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## Parental Evaluation of the Implementation of Free Secondary Education Programme in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*The current study sort to determine the parental evaluation of the implementation of the Free Secondary Education (FSE) programme in secondary schools in Eldoret Municipality. The study specifically sought to find out parents' perception of the implementation of the FSE programme as well as the degree of parents support of FSE programme. The study used a cross sectional survey design with both qualitative and quantitative aspects. A total of 1462 parents, six head teachers, 61 teachers and 15 local leaders were consulted. simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the respondents.*

*The study found out that: Parents' perception of the implementation of the FSE programme had both positive and negative inclinations. The FSE programme reduced the school fees burden on the parents. The FSE programme had negative effect on the quality of education due to high student enrolments against inadequacy of teaching/learning resources. Parents registered full support to the programme by paying for school uniforms and boarding fee for their children as well as participating effectively in meetings and other educational forums organized by the schools.*

*The study recommended that: Parents be sensitized about their obligations and responsibilities pertaining school matters. More classrooms be constructed and more schools be established to accommodate increased number of students enrolling for secondary education. An assessment and evaluation mechanism be designed to promote quality education. Supply of instructional materials should be sufficient and timely. More human resources specially teachers should be employed to gather for the ballooning student populations*

**Keywords:** Free secondary education, parental evaluation, Eldoret municipality

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Primary education in Kenya begins at the age of 6 after completion of a two year pre-school education, commonly known as nursery. Primary education takes eight years. At the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> year, pupils sit for a national examination known as Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). For decades, KCPE served not just as a tool for evaluating pupil's academic achievement at the primary education but also as a sieving criterion for determining those who could proceed to secondary education. Secondary schools in Kenya fall into two categories – government funded, and private. Government funded schools are divided into national, extra county (formally provincial schools) and county levels. Private schools are run by either private organizations or individuals.

Students with the highest scores gain admission into national schools while those with average scores are selected into county schools. The government advocates for 100% transition of learners from primary to secondary. However, transition from primary to secondary schools rose from around 70 % just before introduction of free secondary school tuition in 2003 to 85% as at 2016. (Education Sector report of September 2016). According to ministry of education, out of about a million pupils who sat for KCPE at the end of 2018, 150 000 did not report to form one despite each one of them given a slot in form one in various secondary schools across the country and a grant of Ksh22,244 for tuition fee. However, even with good and timely funding, enrolment and retention may be limited by socio-economic factors in the environment. some of the factors causing school drop outs include early marriages, pregnancies, domestic duties, negligence by parents (discipline) and peer pressure or lack of interest in school(Liang & Nellmann (2004)

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

There has been increased transition of students from primary to secondary schools. Consequently, resulting in a very high teacher-student ratio, a scenario that compromised not just quality of education at secondary level but equally become an obstacle to the effective implementation of the FSE programme. Although the government is committed FSE,

the implementation has not been smooth. This has raised mixed reactions from different stakeholders especially the parents who feel that their children may not be getting good quality education. In such a case, parental evaluation of the FSE programme in Eldoret Municipality was necessary.

### 1.3. Objectives of the Study

The study specifically sought to:

- Find out parents perception in the implementation of the FSE programme in Eldoret municipality
- Find out whether the parents appreciate FSE programme
- Find out the degree or percentage of parents support to FSE programme.

### 1.4. Research Questions

- What is the parents' perception on the implementation of the FSE programme in Eldoret Municipality?
- Do parents appreciate the FSE programme
- What is the degree or percentage of parents support to FSE programme?

### 1.5. Significance of the Study

It is hoped that:-

- The research will be useful to the ministry of education and in exposing the underlying problems that still affect SFE programme.
- The study will provide information and recommendations that may bring improvement in the implementation of FSE in Kenya.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

The main purpose of Secondary Education in Africa is to facilitate the individuals' possibilities to enter and to succeed in secondary education. Most governments focus on reducing factors that are hindering youth to enter or to stay in schools and at the same time strive to achieve more equitable and efficient transitions from primary education to secondary education.

Bregman, J.( 2008) notes that transitions in Secondary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa is affected by slow growth of free secondary education for all, thus jeopardizing the futures of millions of children globally. A report from Human Rights Watch in advance of the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) 2018 observed that globally, more than 203 million secondary school children are out of school. Out of these, close to 80 percent of them are in the 65 countries associated with the Global Partnership for Education. MoEVT (2014) noted that low-income countries have made meaningful progress in ensuring primary education, but secondary education still remains out of reach for millions of children and that countries that have pledged to provide free secondary education should make good on these promises and those that have not should follow suit.

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), being a multilateral funding organization made up of governments, foundations, and private donors, is one of the largest global education donors and provides funding to strengthen primary and lower-secondary education in low-income and conflict-affected countries, including Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, and Tanzania. More than 43 million children of primary-school age and 35 million children of lower-secondary age are out of school in these countries. The Global Partnership for Education aims to be on track to allocate US\$2 billion per year from 2020. In 2015, the United Nations member countries pledged to provide free primary and secondary education by 2030. Various regional and international treaties set out detailed requirements to protect the child right to education. Key among the details is the obligation to eliminate school fees and all indirect costs at both primary and secondary education. Countries associated with the Global Partnership have implemented these obligations to varying degrees. Although most these counties have abolished tuition fees in both primary and secondary education, most of them still impose indirect costs like compulsory uniforms, exam fees, repair and maintenance fees, water and electricity fees, boarding fees among other indirect costs. Nepal for instance offer free education up-to secondary level but the indirect levies keep many girls and other vulnerable children out of school. Some GPE member countries have made significant attempts to actualize the obligation. For example in 2015, the government of Tanzania adopted a policy to eliminate tuition fees and any other costs up to lower secondary education. In 2017, Ghana guaranteed fully free education to higher secondary education.

Despite the critical role secondary education is expected to play in society, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are struggling to institute competitive secondary education systems. Many countries have been investing a lot in education sector particularly in primary and secondary education. Primary and secondary education is regarded as basic education and a right that every country should guarantee to her citizens (Abagi, 1998). The realization of basic education as a link to economic and social development has led to several countries to provide free secondary education (UNESCO, 2000).

A number of studies indicated that the provision of free education has been accompanied by numerous challenges that impede quality education. For instance, in Kenya and Uganda, the provision of free secondary education has led to unwillingness by many parents to make any payments to schools and in-creased student enrolment that consequently caused other problems like heavy teaching loads, movement of students in and out of schools, teacher shortages and inadequate instructional materials (Aluko&Adan,2015; Kalunda & Otanga, 2015, Oyaró, 2008 )

In 2007, Uganda became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to introduce universal secondary education. At the time, a UN report said Africa had the worst secondary school enrolment rates in the world. Only 34% of secondary

school-age children were enrolled in class. Girls and poorer young people comprised the bulk of those locked out of school by financial and cultural constraints. Academic standards are deteriorating, and the education being universal, students are just pushed through. Like Uganda, Kenya, which introduced a universal secondary scheme much after Uganda, is also facing similar challenges. Shortage of classrooms and teachers as well as belated disbursement of government grants are reportedly undermining the quality of education.

### 3. Research Methodology and Procedures

#### 3.1. Research Design

During the study, a descriptive survey design was used. It was selected for use because of its ability to generate both qualitative and quantitative information from different education stakeholders. This enabled the researcher to gather qualitative information from parents' evaluation of FSE, problems, strengths and opportunities of FSE policy. The relevant quantitative data like adequacy of instructional materials, pupil enrolment, the quantity and distribution of government aid to the schools was obtained from Municipal council education office as well as school management committee records.

#### 3.2. Population and Sample

The parent population of the study constituted 06 head teachers, 93 teachers and 1636 parents. The population and sample size are shown in table 1.

School	Head Teachers		Teachers		Parents	
	Population	Sample	Population	Sample	Population	Sample
Hill School	01	01	27	12	350	14
Wareng H.S	01	01	32	14	210	14
Kimumu H.S	01	01	25	09	365	14
Sosiani H.S	01	01	16	07	320	15
Mageresa H.S	01	01	22	08	206	14
Uasin Gishu H.	01	01	31	11	185	14
Total	06	06	153	61	1636	85

Table 1: Population and Sample Size  
Source: Eldoret Municipal Education Office

#### 3.3. Sampling Design

Stratified random sampling method was used to select 6 schools from the 15 government-aided funded secondary schools in Eldoret Municipality. These schools were selected proportionately based on their location, status, annual academic performance and their history. The study did not cover the private owned secondary schools in the area because they did not implement the FSE programme. In addition the researcher conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGD) using a sample of 15 opinion leaders selected from local councils, religious leaders and knowledgeable elders using purposive sampling.

#### 3.4. Method of Data Collection

During the study, both primary and secondary data were collected. The primary data was collected with the use of structured interviews guides. It was also prepared and used to collect information from the head teachers of the selected secondary schools. This tool helped to solicit for information about the degree or percentage of parents support to the FSE programme in the Municipality. A questionnaire was administered to parents and teachers. Through this method, information about the parents' perception of the implementation of the FSE programme, parents appreciation of the FSE programme and, the degree or percentage of parents support to the programme in Eldoret Municipality were collected.

#### 3.5. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

One FGD composed of opinion leaders (local leaders) in the area of study was conducted to check the reliability of the information generated from the structured interviews. These also helped in generating qualitative data regarding parental evaluation of the implementation of the FSE programme in the area. At least two opinion leaders were purposively selected from communities in each of the six selected secondary schools. The FGD participants ranged between 10 to 15 persons. The researcher moderated the discussion and recorded its deliberations and attitudes towards the topic.

#### 3.6. Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analyzed qualitatively where necessary; except from interview reports were used to supplement the facts raised in the discussion section. Also tables and graphs were used to explain major reports or findings.

#### 4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

##### 4.1. Data Presentation

##### 4.1.1. Research Question 1

What is the parents' perception of the implementation of the FSE programme in Eldoret Municipality?

	Positive	Percent	Negative	Percent
Positive factors				
1. Increased access to primary education	85	98.9	1	1.1
2. Reduction of debt burden to parents	76	90.3	0.8	9.2
3. Increase in pupils' enrolment	78	87.8	9	11.2
Negative Factors				
1. Inadequacy of school facilities	34	39.6	51	60.4
2. Promotion of poorly performing students	33	36.2	54	63.8

Table 2: Parents' Perception of the FSE Programme

##### 4.1.1.1. Results

Parents perceived the FSE programme as positive due to increase in access to secondary education, reduction of debt burden on parents and increased enrolment in secondary schools since the inception of the FSE programme in Kenya.

Parents perceived the FSE programme as negative due to inadequacy of school facilities and promotion of academically weak students.

##### 4.1.2. Research Questions 2

Do Parents appreciate the FSE Programme

Factors	Positive	Percent	Negative	Percent
1. Demand for the FSE in Kenya	68	74.4	18	21.6
2. Increased literacy rate of learners	73	87.2	27	12.8
3. Increased access to secondary education	66	61.4	29	38.6
4. Timely introduction of FSE	53	60.5	32	39.4

Table 3: Appreciation of the FSE programme by Parents

##### 4.1.2.1. Results

Parents appreciated the FSE programme as positive due to high demand for FSE in Kenya; increased literacy rate of children and that FSE programme was introduced at the right time.

##### 4.1.3. Research Question 3

##### 4.1.3.1. What Is the Degree Or Percentage of Parents' Support to FSE Programme?

The findings indicated that 65.2 of the responses supported FSE while 34.7 were reluctant. Based on the foregoing, the following conclusions were made

##### 4.2. Parents' Perception of the Implementation of the FSE Programme in Eldoret Municipality

- Parents perceived the FSE programme as positive due to increase in access to primary education, reduction of debt burden on parents and increased enrolment in secondary schools since its inception.
- Parents perceived the FSE programme as negative due to inadequacy of school facilities and promotion of academically weak learners.

##### 4.3. Appreciation of the FSE Programme by Parents

Parents appreciated the FSE Programme as positive due to high demand for FSE in Kenya; improved transition to and that FSE programme was introduced at the right time.

#### 4.4. *The Degree of Parents' Support for FSE Programme*

Majority of the parents agreed that the programme was very much supported.

### 5. Discussion of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 5.1. *Discussions of the Findings*

##### 5.1.1. Parents' Perception of the Implementation of the FSE Programme in Eldoret Municipality

One of the objectives of the study was "to find out parents' perception of the implementation of the FSE programme in Eldoret Municipality. There were a number of elements that were explored to help the researcher get answers to adequately answer this objective. From the results in the previous chapter, it is well expressed that parents evaluation of the FSE programme was found to be both positive and negative implying that there are some issues that are not pleasant while others were fair and good. These results were however, cross- referenced with the findings of other scholars in other organizational environments and a related picture was expressed. For instance, among the benefits brought about by the FSE programme where parents indicated a positive attitude were that: the introduction of FSE programme helped some children whose parents/guardians had failed to raise tuition fees to attain secondary education, that FSE programme reduced the school fees burden that was shouldered by parents, and that FSE programme led to improved transition. This is in linewith the ministry of education (2003) that the launching of FSE in Kenya in 2002 led to abrupt increase in the number of children in all FSE schools.

The idea that the introduction of FSE programme had reduced the school fees burden from most of the parents was also revealed through in-depth interviews.

On the other hand, respondents revealed a negative parents' attitude towards FSE programme. They indicated that the FSE has reduced academic standards in secondary schools. The study also noted that FSE has led to overcrowding in classes leading to shortage of infrastructure and other teaching/learning resources and that the programme has not been good because even pupils who are academically weak were promoted to higher grades. This encouraged laxity among students thus contributing to poor academic performance. From the focus group discussion, most participants expressed disappointment at the big number of pupils that had overwhelmed the physical infrastructure in most secondary schools in the area. This implies that other necessary facilities like the libraries, dining halls and dormitories for some boarding schools were also overcrowded.

Basing on the results of the current study and views from other scholars, it can be concluded that the introduction of the FSE programme in Eldoret Municipality in particular and Kenya in general generated both positive and negative attributes among parents.

##### 5.1.2. Appreciation of the FSE Programme by Parents

Another objective of the study was "To find out whether the parents appreciate FSE programme". From the results in the previous chapter, it was revealed that majority of the respondents appreciated the FSE programme. This was mainly due to the fact that it had relieved parents the burden of school fees. The available literature also concurs with research findings that FSE was highly required because Kenyan education turned out to be more expensive and losing value because parents could no longer afford paying rapidly increasing fees.

Finally, the appreciation of FSE programme by some parents was further explained by the previous experience where the girl child was not given priority in provision of secondary education. However since FSE did not involve payment of school fees by parents, it was expected that more girl children could attend school like their boy counterparts. This corroborates with Avenstrup, Liang and Nellemann (2004) findings that poor parents are willing to invest their children's time in education if they think they will gain something useful from the investment. However, they need to be convinced that their children have access to good – quality education – relevant knowledge and skills taught well in a conducive learning environment. If they are not convinced that their children are getting an appropriate education, they lose confidence in the system and pull their children out. This implies that the parent's perception towards UPE was positive and that they appreciated its introduction.

##### 5.1.3. The Degree of Parents' Support for FSE Programme

The final research objective was "to find out the degree or percentage of parents support to FSE programme." During the study, the degree of support was measured through the roles parents play in the implementation of FSE. Such roles included among others; participation in leadership of the school such as school management committee work and, developing relationship with teachers that focus on pupils, performance. Under the FSE programme, both parents and the community are charged with the contribution to school construction either in kind or through direct labor. Parents are supposed to provide the children with school uniforms, some reading materials as well as boarding fee.

The degree of support is highlighted through their participation as stakeholders and their positive attitudes towards FSE programme. This helped to improve cooperation between teachers and parents by providing information on how their children were getting on in schools. Writing about principles and practices of Education, Farrant (1982), schools had a traditional attitude to keep parents out of school, arguing that a professional skill such as teaching must be carried out without interruption or interference. Today, this tradition has changed greatly and schools have tried to encourage parents to take greater interest in their schools and have tried to get a better understanding of what takes place in the

classroom. This has been based on the fact that children cannot be culturally and intellectually divorced from their families and then after finishing they leave schools as misfits in their communities.

On the other hand, although the parents expressed high degree of support for FSE programme they identified a number of problems that were associated with its implementation. These included overcrowding in classes, decline in academic standards due to automatic promotion, high pupil- teacher ratio, pupils neglect by parents, insufficient instructional materials, delay and insufficient funds, lack of classroom infrastructure and poor remuneration of teachers and some sort of negligence by parents. These corroborate with information given by interviewees during in-depth interviews that the problems associated with FSE implementation are lack of physical infrastructure, inadequate instructional materials, and high teacher- student ratios.

### 5.2. Conclusions

Drawing from the findings and discussion, the following conclusions were arrived at:

- Parents' evaluation of the implementation of the FSE programme was found to be both positive and negative implying that there are some issues that were not pleasant while others were fair and good.
- Majority of the parents appreciated the FSE programme because of being introduced at the right time when many children were dropping out of school due to lack of school fees.
- Majority of the parents agreed that they supported the FSE programme as revealed through their participation in leadership and their positive attitudes towards FSE programme.

### 5.3. Recommendations

Arising from the findings and conclusions, this study recommends that:

- Innovative solutions are needed to ensure quality and access. The supply of infrastructure, textbooks, materials, and teachers needs to be increased rapidly to accommodate the huge increases in enrolment. Innovative and interim approaches that ensure good learning are needed. A variety of complementary educational opportunities are needed to reach very poor people, marginalized groups, and dropouts. Without such measures, a new generation of dropout will perpetuate to vicious cycle of illiteracy.
- The government should put much emphasis on enabling children from poor families to access secondary education. This can include not only school fees but also other necessities like uniform and feeding. The programme should not only aim at increasing the enrolment but also at improving academic standards.

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