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Enhancing Socio-Economic Equity in Accessing Quality Education: A Case of Form One Selection Policy in KISII County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Through its educational policies, Kenya is among the countries whose aim is to achieve equity in access to secondary school by pupils from different socio-economic background. This study determines the level of equity in access to different categories of secondary school by pupils from different socio-economic background. The study adopted descriptive survey design and it used questionnaires and document analysis schedules to collect data from students and head teachers.

Stratified and Purposive sampling procedures were used to obtain a sample of 93 secondary school students and 60 primary schools.

The result showed that majority of students who learnt in private primary schools belonged to the upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds and they accessed national and quality provincial secondary schools while majority of those from public primary schools joined county secondary schools. There was lack of adequate resources, minimal parental support and high pupil-teacher ratios in public primary schools unlike in private ones. The implication is that unless the Ministry of Education reviews the selection policy this trend is likely to perpetuate intergenerational poverty and social inequality. The study therefore suggests that, the government and other stakeholders should equitably distribute learning resources to public schools to enable more pupils from low socio-economic background access quality education. The government should also rethink the quota admission policy so that socio-economic equity is achieved during form one selection process.

Keywords: *quota policy, equity, quality secondary school, socio-economic background*

1. Introduction

Since independence, the Government of Kenya has been committed to reviewing its' education policies and tackling emerging issues with a view of enhancing equity, quality, relevance of education and access to educational opportunities (Republic of Kenya (RoK), 2005). To enhance regional equity in selection and access to national and provincial secondary schools, the Government of Kenya through an Act of parliament introduced the Quota system for form one selection in 1985. The policy on form one selection allocates form one places as follows; 60 percent of pupils joining provincial secondary schools are to be selected from the primary schools within the county where the provincial school is located, 35 percent from other counties within the province where the school is located and 5 percent from other provinces (RoK, 2005). In another development to enhance equity in access to secondary school education especially for the students from low income background, the girl child, the orphans and vulnerable students in urban slums, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in collaboration with the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP) has laid down the following strategies: increase primary to secondary school transition rates from 47 percent in the year 2005 to 70 percent in the year 2008; increase the percentage of needy students accessing government bursary in secondary schools; increase the number of secondary schools especially in urban slums and develop new guidelines with selection criteria for needy students so as to raise the proportion of needy students accessing secondary school education (RoK, 2005). KESSP has also proposed to establish two schools to serve as centres of excellence in each county, one for each gender. This is intended to serve as role model schools and even increase the number of quality schools in every region (RoK, 2005). Currently, the government is making efforts to create more centres of excellence in each county.

Public secondary schools in Kenya have been categorized as National, Provincial and County schools. Selection to join these schools is based on the principle of meritocracy. National schools select the top KCPE scorers followed by provincial and lastly the county schools. National and most provincial schools are well endowed resource wise hence there is high quality learning in these schools compared to county secondary schools (Bogonko, 1994). These schools are therefore better avenues for social mobility compared to county schools hence the need to fairly distribute form one chances in quality schools. In KCSE examinations students in national and provincial schools seem to be performing well hence have high opportunity for upward mobility compared to those in county schools (KNEC, 2006). Studies have shown that if policies promoting access to

educational opportunities were fair, students from different social-economic backgrounds would be able to have a fair competition and access to form one place in quality schools. As a result, the school would serve as a levelling mechanism towards reducing social inequalities in the society (Kozol, 1991).

2. Consequences of Inequality in Accessing Quality Education

Access to a quality school is most likely to lead to good performance in examination which could facilitate the pupils' access to the secondary and even higher education of particularly high international standard (Muller, 1999). However, students who attend county secondary schools and other low quality secondary schools continue to have the less educational opportunities of proceeding into universities and even other quality vocational colleges. Even if the chances of catching up with higher educational levels have increased somewhat through the introduction of a self sponsored programmes, distance learning, bursaries and scholarships, such opportunities still tend to filter pupils by their parental background so that children from a more prestigious socio-economic background are more likely to obtain the qualifications to enroll for parallel degrees (Muller, 1999). The second consequence of inequality of educational opportunities is the occupational segmentation of the Kenyan labour-market. In Kenya, labour-market position is strongly predicted by level and type of education one acquired. The expectation of employers of finding workers with the required qualifications reinforces this occupational segmentation. The implication of this is that the higher the secondary school qualifications, the greater the opportunities for vocational or academic training, which again leads to a higher labour-market position. Inversely, the lower the secondary school qualification, the higher the risk of unemployment (Riphahn, 1999). There also appears to be a clear correlation between a child's secondary school attainment and their subsequent work income (Dustmann, 2001). Hence, the quality of the secondary school one attends is most likely to affect subsequent earning opportunities.

Generally, most private schools charge high amount of fees making them inaccessible to children from low income families. Kozol (1991) observed that most private schools have adequate learning-teaching resources unlike most public primary schools. Consequently, children from public schools don't score highly in national examination compared to those from private primary schools. This scenario locks children who learn in public schools into some kind of educational caste. Wachira (2007) observed that availability of adequate learning resources in private primary schools in Kenya has led to high quality education in these schools as evidenced by their good performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination. For instance, during the release of 2006 KCPE results it was observed that out of the top 100 pupils, only 14 pupils emerged from public primary schools as the remaining 86 emerged from private schools (KNEC, 2006). This is likely to impact negatively on equity in selection and access to join secondary school, higher education and even on an individuals' social mobility.

A society can be deemed more or less progressive depending on whether the link between parents' and children's social status as adults is looser or tighter. In a relatively immobile society an individual's wage, education or occupation tends to be strongly related to those of his/her parents (Muller, 1998). Intergenerational mobility depends on a host of factors that determine individual economic success, some related to the inheritability of traits (such as innate abilities), others related to the family and social environment in which individuals develop. Among environmental factors, some are only loosely related to public policy (such as social norms, work ethics, attitude towards risk and social networks), while others can be heavily affected by policies. Typical examples are policies that shape access to human capital formation, such as public support for early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as redistributive policies (for example, tax and transfer schemes) that may reduce or raise financial and other barriers to accessing higher education. Indeed, in an economic sense, intergenerational social mobility is generally defined in terms of the possibility to move up (or down) the income or wage scale relative to one's parents. Such mobility is closely related to educational achievement, given that there is a direct link between human capital and labour productivity (Todaro, 1970). For successful formulation and implementation of equity policies, it is necessary to find out the extent of disparity in accessing different categories of schools. Against this background, this paper assesses the level of equity in access to quality education by pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds.

3. Statement of the Problem

Pupils from economically stable family background seems to have better opportunities of accessing national and quality provincial secondary schools than their counterparts from the lower socio-economic backgrounds. This is against the educational goal of enhancing social equality through education. If this issue is not addressed, the aforementioned secondary schools may remain a domain of pupils from upper and middle socio-economic background as county secondary schools remains the major avenue for those from lower socio-economic background. The need to determine the level of equity in accessing different categories of secondary schools in Kisii South County occasioned this study.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to determine the level of equity in accessing different categories of schools by pupils from different socio-economic background. Specifically, the study sought to

- Determine the proportion of pupils accessing different categories of primary and secondary schools from different socio-economic background.
- Determine if there was a relationship between pupils' socio-economic background and their access to secondary school.
- Finally the study assessed the opinion of head teachers about the factors influencing access to secondary schools from there specific primary schools.

5. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Social Justice Theory postulated by John Rawls upon which the concept of equity was founded (Rawls, 2001). He focused on the idea of justice and fairness in distribution of goods and essential services. According to this theory, for justice to prevail the worse off or disadvantaged members of the society should be considered or compensated in the provision of goods and services. It also points out that due to lack of equity in distribution of essential needs, every society is always faced with the choice about whether to stay with the current laws and policies or to modify them so as to achieve equity. For instance, advocates of the theory observed that, for justice to prevail the society should change its policies and laws to raise the position of the least advantaged in the society (Rawls, 2001). The implication is that societies should focus on creating a system that is fair to every member of the society.

This study considers quality education as an essential service needed by all members of the society in order to uplift their position. Based on this theory, quality secondary school education should be equitably accessed by individuals from upper, middle and lower socio-economic background. This implies that, students who learn under un-conducive environment or who are disadvantaged during learning process should be put into consideration during form one selection to enable them fairly get access to quality secondary schools. This is because studies have shown that, quality education is essential for upward mobility especially for those from the lower socio-economic backgrounds (Kesler, 2001).

6. Literature Review

The concept of equity refers to the degree of fairness and justice extended to every member of the society (Chiuri and Kiumi, 2005). It is tied up to the society's religious, philosophical and moral value hence its interpretation differs from one society to another (Ayodo, Gatimu and Gravenir, 1991). The degree of equality of educational opportunities that is reached by school systems varies considerably across countries. While equality assumes sameness of treatment for all, equity refers to fairness or justice and its promotion through policy. It requires that individuals' or groups' needs and circumstances be taken into account when planning or designing initiatives. An equity based approach acknowledges that compensatory mechanisms may be required in order to promote fairness and to level the playing grounds for the disadvantaged groups in the society. This implies that promotion of equity in education may require policies and initiatives, which in themselves undermine equality of provision or treatment and change the allocation of existing resources with the aim of promoting change and enhancing equity.

Equity in education has been a concern of almost all countries whether developed or in the process of developing. Inequality in education is measured by differences in measures of learning (like test scores), measures of educational attainment (like years completed and transition), or access to educational opportunity. Countries differ in the extent to which they value fairness and equity. For instance, Finland seems to consider equality of both educational status and opportunity as the key elements of equity (Nyssola, 2005). As a result of putting more emphasize on equality, Finland has relatively low levels of poverty compared to the standards of other developed countries.

Equity in education is more than an issue of fairness and distributive justice especially in the current period when many countries are trying to develop their human resources as one element in enhancing growth and international competitiveness in the job market. Unequal education implies that human potential is being wasted, and that some individuals do not have the competence to perform well in a modern society (Ludger & Schutz, 2006). This is both a social and an individual problem. From a social standpoint large numbers of under educated individuals fail to contribute positively to national prosperity. From an individual standpoint, lack of adequate schooling and school based competencies usually leads to lower earnings, higher levels of unemployment, increased crime and may correlate to poor economic conditions including family instability, worse health, greater stresses of several kinds, lower levels of political participation, and a general inability to participate in the richness of a modern society (Chiuri and Kiumi, 2005).

Equity in access to education requires that the costs and benefits of education be equitably distributed among regions, gender, different socio-economic and ethnic groups (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 1985). A study by the Society for International Development (SID, 2004) on access to educational opportunities show that there exists a wide disparity in access to educational opportunities between geographical regions, gender, and socio-economic background, rural and urban settings. The report further show that, there are wide gaps between participation rates at the secondary, technical and university levels. Schultz et al. (2005) observed that in some countries for instance, students' access to educational opportunities is determined by educational performance which is strongly predetermined by their family background. This is much less the case in other countries.

The parents' income level, highest level of education attained, property owned like type of house, car, size of land and occupation are major determinants of socio-economic status (Todaro, 1970). The economic status of parents has a direct influence on their children's education. Studies have revealed that there exists inequality in accessing secondary education between pupils from different socio-economic background. Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) observed that there is evidence that, some groups of people in developing countries have better access to educational opportunities than others because the factors determining access to education varies from region to region and from group to group.

Similarly, Fields (1980) observed that, there exist considerable differences in educational opportunities and participation classified by gender, socio-economic background and urban-rural areas. Despite the efforts made to achieve equity of access to educational opportunities, there remains considerable social selection and disparities in education particularly among different socio-economic groups (Chimombo, 1999; Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). They observed that, the development of sound and inclusive strategies to accelerate progress towards good quality education for all was urgently needed.

In America, the notion of equal educational opportunity has historically been supported by the society. Studies reveal that Americans invest their public dollars in education more than other sectors because of emphasis on equity in access to educational opportunities (Kluguel and Smiths, 1986). Despite the fact that American education has provided unprecedented

educational opportunities, some groups of Americans have benefited from the system more than others. Klugel and Smiths (1986) observed that, 83% of people believed that children from upper socio-economic background had a better or much better chance to access higher schooling opportunities than those from average and lower socio-economic background.

Racial segregation in public and private schools was a common phenomenon in Americans education system in the 1950s (Kozol, 1971). For instance, inferior education was given to blacks, whether in the North or the South, facilities in most whites' schools were far superior to facilities in most black schools and average public expenditures for white schools routinely exceeded expenditures for black schools. This created inequality in access to higher educational opportunities and resulted into social and racial stratification. Consequently, affirmative actions were introduced to eliminate segregation in education e.g. introduction of racial quotas. However the affirmative action gave graduates of private schools high opportunity of proceeding to higher education than those who learnt in public schools which were financed through taxes (Kozol, 1971).

In Latin America, the increased investment and target interventions to the children from low-income families and vulnerable schools have succeeded in improving the quality of education provided in the public schools. However, children from well-off families who attend private schools got quality education and achieved the highest scores. The levels of learning fall away as income levels descend so that low-income children attending public or subsidized private schools present the lowest levels of educational performance (McEwan and Carnoy, 2000; McEwan, 2001).

Ferge et al (1980) carried out a study in Hungary on the effects of the type and quality of school on future opportunities for children. The findings show that, the standards of education in rural areas remained below those of urban areas causing disparity in performance due to lack of adequate equipment. As a result, there arose regional inequality between the rural and urban areas.

In another study by Court & Kinyanjui (1980) on distribution of educational facilities it was concluded that, the facilities available to the newly independent African countries in early 1960s were unequally distributed between geographical areas. In Kenya and Tanzania for example, distribution of educational facilities and expenditure favoured minority groups like urban areas, areas of mission settlement and areas of colonial interests leading to disparity in distribution of educational resources.

A study conducted by the OECD (2000), examined the relationship between students' performance and several aspects of their home background, such as their parents' levels of education and occupations, their exposure to various levels of cultural and economic capital, their country of birth, and the language they speak at home. The results show that home background indisputably has an influence on the performance of students. Parental occupation has a particularly strong correlation with student performance in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy. Having parents in prestigious jobs may widen the range of options of which children are aware. Thus, it appears that educational systems should try to widen occupational knowledge and aspirations of students. Family wealth, associated with parents' occupations, also corresponds to higher levels of performance, although the relationship is weaker. Parental education and patterns of social and cultural communication between parents and children appear to have a significant beneficial impact for children. Public policy should therefore support parents, particularly those with a low educational level, to facilitate their interactions with their children and with the schools.

A study by Ngware et al (2006) on 'Improving Access to Secondary School in Kenya' revealed that, household income level increases the probability of a household decision to enrol a child to secondary school. This implies that the higher the level of household income, the higher the prospect of enrolling children in secondary schools. Income provides the needed resources that a household can share among its unlimited needs. Thus with higher income levels, a household will be able to invest more on the children's education. On the other hand low income implies that a family can only squeeze its budget to cater for the most basic needs.

Causa, & Chapuis (2009) observed that inequalities in secondary education are likely to translate into inequalities in tertiary education and subsequent wage inequality. For example, in Denmark, Finland, Italy and Luxembourg the probability of achieving tertiary education is more than 30 percentage points higher for a son whose father had also achieved tertiary education compared to a son whose father only had upper secondary education. Educational inequalities are compounded by wage inequalities in the sense that generational transmitted inequalities in higher education are positively associated across countries with inequalities in wages.

7. Research Methodology

The study was done in Kisii South County in Western province. It was conducted using descriptive survey design which is concerned with describing, recording, analyzing and interpreting relationships or conditions as they existed without manipulation of the variables (Kothari, 2003). The design was selected because of its ability to enable rapid collection of data from a representative sample population as observed by Cohen and Manion (1980). The design was used to describe and explain access to the selected secondary schools and the pupils' socio-economic background. The study focused on pupils who were selected and actually joined the secondary schools from private end public primary schools. The primary schools with a mean score of less than 280 marks were eliminated from the study. The target population therefore comprised of 60 primary school head teachers, 155 secondary school students and the Provincial Examination Officer (PEO) Western Province.

Questionnaires and document analysis schedules were used to collect data. Questionnaires were preferred because they are convenient when handling a large number of respondents. The questionnaire for students had two sections. Section one gathered personal information about the students' gender, type of primary and secondary school attended, KCPE score, and fathers' or guardian's occupation. Section two gathered information about the students' socio-economic background. This section elicited responses on the students' father or guardian level of education, income level and property owned.

The parents' questionnaire comprised of 3 sections. Section I collected biographic data, section II sought information on socio-economic status while section III solicited information about the type of primary and secondary school accessed by their children. The purpose of gathering this data was to cross validate the information given in the questionnaire for students. The

questionnaire for the head teachers had two sections; section one gathered biographic data of the head teachers while section two solicited data about the head teachers' opinion.

The schools' admission registers were used to verify data on enrolment of form one students in the sample schools. Data from the Provincial Examination Office and head teachers on the number of students selected to join different categories of secondary schools and those who actually joined those schools was collected using document analysis schedules. This data was used to trace the respondents of the study.

Questionnaires for these students were delivered to them and picked on completion. The return rate for the students' questionnaires was 62% (93) out of 155 questionnaires. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a return rate of 50% is considered adequate for analysis and reporting of research studies. It was observed that, all pupils in the sample who had been selected to join national schools actually did access the schools. However 23 (36.0 %) of those selected to join provincial secondary schools had failed to access while 39 (48.8%) of those selected to join county schools failed. Through the students, their parents' mail and telephone contacts were obtained. Thus parent's questionnaires together with an introductory letter stating the purpose of the study were delivered by mail to selected national and provincial schools. Parents were requested to fill the questionnaires and return them after a period of one week. To ensure this, a self addressed envelope was enclosed in each parents' questionnaire. Those who failed to return the questionnaire were reminded through telephone calls. For parents who had children in county schools, the questionnaires were delivered and returned through their children.

Multi stage sampling procedure was used to obtain a desired sample of schools. Kombo and Tromp (2006) observed that, a sample size of between 10% and 30 % of accessible population is a representative sample hence a sample of 4 (24 %) national schools was considered adequate. Provincial and county secondary schools which had KCSE mean score of above 8.5 and 6.0 respectively were purposively included in the study because such schools seemed to be offering quality education as evident by their KCSE mean scores therefore acting as avenues for socio-economic progression. A total of 93 students from Kisii South County who accessed the selected secondary schools were purposively picked upon as the respondents of the study.

Data collected from the respondents was edited, coded and entered into the computer. The data collected was nominal in nature. It was analyzed using both inferential and descriptive statistics. Percentages were used to analyze the proportion of pupils who accessed different categories of secondary school by socio-economic background. Information gathered on socio-economic indicators was used to categorize pupils into three socio-economic backgrounds. The indicators of socio-economic status included the parents/guardian income level, father's occupation, type of house lived in at home, property owned by their parent or guardian and parents' education level. These indicators were used to capture common features that mainly contribute to socio-economic status of most African families as observed by Todaro (1970); Odebero (2008).

Every indicator had a different scoring criterion that was used to produce a range of total scores. The total scores ranged between 9 and 36. Using the total scores, the respondents were classified into three socio-economic categories as shown below:

- From score 8-12 represented lower socio-economic background (Coded 1)
- From score 13-24 was middle socio-economic background (Coded 2)
- From 25-36 represented upper socio-economic background (Coded 3)

The findings on the proportions were presented using tables and comparative bar graphs. Chi-Square tests were performed to test whether there was a relationship between pupils' socio-economic background and access to secondary school. The test was preferred because the data collected by the study was nominal in nature (Kathuri, 2003; Ingule, 1996). To calculate Chi square results, data was analyzed at a confidence level of 0.05.

8. Findings and Discussions

The study sought to determine if there was equity of access to primary and secondary school by students from lower, middle and upper socio-economic backgrounds.

8.1. Proportion of Pupils from Lower, Middle and Upper Socio-Economic Background Accessing Public and Private Primary Schools

To determine the proportion of pupils from different socio-economic background who accessed different primary schools, pupils were asked to identify the type of primary school attended, fathers' education level, property owned by the father, size of family land, type of house lived in, occupation of the father and his income level. The responses were scored and the scores used to classify students in different socio-economic backgrounds against the type of primary school attended. The total number of students in every category was used to compute percentages. The results were as shown in table 1.

	Lower	Middle	Upper	Total
	Count (%)	Count (%)	Count (%)	
Public	30 (93.8%)	23 (53.5%)	4 (22.2%)	57
Private	2 (6.2%)	20 (46.5%)	14 (77.8%)	36
Total	32 (100%)	43 (100%)	18 (100%)	93

Table 1: Distribution of Pupils to Different Categories of Primary School by Socio-Economic Background
Source: Field Data

Table 1 shows that majority of pupils (93.8 %) from low socio-economic background learnt in public primary schools while a smaller percentage (6.2%) from this socio-economic background were enrolled in private primary schools. Majority (53.5%) of

pupils from middle socio-economic background enrolled in public primary schools while 46.5 % attended private primary schools. It is also observed that, 77.8 % of pupils in the upper socio-economic background attended private primary schools while 22.2 % from this socio-economic background attended public primary schools. The percentages were used to draw figure 1 below.

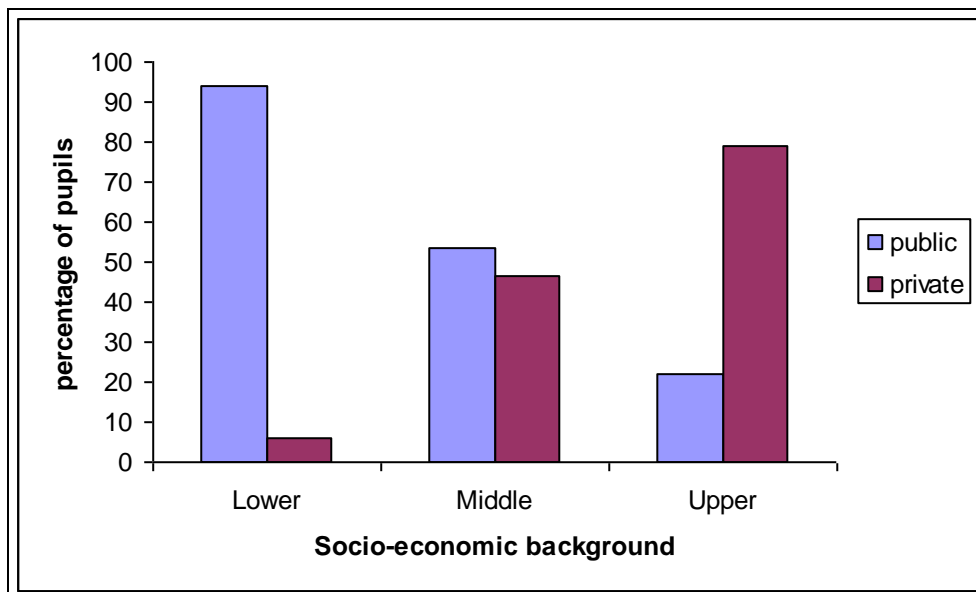


Figure 1: Access to Primary School by Pupils from Different Socio-Economic Backgrounds.
Source: Table 1

Figure 1 show that, majority of pupils from lower socio-economic background attended public primary schools. This is evident by the value of the bar representing them being higher (93.8 %) than the value of the bar representing pupils attending private primary schools which was 6.3 %. From the middle socio-economic background, 53.5 % of the pupils attended public primary schools while 46.5 % attended private primary schools. It is also observed that, 77.8 % of pupils from the upper socio-economic background attended private primary schools while 22.2 % attended public primary schools. This could be attributed to the fact that, most private primary schools charge high amount of fees locking out most children from low socio-economic backgrounds because their parents can not meet the direct costs of education in private primary schools. This denies pupils from low socio-economic the benefits that accrue from private education. Ngware et al (2006) observed that, if individuals from certain households were to be prevented from accessing education due to costs and/or any other militating factor, then they are denied the benefits that accrue from education. Indeed there is a clear link between the quality of school attended and later income and occupational opportunities. It is therefore the secondary school that shapes an individual's lifetime chances and limits professional opportunities.

A Chi square (X^2) tests was done to determine the extent of the relationship between access to private and public primary school and socio-economic background of pupils. This was done using the contingency table below.

	Lower	Middle	Upper	Total
Private	30	23	4	57
Public	2	20	14	36
Total	32	43	18	93

Table 2: Number of Pupils Accessing Different Types of Primary School by Socio Economic Background
Source: Field data

The calculated Chi-square value ($X^2=26.88$) was greater than the critical table value of 5.991 at 2 degrees of freedom tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance ($26.88 > 5.991$, $df = 2$). The test revealed that there was a significant relationship between access to primary school and pupils' socio economic background in that, pupils' socio-economic background strongly determined the type of primary school to be accessed. The results concur with observations made McEwan & Carnoy (2000) that, in Latin America children from well off families learn in private schools as those from low income attended public or subsidized private schools. This scenario could be attributed to the fact that, parents of low socio-economic status in are not able to meet the direct costs of education in private schools hence enrol their children in public school where education is subsidized.

8.2. Proportion of Pupils Accessing Different Categories of Secondary School by Socio-Economic Status

In order to establish the distribution of pupils from different socio-economic background to secondary schools, students were asked to identify their fathers’ education level, property owned by the father, size of family land, type of house lived in, occupation of the father and his income level from various sources. The data was used to calculate the percentage of pupils from three socio-economic statuses attending different type of primary school. The results were tabulated as shown in table 3.

	National	Provincial	County
	Count (%)	Count (%)	Count (%)
LSES	1 (8.3%)	7 (17.1%)	24 (60%)
MSES	1 (8.3%)	26 (63.4%)	16 (40%)
USES	10 (83.4%)	8 (19.5%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	12 (100%)	41 (100%)	40 (100%)

Table 3: Distribution of Pupils to Different Categories of Secondary School by Socio-Economic Background

Source: Field Data

Legend: LSES- Lower Socio Economic Status, MSES- Middle Socio Economic Status, USES- Upper Socio Economic Status

From table 3, it is observed that the majority of pupils (83.4 %) who accessed national secondary schools were from upper socio economic background. Those pupils from lower and middle socio-economic background accounted for only 8.3% and 8.3% respectively. For access to provincial secondary schools, a bigger percentage of pupils (63.4 %) were from middle socio-economic background while 19.5 % and 17.1 % were from upper and lower socio-economic backgrounds respectively. It was also observed that a bigger percentage (60 %) of pupils who accessed county schools emanated from lower socio economic background. These results were presented using figure 2 below.

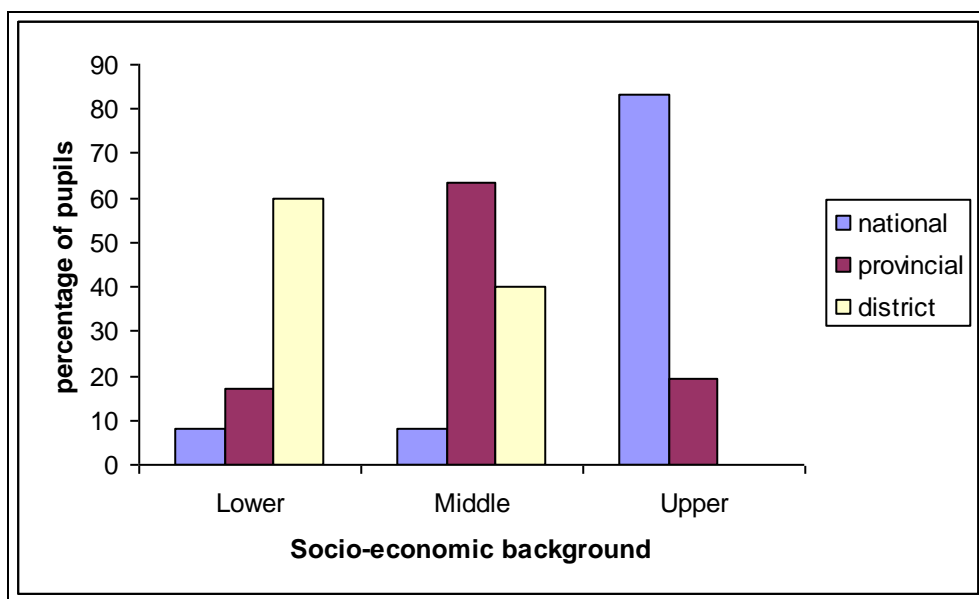


Figure 2: Access to Secondary School by Pupils from Different Socio-Economic Background.

Source: Author, 2010

It is apparent from figure 2 that, a larger percentage of pupils from the upper socio-economic background accessed national secondary schools compared to the percentage that accessed provincial schools. The percentage is also greater than that of pupils accessing national schools from middle and lower socio-economic backgrounds. This was evident by the values (83.4 %) of the bar representing pupils accessing national schools from upper socio-economic background being greater than 19.5 % representing pupils accessing provincial schools.

This scenario was different for access to secondary school by pupils from the middle socio-economic background. The bar value (63.4%) representing pupils from the middle socio-economic background to provincial secondary schools was greater than the values (40 % and 8.3 %) representing access to county and national secondary schools respectively. From lower socio-economic background, a larger proportion (60%) of pupils accessed county secondary schools while 17.1% and 8.3% accessed provincial and national secondary schools respectively.

A chi square test was done to determine the extent of the relationship between access to secondary school and socio-economic background of students. This was done using the contingency table below.

	Lower	Middle	Upper	Total
National	1	1	10	12
Provincial	7	26	8	41
County	24	16	0	40
Total	32	43	18	93

Table 4: Number of Pupils Accessing Secondary School by Socio Economic Background

Source: Field Data

The results showed that, the calculated Chi-square value ($X^2 = 53.4$) was greater than the critical table value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance ($53.4 > 9.488$, $df = 4$). The test revealed that there was a relationship between access to secondary school and students' socio economic background. The results concur with observations made by Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) that the education system in developing world has remained socially stratified despite the governments' efforts to achieve parity. Similarly, Fields (1980) observed that there exist considerable differences in educational opportunities and participation classified by gender, socio-economic background urban-rural areas.

The results of this study could be attributed to the fact that the financially endowed parents are in a better position to enrol their children into private primary schools that do perform better in KCPE examination than most public schools. Most parents in the upper and middle socio-economic background are able to meet both the direct and indirect costs of educating their children leading to overwhelming performance in examination. This gives children from upper and middle socio-economic background an upper hand of accessing quality primary schools compared to their counterparts in the lower socio-economic background. These private schools have a high turnover rate to both national and quality provincial secondary schools compared to public primary schools.

Contrary to the aforementioned observation, majority of parents in the low socio-economic background end up taking their children to public primary schools as they cannot afford the fees charged in the private primary schools. The public primary schools have a low turnover rate to both national and quality provincial secondary schools hence pupils from low socio economic background have a low transition to national and quality provincial schools. Majority of them access county secondary schools.

The small proportion of pupils accessing national secondary schools from the lower socio- economic background could also be as a result of inability to meet the high cost of education in national secondary school by most parents from the low socio-economic background. Thus majority of pupils from lower socio-economic background access the county secondary schools. This could be because county secondary schools are affordable to them compared to most provincial and national secondary schools as there parents are from the low socio-economic background. However, schools with pupils from low socio-economic background seems to be facing a diverse of challenges which results in low performance compared to quality schools. This was evident in a study by Ndiku (2007) which revealed that, schools whose students belong to the low socio-economic background had the following characteristics and effects on education:

- Limited provision of school facilities, equipment and materials. Such affects the quality of teaching and learning.
- Less staff development and training opportunities.
- Poor nutrition and feeding habits in schools
- Poor health among some students.
- 5. Poor time management especially when learning is interrupted as students are sent for fees in some schools.
- Exposure of students and staff to indiscipline.
- Exposure of students, parents and staff to stressful situations.
- Creation of poor relations between the school and some parents.
- Creation of strained relations with the community
- Poor working relations in schools
- Lack of development of certain skills in students due to inadequacies of the curriculum some schools adopt.
- Increase school drop out

8.3. Factors Influencing the Number of Pupils Selected to Join Secondary School from Private and Public Primary Schools

Using a Likert type of scale primary school head teachers were requested to comment on the state of the factors influencing the number of pupils selected to join secondary schools from their primary schools. These factors included availability of learning resources, pupil teacher ratio, parental support and supervision of school programs. To get the mean score for every factor, the total score for each factor was divided by the total respondents in each type of primary school. The mean scores were summarized in table 5 below.

Factor	Mean score for private	Mean score for public
Availability of learning resources	4.57	2.79
Pupil teacher ratio of the school	4.43	2.40
Parents support and supervision of the school programs	4.14	2.46

Table 5: Head teachers Responses on the Factors influencing Performance in Public and Private primary Schools

Source: Field Data

Legend: Very good (5) Good (4) Average (3) Poor (2) very poor (1)

Table 5 indicates that public primary school head teachers felt that, there were inadequate learning resources, high pupil teacher ratio, and poor parental support in their schools. This is indicated by the mean scores of the head teachers' responses being 2.79, 2.40 and 2.46, all being less than three. On the contrary head teachers in private schools felt that, these factors were adequate in private primary schools as shown by their means being 4.57, 4.43 and 4.14 all being above three.

The success of private schools in posting large proportion of pupils to national secondary schools is a therefore a culmination of the provision of quality education as attested by the respondents' rating. Availability of teaching and learning resources has a positive influence on the pupils' academic achievement. Low pupil teacher ratio enable individualised teaching and adequate supervision of the pupils' hence promoting performance in examination. This observation is also in tandem with the observation made by Matear (1990) that in Chile, students who learnt in private schools got high quality education than those in public schools. Private primary schools had adequate learning resources hence scored highly in achievement tests enabling them to progress academically. Similarly, a study by Bonesronning et al. (2004) in Norweigh on the effect of private schooling on academic achievement revealed that students in private schools had higher average scores in national achievement tests both in grade 10 and in grade 4 compared to their counterparts in public primary school. This was attributed to the fact that, private schools have higher density of teaching inputs (lower student: teacher ratios) than in public schools leading to good grades in KCPE and eventually selection to join national schools.

9. Conclusion

The study concluded that there was a relationship between students' socio-economic background and access to secondary school. Majority of the pupils from the upper socio-economic backgrounds attend private primary schools enabling to pass KCPE and hence secure chances in quality secondary schools compared to their counterparts in the public primary schools.

Attendance to private primary schools is attributed to the fact that their parents' or guardians' socio-economic status enables them to afford high school fees charged in private primary schools, provide them with adequate learning resources and give possible guidance and support towards academic excellence. The divergent occurs for majority of pupils who learn in public primary schools. Most of their parents are of low socio-economic status hence unable to provide all the necessities for academic excellence. As a result, majority of pupils in public primary schools don't merit in KCPE examination yet they are the majority in enrolment. This hinders most of these students from accessing national and quality provincial schools. They finally dominate the county secondary schools as their counterparts in upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds dominate the national and quality provincial schools. This implies that the governments' efforts to achieve parity in access to quality education have not been achieved. This also negates the national goal of achieving social equality through educational opportunities.

Lack of equal opportunities is more likely to waste or misallocate human skills, talents, affect the motivation, effort and, ultimately, the productivity of citizens, with adverse effects on the overall efficiency and the growth potential of the economy. It may also create greater pressure for policy settings that are detrimental to growth but may help specific groups increase their share in overall income.

10. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the study findings.

- Public primary schools lack adequate learning resources. The government, international donor agencies and parent should therefore work in collaboration so as to provide sufficient learning resources in these schools to redress the inequality in resource distribution between public and private primary schools hence ensuring equal and fair competition in KCPE.
- Since the county secondary schools seem to be the main domain for pupils from low socio-economic background, the government should provide adequate learning resources in these schools. This will be in the wake of boosting the quality of education being offered in these institutions and to enhance equity in resource distribution.
- The government should re-think the form one selection policy so that more pupils from public primary schools are enabled to access quality secondary schools. Quotas could also be given on the basis of socio-economic background.
- The government, NGOs' and charitable organisations should encourage children from the low socio-economic background to attend private primary schools through provision of financial assistance like bursaries, scholarships, vouchers to the needy.

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