

Influence Of Non-Tuition School Expense On Students' Enrolment At Public Day Secondary Schools In Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

The benefits of education to any individual person cannot be gainsaid. This explains the reason governments spend massive resources in the provision of education to its citizenry. In line with this commitment, the Government of Kenya (GoK) has tried to expand opportunities for education at various levels. In 2008, the GoK introduced Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) to increase access to secondary education. In this program, the GoK would cater for school construction, employment of teachers and provision of teaching/learning materials. Parents on the other hand had to purchase school uniform for their children, provide meals and other learning support requirements. Although the GoK was envisaged a 100% transition from primary to secondary school with this program, by the year 2017 Net Enrolment Rate (NER) stood at 47.2% (KIPPRA, 2020). This shows that despite so much effort, more than half of potential secondary school students are still out of school. Studies have attributed students' non-enrolment to school to many factors. This study looks at the influence of non-tuition expense on students' enrolment to Public Day Secondary (PDS) schools, specifically at Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya. The target population was the head teachers of PDS schools, sampled purposively to include 20 of them in the study. Survey design was adopted as the research design for the study. Questionnaires were used for data collection. The findings revealed that 45% of students invited to join PDS schools do not turn up. Payment for meals was found to be the most deterrent requirement to students' enrolment in PDS schools. The study recommends government-funded feeding program in PDS schools to mitigate the high rate of non-enrolment.

Keywords: Influence, Non-Tuition, School Expense, Students' Enrolment, Public Day Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

The importance of education in the life of a person cannot be gainsaid as it empowers the participant and opens innumerable opportunities for an individual to exploit own potential and become productive for the benefit of self and the society. People are the real wealth of nations (UNDP, 2010) and education enables them to live healthier, happier and more productive lives. The backbone of any society is firmly hinged on the education opportunities accessible to its citizens. According to World Bank (2020), there is a broad agreement backed by research findings that education enhances people's ability to make informed decisions, be better parents, bring up healthier children (Gakidou et al., 2010) sustain a livelihood, adopt new technologies, cope with shocks (Frankenberg, Smith, 2003 & Thomas; Corbacho, Garcia-Escribano & Inchauste, 2007) and be responsible citizens adapting to environmental change (Blankespoor et al. 2010). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognise a child's right to an education – a worldwide acknowledgement that depriving a child of the opportunity to basic skills is tantamount to

depriving that child of the chance to have a satisfying life (World Bank, 2020). This means education as a potent instrument of well-living and a means of economic liberation should be provided to all irrespective of the recipients' socio-economic background. The role education plays in an individual's life is immense. It is one of the most important drivers for ending poverty and boosting shared prosperity (World Bank, 2020). Studies show that, for children to be fully fairly equipped for economic opportunities, secondary education is key. The report by USAID (2000) argues that secondary education increases the voice of the poor, particularly at the local level, where the poor gain the self-confidence needed to engage in dialogue and influence decisions. Secondary education provides learning and educational activities building on primary education and preparing for labour market entry, post-secondary, non-tertiary education and tertiary education (UNESCO, 2012).

Provision of education in many developing countries are alarmingly low especially among disadvantaged populations, a trend which has bogged the minds of many educational practitioners over years. The World

Bank Group's Education Strategy for 2020 is learning for all (LFA). This means ensuring that all children not only can go to school but acquire the knowledge and skills they need to lead healthy, productive lives, secure meaningful employment and contribute to society. Education is a human right, a powerful driver of development and one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender, equality, peace and stability. It delivers large, consistent returns in terms of income and is the most important factor to ensure equality of opportunities (World Bank, 2020). Countries have made tremendous progress in enrolling children to school. However, retaining of students in these schools has remained a major challenge due to insufficiency of funds allocated per student vis a vis the cost of supportive education materials and programmes. In societies where school fees charges are allowed, or deterrent measures are not very tight, there is always an aspect of exaggeration and exorbitance with adverse effects on the poor children seeking education. governments have been directing massive resources to the funding of education across the globe to ensure that the financial hurdles hampering children from poor families are ultimately vanquished. World trends in funding education reveal that in the last decade, governments in developing countries especially in Asia and Africa have been directing additional budgets each year to tap more students for school.

Effects of Cost on Secondary Education

Cost, whether direct or indirect always has negative implications on students' participation in education. Although secondary education has been appreciatively expanded the world over, millions of students still leave school without completing 12 years of education (Jacinto,2011).School fees is one of the single most factors influencing students' participation in education. Poor households normally struggle with the effort to send their children to school and seeing them through to completion. Economic situation of youth in upper secondary schools in Mexico was found to be the second largest contributor of school drop-out (22.7%) after lack of interest and a feeling that education was irrelevant to quality life, (40.0%), (World bank, 2014). Population census report of 2005 in the same country similarly cites students' economic situation as the second main cause of dropping out from upper secondary education. Around the world, both the direct costs of going to school – tuition and other fees, uniforms, transport, books and so on as well as opportunity costs, particularly in the form of lost labour for the household, remain barriers to achieving universal enrolment to school (Adelman & Holland, 2015). Uganda implemented universal secondary education in 2007, the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to do so. In the program's first year, 69% of primary school graduates continued on to secondary school as

opposed to 50% prior to its implementation and enrolment increased the most among girls from poor households (Asankha& Takashi, 2011).

However, there is a general concern that compulsory secondary education has resulted in deteriorating academic standards (Hedger et al. 2010). Similarly, Kenya, which introduced free tuition secondary education in 2008 has been struggling with shortages of classrooms and teachers and delayed disbursement of funds as well as declining quality (Kavuma, 2011). According to the Republic of Kenya (2002), Ministry of Education Science and Technology, {(MoEST) (2004)} and MoEST (2005), the cost of secondary education in Kenya is the main reason for the low transition rate from primary to secondary education. A study by Mutegi (2005) established that the cost of education was one of the main factors that negatively affects students' demand for secondary education. However, increase in the governments' funding of education has not necessarily resulted to improved retaining of children in school as still countries report non-enrolment and massive drop-out rates over many years.

Odada and Odhiambo (2003) gave comments on user fees impact by noting that high fees were charged to a degree that the poor could not access education. MoEST (2005) asserts that over the last decade, low enrolment ratios of secondary education compared to primary education has been as a result of high cost of secondary education and poverty. Additionally, the escalating cost of learning and teaching materials, high cost of school uniforms, transport charges and development levies were also seen as factors hindering secondary education. In 2010, a poverty assessment was done in Kenya and the results were that communities that were deprived financially had difficulties keeping children in school. This was due to their inability to raise money for schooling. Statistics indicated that over 50% of the households interviewed had their children drop out from school due to financial constraints (World Bank, 2011).

The report from the World Bank implies that whereas the imposition of user fees would affect the poor children, if they are removed without proper plans, then the most affected would be the poor. This is in light of the quality of education being compromised with removal of user fees owing to high school enrolment. An assessment on effect of user charges on enrolment and attendance revealed that when households contribute to cost of education, there is reduced attendance ratios (Reddy & Vandermoorteel, 2009). A study of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Malawi shows despite the abolition of school fees and the non-enforcement of school uniforms, parents were still required to incur expenses of exercise books, pens and clothes. Rose (2002) found that the sum of the costs was actually

more than the amount formerly required for fees. Rose (2002) estimates that poorest households spend 13% of their household expenditure on education. Other studies show that although free education reduces households' direct costs, indirect costs remain as substantive deterrent for children from poor households to gain access to education. Ghana implemented Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in 1996 in primary and lower secondary.

However, as a result of abolition of school fees some schools introduced indirect fees to compensate for the lost revenue (Akyaanpong, 2009). Thus, parents in primary and lower secondary schools were still required to pay for operational costs, parents teacher association fees, textbooks, uniforms and other costs. In other examples although Uganda introduced universal secondary education parents are still required to pay boarding and medication costs. Similarly, Nigeria provides tuition free secondary education, yet different forms of fees are imposed on parents to cover the cost of running the system (UNESCO, 2007). Studies on access and retention in primary and lower secondary education in Ghana show that although the FCUBE made overall enrolments increase, children from poor households continue to be underrepresented in enrolments (Akyaanpong, 2009; Rolleston, 2009). The rising cost of providing education to the citizenry, justifies every country's policy of partnership in financing education. the essence of cost-sharing in the provision of education is to lessen the cost burden in the light of costly inputs, growing numbers of students and desire for quality. Whereas this idea is noble, results from other countries have shown that the practise has adverse effects on children from low-income households seeking to access education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) was rolled out by Grand Coalition Government in Kenya, in 2008. The development started with massive establishment of Public Day Secondary (PDS) schools throughout the country. this was the government's wisdom of mitigating the cost of secondary school education which until then was majorly a preserve of the well-off families. The Government of Kenya (GoK) embarked on construction of classrooms, laboratories, employment of teachers and purchase of textbooks. Parents were however required to meet the cost of non-tuition expenses such as meals, school uniform, support learning materials, stationery and other user requirements for their children. Despite GoK's spirited efforts to achieve 100% transition of students from primary to secondary school, statistics show that by 2018, Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) and Net Enrolment Rate (NER) stood at 70.3% and 53.2% respectively {Kenya Institute for Public Policy

Research and Analysis (KIPPRA, 2020)}. Studies have shown that cost is a factor in students' enrolment to school the world over. There is therefore need to conduct research and find out the influence of non-tuition expense on students' enrolment at public day secondary (PDS) schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive survey was adopted as research design for this study due to its applicability in determining trends of a population. The study was carried out between May and July in the year 2017 in Imenti North Sub-County, Meru County in the Eastern region of Kenya. At the time, Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) had been implemented for 10 years with GoK giving all public secondary schools capitation to cater for learning/teaching resources and pay the key support staff like school guards and secretaries. This was done in an effort to mitigate the cost of education as much as possible. The government was also outdoing itself in establishment of more Public Day Secondary (PDS) schools and employment of teachers to increase access. Despite all these efforts, a proportionate number of students remain unenrolled in secondary schools hence the need for this study.

Target Population

The target population for this study was the principals of PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya owing to their knowledge on why students do not enrol in their schools despite the invitations. At the time, the sub-county had 22 public day secondary schools from which 2 were used in the pilot study.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The respondents for this study were the principals of PD Sschools. All the principals of PDS schools in the sub-county were included in this study. The sample size for the study therefore comprised of 20 principals (having involved 2 of them in the pilot study). This constituted a 100% sample size. According to <https://www.qualtrics.com>, the sample size for a target population of less than 100 cases should be 100%.

Research Instruments

Data for this study was collected using the questionnaire for school head teachers. Questionnaires have greater validity of information because the responses given by the respondents are available in their own version and language (<https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com>). Questionnaires are also easy to plan, construct and administer. To enhance the validity of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted with the participation of 2 principals and their responses were used to construct the final questions in the questionnaire.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Establish the number of students enrolling to PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya
2. Determine the number of non-tuition requirements for students’ enrolling at PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya
3. Find out the measures entrenched by the stakeholders to improve enrolment at PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya.

In order to achieve the objectives, the following research questions were asked:

1. How many students are enrolling at PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya?
2. What are non-tuition requirements for students enrolling at PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya?
3. What measures have stakeholders entrenched to improve enrolment at PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County Kenya?

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaires were administered to 18 principals of PDS schools in Imenti North and they were all collected back resulting to 100% return rate. All their responses were found usable in the study and interpretations are presented in this section according to the research questions. Data is analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables and text.

Question 1:

How many students enrol at PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya

To establish the number of students enrolling in PDS schools in Imenti North sub county, Kenya, a question was presented to the school head teachers on the number of students who had enrolled in Form One in their schools in the previous three years in comparison with those invited. The findings are presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 number of students enrolling in form 1 in PDSS schools in the previous 3 years

N = 20

n	%	Those enrolled against those admitted in %
11	55	Below 50
6	30	50 - 70
3	15	Above 70

From Table 1.1, it is evident that in 11 PDS schools which constitute (55%) of those in the sub-county reported that the turn up rate for Form One students in the previous three years to this study was below 50% against those invited. These being PDS schools, which are categorised as sub-county (SB) schools, they admit students with the lowest Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) marks as compared to county, extra-county and national schools. This

means that if these students do not enrol in PDS schools, they can only either scout for a place in another PDS school or terminate their education altogether. The former is also challenging because the main catchment area for each PDS school is its locality. It is therefore difficult for this category of students to move to other PDS schools owing to their low-income households. Change of school comes with the demand for costly accommodation or transport arrangements which is a challenge to most of the families they come from. Thus, most of those who do not enrol in their PDS schools of admission are mostly terminating their education. A further prob revealed that financial challenges of some of those who do not enrol in secondary schools are so dire that even in term two and term three of schooling in Form One, still some students are hankering for admission. So, in every PDS school visited, the researcher sought information on the accumulated number of students who were admitted late (either in term two or term three in Form One) against the total class enrolment in the previous three years of the study. The responses are shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 The number of students on late enrolment in Form One

N = 20

n	%	Late enrolment against total student population in %
10	50	Above 20
7	35	10
3	15	Below 10

From Table 1.2 it can be seen that as many as 10 (50%) of the schools surveyed, over 20% of the total students were admitted late in Form One. This is an evidence of parents’ dire lack of financial resources to enrol their children in school at the required time.

Question 2:

To what extent does non-tuition expense influence students’ enrolment in PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya

Head teachers were presented with a question on the extent to which non-tuition expense influence students’ enrolment in their schools. As chief school administrators, head teachers were deemed to harbour valuable information on this question as they can to a large extent tell why students fail to enrol in their schools after being admitted. Table 2.1 shows the nature of admission levies and items against the number of schools which demand for them.

Table 2.1: Items and Levies Demanded by Schools on Student’s Admission

N =18

<i>Item</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>School uniform</i>	18	100
<i>Meals’ money</i>	18	100
<i>stationery</i>	18	100
<i>Support learning materials e.g., dictionary, bible, atlas, maths tables, sets</i>	10	56
<i>Games uniform</i>	7	39

From Table 2.1, all the schools covered by the study (100%) required that students purchase school uniform, pay for meals and buy personal stationery like exercise books, pens, pencils, rulers and other writing materials before they are enrolled in school. According to schools’ admission requirements, these levies and items were key and no student could be admitted in school without them. The study sought information on the percentage of students who either failed to show up for admission or are turned away due to non-possession of the items in question or non-payment of the charged levies. The results are shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: The Number of Students Forfeiting their Enrolment in Form One Due to Non-Tuition Expense

<i>Item</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Meals’ money</i>	30
<i>School uniform</i>	15
<i>stationery</i>	10
<i>Support text books e.g., dictionary, Bible, atlas</i>	5
<i>Games uniform</i>	2.5

From Table 2.2, the most deterrent requirement in students’ enrolment in PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County is money for meals with (30%) of the admitted students forfeiting their offers. This money is paid by parents directly to schools to buy food items to cook meals for students. School principals averred that it is challenging to admit a student whose meals have not been paid for because learning begins with addressing the physiological needs of learners for which food is key. They observed that failure to address students’ hunger can result to catastrophic chaos in schools for which no school head was willing to risk.

They also reported that majority of students hail from low-income households, hence not even 50% of students is able to pay meals money in full to compensate for those who could be enrolled without paying anything. School uniform was equally found to be a serious inhibiting factor in enrolment at PDS schools. At 15%, a substantial number of students missed school admission due to school uniform.

School principals observed that even when they sympathise and express their willingness allow parents to enrol students without the proper school uniform with the arrangement of buying it at a later date, 80% of the parents are hesitant to just throw their children in school when they do not look like others. They view this as exposing their poverty too much. Even students are quite unwilling to join others without the proper school uniform. Stationery was also found to be an impediment to enrolment in schools especially in families with illiterate parents and guardians. In such families, if a student is sent home for a pen, he/she can stay there for weeks. The researcher sought information on the amount of money levied for meals at Form One admission in PDS schools in Imenti North sub-county. The results are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Amount of Money Charged for Meals at PDS Schools in Imenti North Sub-County, Kenya

N = 18

<i>Amount in Ksh</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Below 3000</i>	5	27
<i>3000 - 5000</i>	10	56
<i>Above 5000</i>	3	17

From Table 2.3, it is evident that majority of PDS schools in Imenti North Sub- County, Kenya (56%) charged between Ksh 3000 – 5000 for meals at students’ enrolment in Form One. Only very few (27%) charged below Ksh 3000. School heads reported that with continued harsh climatic conditions, in conducive for proper crop harvests, the cost of food has astronomically gone up hence the high charges. They also postulated that given that their total school enrolments are low and the payment ability of their students poor, they do not enjoy economies of scale which come with massive food orders. With higher students’ population and majorly able parents, the school suppliers are assured of huge orders and prompt payments. They can hence supply schools with no transport charges. The fact that many PDS schools are situated in the county’s interior does not help matters. Due to impassable roads, food stuffs to these schools are mostly supplied by motorbikes which have little loading capacity hence repeated trips to clear the required stock. This pushes the transport cost for food supplies higher and it has to be borne by parents.

Question 3:

What measures have stakeholders entrenched to mitigate students’ failure to enrol at PDS schools in Imenti North Sub-County Kenya?

The researcher endeavored to find out the remedy stakeholders have entrenched to mitigate students’ poor enrolment in PDS schools. The principals being the heads of PDS schools and in this sense, the main

players in the sector were presented with this question. Their responses are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Remedy Entrenched by Stakeholders to Mitigate Students' Poor Enrolment in PDS Schools

N = 20

Remedyn%

Staggered payment of meals money	15	75.0
Relaxation of uniform rules	10	50.0
Leniency on demand of learning support materials	7	35.0
Delayed and selective home-sending of students for money or items	6	30.0
Acceptance of food materials in place of meals money	5	25.0
School sponsorship of students	3	15.0

From table 3.1, majority of PDS schools staggered the payment of meals money to enable more parents to enrol their children in school. School heads reported that to a great extent they are forced to enter into a form of agreement with parents on how they would be paying their money so as to match their financial abilities and plans. In addition, 30.0% of principals said that they took time to send students home to collect meals money or other items to allow parents sufficient time to comply. There are also 25.0% of principals who said they accepted food items such maize, beans and vegetables from parents in place of money. The rationale behind this they said many parents would find it cheaper to bring their produce to school rather than take it to the market with transport cost to sell and bring money to school. A massive 50.0% of schools were found to relax rules on uniform to keep children in school. Students were allowed to wear civilian clothes especially during rainy seasons and when their uniforms got torn. Only a mere 15% of schools were found to sponsor students with full items and monies required to take their education. This sponsorship, the principals said was financed by teachers, Board of Management members and other well-wishers to enable students from poor family backgrounds to get education.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the manner in which students are enrolling at PDS schools is appalling. Majority of PDS schools reported that more than half of the students they invite for admission at Form One do not turn up. This trend is worrying because almost all students marked for admission to PDS schools by the GoK are below average performers in their KCPE examinations and hence their choices as to the categories of schools are limited. There are high chances that failure to enrol in PDS schools deals a death knell to their academic life. From the findings, it is also visible that a number of students of those who enrol at PDS schools do so either later in the

term or year. This means by the time they are joining, other students in the classrooms have already lost substantial amount of instructional time and this can take a lengthy period of time to recover. Lost instructional time has greater adverse effects to students in secondary schools due to the heavily packed learning content and the limited time in which it should be covered. This keeps teachers on the run to cover the syllabus inconveniencing absentee students. The three most important requirements which all PDS schools said that students must have is meals money, school uniform and stationery. However, among these meals' money was blamed more than any other requirement for students' failure to enrol in Form One. With majority of schools charging between Ksh 3000.00 – 5000.00, this is an uphill task for many households. Kenya's 2020 Economic Report (KIPPRA, 2020) shows that most of Kenya's households rely on subsistence agriculture as their only source of income. This situation coupled with successive long periods of drought in the country condemns poor families into unprecedented levels of poverty. The situation makes it hard for them to raise school monies required by their children. The staggered method of meals money payment which is favoured by many schools as a strategy of mitigating schools' poor enrolment does not help majority of students because by the time, they are completing Form One arrears are so huge. This means they cannot continue at Form Two unless they get a well-wisher to offset the insurmountable balances, they owe schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that for PDS schools to fully benefit students the GoK should:

1. ensure continuous mechanism of data collection on enrolments in PDS schools to inform Government's decisions.
2. initiate a government-funded feeding programme to relieve parents the burden of payment of meals money.
3. endeavour to provide PDS schools with learning support materials and stationery to each student.

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