

Effects of Subsidized School Funding on Access to Secondary Education in Sabatia Sub-County, Vihiga County – Kenya

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Abstract

Provision of quality secondary education is known to provide a bridge between Primary, the labour market and tertiary education. In this regard, Kenyan government in 2003 introduced free primary education and in 2008 began subsidized secondary education. This initiative was meant to address critical challenges such as illiteracy, low quality education, low transition rate from Primary schools and low completion rates at secondary level. The purpose of this study therefore was to establish the role of subsidized secondary school funding programme in enhancing access to education in Sabatia Sub-County. Specifically, the study was to assess the ways in which subsidized education affected access to secondary education. The study location was Sabatia Sub-County and involved public secondary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population included 28 Principals, 28 Directors of studies, 630 Form 3 students, parents, one Sub-County Education Officer and the Chairman of the Sub-County Education Board. Stratified, purposive and simple random samplings were used to sample the respondents. A total of 248 respondents formed the sample size. The study utilized questionnaire, interview schedule, Focus Group Discussion, and observation guide as instruments for data collection. Piloting was conducted in two selected schools to enable the researcher to strengthen the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Predictive analysis software (PASW) in the computer for means percentages and frequencies. Data was presented in form of frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The study established that: There was a consistent decline in the transition rate of Primary school graduates to secondary schools in 2011, 2012 and 2013 with transition rates of 58.02%, 54.55% and 47.70% respectively; higher enrolment of students in the schools caused the need to construct additional classrooms and dormitories. From the findings it was concluded that schools still experienced student dropout due to other factors in addition to lack of school fees. It was recommended that: Principals should effectively utilize guidance and counseling to deal with cases of dropouts.

Key words: *Subsidized Funding, Access to Education, Drop out Rate, Transition Rate*

Introduction

According to the World Bank's report on governance Management and Accountability in Secondary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa International trends in Secondary Education have been driving much of the need for reform in Secondary Education throughout the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region (World Bank, 2008). The international commitment to basic education for all and free universal Primary Education that coalesced around the 1990 Jomtien and the 2000 Dakar meeting has driven the policies and financial investments of donors and developing nations alike. The success of this international movement has addressed many of the equity and quality issues facing developing countries as they expand their educational systems. EFA has drastically increased the demand for Secondary Education while competing with resources necessary to respond to that demand (World Bank, 2008).

According to Lewin (2008), projections of the financing required for a significant expansion of access to secondary education including progress towards a basic education cycle of 9 or 10 years – indicate that enrolments in secondary education cannot be expanded at present unit cost levels. Constrained by Limited Public resources and in the absence of significant policy reforms, SSA countries have responded to the increase demand for secondary places by spreading the same resources over larger numbers of students (Verspoor, 2008). Consequently, essential inputs of ten are in short supply resulting in increasing class sizes, shortages of text books, instructional materials and supplies, poorly stocked libraries and double or triple shift use of facilities. In order therefore to attain the desired millennium development goals (MDGs) and education for all the introductions of subsidized secondary education funding was intended to reduce the cost burden on parents and enable more children access and attain the minimum basic secondary education. Implementation of the free primary education (FPE) has been responsible for the recent upsurge in the secondary school enrolments since 2003. Enrolment trends in secondary schools show a steady growth from 30,000 in 1963 to 860,000 students in 2003 and to over 1 million in 2006 (Munavu et al, 2008).

Similarly the number of Public secondary schools increased from 151 in 1963 to 3660 in 2005 (Republic of Kenya, 2005). One of the factors limiting growth in Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) at the Secondary level is the Limited Number of Secondary Schools compared to the number of Primary Schools. The current gapping mismatching between the capacities at these levels is approximated by comparing the number of Primary and Secondary Schools. The number of Public primary Schools was 18,081 in 2003 compared to 3,660 public and 641 private secondary schools in the same year (ROK, 2005). The consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transition and Equity (World Bank, 2009) study in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) established that most schools especially national schools charged over kshs.60, 000 (Sixty thousand Kenya shillings) per year. This high cost was prohibitive not only to the poor but also Middle class families. According to the study by World Bank (2009) in rural Kenya on whether subsidized secondary education funding has enabled the poor to access basic education in SSA was affordability.

World Bank (1998) report findings on community and parental participation in financing secondary education in Zambia and acknowledged that increase in participation in self help projects through PTAs led to the increase in the number of schools between 1981 and 1984. Thus, this improved access in secondary schools. However, the report points out that there were no guidelines issued

regarding the items which schools could charge parents and that school authorities and their PTAs were left to determine the nature of contributions to various projects. The poor households continue to face significant challenges in meeting the costs of free secondary education. There is need to establish ways in which this funding programme has affected access to secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-County.

Statement of the Problem: In spite of the vital role played by subsidized secondary education funding, the challenges affecting its implementation have a bearing on the level of access to secondary education in Kenya. The focus of this study therefore was to assess the contribution of subsidized secondary education funding on enrollment dynamics in secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-County.

Purpose and Objective of the Study: The purpose of the study was to establish the role of subsidized Secondary School funding in enhancing access to secondary education in Sabatia Sub-County. The specific objective of the study was to establish ways in which subsidized secondary School funding affect Access to secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-County.

Significance of the Study: It was hoped that this study would provide valuable insights on subsidized education to researchers in education sector who would then use the research findings to analyze the contribution of subsidized Secondary School funding in enhancing access to Education in secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-County.

Scope of the study: The study focused mainly on public secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-County, Vihiga County. Sabatia Sub-County was identified because it has all categories of schools used in the study. The Sub-County has, Provincial boys', Provincial Girls' and Provincial mixed secondary schools, Sub-County Girls' and Sub-County mixed secondary schools. The study addressed the role of subsidized Secondary School funding in Sabatia in relation to enhancing access.

Methodology

Research Design: The study adopted descriptive survey design. The design adopted was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect information on the subject of study in its current state. It also gathered extensive amount of information for large groups of individuals in short time span. Kothari (2008) adds that descriptive survey design uses data collection methods and tools that can be adjusted as the research progresses. The design also provided the researcher with opportunity to capture relationships among the variables, human attitudes, opinions and other emotions of the respondents (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999).

Location of the Study: The study was being conducted in Sabatia Sub-Counties. This is one of the Sub-Countys that form Vihiga County. The other Sub-Counties are Hamisi, Vihiga and Emuhaya.

It was carved out of the larger Vihiga Sub-County in 2009. Sabatia Sub-County comprises two administrative divisions, Sabatia and Chavakali. It borders Hamisi Sub-County to the East, Kakamega South Sub-County to the North, and Vihiga Sub-County to the south. It covers 59.2km² with a population of 176,000 people. The Sub-County is the most densely populated area in the world with a density of 1500 persons per square kilometer. The population growth rate is at 3.5% compared to the national average of 2.4%. This is attributed to the high female fertility rate of 5.1%. About 52% of the population is poor and living below poverty line. The high poverty levels affect the Gross Enrolment rates and access to basic education in the Sub-County. There is also high poverty in the area which may contribute to high drop out rates. Therefore, for students to remain in school in this Sub-County, government financing must be reliable. The researchers therefore found it necessary to investigate the role of Free Secondary education programme in enhancing access in Sabatia Sub-County as no other similar study has been conducted in this area.

Study Population: The study targeted 28 Principals, 28 BOM Chairpersons and The chairman and Secretary of Sub-County Education Board, 28 Director of Studies (DOS), students and 28 PTA chairmen. The target population directly participates in the implementation of subsidized education Programme and therefore their contribution in this study was valuable.

Sampling Procedure: Sampling techniques used include: purposive sampling, stratified sampling and simple random. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), sample is a small subset of the population that has been chosen to be studied. The sample should represent the population and should be sufficient in size. Stratified sampling was used to identify the five categories of schools namely County Boys', County Girls', County Mixed, Sub-County Girls' and Sub-County Mixed. According to Koul (1992), stratified sampling is a process in which the units in the sample are proportional to their presence in the population. Purposive sampling was used to select Principals, Director of studies, Sub-County Education Officer and the Chairman Sub-County Education Board. This is because they possess special knowledge as regards the implementation of subsidized Secondary school funding programme in Sabatia Sub-County.

Sample Size: According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) and Kothari (2008) the main factor considered in determining the sample size is the need to keep it manageable enough in terms of effort, time, finance and human resource. Kerlinger (2004) says that the ideal sample should be between 10% and 30% of the target population depending on the data to be gathered and analyzed. 31% of 45 students per class gave a total of 196 from the total student population of 630.

Table 1: Summary of Sample Size

Category of Respondents	Population (N)	Sample size (n)	Percentage (%)	Sampling Technique
Principals	28	14	50	Purposive
Director of Studies	28	14	50	Purposive
BOM Chairpersons	28	14	50	Purposive
Sub-County Education Officer	1	1	100	Purposive
Chairman Sub-County Education Board	1	1	100	Purposive
Students	630	196	57	Purposive
PTA chairmen	28	14	31	Purposive
Total	688	248		

Instruments for Data Collection: The instruments for data collection included: Questionnaire, interview schedule and observation guide. All these were designed based on the objectives of this study.

Questionnaire: The Questionnaire was used because it gives the respondent adequate time to provide well thought out responses. It also provides an opportunity to gather information from a wider area and also a large sample. This was covered in a shorter time (Mutai, 2000). Questionnaire enables the respondent to give very clear responses freely since they are not supposed to write names on them. The Questionnaire was for Principals, Director of Studies and students. The student had a separate questionnaire from the one of Director of Studies (DOS) and Principals. They had both open and closed end items.

Interview Schedule: The interview schedule was used to collect data from the BOM chairpersons, the Sub-county education officer and Sub-county education board Chairman. The focus was on curriculum implementation, infrastructural effectiveness and challenges of implementing subsidized education. According to Bryman (2001) the interview is a highly purposeful task which goes beyond mere conversation. Face to face interview was conducted upon prior arrangement. It consisted of open ended questions that enable respondents to express their feelings. This instrument was useful because it helps to corroborate the data collected through questionnaire and observation guides. It also enabled the researcher to employ probing techniques which allowed the respondents to freely give their opinions.

Observation Guide: The researcher observed the aspects of school process (daily school routine), teaching and learning including the instructional materials used in class in terms of availability and types. The guide also focused on school facilities (infrastructure in terms of availability and adequacy). The Personnel body language showed the level of dedication and motivation to work. Observation guide enhances other methods of data collection particularly the Questionnaire and the interview schedule.

Focus Group Discussion: These are guided group discussion with a group of five to ten participants from similar backgrounds with a skilled moderator (Kreger & Casey, 2009). This method was used only on parents. The results were reported on a narrative way to bring into the study the voices of the participants. What they said in these groups was generated from their free space to air their views and likely brought in issues not addressed in the questionnaire. The researcher played the role of the moderator and the eight (14) parents were clearly informed of the purpose of the group discussion. The setting was made conducive and the discussion was made brief to last for one hour.

Pilot Study: In order to establish the suitability and clarity of the instruments, a pilot study was carried out in two of the selected schools. These schools did not participate in the final study. This was to test the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments. The desirability of piloting was to ensure that survey questions operate well and also that the research instruments function well (Bryman 2001). The information obtained from the pilot study was be used to refine the instruments.

Validity: According to Kothari (2008), to measure the validity, the results of the current study were associated with earlier propositions. The researcher sought relevant evidence that confirmed the answers that were found with the measuring instruments. Content validity of the instruments was established by consulting experienced staff and supervisors from the department. The supervisors assessed the instruments in relation to the stated objectives and research questions. Suggestions offered were used to modify and improve the research items to be more adaptable to the study.

Reliability: According to Kothari (2008) reliability is concerned with securing consistent results with repeated measurements of the same person and the same instrument. In order to get the same measurements, the researcher employed Cranach's Alpha of correlation to test reliability of the instruments. The responses were checked together with those that had been obtained to determine similarities. The items that showed variance were adjusted so as to elicit reliable responses in line with the study.

Data Analysis: Data were analyzed by use of descriptive statistics. Predictive analysis software (PASW) was used in form of Frequencies, percentages, averages to analyze the data. Data was then presented in form of frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs as presented below:

Results and Discussion

Transition to Secondary Education: Transition rates deal with the ease of passage from one level of formal education to the other. Generally speaking, the more the facilities, the easier it is to provide for everyone wishing to move to a higher level of education after the completion of education of the lower level. With this in mind, the researcher sought to establish the transition to secondary education in Sabatia Sub-County before the introduction of subsidized secondary

education programme and after the launching of this programme. The transition rates are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Transition to Secondary Education in Sabatia Sub-County

Students who sat for KCPE Exam			Students who Joined Form One			Transition Rate (%)		
Year	Boys	Girls	Year	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Overall
2003	854	980	2004	406	457	47.52	46.61	47.06
2004	1071	1137	2005	521	556	48.65	48.89	48.78
2005	1225	1260	2006	582	598	47.52	47.46	47.49
2006	1359	1383	2007	659	687	48.47	49.64	49.09
2007	1733	1659	2008	1096	989	63.24	59.61	61.43
2008	1990	1905	2009	1204	1038	60.50	54.49	57.50
2009	2173	2146	2010	969	836	44.59	38.96	41.78
2010	2383	2260	2011	1448	1249	60.76	55.27	58.02
2011	2404	2389	2012	1404	1211	58.40	50.69	54.55
2012	2622	2511	2013	1316	1135	50.19	45.20	47.70

Source: Sabatia Sub-County Education Office (2013)

From Table 2, it is evident that in 2003, the transition rates of primary school education graduates to secondary school were 47.52% and 46.61% for boys and girls respectively. Furthermore, the transition rates of primary school boys and girls in 2004 were 48.65% and 48.89% respectively. In 2005, the transition rate for the boys and the girls were 47.52% and 47.46% respectively while the transition rates of the boys and girls who sat for their KCPE in the year 2006 were 48.47% and 49.64% respectively. It is worth noting that the transition rates of boys and girls in 2007 were 63.24% and 59.61% respectively. It is also important to note that in 2008 we had 61.43% of the students who sat for their KCPE examination in 2007, joining form one. This may be attributed to the fact that 2008 is the year when Free Day Secondary School programme which enabled more students join form one. However in 2009, the overall transition rate of students who joined Form one declined to 57.50% while in 2010, the transition rate dropped further to 41.78%. This could be attributed to the teething problems of free secondary education programme because it had just started and it was still new. It is worth noting that in the year 2011, there was an improvement whereby 58.02% of the students joined Form one after which, there has been a consistent drop in the transition rate for in the years 2012 and 2013, 54.55% and 47.70% of the students who sat for KCPE examinations joined Form one. From these findings, it is clear that the government may have been overwhelmed by the challenges of sustaining the programme and maintaining the high transition rate.

Secondary School Enrollment in Sabatia Sub-County: In the first objective, the researcher sought to establish the class enrollment and the overall school enrollment of the schools in Sabatia Sub-County and the findings are as presented in Table 3 that follows.

Table 3: Student Enrollment in Sabatia Sub-County

Student Enrollment	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Form One Class	69.00	329.00	132.71	71.64
Form Two Class	60.00	320.00	118.64	74.53
Form Three Class	57.00	254.00	114.71	61.69
Form Four Class	49.00	245.00	91.57	66.15
School Enrollment	177.00	1000.00	383.71	262.30

Results in Table 3 indicate that schools in Sabatia Sub-County had a minimum of 69 and a maximum of 329 Form one students with a mean of 133 and Standard deviation of 71.64. At the same time, Form two classes had a minimum of 60 and maximum of 320 students with a mean of 118.64 and standard deviation of 74.53. In addition, Form three classes had a minimum of 57.00 and a maximum of 254 students with a mean of 114.71 and standard deviation of 61.69. Furthermore, in Form Four, there was a minimum of 49.00 students and a maximum of 245 students with a mean of 91.57 and a standard deviation of 66.15. In addition, the DOS were asked to indicate the overall school enrollment and the findings show that a school with the least student population had 177 students while one with the largest population had a total of 1000 students. The mean school student population was 383.71 students. These findings show that the parents had responded positively to the programme by taking their children to school.

Secondary School Students Drop out in Sabatia Sub-County: Drop out of students is an aspect of wastage in the education system. It prevents the completion rate and has a negative impact on the socio-economic status of the community. There is need for the Government and the society at large to prevent school drop out at all cost because it sometimes gives birth to other evils in society. Education for all (EFA) has drastically increased the demand for Secondary Education while competing with resources necessary to respond to that demand. The researcher sought to establish whether there were any drop outs per class and the DOS indicated as shown in the Figure 1 that follows.

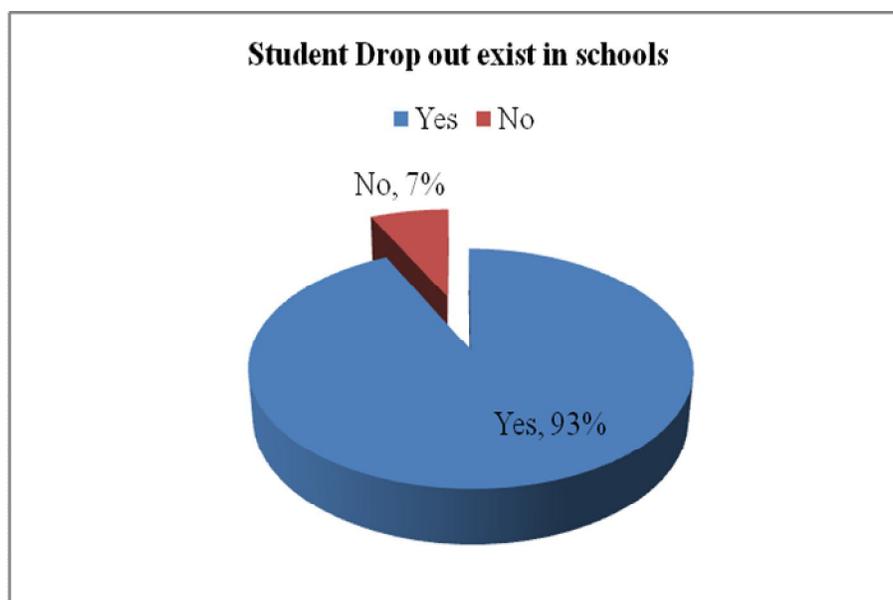


Figure 1: Student Drop out in Sabatia Secondary Schools

From the above figure, it is evident that majority (93%) of the DOS indicated that they experienced drop out of students in their schools while the rest (7%) of them indicated that they did not experience student drop outs in their schools. In addition, times series cohort analysis was used to show flow of students from Form one to Form four as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Cohort Flow for Students in Sabatia Sub-County

Year	Boys				Girls			
	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Form 4	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Form 4
2008	1289	1270	1213	1011	1496	1361	1154	1023
2009	1309	1235	1231	1072	1418	1412	1266	1062
2010	1415	1236	1216	1065	1515	1371	1321	1083
2011	1561	1364	1215	1176	1715	1448	1340	1215

From the flow of the students in Table 4.3, the drop out rate of the students was analysed and presented as shown in Table 5 that follows. From Table 5, it can be seen that in 2008 to 2009, the boys' drop out rates were 4.19%, 3.07% and 11.62% for the forms 1 to 2, 2 to 3 and 3 to 4 respectively while that of the girls were 5.61%, 6.98% and 7.97% for the Forms 1 to 2, 2 to 3 and 3 to 4 respectively. Furthermore, for the year 2009 to 2010, the drop out rates of the boys were 5.58%, 1.54% and 13.48% for the forms 1 to 2, 2 to 3 and 3 to 4 respectively while that of the girls were 3.31%, 6.44% and 14.45 for the Forms 1 to 2, 2 to 3 and 3 to 4 respectively.

Table 5: Drop out rates of Students in Sabatia Sub-County

Year	Boys drop out rate (%)			Girls drop out rate (%)		
	Form 1-2	Form 2-3	Form 3-4	Form 1-2	Form 2-3	Form 3-4
2008-2009	54 (4.19%)	39 (3.07%)	141 (11.62%)	84 (5.61%)	95 (6.98%)	92 (7.97%)
2009-2010	73 (5.58%)	19 (1.54%)	166 (13.48%)	47 (3.31%)	91 (6.44%)	183 (14.45%)
2010-2011	197 (13.92%)	21 (1.70%)	40 (3.29%)	67 (4.42%)	31 (2.26%)	106 (8.02%)

Finally, in the year 2010 to 2011, it is evident that the boys drop out rates for the Forms 1 to 2, 2 to 3 and 3 to 4 were 13.92%, 1.70% and 3.29% respectively while drop out rates for the girls for the Forms 1 to 2, 2 to 3, 3 to 4 were 4.42%, 2.26% and 8.02% respectively. From the foregoing findings, it is worth noting that the drop out rate of Form one students was on a steady rise as from 2008 to 2011. This could be attributed to the fact that school principals attach fees structure with less school fees and send to students as admission instructions and then increase school fees after students have joined form one. It is also important to note that there is also a higher drop out rate between Form 3 and Four 4 for both girls and boys. This could be due to two reasons: first, higher fees due inclusion of Mock examinations, holiday tuition fees and KCSE examination fees and secondly, forceful repetition of Form 2 and 3 classes due to set criteria of promotion to the following classes.

When asked to give the causes of the drop outs, most of the DOS indicated gave three main causes. These were lack of school fees for all students, peer pressure and unwanted pregnancies for the female students. This shows that in spite of the subsidized school funding programme, students still drop out of school due to lack of fees. In other words the funding did not retain students in school which generally affected completion rate. This was supported during Focus Group Discussion (FGD) where most parents felt that the fees burden was equally the same. One of the parents lamented, "As parents we still pay for school fees just as before the funding programme started. So I feel the burden of school fees has not been lessened." In addition, another parent said, "Normally teachers do inform parents to pay fees which are not on the fees structure. Such amount of money is never receipted for example tuition fee." Cases of pregnancy among girls may be directly attributed to cultural issues and indirectly attributed to lack of fees which make the girls loose hope of continuing with their studies. The researcher also asked students to indicate whether there were classmates who dropped out of school and the findings were as shown in the Figure 2 that follows.

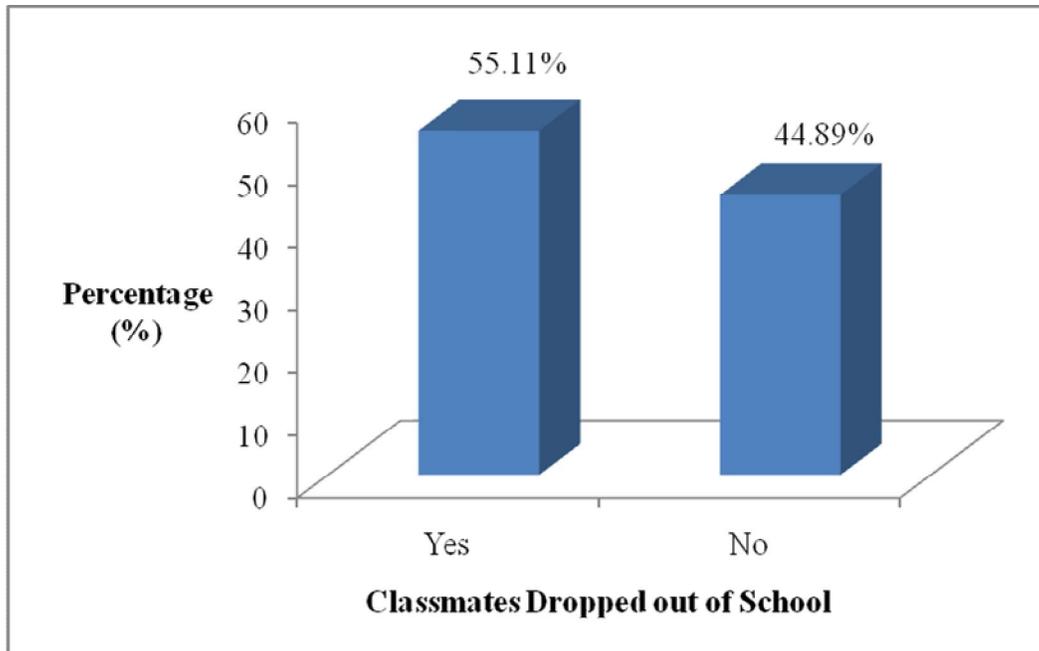


Figure 2: Classmates Dropped out of School

From the above Figure 2, it can be seen that most of the students indicated that 55.11% of the students indicated that their classmates had dropped out of school while 44.89% of them indicating that their classmates had not dropped out of school. The findings show that the rate of student drop out was higher than that of retention. This trend if not checked and reversed could undermine the Government effort of increasing the access to secondary school education. On the other hand, the researcher sought to establish whether students experienced any problems as the Government was providing subsidized secondary school funding and most of the students reported that they did not experience problems since the funding had reduced their fees burden. When asked to rate the level of success of this programme to a scale of 10 and the DEO rated the success at 3 out of 10 and immediately added, "This is because subsidized funds are disbursed late and do not reach the target group on time. Students are denied the services and others even leave schools before their targeted funds arrive." From this findings, it is clear that the funding programme had not fulfilled the intended target of improving access and there are definite corrections must be made. The researcher further students to indicate the reasons that could have led to the high student drop out rate and students indicated that their classmates dropped out of schools due to lack of school fees, early pregnancy and peer pressure.

These findings show that despite the main objective of the subsidized secondary school funding which was to enhance access to education, lack of fees was still the main cause of drop out of students from school. These findings were similar to those of World Bank (2008) which indicated that in 1990s in Columbia there were more private schools (2124) than Public secondary schools and gaining access was not a problem to large and well to do, families preferred private and were willing to pay more. Poor families on the other hand did not have a choice to spend their Limited

income on private secondary schooling or to let their children go without secondary education. This led to high dropout rates among the disadvantaged families. The findings contradict those of Veriava (2002), who established that in South Africa, there were exemptions from paying school fees for parents who could not afford to meet the cost. Exemptions are extended to parents whose income is less than 30 times, but not more than 10 times the amount of fees. These findings are also in agreement with Chabari (2010) who indicated that the implementation of subsidized secondary school funding witnessed the unprecedented influx of children to schools which increased demands on existing physical facilities and also high student teacher ratio.

Conclusion

Regarding effects of subsidized school funding on access to secondary education, it was concluded that: the average student enrollment per class was 384 students, with Form one class leading with a maximum number of 329 students; Student population increased from Form one to Form four with Forms one, two, three and four having average student population of 133, 119, 115 and 91 students respectively; Schools still experienced student drop out due to lack of fees, unwanted pregnancies and peer pressure; Parents were asked to pay extra fees that is not on the fees structure and which is never receipted.

There is need for Principals to avoid sending students home for fees so as to reduce the rate of student drop out due to lack of school fee. There is also need for Principals to establish, equip and effectively utilize guidance and counseling departments so as to deal with issues affecting students such as peer pressure and unwanted pregnancies. This would also deal with aspects of depression among students who lack fees and reduce drop out rates in the schools. Principals should avoid asking parents to pay extra fees and not receipting and instead follow the due process of asking for extra fees for this goes against their professional integrity and ethics and is punishable under the rule of law. Parents should report cases of paying fees in the schools and not being issued with receipts.

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