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## INFLUENCE OF FREE DAY SECONDARY EDUCATION SUBSIDY ON COMPLETION RATES; A CASE OF PUBLIC DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KITUI COUNTY, KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of free day secondary education subsidy on completion rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The journal is based on findings of a study conducted in 2017. The objectives of the study were; to investigate the influence of education subsidies on retention rates in day secondary schools in Kitui County; to assess the influence of education subsidies on dropout rates in day secondary schools in Kitui County; to assess the relationship between educational subsidies and completion rates. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study sample was 119 principals of public day secondary schools in Kitui County, 16 treasurers of Constituency Bursary Fund and one County Director of Education. Data was collected using a questionnaire, interview schedules and document review guide. Validity of the research instruments was ascertained through piloting and expert judgement. A test-re-test technique was used to assess reliability of the research instruments. The scores were correlated to get the co-efficient of stability using Spearman's coefficient of correlation and an instrument reliability value of 0.823 was obtained. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyse data using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) was used to analyse hypothesis. The study found that subsidies given to day secondary schools were not adequate to finance education expenses of the learner; the study further found that education subsidies were more often disbursed late; The study also found that completion rates in public day secondary schools has been rising steadily from 70.4 per cent in 2007 to 72.6 per cent in 2013 a trend attributed to education subsidies. The study recommended that government should increase the amount of free day secondary tuition per student per year and remit it in good time to public day secondary schools so that the school managers could plan with precision and be able to retain the students in schools. The study concluded that provision of educational subsidies in public day secondary schools has increased students' retention rate and reduced dropout rates subsequently this has led to high completion rates.

*Key words: Educational subsidies, Free Day Secondary Education, public day secondary schools, completion rates*

## **Introduction**

Educational subsidy is an assistance given by the government as a policy to students in educational institutions in support of their studies and is regarded as being in the public interest (KIPPRA, 2008). The primary goal of public day secondary school educational subsidies is to promote school enrolment and reduce dropout rates by reducing tuition costs (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

Cameron (1997), explained that in many developed nations such as United States of America, Canada, Australia, France, Britain and Sweden among others, secondary education is available for all in public schools and is run and funded by the government. Cameron further commented that in some developing countries like Ghana, Nicaragua and Guatemala secondary education is compulsory. This has led to high completion rates (Cameron, 1997).

The United Kingdom abolished fees for state secondary schools through the Butler Act of 1944 and the compulsory school leaving ages was increased from 14 to 15. Lewin (2007) studies on Improving Access, Equity and Transitions in Education in Bangladesh, found that completion rates improved substantially in Bangladesh after the introduction of educational subsidies.

Study done by Lewis (2008) on Financing Education in Mauritius, explained that educational subsidies make secondary education more accessible. Muhindi (2012) noted that despite financial crisis and deficits, some governments in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have recently extended free education from primary to include secondary schools. Rwanda and Uganda abolished lower secondary education fees in 2006 and 2007 respectively (Muhindi, 2012). The Government of Rwanda has a nine year basic education of which primary to lower secondary is free (UNESCO, 2007). This policy was implemented to ensure high completion rates (UNESCO, 2007).

The Government of Kenya subsidization of Education is motivated by the desire to increase transition and retention rates leading to low dropout rates hence high completion rates (Masimbwa, 2010). Educational subsidies include; Free Day Secondary School Education (FDSE), Constituency Development Fund (CDF) bursary, scholarships, teaching and learning materials and grants (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

Subsidized secondary school education policy was introduced by the Government of Kenya in January 2008. The main objective was to make secondary school education accessible and affordable to all qualified students regardless their socio-economic background; in the long run improve the completion rates. A sum of Kshs 10 265 was allocated to every student in public secondary school annually. The FDSE funds were to be later revised through government circular No. MOE.DSEC/5/17 of 2015 to Ksh. 12 870 per student. The 1990 Jomtein World Conference on Education for All (EFA) encouraged governments all over the world to provide universal education to its citizens. In response to these resolutions, the Government of Kenya launched Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2008 as a strategy to make education accessible and affordable to many households in the country (Orodho, 2014). The launch of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2008 was meant to address illiteracy, low quality education and low completion rates at the secondary level (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

According to the Free Day Secondary School Education (FDSE) policy, the Government of Kenya was expected to meet the tuition fees of KShs 10 265 per student annually (Gachukia, 2007). Parents were required to meet other requirements like lunch, transport and boarding fees for those in boarding schools, besides development of approved school projects.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study was guided by the following objectives

- i. To investigate the influence of education subsidies on retention rates in day secondary schools in Kitui county Kenya
- ii. To assess the influence of education subsidies on dropout rates in day secondary schools in Kitui county, Kenya

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Influence of Free Day Secondary School Education subsidy (FDSE) on students' completion rates**

Cameron (1997), explained that in many developed nations such as United States America, Canada, Australia, France, Britain and Sweden among others, secondary education is available for all in public schools and is run and funded by the government (Cameron, 1997, Muhindi, 2012). The United Kingdom abolished fees for state secondary schools in 1944 through the Butler Act (Cameron, 1997).

A Study by Lewin (2008) on financing education in Mauritius explains that subsidized secondary schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has led to high completion rates. Rwanda and Uganda abolished lower secondary education fees in 2006 and 2007 respectively (Lewin, 2008). The Government of Rwanda was concerned that, high fees charged at secondary school level of education locked out those who completed primary education and qualified for secondary education World Bank (2008). While introducing Universal Secondary Education (USE) in Uganda there was a great concern that, only one in five children who completed primary school had access to secondary education, and the majority of them are those from wealthy households (UNESCO, 2007).

A study done by Kinaro (2015) in secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County Mombasa County found that subsidized secondary education funds provided by the government has led to high completion rates in public day secondary schools. The study used descriptive survey design. The target population was 238 and the sample size was 88 respondents. It is on this basis this study sought to determine the extent to which FDSE influence completion rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County.

Kenya government play very crucial role in financing of public secondary education especially through Free Day Secondary Education. In 2007, the Government formed a taskforce to look into ways and means of reducing the cost of secondary education on households (Ministry of Education, 2008). The taskforce on Affordable Secondary Education was led by Dr. Eddah Gachukia and it recommended a Government monetary subsidy of Kshs. 10 265 per child to meet the cost of instructional material and other support services (Gachukia, 2007). The disbursement of FDSE funds is in three batches; 50 per cent in first term, 30 per cent in second term and 20 per cent in third term. The FDSE funds were to be later revised through government circular No. MOE.DSEC/5/17 of 2015 to Ksh. 12 870 per child. The FDSE funds are distributed in the following vote heads.

**Table 2.1: FDSE Vote heads**

<b>Vote head</b>	<b>Amount (Ksh)</b>
Teaching Learning Materials	4,792
Repair maintenance	800
Medical	278
Local transport	800
Administration cost	800
Electricity, water and conservancy	1,500
Activity fees	600
Personal emolument	2,700
Insurance	600
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,870</b>

Source: MOE 2015

A Study done by Ngwili (2014) on factors influencing student's completion rates in public day and boarding secondary schools in Kibwezi District, Makueni County found that funds from FDSE are used to enhance educational facilities in day secondary schools, this has provided ideal environment for quality education, hence improved completion rates. The study design was descriptive survey, the target population was 632 and the sample size was 242 respondents. The study concentrated on the factors influencing students' completion rates in public day and boarding secondary schools. It is on this basis this study sought to assess the influence of Free Day Secondary Education on completion rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County.

### Research Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The target population consisted of 235 respondents. The sample consisted of 119 principals of public day secondary schools in Kitui County, 16 treasurers of Constituency Bursary Fund and one County Director of Education. Data was collected using a questionnaire, interview schedules and document review guide. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyse data using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) was test used to analyse hypothesis.

### Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on the Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunity by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). The theory states that all human beings are created equal and hence all the social institutions within a societal set up should promote this equality. In this context provision of equal opportunity to education is one way of promoting social equality in the society. The classical liberal theory was found to be relevant for this study because socio-economic background discriminates poor families who cannot afford to keep their children in school hence withdrawing them prematurely. The Government of Kenya introduced subsidized secondary education to give an equal opportunity in secondary education to all eligible secondary school students regardless of their socio-economic background (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

### Findings and Discussions

This study sought to investigate the influence of Educational Subsidies on completion rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County. Principals were requested to indicate the influence of FDSE on completion rate in public day secondary schools. Based on the principal's responses

on the statement that FDSE subsidy has increased student retention rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County, the study showed that out of the 105 principals sampled 103 principals (98.11%) agreed with the statement. On the statement FDSE subsidy has ensured students in ASAL areas benefit in education in Kitui County 100 principals (95.3%) agreed with the statement. On the statement FDSE subsidy has reduced student dropout rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County 97 principals (92.4%) agreed with the statement. On the statement FDSE subsidy has increased transition rate from Public day secondary schools to tertiary institutions 93 principals (88.6%) agreed with the statement. Further 76 principals (72.4%) disagreed with the statement there is no relationship between FDSE subsidy and completion rates. The data is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Findings of principals on influence of FDSE on completion rates in day secondary schools.**

Statement	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree		Mean score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
FDSE subsidy has increased student retention rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County.	1	0.95	0	0	1	0.9	4	43.6	5	54.3	4.50
FDSE subsidy has ensured students in ASAL areas benefit in education in Kitui County.	0	0	0	0	5	4.8	5	52.4	4	42.9	4.38
FDSE subsidy has reduced student dropout rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County.	0	0	3	2.9	5	4.8	4	42.5	5	49.5	4.39
FDSE subsidy has increased transition rate from Public day secondary schools to tertiary institutions.	1	1	6	5.7	5	4.8	3	36.8	5	52.4	4.33
There is no relationship between FDSE subsidy and completion rates.	50	47.6	2	2.6	6	5.7	1	15.6	7	6.7	2.09

Interview was conducted with the County Director of Education Kitui County. Questions on the influence of FDSE on completion rates in public day secondary schools were put across. The County Director of Education indicated that FDSE had a significance positive impact on completion rates. The County Director Education (CDE) indicated that out of 4413 students who enrolled in form one in 2007 in public day secondary schools 3211 (70.4%) completed secondary education in 2010. The CDE also indicated that out of 4426 students who enrolled in form one in 2008 in public day secondary schools 3123 (70.6%) completed secondary education in 2011. The CDE further indicated that out of 4522 students who enrolled in form one in 2009 in public day secondary schools 3225 (71.3%) completed secondary education in 2012. In 2010 form one enrolment was 4615 students and 3348 (72.6%) students completed secondary education in 2013. The data is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 Findings of the County Director of Education on the influence of FDSE on Completion Rates in Day Secondary Schools**

Form 1 Enrolment		KCSE Candidature		% Completion Rate
Year	No. of Students	Year	No. of Students	
2007	4413	2010	3112	70.4
2008	4426	2011	3123	70.6
2009	4522	2012	3225	71.3
2010	4615	2013	3348	72.6

The chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) of independence was used to test the hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) **There is no statistically significant relationship between Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) and completion rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya.** The acceptable level of significance for the chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) test was 0.05 at 1 degree of freedom. Levels of significance found to be greater than 0.05 implied that the null hypothesis is rejected, on the contrary, if the level of significance was less than 0.05 then the null hypothesis was accepted. The results are as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Chi-square test for the Influence of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) on completion rates**

Independent variable	Hypothesis	Chi- test	Chi-sq. p value	Sig. Value	Result	Decision
Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE)	$H_{01}$	32.14	0.127	0.05	0.127>0.05	$H_{01}$ : rejected

Table 3 shows that at 0.05 confidence level, the null ( $H_{01}$ ) hypothesis yielded Pearson's P-value of 0.127 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Consequently, its alternate hypothesis that there is statistically significant relationship between Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) and completion rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya, was accepted.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that provision of Free Day Secondary Education FDSE in public day secondary schools has increased students' retention rate and reduced dropout rates leading to high completion rates. The study also concludes that FDSE funds are not adequate and the disbursement is not timely. Therefore the study recommended that government should increase funds for FDSE allocated to public day secondary schools. The government should also increase the amount of FDSE tuition per child per year and remit it in good time to secondary schools so that the school managers could plan with precision and be able to retain the students in schools for full participation.

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