

Sample Dissertation Proposal in Education

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This research intends to assess the perception of teachers towards the new grading system at ordinary level secondary schools. This chapter includes background of the problem, statement of the problem, general objective, specific objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, definitions of terms and abbreviations.

1.2 Background of the problem.

This study builds its arguments on two variables which are teachers' perceptions and grading system. According to Erlenkamp (2004) perception is gathering information through our senses which are: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling and sensing; it is through these senses we can perceive things, events or relationship. In other words perception is the process by which these stimuli are selected, organized and interpreted.

According to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2010), perception is the way you notice things especially with senses or is the ability to understand the true nature of something. It is an idea, belief or image you have as a result of how you see or understand something.

According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2008) perception is the way you think about something and your idea of which it is like, it is the way you notice things with your senses of sight, hearing, tasting, smelling or touching.

On the other hand grades according to Erlenkamp (2004), grades is a set of symbols, words, or numbers used to designate different levels of achievement or performance. These might be letter such as A, B, C, D and F. Symbols or numbers such as 1, 2, 3, or 4, sometimes grades can be in descriptive words such as Exemplary, Satisfactory or Needs improvement and grading system is the way by which these grades are designed.

Hence teachers' perceptions towards new grading system at ordinary level secondary education refer to the views, understanding, and awareness of teachers towards the new grades at ordinary level secondary education.

Grades in school examination have been designed in order to sort learners according to their abilities and to promote the students from lower level to the higher level so as to ensure availability of experts in all spheres for sustainable development.

For a good number of years ordinary level secondary education had been using five grades in all exams taken at this level. These grades have been adjusted and replaced with seven grades from 2012. The table below shows the old and new grading system at ordinary level secondary schools

OLD GRADING SYSTEM		NEW GRADING SYSTEM	
MARKS/SCORE	GRADE	MARKS/SCORES	GRADE
81-100	A	75-100	A
61-80	B	60-74	B+
41-60	C	50-59	B
21-40	D	40-49	C
0-20	F	30-39	D
		20-29	E
		0-19	F

The new grades come into use when the educational sector is among the six sectors under the new slogan known as Big Results Now (BRN) and also a year after the 2012 form four national

exams that had mass failure as more than a half of the students who sat for it scored division zero, the worst results in the history. Retrieved from <http://www.sabahionline.com>

The new grading system has led to contradictory arguments among various educational stakeholders with two opposing views one group thinks that the new grades will improve the quality of education while the second group thinks that the new grading system will distort the quality of education in the country.

(The Guardian, 23rd November 2013, according to NECTA acting executive secretary Dr.Charles Msonde speaking to the news conference in Dar es salaam, the new school exam grading system aim at placing students with similar capability in one group to differentiate them from other group and also it aims at reducing the huge backlog of scores in one grade.

The Citizen 20th October 2014, according to the executive director of Haki Elimu the new grading system that has been introduced by government in the last year will deteriorate the quality of education. “This is not something to celebrate, because if you look into these results as per the previous grading system, many of these pupils have not passed; we need to work hard to make sure that there is real improvement in the sector” she said, added that it seems like more pupils passes this year because of the adjustment in the grading system which was made by government by lowering the pass grades, more pupils who would have scored division zero seemed to have passed their examination. She also highlighted that if you combine the newly E and F grades the truth is that there would have been a mass failure compare to 2012.

Teachers, parents, administrators, non-government organizations, and community all agree that we need better grading system. The problem is that none of these groups seems to agree on what form those grades should take, even within each group there is contradicting perceptions as to

which type of grading system is better. Thus this study is interested in assessing the perceptions of teachers towards the new grading system at ordinary level secondary education in Nyamagana district especially at Butimba and Mkolani wards. The study will provide the suggestions on what should be done to improve grading system which in education system.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There are various grading systems which are used in different countries to award certificates for candidates who did national examinations, though flexible grading ranges and fixed grade ranges are mostly and widely used than other grading systems. For example in Tanzania education system flexible grade ranges had been used for a good number of years, from 1973 to 2011, though in the 2012 national examinations, NECTA began to use the fixed grade ranges.

Grades are of virtual importance in education as NECTA (2014) says that, the major aim of form four and form six is to measure the knowledge and skills the learner acquired that enables him/her to fulfill his/her needs, the needs of the society as well as the surrounding environment. The examinations results (Grades) enable the educational authorities concern to select candidate to continue with study in the next stage that include higher education and other professional studies.

Adams and Torgerson (1964) have identified four functions of grades which are: administrative, informational, guidance and motivational functions. Thus grades have an important role to play in teaching-learning process as it enables teachers to communicate to the learners about their progress, identify their strength and weakness as well as planning their study agenda.

The effective grading system must involve all educational stakeholders in the concerned area, thus this study aim to assess teachers' perceptions towards the new grading system at ordinary level secondary education in Nyamagana district.

1.4. Research objectives

14.1 Main objective

To assess the perceptions of teachers towards new grading system at ordinary level

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

To examine the reasons for the use of new grading system

To examine the quality of new grading system in relation to old grading system

To assess teachers' suggestions towards the improvement of education quality

1.5. Research questions

What are the reasons for the use of new grading system?

What is the quality of new grading system in relation to old grading system?

What are the teachers' suggestions towards the improvement of education quality?

1.6. Significance of the study

This study on the perceptions of teachers towards new grading system at ordinary level will have numerous significances as follows.

First, the study will make a researcher to be more familiar to the problem, as well as how to conduct research and also to be awarded bachelor degree of SAUT.

Second, the study will be helpful to the district, and non government organization as it will make them aware of teachers' perceptions towards the new grading system

Thirdly, this study on teachers' perceptions towards new grading system will act as frame work and references to other researchers who will do the same research or the related researches as it will act as the guidelines to them.

1.7 Scope of the study.

This study will be carried out in Nyamagana district particularly in Butimba and Mkolani wards, it will focus on the reasons for the adjustment of school exams grades, the quality of new grades compared to the old grades as well as what should be done to improve quality of grading system.

1.8 Definition of terms.

Grading system- in education is the process of applying standardized measurements of varying level of achievement in a course.

National examination- the examination which is taken by every student in the country, determines student's educational future is organized and supervised by NECTA

1.9. Abbreviations.

DEO- District Educational Officer.

NECTA- National Examination Council of Tanzania.

DAS- District Administrative Secretary

NGO's- Stands for Non-Government Organizations

SAUT- stands for Saint Augustine University of Tanzania.

SPSS-Refers to Statistical Packages for Social Science

WEC-Stands for Ward Educational Coordinator

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the review of works done by authors and other researchers that relate to the topic under the study. It includes perceptions of teachers towards examinations, related literature review and research gap.

2.2 Perceptions of teachers towards examinations.

Dawkins (1988:18) states that, “Academics must be able to relate and respond to the national priorities which government has a responsibility to determine but not to impose.”

The aim of education is to make one a right thinker and liberate him/her towards self-decision making. Likewise grades in exams aim at grouping students in groups according to what the students have acquired during learning progress. If the grades are well designed it is obvious that students in one grade will have almost the same skills and knowledge.

According to James (1998) examination at school are not supposed to be test of underlying abilities or aptitudes but measure of attainment, means to measure the extent to which candidates can demonstrate their acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to curriculum that they have been taught.

The above authors show the importance of examination in education and what examinations should aim to achieve in school. In Tanzania ordinary level secondary education students are supposed to take two national examinations. Thus, in order for those examinations to achieve the intended goal there must be an effective grading system in examinations

2.3 Related literature review

Walvoord and Johnson (1998) argued that grading is the process by which a teacher assesses student learning through classroom test and assignments, the context in which good teachers establish that process and dialogue that surrounds grades and define their meaning to various audiences. Grading serves four roles: 1) it evaluates the quality of student's work; 2) it communicates with student, as well as employers, graduate schools and others; 3) it motivates how the students study, what they focus on, and their involvement in the course; and 4) it organizes to mark transition, bring closure and focus effort for both students and teachers.

In Tanzania education grading system is a powerful tool in all levels of education just like in other countries of the world. Effective grading system in ordinary level secondary education provides suggestions for improving education and preparing learners that are capable of using the education acquired to solve various issues in the society as well as to withstand the competition in the job market. Effective grading system in education requires wide participation from teachers and other education stakeholders

Norman (1981) also suggested that students' performance and skills can be enhanced if the students are motivated to study hard. Employing appropriate pedagogical techniques, such as grading system, can encourage students to do their assignments, thereby increasing understanding of a subject matter and improving their class performance, as well as allowing the instructor to obtain feedback regarding the degree of understanding and performance of the students. For example the tests and examinations have been used as feedback mechanism in ordinary level education and in other levels.

Grading system helps in sorting learners according to their level of performance and understanding. Grading also enables learners, teachers, parents and other educational stakeholders to identify areas of weakness and strength so that desirable measures can be taken. For example the poor performance of students in science subjects in our country has made the government to take various initiatives to solve the problem such as construction of laboratories and providing loans for students who are admitted in colleges to pursue diploma and degree of science subjects and mathematics.

According to Michel (2006) grading in academics is affected by cultural values which put huge important and stress on academic success and achievement. In fact, cultural thought we are not conscious of, is very vital to grading system and style. In addition to this, all the expectancies are related to this cultural heritage which is shaping the vision of adolescents on their academic effort, anxiety and stress, also their goals through the career system. Grading can be defined as cultural belief and assumptions of the parents, so the students. Grading is the tools of approval in adolescence and it makes student's motivation higher to study hard and doing their best for gaining environmental approval from others. Besides this grade levels of adolescents are indicators and criteria for evaluating their personality. This is because their performance through the class is accounted for their individuality in the society. Moreover, academic achievement among adolescent is a tool for starting the looser and winner. The student must be best in this competition for pursuing her/his life.

2.4 Research Gap.

Though there are various literatures which explain on the importance of grading system in education and the need for quality education and mean to be used to attain it. As well as the

challenges that face education in terms of teaching and learning environment. Although there is contradicting views on the new grading system in the country there is no any literature on the teachers' perceptions towards the new grading system, thus the researcher wants to assess the views of teachers using a case of Butimba and Mkolani wards as among the educational stakeholders and also to resolve the existing contradiction on whether the new grade will improve or decline the quality of education in the country.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction.

This chapter will show the whole process on how the study will be done systematically. It will include: research design, description of the study area, population of the study, sample size, sampling procedures, data collection method, data analysis and presentation.

3.2 Research design.

This study will use both qualitative and quantitative research design. Qualitative approaches will be used whereby a case design will be used in the selected sample schools and higher learning institutions. Descriptions basing on the study will be obtained from the respondents within the selected institutions. The study will also use interview and questionnaires to get descriptions from the respondents. Quantitative research will be used in data presentation like the use of tables.

3.3. Selection of the study area.

The research will be carried out in Mkolani and Butimba wards both of which are found in Nyamagana district involving six secondary schools. From Mkolani wards the sample institution will include Ngaza secondary school, Malimbe secondary school and Luchebele will be used as sample whereby in Butimba the sample institutions will include Butimba secondary school and Nyamagana secondary school. The reason for selecting only six institutions despite the fact that there are many institutions in these wards is because teachers' views in these sample institutions

will represent other institutions found in these wards and District in general on the teachers' perceptions towards the new grading system at ordinary level secondary education level.

3.4 Description of the study area.

The study will be carried out in Nyamagana municipal district which is one of the seven districts of Mwanza region of Tanzania. The district comprises the northern half of the city of Mwanza. Nyamagana is bordered to the north and west by Lake Victoria, to the south by Ilemela district and to the west by Magu district. The district is divided into twelve administrative wards and according to the 2012 census the district has a population of 363,352.

3.5 Sample and sample size.

3.5.1 Sample

David Waugh (2009) define sample as the selected items, units or elements which the researcher conclusion will be made. In this study the sample will include, veteran teachers from the selected schools, teacher trainee from the sample colleges, academic masters/mistress, heads of schools and ward education coordinators.

3.5.2 Sample size

Kothari (2008) defines sample size as “the number of items to be selected from the universe to constitute a sample.” The sample size will be derived from the total population, in this study the sample size will be 62 respondents from the selected sample institutions. The sample size in this study will be chosen as follows

Respondents	Number	Percentage
Teacher trainee	20 (5) from each school	32.25%
Veteran Teachers	32 (16) from each college	51.61%
Academic masters/mistress	4 (1) from each school	6.45%
Heads of schools	4 (1) from each school	6.45%
Ward education coordinators	2 (1) from each ward	3.23%
Total	62	100%

3.6. Sampling techniques

Kombo and Delno (2006) defined sampling as a procedure the researcher uses to gather people, places or things to study. It is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative characteristics found in the entire group. The study will use both probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

3.6.1 Simple random sampling.

According to Waugh (2009) simple random sampling is the type of sampling under normal circumstances is the ideal type of sample because it shows no bias. Every member of the total population has an equal chance of being selected and selection of one member does not affect the probability of selection of another member. The researcher will use this technique to get 4 schools to represent the rest schools, under this procedure the researcher will write the names of all secondary schools in the selected wards on pieces of paper, fold them, mix them and pick four pieces of paper with names of schools written on them, these will be used as sample schools, the same procedures was used to get the study area also will be used to get sample teachers.

3.6.2 Purposive sampling

Kombo and Tromp (2006) defined the purposive sampling techniques as the sampling technique where the researcher purposively targets a group of people reliable for the study and in this case the respondents are from different areas.

The purposive sampling will be used to get two institutions because these are the only institutions that train teachers in the selected wards. The purposive sampling will also be used to get key informants like academic masters/mistress, heads of schools, and Ward Educational Coordinators from the selected study institutions. This is because these are people who are believed to be relevant and knowledgeable to ensure relevant information concerning the perception of teachers towards new grading at ordinary level secondary education in the study area.

3.7. Data typology

Data to be collected will include both primary and secondary data where necessary. Primary data, these will be collected from the sample population in the field whereby questionnaires and unstructured interview will be employed to gather data in the study, and secondary data will be obtained from magazines, newspapers, and internet.

3.8. Data Collection Tools

3.8.1 Questionnaire The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2010) defined questionnaire as a written or printed list of questions to be answered by a number of people especially as part of survey. This technique will involve written questions to which the respondents will be required to write answers individually with no researcher's guide. The questionnaires will be in two forms, the open-ended questionnaire that requires the respondents to answer the way they wish. This method will be used to get information from academic masters/mistress, heads of schools and

WEO. Close-ended questionnaire which will limit the respondents to answer “YES” or “NO” this methods will be employed to teachers.

3.8.2 Interview

Seale, et al (2004) define an interview as, the social encounter where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective and prospective accounts or version of their parts or future actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts. In this study the researcher will also use unstructured form of interview due to its flexibility to questioning. The researcher will use this kind of interview because it gives chances for both researcher and respondents to discuss, also it serve time with full information and can be changed or adopted to meet the respondents’ intelligence, understand or beliefs.

3.9 Data analysis and presentation

3.9.1 Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of examining data which have been collected. In this study both qualitative and quantitative methods will be used to analyze the data that will be collected from the field.

By qualitative approach, the description about perception of teachers towards the new grading system and the proposed ways to improve education in the country

By quantitative approach, the researcher will examine the data which will be in numerical manner this will include the number or percentage of respondent.

3.9.2 Data presentation

Data presentation refers to the ways and means of presenting data after data have been analyzed.

In this study the researcher will present the data by using qualitative approach which will present the data related to description form.

The researcher also will present the data by quantitative approach by using graphs and tables.

This method will enable the researcher to summarize the results on teacher's perception towards the new grading system at ordinary level secondary education.