

The Causes of Dropout in Rural Primary Schools in Malawi

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High dropout rates is a critical issue in most of developing countries. Malawi follows this trend of student nonpersistence; in 2013, the primary school dropout rate was approximately 12.2%.

This study aims to find the causes of dropout in rural Malawian primary schools. There are two features: data were collected through survival analysis, which has been used to study dropout in developed countries; a multilevel logistic regression was used to classify individual, family, teacher and school factors potentially associated with dropout.

In individual factor, student age of first entry, number of grade repetitions, and feelings about school were significant in determining the odds of dropout. In family factor, parents alive was associated with significant odds of dropout. Although most of the previous studies reported that parents' education level and economic status affect dropout, in this study, these factors were not found statistically significant. In teacher factor, lack of teacher's in-service training and teacher absenteeism raises the risk of dropout. In school factor, school location was related to significant increases in the odds of dropout. On the other hand, class size and school facilities were not related to dropout.

Although the sample reflects only one district in Malawi, the informative findings contribute to efforts for reducing dropout in this area. Also, the methodology used in this study can be applied to dropout studies in other developing countries. Further research needs to include analysis of additional teacher and school factors.