recommended that the government authorities should have strict checks on these schools. The presence of the staff should be ensured. The teachers should use audio visual aids in teaching process. Students should be involved in co-curriculum activities.

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