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## The Impact of Implementation of Free Tuition on Access to Education in Public Day Secondary Schools in Njoro Sub-County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*The implementation of Free Primary Education (FPE) in the year 2003 stemmed from the huge admission of children to primary schools. The Kenyan administration introduced the initiative in 2008 as a mechanism purposed to check on the issues emanating from the FPE. Worries have conversely been noticed over the impact of free tuition programs on access. The exploration determination was to assess the influence of free tuition on access to education in public day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County Nakuru County in relation to enrolment trends. The investigation utilized a descriptive review research plan. The objective populace was 528 respondents, which incorporated 40 head educators, 487 instructors and one sub-region training officer in Njoro Sub-County. The sample size was 106 respondents, made up of 8 head educators, 97 instructors, and one Sub-County Education Officer. Proportionate sampling was embraced in the selection of the head teachers and teachers, while purposive sampling was applied in the selection of the Sub-County Education Officer. The instrument for collecting data was mainly questionnaires which were used on the head teachers and teachers, while an interview schedule was applied in gathering data from the Sub-county Education Officer. From the findings, it is recommended that for enrolment to be enhanced, the government should introduce a mechanism to support parents in meeting other initial costs, such as uniforms and buying books in public day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County.*

**Keywords:** Free tuition, implementation, assess, impact, enrolment

### **1. Introduction**

For a nation to make the needed financial advancement and social and political improvement, there is a need to improve human capital through education. Almost all industrialized countries in Western Europe and North America have recognized universal secondary school enrollment, with Gross Enrollment Rates (GERs) exceeding 100 percent. This followed a fee-free approach to basic education pioneered by governments in 1830 when universal primary education was limited to a few states in the United States (Langsten, 2014). Even though it is indisputable that free education activities enhance the enrolment of learners, various challenges were realized during the implementation. In the United States, challenges in the quality of education were registered in test scores and accomplishments differences between the rich and poor. These challenges drove Congress to pass the 'No child left behind act' to ensure the country gives quality education to each learner despite their background. This open-door policy led to high enrolment problems related to discipline. However, compassionate culture for institutional change committed to the program's implementation and the availability of program materials are some of the institutional factors that affected how the program was implemented in the educational system in America.

Training is one of the essential elements in the social pillars to establish a just and harmonious society, as indicated in the Kenya Vision 2030 (Adan&Orodho, 2015). Educating citizens is fundamental since it enables people to acquire knowledge that engages them to settle on informed decisions concerning their lives and those against Kenyan societies. The education sector is expected to offer skills that guide society toward achieving Vision 2030.

It has been observed that the emphasis on education notwithstanding, primary learning is inadequate for much-needed economic growth and poverty reduction. Their age limits those completing primary education from becoming independent economically. They are as well too young to participate in other undertakings socially. Completing primary education for several children marks an end to formal learning and introduces them to the working environment. However, owing to their skills, know-how, and immaturity limitations, they cannot participate fully in the working environment. This has seen several governments extend lower secondary education as the least level of basic education. This is founded on the assumption that many learners completing basic education may be absorbed in the workforce directly. Against this background, many nations have introduced Free Secondary Education (FSE) policy. These countries include Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya abolishing the fees in 2006, 2007, and 2008, respectively (Langsten, 2017).

Free Secondary Education (FSE) announced in 2008 in Kenya was purposely intended to solve education

challenges in the country, such as poor education quality, illiteracy, high education cost, the low contribution of the community in the education sector, and the low rate of secondary school completion (Mohammed & John, 2015). However, Kenya was not prepared to embrace the program and policy for free tuition day secondary school education. This was because the Free Secondary Education project was primarily due to the political climate experienced from the just concluded general elections. Nevertheless, the government was committed to increasing the transition by 70% from primary to secondary in every district (Asena et al., 2016).

The government-funded education policy was structured so that the government was responsible for the free tuition amounting to Ksh10, 265 per learner. Other learner requirements, such as the cost of boarding, transportation, and lunch, in addition to expansion projects, were the responsibility of the parents and guardians. This was also meant to fulfill the government's responsibility and commitment to addressing the needs of unique people and disparities of gender. The efforts facilitated the country's efforts in realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and educating all children in the country.

Ongoing strategy activities have concentrated on achieving Education for All [EFA], specifically, Universal Primary Education. However, the government of Kenya has provided for retention, completion, and equity in secondary education. Concerns have been raised over the impact of the implementation of free tuition programs and whether its objectives of addressing access, retention, completion, and equity are being realized Republic of (Kenya, 2012).

### *1.1. Statement of the Problem*

Free Tuition Education in 2008 was launched to address access, retention, completion, and equity in secondary education. The introduction of free tuition was probably prompted by the charged political climate experienced in the 2007 general election in the country that demonstrated the unpreparedness of the policy embracement. However, the government was committed to increasing the transition from primary to secondary education by 70% (Asena et al., 2016). Studies indicate that numerous nations that have already embraced free secondary education have experienced the effect of improving admission, making sure retentions are high and minimal inequalities (Gura, 2015; Phumlani et al., 2018; Langston, 2017). However, in the Kenyan context, concerns have been raised over the impact of the implementation of free tuition programs and whether its objectives of addressing access, retention, completion, and equity are being realized (Republic of Kenya, 2012). What worries Kenyan school administrators are quality, equity, retention, relevance and accessibility, and efficiencies in the system (Achola & Pillai, 2016). In as much as the Kenyan government provided free primary education in 2003 and free day secondary in 2008, there is still very little empirical literature to support the realization of the free tuition program objectives. This indicates that little is identified about the impact of free tuition to access in terms of enrolment trends, transition characteristics, and completion rates, especially in the study location.

### *1.2. Objectives of the Study*

- To determine the impact of free tuition funds on the enrolment of students in public day secondary schools in Kenya.
- To determine the impact of the free tuition policy on the number of students in public day secondary schools in Kenya.
- To determine the ability of students to meet other costs in public day secondary schools in Kenya.

### *1.3. Research Methodology*

To collect both quantitative and qualitative data, the study used a mixed-method approach. Creswell (2013) states that the mixed method approach is appropriate for a descriptive survey where the researcher describes the state of affairs. This design was adopted on the grounds that the study was aimed to study the research variables in the field as they were, without manipulating them.

### *1.4. Research Design*

In this study, a descriptive survey research approach was employed. This design is used in exploratory and preliminary studies to allow researchers to collect data, summarize it, present it, and interpret it for clarity (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018).

#### 1.4.1. Location of the Study

The study was carried out at Njoro Sub-County public day secondary schools. Njoro Sub-County is 812 square kilometers in size and has the following educational zones; Kihingo, Lare, Mau-Narok, Njoro Central, and Mauche. Njoro Sub-County has 40-day secondary schools, which were a target for this study. Njoro Sub-County was chosen due to the low access levels of students in secondary schools nationally over the years.

#### 1.4.2. Target Population

The study's target population included all 40 head teachers and 487 teachers from Njoro Sub-County are forty-day secondary schools. As a result, the total population for the study was 528 people, including the Sub-County Director of Education.

#### 1.4.3. Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Sampling is choosing a given subject as a representative of the population from a defined population. Any

statement about the sample should apply to the entire population (Nzoka & Orodho, 2014). Gay (2012) suggests that, in any case, for a large population, 10% is a good representative, whereas 20% is ideal for small populations. The researcher utilized proportionate sampling to select 106 study participants from the target population of 528 individuals. According to Gay's (2012) recommendation, this constituted 20% of the target population. There were 8 head teachers and 97 teachers based on proportionate sampling. One Sub-County Director of Education Officer was chosen on purpose.

#### 1.4.4. Research Instruments

Questionnaires were the main tools in the course of data gathering. When choosing the tools, the researcher considered the collected data type, the time duration of the study, and the study objectives. Semi-structured instruments were used in the study and employed closed and open-ended questions. Administration of questionnaires was done by dropping and picking from the study sample population. Interviews were also used to collect information on the respondents' views, opinions, feelings, and perceptions.

#### 1.5. Questionnaires

The questionnaires were administered to collect information because they provide a significant advantage in administration. Gay (2012) maintained that questionnaires allow participants to share their opinions and make suggestions. To obtain data from head teachers and teachers, questionnaires were utilized. The questionnaires for head teachers, which were both open and close-ended, contained four segments. One segment was for background data, while the other three assessed enrolment trends, transition characteristics, and completion rates.

The teacher questionnaire contained four areas: First, for background data and every one of the other three areas assessed the impact of free tuition on access to secondary school education in relation to enrolment trends, transition characteristics, and completion rates.

##### 1.5.1. Interview Schedules

An interview schedule was used to interview Sub-County Education Officer on the assessment of the impact of the implementation of free tuition on access to public day secondary school education in Njoro Sub-County, Nakuru County. The interview schedule contained all the objectives of the study and assessed the views of the officer regarding the impact of free tuition in relation to enrolment trends.

##### 1.5.2. Data Collection Procedure

An introductory letter from the University was sought before embarking on data collection. Research permits were obtained from the National Council of Science, Technology, and Innovation [NACOSTI], County Director of Education, Nakuru County, County Commissioner, Nakuru County and after that, the office of the Sub-County Director of Education, Njoro Sub-County was consulted before the commencement of the study. The researcher personally issued the questionnaires to all respondents and interviewed the Sub-County Director of Education Officer. The respondents were guaranteed privacy in dealing with the answers. Approximately one week was allowed for filling out the questionnaire and collected later on. Interview with the Sub-County Director of Education Officer was conducted face to face.

##### 1.5.3. Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Prior to the collection of actual data, pilot-testing of the study was done to test the accuracy of language and comprehension of research questions. As a result, the pilot study contributed to the instruments' legitimacy by identifying items in the study instruments that may be ambiguous or irrelevant in relation to the study's objectives (Mayer, 2015). It recommended that the legitimacy of an instrument is enhanced through specialists' judgment.

Malhotra, Nunan & Birks (2017) define reliability as a proportion of how much a study instrument yields predictable results after repeated trials. The pilot study assessed the study tools' clarity, and inadequate or vague items were adapted to enhance the research instrument's quality and, thus, its reliability. The questions' reliability was then assessed using the Pearson product-moment correlation statistic and the test-retest technique. A reliability index (alpha) of 0.72 was considered high enough for the instruments to be used in the study.

##### 1.5.4. Data Analysis Procedures

All data was collected, computed, and entered for scrutiny through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) model 25.0. The researcher used quantitative analysis using statistical techniques such as frequency counts, tabulations, pie charts, and percentages to show the frequency differences. The quantitative analysis employed the utilization of measurable systems, for example, frequency counts, percentages, pie charts, and tables. The researcher used cross-tabulations to ensure a clear comparison of the variable relationships. Qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The use of bar charts displayed nominal and ordinal data. To supplement quantitative analysis, the researcher used qualitative analysis to create a robust framework for interpreting the findings (Quiroz et al., 2017). The researcher grouped qualitative data into clear, meaningful themes and patterns reserved to aid in organizing and summarizing data.

##### 1.5.5. Ethical Considerations

Necessary measures were taken to ensure confidentiality for the respondents and the data provided. All questionnaires were coded to provide the anonymity of respondents. The researcher also sought permission through a written request to sign the informed consent form so that no respondents felt coerced or threatened to participate.

The participant's personal identities were not exposed under any condition. The researcher clarified to the respondents that their non-response would not be used in the study. The researcher ensured that the records accumulated were dealt with utmost confidentiality. Formal procedures and communication channels were used through data collection. The researcher did not compel respondents to reveal any information they considered confidential. Participating in this study was voluntary; if the respondent did not want to participate, they were not compelled.

All respondents involved in the study were notified. They were also clearly explained the study's purpose and were informed that they would respond at their own will without coercion. Privacy was maintained throughout the research. Oral permission was sought from every respondent before an interview was conducted or a questionnaire was issued. A letter of introduction from the university and permits from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), the County Director of Education in Nakuru County, the County Commissioner of Nakuru County, and Sub-County Director of Education in Njoro Sub-County, were obtained and exhibited to the respondents. Ethical research language was used, and caution was maintained to avoid any psychological harm and disrespectful language.

## 2. Findings and Discussions

The study's outcomes are founded on the data collected from the field. The study purposed to reveal the impact of implementing free tuition on access to education in public day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County. The study's objectives sought:

- To determine the impact of free tuition funds on the enrolment of students in public day secondary schools in Kenya,
- To determine the impact of the free tuition policy on the number of students in public day secondary schools in Kenya and
- To determine the ability of students to meet other educational costs in public day secondary schools in Kenya.

The study's sample size was 97 teachers and 8 head teachers from public day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County and 1 Sub-County Director of Education Officer. All the teachers filled in the questionnaires. Therefore, the response rate for teachers was 100%. One head teacher did not complete the questionnaire, resulting in an 87.5% response rate.

Demographic statistics of the study participants were determined regarding their working experience and period of stay in their current station. 52% of the respondents had worked for below 5 years, while 23% of the respondents had worked for 5 to 10 years. 6% of the respondents had worked for 11 to 15 years, while 13% of the respondents had worked for over 20 years. Given the respondents' several years of work experience, the demographics indicated they could provide credible data for their schools concerning the variables under study.

The Figure below presents the period of stay in the current workstation of the teachers who participated in this study.

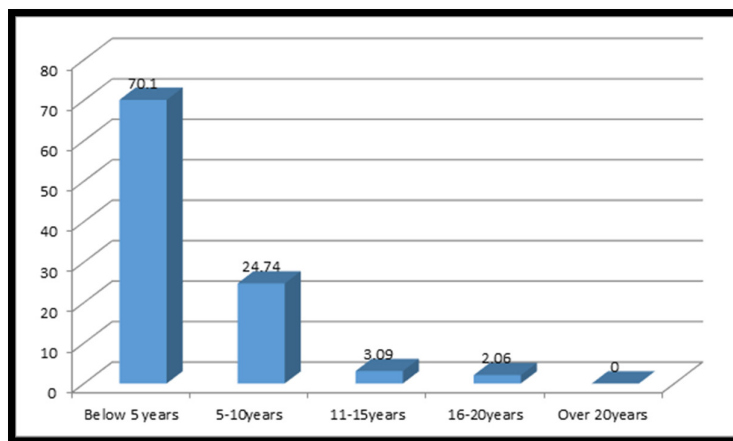


Figure 1

The majority of the participants, representing 70%, had been in their current workstations for less than 5 years. 24% of respondents had stayed at their current workstations for 5 to 10 years, compared to 3% of the respondents who had worked at their current workstations for 11 to 15 years. Only 2% of the participants had worked in their present workstations between 16 and 20 years, while no respondents had been at their current workstations for more than 20 years. The period of stay in a current workstation was an important factor in the study since teachers who had spent less time in a particular school could not give detailed information on the study variables like enrollment, transition, and completion rates.

Objective one sought to determine the impact of the implementation of free tuition on enrolment rates. To answer this objective, the head teachers were asked to respond on the impact of implementing the free tuition policy on enrollment rates by giving statistics on enrollment rates in their schools from 2004 to 2012. The results are indicated in the figure below.

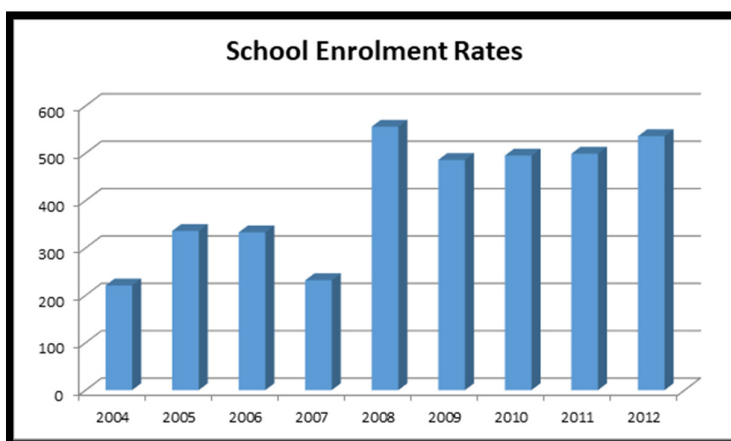


Figure 2

From the figure above, data from sampled schools shows that enrollment rates varied from 2004 to 2008. In 2004, the total enrollment for the 9 sampled schools was 221 and increased to 336 in 2005. Enrollment decreased to 333 in the year 2006, and it further decreased to 232 in 2007. In the year 2008, when FSE was introduced, there was a great increase in enrollment rates as the numbers shot up to 548. However, enrollment slightly decreased to 486 in 2009 but increased again in 2010, with 495 students enrolling in secondary school. Since then, 2011 and 2012 registered an enrollment of 499 and 536, respectively, marking an increase in enrolment. The year 2008 recorded the highest number of enrollment rates in Njoro Sub-County as the free tuition policy was being rolled out in secondary schools across the country. Enrollment rates have remained relatively high in the years after introducing free secondary education as compared to the years before its introduction. Thus, the data obtained indicate that the free tuition policy has positively affected enrollment based on increased student enrollment numbers registered in the sampled schools in the Njoro Sub-County.

In support of this argument, the Sub-County Director of education officer who was interviewed for this study stated that:

*Since the introduction of free tuition in public day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County, enrollments have tremendously increased. Enrollment has been steadily increasing since 2008, and since the free tuition policy was implemented, more students have joined.*

*Source: Sub-County Director of Education*

The teachers were also given various statements related to free tuition and enrolment rates, which they were required to respond to. The statements related to government policy on free tuition, the impact of free tuition on enrolment, and other costs related to free tuition education. The findings are presented herein.

The first statement was whether the government policy on free tuition increased student enrolment. The findings are indicated in the table below.

| Statement  | Agree |      | Undecided |      | Disagree |      |
|--|-------|------|-----------|------|----------|------|
|  | f     | %    | f         | %    | f        | %    |
| Government policy on free tuition has increased students enrolment | 95    | 96.9 | 1         | 1.0  | 1        | 1.0  |
| Free tuition funds have enhanced the enrolment of students         | 95    | 96.9 | 1         | 1.0  | 1        | 1.0  |
| Students are able to meet other costs involved in enrolment        | 42    | 42.9 | 17        | 17.3 | 38       | 38.8 |

Table 1

From the study findings, the majority of the respondents (97.9%) agreed that the government policy on free tuition had increased overall enrolment. There were 1% of the respondents who were undecided on this statement, while another 1% of the study participants disagreed. According to the study findings, the government policy on free tuition had led to an escalation in the admission of learners.

The outcomes demonstrate that the respondents' great majority, 97.9%, agreed that free tuition funds had enhanced the enrolment of students with a frequency of 97.9%. Only 1% were undecided regarding this statement, and 1% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. Results from the study show that free tuition funds have positively affected student enrolment in public day secondary schools in the study location.

The finding is consistent with the work of Musau et al. (2015), who discovered that the admission of learners had risen upon the adoption of subsidized secondary school education. Musau (2015) notes that secondary school enrollment had grown from 30,000 in 1963 to a high number of 860,000 in 2003. This happened after the introduction of FPE. According to teachers, the number increased after the Kenyan government implemented a free tuition policy in secondary schools.

Data in the above table indicates that 43.3% of the respondents agreed that students could meet other costs involved in enrolment. 17.5% of the respondents were undecided on this statement, while 39.2% of the respondents disagreed. The findings showed that not all students could cover other costs involved in enrolment to public secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County.

Here teachers stated that other challenges facing students besides tuition money paid by the government included a lack of enough resources and classrooms to hold the large number of students who were enrolling and a lack of money for lunch.

### 3. Conclusion

The study concluded that introducing free secondary school education has greatly increased the number of students who enroll in secondary schools.

### 4. Recommendations

The subsequent are recommendations emanating from the findings of the study:

On enrollment, the study recommends that for enrollments to be enhanced, the government should introduce a mechanism to support parents in meeting other initial costs, such as uniforms and buying books in public day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County.

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