

FACTORS AFFECTING THE LOW QUALITY OF GRADUATES IN EAST INDONESIA BORDER AREA (CASE STUDY AT STATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN MERAUKE REGENCY, PAPUA)**Basilus Redan Werang**

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seli_mradjaleba@yahoo.co.id**Abstract**

Graduation rate of state senior high school in Merauke Regency, Papua - Indonesia which is approximately close to 100% has already become a 'big question' due to the low rate of acceptance to continueing study in the universities or to working in both public and private agency.

The research aimed to map factors affecting the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency, Papua - Indonesia. The research sampel consist of 9 state senior high schools in Merauke Regency. Observation on school facilities and infrastructures, documentation study on graduation data, and profound interview were the tools of the research to collect data. The data were given qualitative treatment using *fishbone analysis*.

The results revealed four main factors affecting the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency, that are: (a) teacher's competence, (b) students' attendance and motivation for learning, (c) parental support, and (d) teaching learning facilities and infrastructures.

Keywords: quality, graduates, state senior high schools, merauke regency

1. INTRODUCTION

As a form of integrality with the Republic of Indonesia, the implementation of education in Merauke Regency-Papua leads to the effort of improving the quality continuously. However, this effort is always confronted with many problems, especially the geographical and geopolitical issues. Geographically, Merauke Regency is located at the border area with the Papua New Guinea. This geographic condition will certainly affect the geopolitical condition, especially when the communities' wellbeing, education infrastructure, and other supporting facilities are very limited.

There are several factors that could theoretically affect the high or low quality of graduates, such as: curriculum, principal leadership, teacher, student, facilities and infrastructures, financial, and student parental support.

1.1. Curriculum

Indonesian Law No. 20 year 2003 concerning National System of Education (Chapter 1 Section 1 Clause 19) defines 'curriculum' as a set of plan and regulation about the objective, content, and teaching learning materials as well as method which is being used as the guideline of the implementation of learning activities to achieve specific educational goals. The target of curriculum establishment is as proposed by Bloom, such as: (a) cognitive: knowledge possessed by students after following a particular subject; (b) affective: attitude shown by students after following a particular subject; and (c) psychomotor: skills possessed by students after following a particular subject.

The continuous changes of National Education Curriculum in Indonesia has become an indicator of the continuous effort of Indonesian government to find out a teaching learning format which is more suitable to Indonesian character and culture. Based on the Indonesian Law No. 32 year 2004 concerning Local Government, national education program which has been composed by central government should be seen as the *master-model* of local (school) education program. In this framework, the emergence of the school-based curriculum is the most obvious manifestation of the central government's confidence on the ability of schools to design and develop their own education program which is more suitable to their real needs and condition, with the notes that all of the local (shcool) educational program should be in line to the *basic design* of the *master-model* curriculum [Buchori, 2006].

1.2. Principal Leadership

Principal is one of the factors that determine school effectiveness. "Leadership is about creating the climate or culture where people are inspired from the inside out. You can shout you care from the rooftops and you can put up signs and banners about how much your people matter, but what will inspire them is when you demonstrate it" (Wilson, 2005, p. 17). Baldoni (2005) said "Leadership involves people, and people have a multiplicity of needs, physical, emotional, and spiritual. A compassionate leader understands the complexity of the human psyche as well as the forces acting upon us from work, family, and community" (p. 33).

Principals are not kings. According to Blasé and Kirby (1992), effective principals are servants to the teachers; they are as guardians of instructional time, help teachers with discipline matters, empower the teachers to develop discipline procedures and codes, and then support teachers as they enforce the policies they developed. Principals who view teachers as part of their school family will work to provide a positive and communal ambiance for all (Littleford, 2007).

Professional principals have a strong vision and expectation to the future of school, teachers and students. Professional principals are never satisfied with the past achievements. Professional principal, on the contrary, will always see to the future, to a 'place' where school, teachers and their students being carried. Professional principal will always accompany and supervise teachers' and students' performance at school, provide a positive and constructive feedback for improving teaching learning process, encourage a more effective and creative usage of learning times and facilities (Scheeren & Bosker, 1997).

1.3. Teacher

Teachers are respected by society because they are viewed as knowledgeable about different subjects of school. A school without teacher is just like a body without the soul, a skeleton without flesh and blood, a shadow without substance. There is no greater need for the cause of education today than the need for strong manly men and motherly women as teachers for the young. As social engineers, the teachers can socialize and humanize the young by their man-like qualities (Singh & Samiti).

Students will never gain a maximum learning experience if they are not supported by the presence of a teacher. Bafadal (2006) stated that every component within the teaching learning process such as: fund, educational facilities and infrastructure, teaching learning materials and medias, will never give a maximum advantage and even cannot be used optimally if they are not supported by the presence of a teacher. "We may put in any effort to improve our objectives, policies, programs, curricula, equipment and administrative structure, but it is only the teachers who put life into the skeleton" (Aziz, 2012, p. 18).

A competent teacher will always look to the future, toward the achievement of education goal. A competent teacher will be more able to create an effective learning environment and to manage his/her class so that the quality of graduates will always be in the optimal level. Joni (1989) believed if the learning process in a school is carried out and driven by a competent teacher, it supposed to be expected that there will be high quality of graduates coming out from that school.

1.4. Student

According to Indonesian Law No. 20 year 2003 concerning National System of Education, student is a member of the society who strives to develop himself/herself through education process on a particular education track, level and type (Section 1 Clause 4). Danim (2011) suggested several characteristics of successful student as follow: (a) regularly attend all class sessions and programs; (b) participate actively in all class experiment conducted at laboratory; (c) focus on materials delivered by teachers; (d) proactive in asking for help to a given task in order to have a more understanding; (e) values-based working; (f) using all the spare times for learning; and (g) always prepare himself/herself for a new challenging task.

Student must be present in school in order to benefit from the academic program in its entirety (Rothman, 2001). Manual of U.S. Department of Education (as cited in Jones, 2006) reported that truancy is the first indicator that a young person is giving up and losing motivation to attend school. Manual of U.S. Department of Education (1996) added, "Students with low attendance often end up dropping out of school and put themselves at a long-term disadvantage in becoming productive citizens. They are more likely to be welfare recipients, earn much lower salaries and lead less productive lives" (as cited in Jones, 2006, p. 7).

1.5. Educational Facilities and Infrastructure

The old saying 'the building fits the curriculum' developed because the physical structure limited the learning experience. School facilities can be flexible enough to accommodate changing learning patterns and methods (Khan and Iqbal, 2012). Learning is a complex activity that supremely tests students' motivation, physical condition, teaching resources, teacher's skills of teaching and curriculum (Lyons, 2012). In that complex activity, school physical facilities play a vital role and become one of the factors that directly affect the teacher consideration of using a particular learning method. When a teacher is about to decide to use a particular learning method, he/she has to consider if the method needs a particular learning facilities. If it is 'yes', the next consideration will be the availability of the said particular learning facilities.

According to the provision of Indonesian Minister of Education Number 24 year 2007 concerning Education Facilities and Infrastructure, a high school should have, at least, the following facilities and infrastructures: principal office, teachers room, administration room, proper lighting and ventilations, prayer rooms, counseling room, classroom, storage, laboratories (computer, physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, and language), library, toilet, play grounds, seating and furnitures, writing boards, books, journals, website, compact disc, and ICT tools. Indonesian Government is widely and justifiably believed that if the schools do not have that minimal facilities and infrastructures then the continuity of teaching learning process would be disrupted and, in turn, would be affecting the quality of graduates.

Excellent school facilities are basic ingredients for good education programmes and are very important for attaining education goals (Khan and Iqbal, 2012). Lyons (2012) reported that there was an explicit relationship between the physical characteristics of schools buildings and educational outcomes. He further mentioned that good maintenance, modern systems, and flexible designs are clearly required.

1.6. Parents

In the early years, parents are even viewed as their children's first and main teachers. This statement implies the rights of parents for their children education. The role of parents in their children's education has long been recognised as a significant factor in educational success and school improvement (Epstein, 1996, as cited in Jones & Allebone, <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/csme/meas/papers/jones.html>).

Parents support for their children's education could be manifested in two ways. First, emotional support. Parents who have a deep concern on their children's education tend to sacrifice their other activities in order to spend time with their children. They will always: (a) talk with their children about school, (b) keep their children focused on learning and homework, and (c) help their children plan for higher education (Washington Alliance for Better School, 2003). On the contrary, parents who have no concern on their children's education are less able to provide attention and affection and to devote their time, energy, and resources to their children. Economic hardship makes it more difficult for parents to create the trusting environments that build children's secure attachments (Jensen, 2009).

Second, material and financial support. Economic background of parents is known to affect academic achievement of their children. Children in low economic families are more likely to attain low academic performance due to the simple fact that their parents are not able to provide adequate learning facilities at home. On the contrary, children in high economic families gain a high academic performance due to their parents are able to provide all learning facilities they need at home (Joni, 1989).

2. METHODS

This research is a qualitative research that was conducted using a case-study method. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) stated that researcher should consider the following five things in order to conduct good qualitative research. First of all, the researcher must treat his/her participants with respect and develop a close relationship built on trust. Equality, closeness, and informality in the relationship should be stressed. Secondly, the researcher must secure the participants' interest and make sure that participation in the research does not lead to loss of prestige or cause any harm to them. This can be secured by anonymity, where the researcher does not use participants' real names in the research. Third, the researcher must seek the cooperation of participants and do his/her utmost to avoid the appearance of coercion. Fourth, the researcher must be particularly sensitive when explaining himself/herself and gaining consent of vulnerable people, such as mentally disabled people, the very young or very old or those who lack formal educations. Fifth, the researcher must tell the truth when reporting his/her findings.

Case study is preferred in the following situations (Yin, 2009): (a) when, how, or why questions are being asked; (b) when the researcher has little control over events; and (c) when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon. The researchers case study design as the method of the research under the following considerations: (a) the researchers attempt to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and (b) the researchers can utilize the vary of data sources [Bogdan & Biklen, 1998].

In order to map factors affecting the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency, researchers applied fishbone diagram analysis due to the following considerations: (a) fishbone analysis permit a thoughtful analysis that avoids overlooking any possible root causes for a need; (b) the fishbone technique is easy to implement and creates an easy-to-understand visual representation of the causes, categories of the causes and the need; (c) by using fishbone analysis, the researchers are able to focus the group on the 'big picture' as to possible causes or factors influencing the problem/need; and (d) even after the need have been addressed, the fishbone shows areas of weakness that –once exposed–can be rectified before causing more sustained difficulties (WBI Evaluation Group, 2007).

The research procedures are follow: (a) identifying issues that related to the quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency; (b) grouping issues based on educational inputs, processes, and outputs; (c) enacting 'educational output' issues of state senior high school in Merauke Regency as the main issues examined; (d) writing

research design; (e) conducting the research; (e) analysing data; and (f) mapping factors affecting the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency [Figure 1].

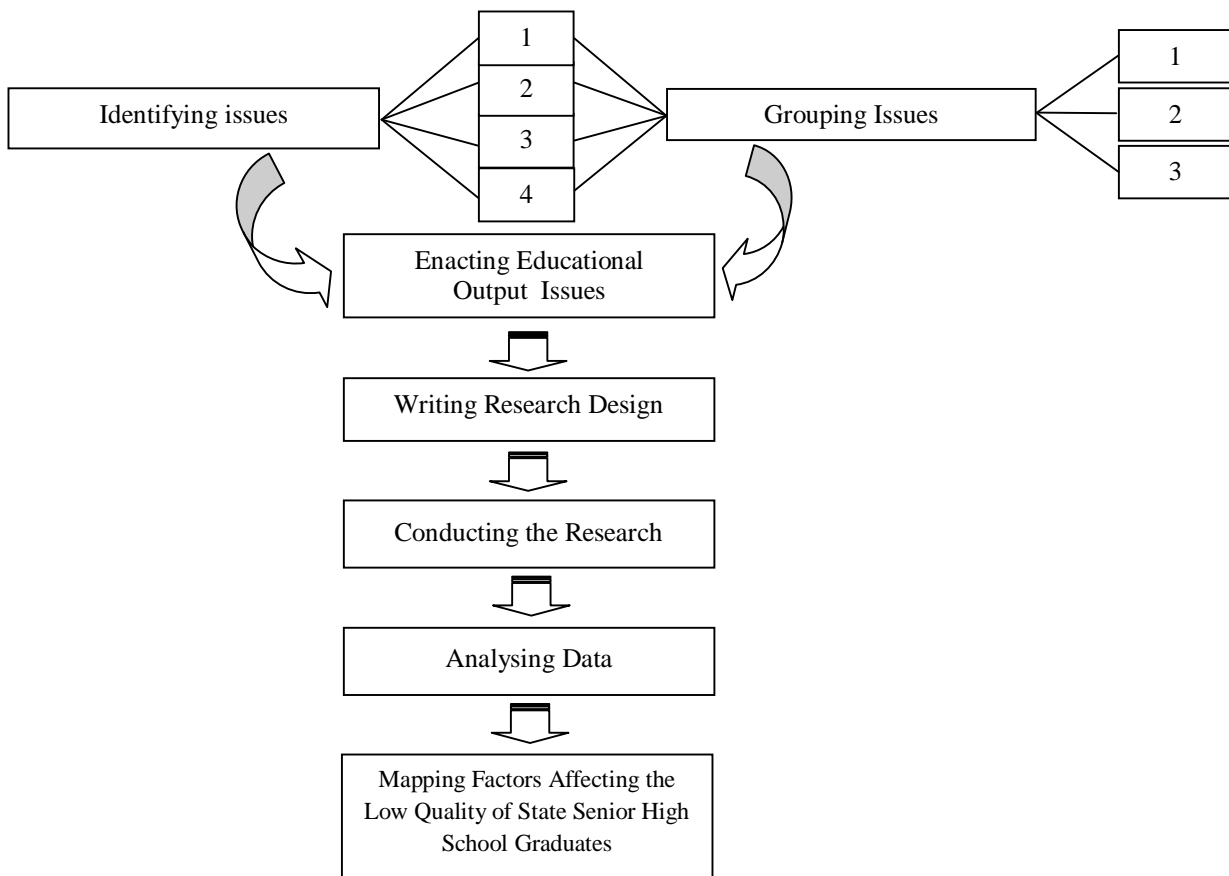


Figure 1. Research Procedures

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

Factors identified affected to the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency, Papua, are as follows:

- ⇨ Lack of teacher in particular subjects, such as math, physic, chemistry, and biology. Due to that fact, these particular subject are taught by teachers out of their area of expertise.
- ⇨ Teachers who teach out of his/her area of expertise skip all of learning materials which are difficult for him/her to understand.
- ⇨ Teachers do not use the vary of learning method and media in teaching learning process.
- ⇨ Low of teachers' competence due to the fact that there are no chances for developing their competence and teaching capacity.
- ⇨ Low of academic events that teachers are hoped to attend.
- ⇨ Unavailability of school physic facilities and infrastructure needed, such as school library, laboratory of computers, laboratory of language, laboratory of chemistry, laboratory of physics, laboratory of biology, and of math.
- ⇨ Unavailability of rooms for counseling and prayer in some senior high schools in Merauke Regency.
- ⇨ Unavailability of a proper school playground for students.
- ⇨ Lack of teaching materials (handbooks) for teachers and student.
- ⇨ Limited references books for teachers and students.
- ⇨ Lack of students' attendance in schools, especially in rural area senior high schools, due to the fact that they have something else they would rather be doing.

- ⇨ Lack of students' enthusiasm in teaching learning process due to the fact that they ho no meal for breakfast.
- ⇨ Many students' are exhausted during teahing learning process due to help their parents working.
- ⇨ Lot of parents rather want their children to casting or fishing with them then attend the school.
- ⇨ Lot of parents rather want their children look for food with them then attend the school.

Those findings are then grouped under the following four categories. **First**, factors related to the teacher: (a) lack of teachers in particular subjects such as math, physisc, chemistry, and biology; (b) particular subjects are taught by teachers out of their area of expertise; (c) teachers do not use the vary of learning method and media in teaching learning process; (d) teacher who teach out of his/her area of expertise skip all of learning materials which are difficult for him/her to understand; (e) low of teachers' competence due to the fact that there are no chances for developing their competence and teaching capacity; (f) lack of academic events that teachers are hoped to attend. **Second**, factors related to the student: (a) many students are choosing not to attend school because they have something else they would rather doing; (b) lack of students' enthusiasm in teaching learning process due to the fact that they have no meal for breakkfast; (c) many students are exhausted during teaching learning process due to help their parents working. **Third**, factors related to the availability of school facilities and infrastructures: (a) unavailability of school physic facilities and infrastructure needed, such as school library, laboratory of computers, laboratory of language, laboratory of chemistry, laboratory of physics, laborartory of biology, and of math; (b) unavailability of rooms for counseling and prayer in some senior high schools in Merauke Regency; (c) unavailability of a proper school playground for students; (d) lack of teaching materials (handbooks) for teachers and student; and (e) limited references books for teachers and students. **Fourth**, factors related to the parents: (a) lot of parents rather want their children to casting or fishing with them then attend the school; (b) lot of parents rather want their children to look for food with them then to attend the school.

The researchers conducted data analysis using fishbone analysis, qualitative research design to map factors affecting the low quality of state senior highs school graduates as reflected in the following diagram.

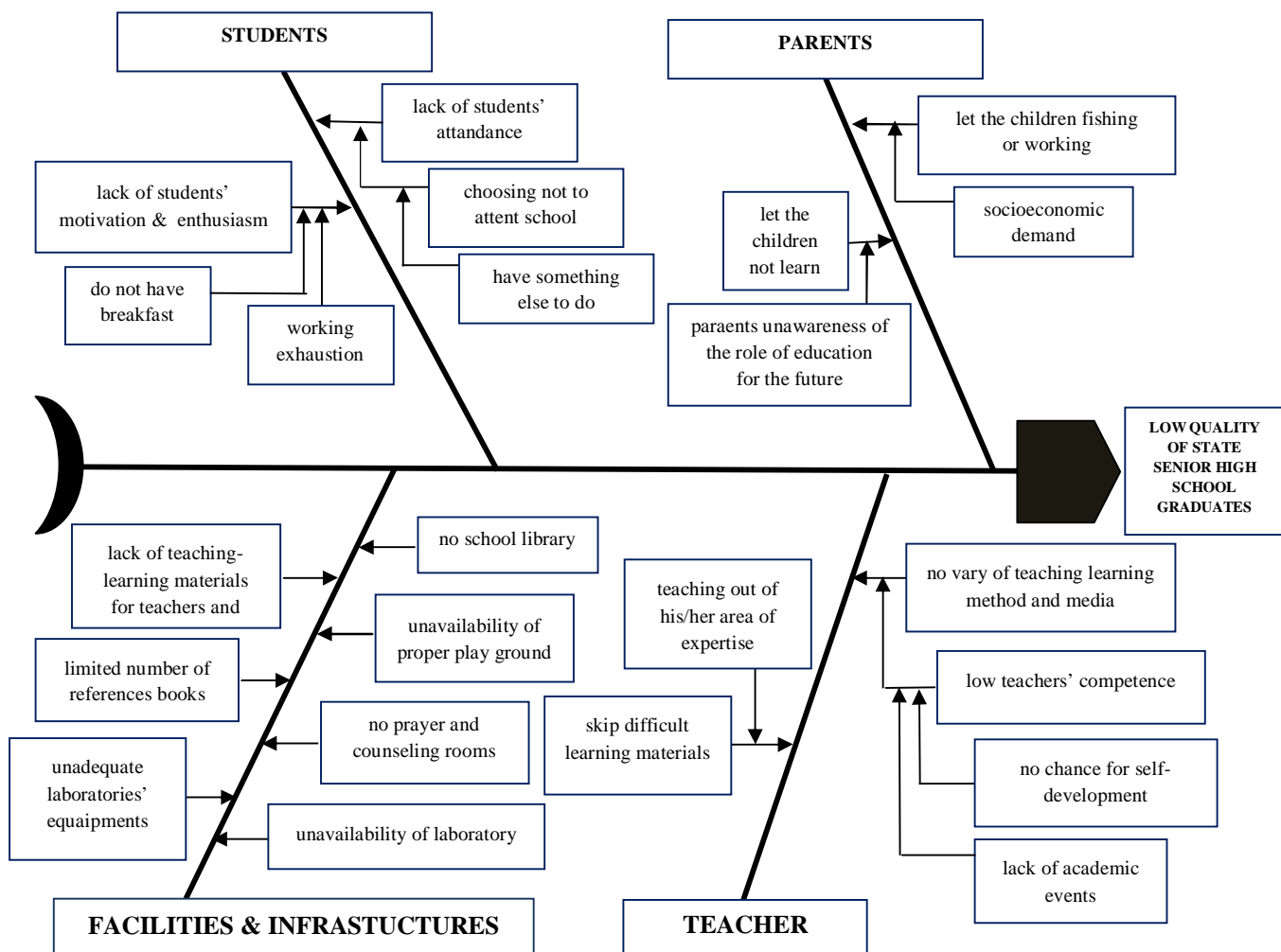


Diagram 1. Factors Affecting the Low Quality of State Senior High School Graduates in Merauke Regency

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Teacher's Competence

Quality of education is directly connected to the quality of teaching learning process in the classrooms and the teacher's competence is considered as the most important factors in teaching learning process (Errant, 1994). Similarly, Aslam and Kingdon (2007) pointed out, "What students achieve in school is heavily influenced by classroom practices and teachers' skills".

Students learn from every lesson the teacher gives and, therefore, teachers have an enormous responsibility on his/her actions. All teachers have the key to provide a good environment for the students. In order that the students receive the best treatment, teachers need to be well trained and developed. Teacher training and professional development can be thought of as a process designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitude of teachers so they might, in turn, improve the learning of students. Training is an important part of teacher preparation programs, especially for those aspects of teaching that are more skill-like in their conception, but there are many other important aspects of teaching that can only be nurtured through reflective strategies and experience (Rahman, et al. 2011).

Low of teachers' competence in mastering teaching materials, method, and strategy in Merauke Regency indicated that initial training was not good enough to develop the knowledge and skills teachers need to deal effectively with the challenges they face in today's classroom. With the pace of change both in content and pedagogy, as well as technology, continual updating of teachers' knowledge and skills should be considered a high priority and should be an important component of the career development of teachers as well as an important aspect of the education (Pacific Island Forum, 2010). Rahman, et al. (2011) stated,

As one does not finish learning with graduation, likewise the teacher's training goes on improving with the passage of time by gaining experience and study throughout the life span of a teacher. It means to achieve educational change that will persist in-service education and training refers to all those activities that contribute to professional growth and qualifications of an employee, e.g. reading educational journals, participating workshops, seminars, conferences, and visits to educational institutions that give the employee a sense of security and a feeling of self-confidence while discharging his routine duties in the school. [...] With the rapid increase in human knowledge new approaches, new methods of teaching, and new avenues for the teachers are being introduced. If a teacher fails to keep himself in touch with these developments he is proving himself as inefficient and ineffective (p. 3).

No chance for state senior high schools' teachers in Merauke Regency to develop his/her competence through in-service education and training directly affect their way of teaching and, in turn, affect the quality of graduates.

3.2.2 Students' Motivation and Attendance

Students are the subject of teaching learning processes conducted in a school. This research showed two factors that believed to affect low or high academic achievement. First, students' attendance. In order to attain a high academic achievement, students must be present in school. High students' absenteeism rates at rural and remote state senior high schools was believed as one of factors affecting the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency, Papua, Indonesia.

A number of studies have established that students with higher absenteeism rates tend to have lower grades of academic achievement than peers. According to DeKalb (1999), students who miss school fall behind peers in the classroom, which in turn increases the likelihood that they will become at-risk students and will drop-out of schools (as cited in Jones, 2006). Similarly U. S. Department of Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2001) reported that students with higher truancy rates have the lowest academic achievement rates, and are more likely to drop out of school which indicates that there is a relationship between student attendance and student academic achievement (as cited in Jones, 2006). In his study, Rothman (2001) reported that high student absenteeism rates were found to affect the achievement of students that attend regularly by disrupting the existing learning groups.

Second, students' motive and enthusiasm. Students' motivation and enthusiasm is the key of success in teaching learning process. It is obvious that students who are not motivated and enthusiastic will not study hard. Lack of students' motivation and of enthusiasm were believed as factors that affect the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency, Papua, Indonesia.

High or low student motivation can be influenced by external factors and internal factors. The external factors include the students' social life, the teacher, the method and learning environment. While internal factors include students' needs, interest, and enjoyment. The needs of students can engage them to achieve learning goal. In other hand, interest also has a role in increasing motivation level of student. Then, enjoyment is also important in increasing motivation of student. If the students do not feel enjoy in learning class, the material taught is difficult to be transferred. Most researchers and methodologists have come to the view that internal factors of motivation are especially important for getting success (Harmer, 1988, as cited in Abdussalim, 2008).

3.2.3 Inadequate of School Facilities and Infrastructure

School physical facilities and infrastructures are the plant facilities and infrastructures provided in the school in order to facilitate teaching learning process (Khan and Iqbal, 2012). School physical facilities play a vital role and

become one of the factor that directly affect to the teacher consideration of using a particular learning method. When a teacher is about to decide to use a particular learning method, he/she shall consider if the method needs a particular learning facilities. If it is 'yes', the next consideration will be the availibility of the said particular learning facilities.

In a study conducted by Willms (2000) in Latin America revealed that children whose school lacked classroom materials and had an inadequate library were significantly more likely to show lowest test scores and higher grade repetition than those whose schools were well equipped. Similarly matters happening at the state senior high schools in Merauke Regency, Papua. Unavailability of school library, school laboratory and its equipment, limited references books and teaching learning materials for teachers and students have become factors that directly affecting the teaching learning process and, in turn, affecting the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency, Papua, Indonesia.

3.2.4 Parental Support

Generally, it is accepted that in order for students to excel in school, they need the support and encouragement from their parents. In their research findings, Hui-Chen Huang and Mason (2008) concluded that parents' attitudes, along with their behavior and activities with regard to their children's education do affect academic achievement in a positive way (as cited in Erlendsdóttir, 2010). Henderson and Berla (1994) even claimed that parental involvement in their children's education affects their school attendance, more students graduate, and behavior of students' improves (as cited in Erlendsdóttir, 2010).

Studies have shown that parents consider their assistance with homework to be particularly effective for their children's academic achievement. Students themselves, in addition, claim to do better in school, at least some of the time, if they receive help from their parents (Erlendsdóttir, 2010). Go along with these research findings, parents in Merauke Regency, Papua, are assumed to support and encourage their children's in order for children to get a maximum academic grade. Unfortunately, parental involvement and support needed is still so far from children's reaching hand, especially those children living at rural and remote area of Merauke Regency, Papua, Indonesia. Parents are more likely hope their children to work than go to school. Parents unawareness on the importance of education has become a crucial factor that responsible for students' truancy and absenteeism and, in turn, responsible for the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency, Papua, Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research data analysis, it can be mapped several factors affecting the low quality of state senior high school graduates in Merauke Regency, Papua, Indonesia, as follow:

1. Factors related to the teachers, such as: (a) lack of teachers in particular subjects such as math, physics, chemistry, and biology; (b) particular subjects are taught by teachers out of their area of expertise; (c) teachers do not use the vary of learning method and media in teaching learning process; (d) teacher who teach out of his/her area of expertise skip all of learning materials which are difficult for him/her to understand; (e) low of teachers' competence due to the fact that there are no chances for developing their competence and teaching capacity; (f) lack of academic events that teachers are hoped to attend.
2. Factors related to the students, such as: (a) many students are choosing not to attend school because they have something else they would rather doing; (b) lack of students' enthusiasm in teaching learning process due to the fact that they have no meal for breakfast; (c) many students are exhausted during teaching learning process due to help their parents working.
3. Factors related to the parents, such as: (a) lot of parents rather want their children to casting or fishing with them then attend the school; (b) lot of parents rather want their children look for food with them then attend the school.
4. Factors related to the availability of school facilities and infrastructures, such as: (a) unavailability of school physic facilities and infrastructure needed, such as school library, laboratory of computers, laboratory of language, laboratory of chemistry, laboratory of physics, laboratory of biology, and of math; (b) unavailability of rooms for counseling and prayer in some senior high schools in Merauke Regency; (c) unavailability of a proper school playground for students; (d) lack of teaching learning materials (handbooks) for teachers and student; and (e) limited references books for teachers and students.

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