

ABSTRACT

Universities in Kenya take first year students through an elaborate orientation programme which is meant to assist the latter to adjust to the new social and academic environments in the university context. Most of the students do not however, possess adequate learning readiness to enable them achieve maximally in their academic work. Student may miss job opportunities due to failure in examinations, which may lead to dropping out of college or repeating a course. The purpose of this study was to explore goal orientation as a predictor of learning readiness among first year university students enrolled in selected public universities in western Kenya. The objectives of the study were to; find out the relationship between mastery-approach goals and learning readiness among the students, determine the relationship between mastery-avoidance goals and learning readiness among the students, find out the relationship between performance-approach goals and learning readiness among the students, and establish the relationship between performance-avoidance goals and learning readiness among the students. The study was guided by the Goal Orientation Theory and Maslow's Theory of Motivation. The study employed a mixed-method approach adopting the embedded mixed methods design. The target population was 14,919 first year students, 122 lecturers, 6 deans of students and 6 university counsellors from six public universities in western Kenya. Cluster sampling, stratified sampling, and simple random sampling techniques were used to sample respondents for the study. The sample size consisted of 3 public universities, 372 first year university students, 20 lecturers, 3 deans of students, and 3 university student counsellors. Questionnaires, and interviews were employed to elicit data from the respondents. Quantitative data were collected by use of a goal questionnaire for students and a learning readiness questionnaire while qualitative data were obtained from interview schedules. Expert judgement by university supervisors was utilized to ensure face, content, and construct validity of the instruments while reliability of the instruments was established by Cronbach's Alpha method which reported a correlation coefficient of .809. Quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, that is Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Linear Regression analyses. On the other hand, thematic analyses were used to analyze qualitative data. There was a statistically significant strong positive correlation ($r=.733$) between mastery approach goals and learning readiness, a moderate positive correlation ($r=.665$) between performance-approach goals and learning readiness, while there was no statistically significant correlation between performance avoidance and learning readiness. From the present study, it can be concluded that goal orientation (mastery approach, mastery-avoidance, performance-approach) is a significant predictor of learning readiness among first year university students. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should focus on strategies to improve educational opportunities to the diverse group of students who attend university; the strategies should be focused on addressing the needs of individual students hence aid in planning the transition from high school to university. Lecturers should also instill an element of hardwork and understanding academic tasks to learners that the latter are not bothered about what their classmates will think of their performance.