

Motivating Factors That Enhance Students' Academic Performance: A Case Of St Michael's Tulwopngetuny Secondary School In Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Motivation is something that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior. It gets students moving, points them in a particular direction, and keeps them going. The purpose of this study was to determine the motivating factors that enhance students' academic performance. The specific objective was; to assess the influence of incentives on students' academic performance. This study was guided by the self determination theory which distinguishes between three types of motivation, namely, intrinsic, extrinsic and amotivation. These types of motivation are completely different and at opposite ends of a spectrum of self determined behaviour. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design where it targeted a population of 180 respondents who included 6 teachers, 139 students and 35 parents. Data for the study was from the entire population. The main data collection instruments were questionnaires and interview schedule which were used to collect primary data from the respondents. Data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively and descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and mean were used to analyze qualitative data while thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. From the findings, the research indicated that the respondents agreed that incentives, is a motivating factor that enhance students' academic performance. The study recommended that Students should be conscientious and empowered to realize that no matter what anybody does to motivate them; they play the most important role of motivating themselves. Parents should make sure that they assist their children with their homework, reward those who have done well and show their children love and acceptance. Lastly the study suggested that there is a substantial amount of research that still needs to be done on motivation since it's a wide subject and plays an essential role in the learning process and enhances students' performance and thus a further study can be done to find out its effects on student discipline.*

Key Words: *Motivation, Incentives and Academic performance*

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I. Introduction

The concept of motivation can be traced from the ancient Greek, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle ages (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002) The ancient Greeks presumed three components, the body's desires, pleasures and pains (sense and efforts of will and spirit) in a hierarchical arrangement for the first theoretical justification of the motivational activities. In the modern era after the Renaissance, Ren'e Descartes (1993) distinguished between inactive and active aspects of motivation. Descartes believed that the body is an inactive factor of motivation, while will in an active factor. Body has a physical and mechanical nature with nutrition desires that answer to those desires by sense and physiological reflects to external environment (if you wanted to understand physical motivation, physiological analysis must be used). The mind has mental, moral and intellectual nature which has purposeful will. Therefore will is always a force of motivation. Descartes devoted motivation exclusively to the will of man for the first time (Descartes, 1993)

1.1.2 Origin of motivation in Kenya (secondary schools)

In Kenya, a study done by Klobal & Musek, (2001) on the influence of class size on classroom interaction in the wake of free primary education (FPE), they found that FPE created increased class size, shortages of teachers, heavy teacher working load and lack of teacher motivation. They further found that teachers are demoralized with heavy workload, handling many lessons, many pupils and they work for long hours. Sirima and Poipoi (2010) also reported in a study in Busia, district in Kenya that public secondary school teachers with high levels of job satisfaction tend to have high social and psychological atmosphere in the classroom that results in high productivity and effectiveness in job performance and willingness to stay longer. The most critical finding that emerges from these studies is that very sizeable proportions of primary school teachers particularly in sub-Saharan Africa have low levels of job satisfaction and are poorly motivated. As the authors of the Tanzania country report point out that "the de-motivation of teachers is a major contributory

factor to the abysmally poor leaning achievement of primary and secondary students” (Spinath & Steinmayr, 2007).

St Michael's Tulwopnggetuny secondary school was founded in 2005. This was a conceptual idea of the local community who then decided that it be sponsored by the Anglican church of Kenya. The first batch of students was admitted in 2006. The school was officially inaugurated on 8th February 2007. It's a mixed day secondary school with a student population of 139. The school is located about 5 km to the south west of Moi University, main campus, Eldoret. The school currently has 6 teachers, 5 of whom were posted by the Teacher's Service Commission. The school motto is “The future begins here”. Their mission is to produce a wholesome person through quality education in a conducive environment. Their vision is to be a model school in the provision of mixed day secondary education services in Uasin Gishu County and beyond.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The academic performance in many rural secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County is quite poor, for example in 2013, Eldoret west sub county had a mean 5.7002, Eldoret west, 4.8469, and wareng 4.405. In 2014, Eldoret west sub county had a mean 5.7222, Eldoret west, 4.547 and wareng 5.038 and in 2015, Eldoret west sub county had a mean 5.6973, Eldoret west, 5.0739, and wareng 4.8735. This has not changed even if the county is believed to be blessed to have the largest library in Eastern Africa, the Margaret Thatcher at Moi University. It is also believed that the county is more resourceful as compared to other counties like Baringo, Turkana and north eastern counties. This then calls for research to examine the motivating factors that can enhance students' academic performance, help students to manage the challenges that come their way and prevent them from achieving their academic excellence.

Due to these problems, the students cannot do well in their studies and excel in their education which then calls for research to examine the motivating factors that enhance students' academic performance. The study aimed at helping students to manage these challenges that hinder them in achieving their academic excellence.

1.3 Objectives

- (i) To assess the influence of incentives on students' academic performance

II. literature review

2.1 Overview of Motivation

Motivation is something that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior. It gets students moving, points them in a particular direction, and keeps them going. We often see students' motivation reflected in personal investment and in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral *engagement* in school activities (Reeve, 2006; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

Virtually all students are motivated in one way or another. One student may be keenly interested in classroom subject matter and seek out challenging course work, participates actively in class discussions, and earn high marks on assigned projects. Another student may be more concerned with the social side of school, interacting with classmates frequently, attending extracurricular activities almost every day, and perhaps running for a student government office. Still another may be focused on athletics, excelling in physical education classes, playing or watching sports most afternoons and weekends, and faithfully following a physical fitness regimen. Yet another student perhaps because of an undetected learning disability, a shy temperament, or a seemingly uncoordinated body may be motivated to avoid academics, social situations, or athletic activities (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991)

Motivation is not necessarily something that learners bring *to* school; it can also arise from environmental conditions *in* school. When we talk about how the environment can enhance a learner's motivation to learn particular things or behave in particular ways, we are talking about situated motivation. Teachers, can do many things to motivate students to learn and behave in ways that promote their long-term success and productivity (Phan, 2004)

2.1.1 How Motivation Affects Learning and Behavior

Motivation has several effects on students' learning and behavior. Motivation directs behavior toward particular goals. Lui, (2009) propose that individuals set goals for themselves and direct their behavior accordingly. Motivation determines the specific goals toward which learners strive. Thus, it affects the choices students make for instance, whether to enroll in physics or studio art, whether to spend an evening completing a challenging homework assignment or playing videogames with friends. Motivation leads to increased effort and energy. Motivation increases the amount of effort and energy that learners expend in activities directly related to their needs and goals (Crookes, Graham & Schmidt, 1991 as cited by Nilsen, 2009). It determines whether they pursue a task enthusiastically and wholeheartedly or apathetically and lackadaisically.

Motivation increases initiation of and persistence in activities. Learners are more likely to begin a task they actually want to do. They are also more likely to continue working at it until they've completed it, even if they are occasionally interrupted or frustrated in the process (House, 1993). In general, motivation increases students' time on task, an important factor affecting their learning and achievement (House, 1993). Motivation affects cognitive processes. Motivation affects what learners pay attention to and how effectively they process it (Cavas, 2011). For instance, motivated learners often make a concerted effort to truly understand classroom material to learn it meaningfully and consider how they might use it in their own lives.

Motivation determines which consequences are reinforcing and punishing. The more learners are motivated to achieve academic success, the more they will be proud of an A and upset by a low grade. The more learners want to be accepted and respected by peers, the more they will value membership in the "in" group and be distressed by the ridicule of classmates. To a teenage boy uninterested in athletics, making or not making the school football team is no big deal, but to a teen whose life revolves around football, making or not making the team may be a consequence of monumental importance (Cavas, 2011)

Motivation often enhances performance, Because of the other effects just identified goal-directed behavior, effort and energy, initiation and persistence, cognitive processing, and the impact of consequences motivation often leads to improved performance. As you might guess, then, students who are most motivated to learn and excel in classroom activities tend to be our highest achievers (Schiefele, Krapp, & Winteler, 1992; A. E. Gottfried, 1990; Walberg & Uguroglu, 1980). Conversely, students who have little interest in academic achievement are at high risk for dropping out before they graduate from high school (McCoach, 2002).

2.2 The influence of incentives on students' academic performance

Family environments are very significant in controlling the aspirations of students. Spinath & Steinmayr, (2007) assert that the parents' stance towards student's education accounts for 26% of the variation in education performance. Pintrich & Schunk, (2002) citing Taiwo states that the function of the home in education is clear: to lay the moral, spiritual and intellectual foundation on which the children are to build upon later in life" This implies that unless the foundation laid by the home is solid, the student has nothing to build upon and the child can later become a problem not only to the parents but the community as well.

2.2.1 The Home Environment and Student Learning

It has long been recognized that the character of students at home influences their intellectual development and learning. A great deal of research on the relationship between home background and scholastic behavior has been carried out since the beginning of this century. The studies indicate that children who do well in school come from families that provide a supportive and enriched environment for learning at home. Conversely, students who do less well in school often come from families in which support for student learning is limited.

These studies have addressed this relationship between home background and student learning in the following four areas: Studies of socio-economic variables - The socioeconomic level of a home need not determine how well a child does at student. Parents with different levels of education, income, or occupational status can provide very stimulating home environments which support and encourage the learning of their children.

Studies of family configuration These studies examine the relationships between structural aspects of families (family size, sibling sex and spacing, and birth position) and scholastic ability and achievement. The findings were correlation not causal, e.g. measures of verbal ability decreased as size of family increased; a child's birth position in the family is related to the child's scholastic performance.

Studies of parental characteristics - Parental characteristics such as their attitudes toward education, their interest in their student's education, and their belief in the value of schooling account for more of the variation in student's school achievement than either the parents' material circumstances or various school circumstances. The relative importance of the parental attitudes increases as the children grow older.

Studies of home process variables - The identification of various environmental press variables to represent the educational environment at home confirms that what parents do is more important than what they are.

As far as scholastic ability and achievement are concerned, measures of process variables in the home predict scholastic ability and achievement better than do measures of family configuration, social class, or parental characteristics including attitudes. This is true among different socioeconomic and ethnic groupings, in rural as well as in urban areas, and in both developed and developing countries.

2.2.2 The Home and Scholastic Success

The role of the home in this area is of particular importance for at least two reasons. First it is in the home, to a degree that is not possible in school, that the child experiences attention, personal interest, intimacy,

intensity of involvement, and persistence and continuity over time, all of which contribute to the child's non-cognitive development. And second, such development forms the basis of the more cognitive oriented work of the school. In its absence, schools are not likely to be very successful in helping pupils master the scholastic tasks they will face.

Despite its high predictive value, the environmental-process model does not provide an entirely comprehensive analysis of the complex dynamics of family relationships. For example, children can influence their parents as well as their fellow children. There is no doubt that parents are influenced by the characteristics and behaviour of their child in applying child-rearing strategies.

III. Materials And Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey study design. The population for this study was 180 respondents who include; students teachers and parents of *St Michael's Tulwopngetuny Secondary school*. The study used 5-point likert questionnaires and interview schedule as data collection instruments. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was applied on the results obtained to determine how items correlate in the same instrument. Cronbach's coefficient Alpha of more than 0.7 was taken as the cut off value for being acceptable which enhanced the identification of the dispensable variables and deleted variables. Data was analyzed by use of quantitative data was analysed by use of descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation)while thematic analysis was also used to analyze qualitative data.

IV. Results And Discussion

This section presents results of the study based on the effects of incentives on students' academic performance of students at St Michael's Tulwopngetuny Secondary School, Wareng Sub County, Uasin Gishu County. The target population for the study was 180 respondents where the researcher administered 145 questionnaires to pupils and teachers and was to conduct 35 interviews to the parents. From the administered questionnaires, 136 questionnaires were returned dully filled and the researcher managed to interview 20 parents. This gave a response rate of 93.8% for the questionnaires and 57.2% response rate for interviews.

4.1. Influence of Incentives on Students' Academic Performance

The first objective of this study was to examine the influence of incentives on students' academic performance and to achieve this objective, the participants were asked to respond to items in the questionnaire on a likert scale of 1-5. The results are presented in Table 4.1 below

Table 4.1 Influence of Incentives on Students' Academic Performance

Influence of Incentives		SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	M
		%	%	%	%	%	
Incentives increase the amount of effort and energy that learners expend in activities directly related to their educational needs and goals	Teachers	80	20	0	0	0	4.800
	Students	45	34	10	7	4	4.600
Incentives increase students' time on task.	Teachers	46	42	0	12	0	1.660
	Students	27.9	51.5	3.1	17.5	0	4.000
Incentives affect what learners pay attention to and how effectively they process it	Teachers	70	30	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.700
	Students	34.1	38	10	10.9	7	4.460
Incentives often lead to improved performance.	Teachers	46	32	0.0	8	14	4.680
	Students	59.7	18.2	14.3	6.5	1.3	2.960

4.4.1.1 Teacher Response

From Table 4.1, it can be seen that majority of teachers at 100% agreed that Incentives increase the amount of effort and energy that learners expend in activities directly related to their educational needs and goals. This was supported by a mean of 4.800 Regarding the issue that Incentives increase students' time on task, an important factor affecting their learning and achievement 88% of the teachers agreed with a mean of 1.660, in relation to whether incentives affect what learners pay attention to and how effectively they process it, 100% of the teachers agreed with a mean of 4.700, lastly on whether incentives often lead to improved performance, students who are highly motivated to learn and excel in classroom activities tend to be our highest achievers 78% of the teachers agreed with a mean of 4.680. This implies that incentives are a factor that enhances student's academic performance.

This was supported by Mr Kibet (not his real name) who noted that:

“Incentives play an important role in the promotion of teaching and learning excellence. Generally, motivated teachers are more likely to motivate students to learn in the classroom and ensure the implementation of educational reforms and feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment”.

These findings are in agreement with *Gorham and Millette (1997) teachers who report low levels of motivation tend to perceive their students' motivation levels as low. Many factors have been found to promote teacher motivation. Pay incentives for example have been found to be unsuccessful in increasing motivation.*

4.4.1.2 Students Response

From Table 4.1 majority of the students agreed that 79% agreed that incentives increase the amount of effort and energy that learners expend in activities directly related to their educational needs and goals, this was supported by a mean of 4.600, on whether incentives increase students' time on task, an important factor affecting their learning and achievement the students agreed at 79.4% with a mean of 4.000, regarding the issue that incentives affect what learners pay attention to and how effectively they process it, 72.1% of the students agreed with a mean of 4.460 and lastly on whether incentives often lead to improved performance, students who are highly motivated to learn and excel in classroom activities tend to be our highest achievers, 77.9% of the students agreed with a mean of 2.960. This implies that incentives among students are effective to change their attitude towards learning, which would enhance their academic performance.

These findings are in agreement with Pugh & Bergin, (2006) who stated that the more learners are motivated to achieve academic success, the more they will be proud of an A and upset by a low grade. The more learners want to be accepted and respected by peers, the more they will value membership in the “in” group and be distressed by the ridicule of classmates.

V. Conclusion

The study concluded that incentives increase the amount of effort and energy that learners expend in activities directly related to their educational needs and goals. They also increase students' time on task, an important factor affecting their learning and achievement. Incentives affect what learners pay attention to and how effectively they process it and this often leads to improved performance. Students who are motivated to learn and excel in classroom activities tend to be high achievers.

5.1 Recommendation of the Study

Based on the findings of this study, With regard to the findings on the effects of incentives on student academic performance, it was recommended that students should be conscientious and empowered to realize that no matter what anybody does to motivate them; they play the most important role of motivating themselves.

5.2 Suggestion for Further Research

There is a substantial amount of research that still needs to be done, on motivation since it's a wide subject and plays an essential role in the learning process and enhance students' performance, thus a further study can be done

- i. To find out its effects of motivation on students' discipline.
- ii. Further owing to the limitations of the study it is suggested that same study be done in other counties and institutions as the results on the current study may not be generalized to other counties.

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