



**SUBSIDIZED FREE DAY SECONDARY
SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM AND ITS
INFLUENCE ON GIRLS' SCHOOL PARTICIPATION
IN NANDI NORTH SUB-COUNTY, KENYA**

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Abstract:

Despite the introduction of free primary education by the Government of Kenya in 2003 and subsequent subsidized secondary education in 2008, there are still challenges in access, retention and completion of girls in Nandi County. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of subsidized day secondary education program on girls' school participation in Nandi North Sub-County, Kenya. The study adopted mixed method approach and descriptive survey research design. This study was guided by Education Production Function theory. The data were collected using questionnaires and interview schedules to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data from respective respondents. The target population comprised 20 head teachers, 60 class teachers and 1320 girls drawn from 20 public day secondary schools in the Nandi North Sub-County. From these populations, a sample of 20 head teachers, 60 class teachers and 396 girls were drawn using census method on head teachers and class teachers, and random sampling technique was used to select 30 percent of girls from one to form three. The study used questionnaires to collect data from the girls and class teachers and interviewed head teachers. The instruments were validated and a piloted questionnaire that obtained a reliable 0.78 Cronbach alpha test score used. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires have been analyzed to obtain frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data obtained from the interviewees have been analyzed thematically in accordance to the research questions. The study found out that inadequate funds allocated to girls and school infrastructural facilities affected girls' participation in secondary school education to a great extent. However, in general, teaching and learning materials were adequate and enhanced instruction and students' performance. The study therefore recommends that parents should complement government effort and that government should increase

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allocation of subsidy funds to students especially girls and disburse the funds in time to schools.

Keywords: subsidized day secondary education, school infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, girl child school participation, enrolment rate

1. Introduction

Education is an economic and social development pillar in every society. According to Central Bureau of Statistics (2005), sustainable development in any society is achieved when there are several educated people. Having educated people means that poverty level in the society reduces (World Bank, 2015). However, the rising cost of education amid other challenges has affected achievement of education in many societies (Lusardi, 2019). In the USA, the state funds and education grants has declined despite increase in school expenses. Schools also have been experiencing a growth in management accounting further driving up the cost of education (Lima, 2011). Despite the rising cost and other challenges experienced in obtaining education, everybody has a right to education especially basic education which should be obligatory (UNESCO, 2007).

According to World Bank (2015), Africa has the lowest education completion rate for girls in the world. The ability of girls to access, get retained and complete school is not only important for individual development but also for the future of the society at large. Several factors affecting girls from accessing education include poverty, need for domestic labor, need for income-generating activities, stigmatization, and parental sickness or death (Eweniyi & Usman, 2013). According to Buchmann et al. (2008), gender - based school enrolment inequalities has been highly documented throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. One of the reports stated that girls are approximately 13 percent less likely to attend school than boys (Monasch & Boerma, 2004). Additionally, the disparities in progression between grades were found among countries that include Botswana, Niger, Ghana, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe (Buchmann et al. 2008). Assessment of grade progression is very important because without being keen on it, girls face high risk of dropping out of school (Wilson, 2009).

The introduction of free primary education in most countries has increased girl child education as well as an increase in enrolment into public secondary schools (World Bank, 2015). This is the right that girls were not enjoying initially. The government of Kenya introduced free primary education in 2003 and subsidized secondary education in 2008. The intervention has boosted access to education by girls particularly the ones from low economic backgrounds. This has also resulted in increased number of girls joining institutions of higher learning in the country (James et al., 2016). According to Ministry of Education (2007), there is a shift from what existed during colonial period when formal education was introduced and only favored the boy child while neglecting the girl child. Sifuna (2006) posit that the girls who joined form 1 in as late as 1998 were 40% compared to 56% boys hence there were more boys than girls in high school enrolment.

Despite subsidies that day secondary schools receive from Kenya government, parents still pay high amount of fees. These fees are for payment of food and for tuition and other school-related expenditure such as books, uniforms, and multiple fees for buildings, maintenance, desks, and other school expenses. According to Ministry of Education (2007), the main reason for high cost of secondary education is the large boarding expenses, high demand for school projects that include swimming pool construction, purchase of school buses and stern admission conditions that calls for more items as well as costly uniforms. The government subsidies were meant to pay non-teaching salaries, repairs, administration, travel and transport, electricity and water bills, full cost or part of tuition. Ministry of Education (2007) considered overall cost, such as cost of uniform, learning materials, and other expenses, on top of opportunity costs disappoints students from economically disadvantaged families, orphans and particularly the girl child from accessing, being retained and completing secondary school education.

2. Statement of the Problem

The success of Kenya's free primary education (FPE) program that was introduced in 2003, the subsequent introduction of free secondary education (FSE) in 2008 in public day secondary schools and the 100% automatic transition of students from primary to secondary schools after their exit examination has manifested itself in increased student participation in secondary education. However, whereas gains have been realized in access, retention and completion among secondary school students, these benefits are more skewed towards the boy child. The gains have not trickled equitably to the more vulnerable girls. The gender inequality is of particular concern as Kenya seeks to enhance girls' education (Republic of Kenya, 2006). According to 2019 basic education statistics, Nandi County gender parity index was below the National gross parity index at 0.98 where boys accounted for 50.53% while girls were 49.47% (Republic of Kenya, 2019). This scenario is replicated in its Sub Counties and is pronounced in Nandi North County. Studies that have been done on the differential participation of boys and girls in secondary school education show that girls' education has greatly been influenced by economic, social and cultural factors (Kariuki, 2007).

This study therefore sought to investigate the extent to which subsidized free day secondary education program influence girls' school participation in Nandi North Sub County and to answer the following research questions;

- 1) To what extent does adequacy of subsidy funds allocated to girls in public day secondary schools influence their education participation in Nandi North Sub – County?
- 2) To what extent does financing of school infrastructural facilities influence girls' participation in public day secondary education in Nandi North Sub-County"
- 3) How does financing of teaching and learning materials influence girls' participation in public day secondary education in Nandi North Sub-County"

3. Methodology

The study adopted mixed methods approach. According to Creswell (2013), the approach is appropriate because a researcher is able to collect, analyze and integrate both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to address the research questions. It is ideal for smaller and focused samples, rather than large samples (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The study employed descriptive survey research design which enables a researcher to collect information using interviews and questionnaires (Orodho, 2009). The study employed a population of 20 head teachers, 60 class teachers and 1320 girls in 20 public day secondary schools. All the 20 head teachers and 60 class teachers were involved in study because the schools were less than 30 and so census method was used. Simple random technique was used to select 396 (30%) girls. A population is considered large to be representative and good at 30% and 20 considered not large population. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from the girls and class teachers and interviewed head teachers. The instruments were validated, and the questionnaire piloted to determine its reliability, A reliable 0.78 Cronbach alpha test score was obtained. A 0.7 Cronbach test score is appropriate (Kathuri and Pal, 2003). Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires have been analyzed to obtain frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data obtained from the interviewees have been analyzed thematically in accordance with the research questions.

4. Results and Discussions

On the influence of adequacy of subsidy funds allocated to girls in public day secondary schools on their education participation in Nandi North Sub – County, the study found out that since the introduction of subsidized secondary school education, money allocated to girls for schooling in secondary schools increased. The funds included ministry of Education bursaries and Constituency bursary funds. This initiative increased access, retention and completion of secondary education by many girls in the study area. The study also found out that the absenteeism and the number of girls dropping out of school has reduced significantly. This agrees with the findings of Hunt (2008) that due to subsidized secondary school education policy, the number of dropouts diminished in Uganda. Similarly Korean government adopted Subsidized Secondary Education to ensure high progression rates between grades among girls are maintained. This is an indication of high maintenance and finish rates among girls (Angrist & Lavy, 2009). However, the findings established that despite these successes, the amount of money allocated to students is small and are given uniformly to all students irrespective of gender consideration and depending on government irregular disbursement the allocation is intermittent. This scenario made some students especially girls to drop out of school.

On the extent to which financing of school infrastructural facilities influence girls' participation in public day secondary education in Nandi North Sub-County, the study

established that inadequate school infrastructural facilities affected girls' participation in secondary education to a great extent. Majority also lacked properly constructed latrines. Lack of these enough facilities greatly affected the access, retention and completion of girls in schools in the Sub-County. According to GOK (2009), the schools which are categorized into County schools, receive low amount of money from government allocation owing to their relatively lower student population. The head teachers stated that one of the challenges encountered in the implementation of subsidized secondary education was delays in the disbursement of funds by the Ministry of Education. The schools frequently receive funds late in the term. This is worsened by the belief by parents that secondary education is free hence they do not want to pay anything. This is major problem that affect the school administration when they ask for funds for even lunch for the case of day schools, boarding fee in boarding schools, building and activity funds (GOK, 2005). The limited resources in most cases were used to develop their infrastructural facilities and due to the small size of classrooms, inadequate latrines among other facilities, there is congestion in these facilities. These make the girls to keep off especially during their menstrual periods. It was observed that this situation forced some girls out of school. According to Akungu (2014), the government should provide funds for purchase for physical facilities.

The study further found out that teaching and learning facilities highly influence assess, retention and completion rate of girls in public secondary schools. Inadequacy of teaching and learning facilities make teachers handle subjects in an abstract manner making learning non-exiting and leads to drop outs (Hervie and Winful, 2018). The study established that majority of the schools had enough textbooks bought using the government's tuition fund . Girls were also severely affected by lack of enough furniture, tools and equipment in congestion in classrooms. Majority of the schools also had enough exercise books that facilitated learning. According to Hervie and Winful (2018), the adequacy of teaching and learning facilities such as textbooks is the most cost-effective input that affects the performance and retention of students in school. They further stated that adequate supply of these materials is assumed to be one textbook for every three students in secondary schools. Anthony and Padmanabhan (2010) regarded adequacy of teaching and learning facilities as a determinant of efficiency in educational systems.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that the subsidy funds allocated to girls in public day secondary schools to enable them access, be retained and to complete secondary school education in Nandi North Sub – County is inadequate. However, the initiative increased access, retention and completion of secondary education by many girls in the study area to a great extent and that absenteeism and the number of girls dropping out of school has reduced significantly. The findings established that despite these successes, the amount of money allocated to students is small and is given uniformly to all students irrespective of gender consideration. Depending on government irregular disbursement, the

allocation is done intermittently. This scenario has made some students especially girls to drop out of school.

It also concludes that inadequate school infrastructural facilities affected girls' participation in secondary education to a great extent. Day secondary schools receive low amount of money from government allocation owing to their relatively lower student population. This situation is worsened by delays in disbursement of funds by the Ministry of Education and the belief by parents that secondary education is free hence they do not want to pay anything. This hampers the development of school infrastructure and therefore congestion, which compromises the privacy of the sensitive girl child is experienced. The study established that girls were also severely affected by lack of enough furniture, tools and equipment in congestion in classrooms. This situation forced some girls out of school.

The study further concludes that majority of the schools had enough textbooks and exercise books. These enhanced teaching and learning and performance of all students including the girl child. However, in cases where students were required to buy supplementary books, those from low-income backgrounds were disadvantaged especially the girls.

6. Recommendation for Practice

The recommendations are as follows:

- 1) The parents and guardians should be encouraged to complement government and school efforts by providing necessary requirements for their students especially girls in day secondary schools.
- 2) The Ministry of Education should increase amount of allocated funds to the day secondary schools to be able to develop their infrastructural facilities and be able to provide competitive services that will give an edge over the developed schools. The Ministry should also disburse the subsidies in time and that the government should increase bursary allocations to the vulnerable students especially girls

7. Suggestions for Further Research

A comparative study should be conducted in other both urban and rural Sub Counties to establish the extent to which subsidized free day Secondary Education influences the participation of girls.

Disclosure Statement

We wish to confirm that there are no know conflicts of interest that are associated with this publication.

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