

Factors Affecting Subsidized Free Day Secondary Education in Enhancing Learners Retention in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract

Learners are the key stakeholders of a school for it to be registered by the Department of Education. However the retention of these learners in Kenya's Secondary Level Education is a great challenge in Kenya. Every secondary school dropout signifies unfulfilled objective, goal and aim for the individual as well as the community at large. The purpose of the study was to establish the factors affecting subsidized free day secondary education (SFDSE) in enhancing learners' retention in secondary schools in Kenya. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: to determine the effects of adequacy of school finances and teaching/learning resources in enhancing learners' retention in secondary schools in Kenya. The target population of the study comprised of 3,993 stakeholders in the education sector in Bungoma County, Kenya. A sample size of 340 respondents was selected purposively for the study. Cross-sectional survey research and proportional stratified sampling were adopted to obtain the Educational Officers, Principals, B.O.G chairpersons, P.T.A chairpersons and Parents from each Sub County in Bungoma County. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data from the respondents. Qualitative data collected was analyzed using content analysis while quantitative data analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results indicated that enrollment and transition rates of learners had increased since the introduction of SFDSE by the government in the year 2008. The study also revealed there is an acute shortage of teachers despite the expansion of various secondary schools in Bungoma County to three streams per class. The study recommends that the Government employ more teachers to meet the international standards of teacher students ratio in schools

Keywords: Subsidized Free Day Secondary Education (SFDSE), School Finances, Learners Retention

1.0 Introduction

Globally, education is recognized as a basic human right and that everyone had the right to education and which would be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Economically, educational attainment is becoming more increasingly important, relative to other factors of production, as it leads to the transformation of other resources to enhance civil and better livelihoods among communities (OECD, 2005).

Governments around the world have invested huge amounts of their expenditure on education, the government of Kenya is committed to; elimination of poverty as a hindrance to educational development; promotion of human rights through provision of education; attainment of sustainable development by the provision of quality basic education for all. The Government had shown her commitment to the provision of quality education and training as a human right for all Kenyans through the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2008 so as to enhance retention of Learners in Schools. The launch of SFDSE in 2008 was meant to address illiteracy, low quality education and low completion rates at the secondary level, high cost of education and poor community participation. (Republic of Kenya, 2005) These efforts were a positive move towards the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All. According to the Subsidized Free Day Secondary Education policy, the government was expected to meet the tuition fees of Ksh 10,265 per student, increased to 12,870 (2014) while the parents were required to meet other requirements like lunch, transport and boarding fees for those in boarding schools, besides development projects. This was in line with the government commitment to ensure that regional, special needs and gender disparities were addressed (Ohba, 2009, Mwiria 2014).

Importantly, the secondary school educational cycle lasts 4 years in Kenya. It is recognized as the springboard to tertiary and /or higher education and training. For this matter therefore, it is a significant juncture in the national and educational development. However, the secondary school cycle in Kenya faces the challenges of high dropout rates among the learners (Republic of Kenya, 2003; 1998). Furthermore, it is noted that one of the perennial causes of secondary school education dropouts is the inability to pay school fees due to poverty (Achoka, 2007; 2006; Republic of Kenya, 2003). 70% of children who complete primary school education in Kenya transit to secondary school annually. Out of this, 9% drop out of secondary school annually. Only 30% of the remainder complete secondary school and precede to either tertiary or higher learning institutions (Ministry of Education, 2009, 2014). Importantly every secondary school dropout signifies unfulfilled objective, goal and aim for the individual as well as the community at large. Emerging from this fact is perhaps a crucial question. "Why do the individuals drop out of the learning cycle without basic education given the huge investments in the

education by the government, parents and donors?" It was necessary, therefore to conduct a study to establish the factors affecting SFDSE in enhancing learners' retention in secondary schools in Bungoma County. The study seeks to establish the extent to which existing initiatives enable learners complete the 4 year cycle of Secondary Education.

2.0 Subsidized Free Day Secondary Education in Kenya

The implementation of FPE by the Kenyan government in the year 2003 has led to the recent upsurge in the secondary school enrolments. Enrolment trends in secondary schools has shown a steady growth from 30,000 in 1963 to 860,000 students in the year 2003, and to over 1 million in 2006 (Munavu et al,2008). Similarly the number of public secondary schools has increased from 151 in 1963 to 3660 in 2005 (Republic of Kenya, 2005) One of the factors limiting growth in Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) at the secondary level is the limited number of secondary schools compared to the number of primary schools. The current gapping mismatch between the capacities at these levels is approximated by comparing the number of primary and secondary schools. The number of public primary schools was 18,081 in 2003 compared to 3,660 public and 641 private secondary schools in the same year (Republic of Kenya, 2005). This mismatch posed a major challenge to learners to access and be retained in secondary schools so as to complete the basic education required to every citizen due to limited chances available in the available secondary schools in Kenya.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that although primary education is important for individual welfare, it is nevertheless an insufficient condition for national economic growth and poverty reduction. The recognition is that primary school leavers are still young to become economically independent and socially engaged in various activities. For some children, completion of primary education means the end of schooling and the entrance to the world of work. However, because of their limited knowledge and skills from primary education and immature age, primary school leavers are in many cases unable to fully participate in the world of work. This study sought to establish if by the government of Kenya extending the minimum level of basic education from primary to lower secondary level through the introduction of SFDSE will enable some of the children to complete the basic education cycle and directly join the world of its workforce.

2.1 Retention of Learners in Secondary school Education

Learners' retention has been studied for decades with a variety of research and conclusions made on factors that influence student retention and success. Retention is measured by the 'completion rate' the proportion of those students who enroll in form one complete the four years cycle of post primary education and sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination (KCSE)(NAO,2007). One persistent constraint in attaining the goals of education for all (EFA) is the rate of drop out from education systems. (Wamahiu, 1997) According to MOE (2007) completion rates in 2004 in secondary schools registered 91.5% for boys and 87.5% for girls. The girls registered 12.5% drop out. In spite of the government policies to enhance enrolments in secondary sub sector, the girl's participation, retention, transition and completion at secondary school education level are lower than boys. In 2004 the national Gross Enrollment rate (GER) was 31.7% for boys and 27.3% for girls (MOE, 2007). This became a contention which the current study sought to address.

2.2 Factors Affecting Subsidized Free Day Secondary Education in Enhancing Learners Retention

2.2.1 Adequacy of School Finances

In order for Kenya to attain its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and EFA, there was need for government extension of free education to secondary level which led to the introduction SFDSE in the year 2008 which was intended to reduce the cost burden on parents and enable more children access and attain the minimum basic secondary education. According to the Free Secondary Education policy, the government was expected to meet the tuition fees of KShs 10,265 per student, while the parents were required to meet other requirements like lunch, transport and boarding fees for those in boarding schools, besides development projects. This was in line with the government commitment to ensure that regional special needs and gender disparities were addressed (Ohba, 2009). It was viewed that the denial of secondary education to children from poor households is likely to limit their chances of escaping poverty because of social political and economic benefits associated with secondary education. There are, however, many challenges which threaten the sustainability of a robust educational regime in Kenya. The key challenges include low enrolment and retention rates, constricted access and equity at higher levels, establishment and maintenance of quality and relevance, and myriad inefficiencies in managing the limited resources allocated to the education sector (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

Secondary schools principals play a major role in the management of all school financial activities, which involve the disbursement of money. The money is obtained through various sources such as fees. According to Orlosky (1984), financial management determines the way the school is managed and whether or not the school will meet its objectives. The principal is responsible for budgeting, accounting and auditing functions of financial management. With the introduction of Subsidized Free Day Secondary Education, schools

get some funding from the government while parents are required to meet various other costs such as school development projects and boarding fees (Republic of Kenya, 2005). It is not clear whether this arrangement is friendly to the learners in secondary schools, and the study will determine if there is a relationship between the adequacies of funds allocated by the government for tuition with learners' retention in secondary schools.

2.2.2 Adequacy of Teaching/learning Resources

Onyango (2001) emphasizes that human resource is the most important resource in a school organization. He adds that teachers comprise the most important staff in the school. However, the contribution made by other staff members such as secretaries, bursars, accounts clerk, matron, nurses, messengers and watchmen is also important.

Odhiambo (2005) observes that the most important purpose of a school is to provide children with equal and enhanced opportunities for learning, and the most important resource a school has for achieving that purpose is the knowledge, skills and dedication of its teachers. Teachers therefore need to be well managed. The head teachers' responsibility in human resource management involves: Leading and motivating staff; delegating responsibilities effectively; and conflict management.

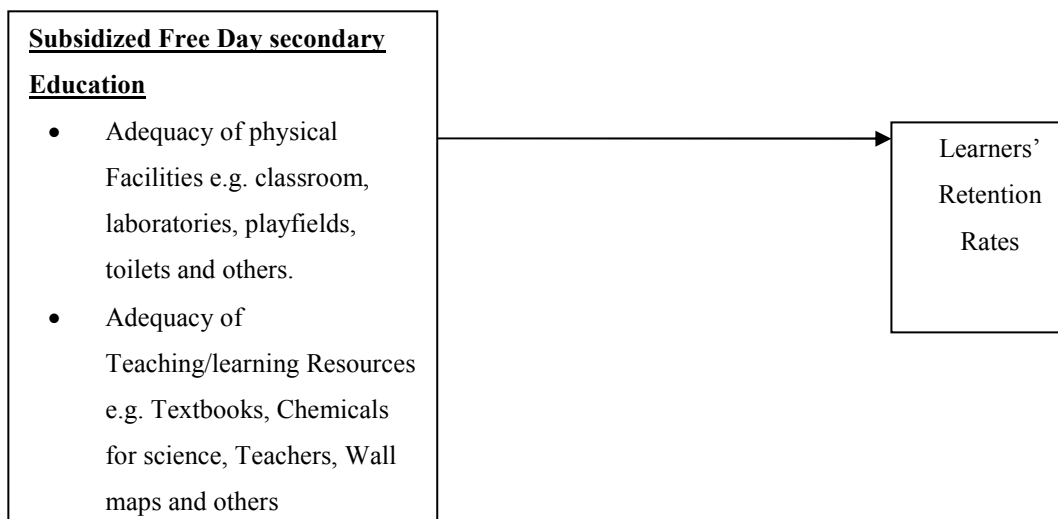
With increased number of students as a result of SFDSE, teacher students' ratio is likely to be high, leading to increased workload for teachers. This is likely to pose a challenge to head teachers, who are expected to ensure that the quality of education is not compromised.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Based on the Human capital theory, SFDSE was viewed as an example of government investment in its human capital. The study focused on the factors affecting specific forms of investments by the Government of Kenya in the education sector on retention of learners in secondary school in Bungoma County.

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable



3.0 Research Methodology

The study was undertaken in public secondary schools in the nine Sub Counties in Bungoma County in Kenya. It utilized a cross-sectional survey research approach, because it's an approach where information on a population is gathered at a single point in time which was the case for this study. The target population for this study comprised of the entire 9 Sub County Education Officers, 249 Principals, 249 B.O.G Chairpersons, 249 P.T.A Chairpersons and 3,237 parents making a total of 3,993. The study adopted Yamane (1967) simplified formula to determine the actual sample size of 364 respondents purposively for this study. Stratified proportionate sampling technique was adopted to obtain the respondents from each category. Both questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data was analyzed qualitatively using systematic content data analysis while quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics the mean and standard deviation. The Results were presented using percentages, frequency distribution table and bar

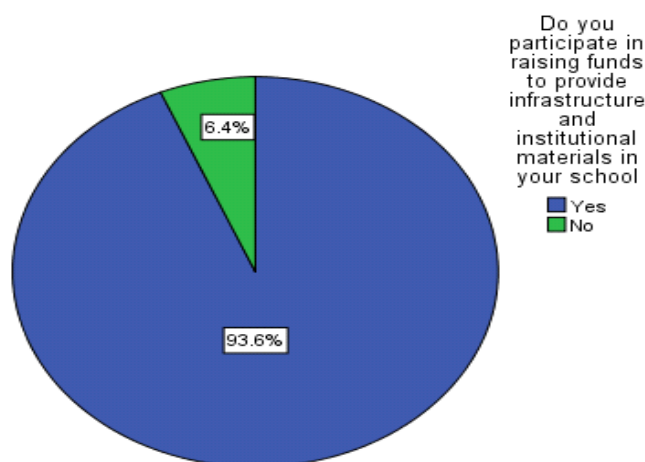
4.0 Results and Discussions

4.1 Adequacy of School Finances

The respondents were asked to indicate the sources of funding to their schools before the introduction of SFDSE in the year 2008 by the government. 31.7% of the respondents indicated the source of the school's income was from payment of fees of the students in school by the guardians/parents, 28.3% from the Parents Teachers

Association (P.T.A) program, and 20% from various bursaries schemes and well wishers respectively. On sources of the school funds after the introduction of SFDSE 48.3% of the respondents still indicated that a bigger portion of the schools' funds was payment of fees by the guardians/parents of the students in schools, 31.7% from bursaries programs by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST), 10% from the government through the SFDSE program and Community Development Fund (CDF) managed by the area Members of Parliament in the Kenyan National Assembly.

All the respondents who filled the parents/guardians questionnaires indicated that they still pay secondary school fees despite the introduction of SFDSE program by the government in the year 2008. Asked on the components of the fees they pay; 34% indicated they paid for the lunch program, 12% for tuition fees and P.T.A funds respectively, 8% examination fees, the bus project and other projects respectively while 6% paid for medical, boarding and uniforms for their kids in secondary schools. The respondents were further asked to indicate if they participate in raising funds to provide infrastructural and institutional materials in schools. 93.6% of the respondents indicated they participate while 6.4% didn't participate as shown in Figure 4.1



4.2 Enrolment and Transition Rates of Learners

Table 4.1 shows the trends of enrollment from the year 2009 just one year after the introduction of SFDSE by the government to the year 2014. There has been an increase in the enrollments rates every year from the year 2009 to 2014 as depicted by Table 4.1 from 524.3191 in the year 2009 to 1052.5789 in the year 2014

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics on enrolment from 2009 to 2014

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Enrolment in 2014	19	613.00	1309.00	19999.00	1052.5789	344.93386
Enrolment in 2013	12	1200.00	1200.00	14400.00	1200.0000	.00000
Enrolment in 2012	53	100.00	1100.00	31510.00	594.5283	337.86653
Enrolment in 2012	47	70.00	852.00	27260.00	580.0000	260.13525
Enrolment in 2010	47	50.00	800.00	22586.00	480.5532	228.50885
Enrolment in 2009	47	30.00	750.00	24643.00	524.3191	216.25972

Figure 4.2: Graph showing trend in enrolment from the year 2009 to 2014

Figure 4.2 shows there has been a steady increase in enrolment from 2009 to 2014. The regression for the graph is:

$$y = 137.5x - 27594$$

The gradient for the graph is 137.5 showing that there was a highly positive trend over the years.

Table 4.2 shows there has been a steady increase in learners' transition rates from the year 2009 to the year 2013 as shown by an increase in means from 58.5366 in the year 2009 to 78.0851 in the year 2013.

Table 4.2: Transition rates from 2009 to 2013

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transition rate in 2013	47	50.00	100.00	3670.00	78.0851	22.17895
Transition rate in 2012	47	55.00	87.00	3419.00	72.7447	13.78321
Transition rate in 2011	41	50.00	81.00	2722.00	66.3902	14.15782
Transition rate in 2010	41	45.00	79.00	2313.00	56.4146	14.85762
Transition rate in 2009	41	40.00	75.00	2400.00	58.5366	13.61267

Figure 4.3: Transition rates from the year 2009 to 2013

Figure 4.3, shows there was a positive trend (gradient of 5.542) showing that there has been a steady increase in

the transition rates over the years from the year 2009 to the year 2013.

$$y = 5.542x - 11080$$

The respondents who filled the Principals' questionnaire were asked if the students who joined their schools in form one after the introduction of SFDSE completed the four year cycle of secondary education. The entire Principal attested to not all the students who joined the schools they are in charge completed the four year cycle. Asked to give reasons, a 54.3% of the respondents indicated it was due to lack of fees by the parents/guardians, 20.7% due to early pregnancies in case of the girls, 18.5% transferred to other schools while 6.5% due to early marriages. Data obtained from the Sub County Education Officials interview schedules also pointed out that for all schools in their areas of jurisdictions registered dropouts mainly due to teenage pregnancies among girls.

4.3 Adequacy of Teaching/Learning Resources

From the results 36.7% of the responded the schools under study were day schools, 35.0% boarding schools while 28.3% had a mixture of students with some boarding and others day scholars. For boarding schools the respondents indicated that 50% of the boarding schools under study had adequate boarding facilities, 38.3% didn't have adequate boarding facilities while 11.7% had some facilities which were adequate while other facilities weren't adequate.

The respondents further indicated that 70% of the schools under study had permanent structures, 12% semi permanent structures while 10% had both permanent and semi permanent structures.

On average, the number of established classrooms was 15 and 2 laboratories per school as shown in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Number of established classrooms and laboratories per School

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Number of established classrooms	60	6.00	30.00	897.00	14.9500	7.96268
Number of established laboratories	60	.00	4.00	115.00	1.9167	1.22532

71.7% of the respondents indicated that their schools had teacher's houses while 28.3% didn't. 69.8% of the respondents further indicated that there schools had less than three houses.

Asked whether their schools owned a school bus, 51.7% of the respondents indicated that their schools owned a school bus while 48.3% indicated their schools didn't own a school bus.

Table 4.4 shows that most of the secondary schools in Bungoma County had an average of 3 streams per class (Form One to Form 4) per school.

Table 4.4: Number of streams per Class (Form) per School

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Streams in Form 1	60	2.00	5.00	3.2000	0.98806
Streams in Form 2	60	1.00	5.00	3.1000	1.14537
Streams in Form 3	60	1.00	5.00	2.9000	1.23096
streams in Form 4	60	1.00	5.00	2.9000	1.23096

The respondents indicated that there has been a slight increase in the average of number of teachers in their schools as from 20.96 in the year 2008 just before the introduction of subsidized free day secondary education by the government and to the current 21.88 at the time of study. On gender parity most of the schools are dominated by male teachers with a mean of 13.5333 against 8.35 as shown in Table 4.5

Table 4.5: Number of teachers in schools

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Number of teachers before 2008	48	16.00	28.00	1006.00	20.9583	5.25097
Current number of teachers	60	8.00	37.00	1313.00	21.8833	9.62710
Number of male teachers	60	3.00	25.00	812.00	13.5333	7.82319
Number of female teachers	60	2.00	12.00	501.00	8.3500	3.69528

The respondents were also asked to indicate the learning/teaching resources the schools had acquired since the introduction of subsidized free day secondary education by the government in the year 2008. 28.2% of the respondents indicated that their schools have constructed additional classrooms, 20% additional laboratories, 14.1% had acquired a school bus, 9.4% had constructed the school's administration block, 7.1% had constructed teachers' houses and toilets respectively while 5.9% students toilets.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

There has also been an increase in the enrollments rates every year from the year 2009 to 2014 as from 524.3191 in the year 2009 to 1052.5789 in the year 2014. The gradient of 137.5 also showing there was a highly positive trend in the increase in the enrollment rates over the years. There has also been a steady increase in learners' transition rates from the year 2009 to the year 2013 as shown by an increase in means from 58.5366 in the year 2009 to 78.0851 in the year 2013. The graph also gave a positive trend (gradient of 5.542) showing that there

has been a steady increase in the transition rates over the years from the year 2009 to the year 2013. The respondents indicated that not all the students who joined their schools completed the four year secondary school level cycle due to lack of fees by the parents/guardians, early pregnancies and early marriages while others transferred to other schools. Despite the steady increase in the learners enrolment and transition rates over the period of study the number of teachers in the schools has almost stagnated from 20.96 to 21.88 in terms of mean while the number of streams per class in the schools has increased with about 70% of the schools having between 3 – 8 streams per class.

Some schools about 30% of the sampled schools did not have permanent structures although 70% were inclusive for learning since the start of FSE. Some schools had acquired additional facilities like classrooms, school buses, playfields, laboratories although not enough or as observed not in good working conditions. Kenya like other third world counties has developed an expected Education System which is characterized by shortage of funds, teachers, classrooms, teaching materials, a shortage of everything except students' Combs Page 3. The Education Sector requires a lot of funds to sustain therefore there is need for the Government to increase the allocation towards Education SFDSE. Apart from the Boarding schools the enrollments in day schools was attributed to SFDSE funds, when the parents were asked more than half 55.3% responded that they kept their children in schools because of the help from the Government. The study showed that about 87% of the parents interviewed believed that SFDSE was a factor in their children remaining and completing Secondary Education. Most parents were positive about the SFDSE programme and wanted it to continue. The majority felt that the amounts should be increased to relieve them more.

The study recommended that the Government should increase the allocation of SFDSE funds from what it is now so that the financial burden of paying fees can be removed from the parents. Remove all the other schools levies like Examination fees, P.T.A funds and many others because schools administrators abuse them. The Government should also come up with fees guidelines for boarding schools and indicate how much they should charge. It should also employ more teachers to meet the international standards of teacher students ratio in schools

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