



Factors Affecting Retention and Participation of Students in Basic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case of Kenya

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 31 October 2015;

Received in revised form:

7 December 2015;

Accepted: 12 December 2015;

Keywords

Retention,
Participation,
Basic education,
Students,
Sub-Saharan Africa.

ABSTRACT

The Government of Kenya started the implementation of Free Primary Education programme in January 2003 and Free Day Secondary Education in 2008. Basic education is critical as it lays a foundation for the subsequent levels of education. To implement the Free Primary Education, the Kenya Government progressively increased budgetary allocations to primary education from an expenditure of Kshs 745.08 million in 2001/2002 financial year to Kshs 18.30745 billion in 2007/2008 financial year. While there has been improvement in pupils' enrolment in primary and secondary schools, its effect on retention and participation of pupils/students in basic education has not been determined. This paper, therefore, looks at factors that affect retention and participation of pupils/students in basic education. Changes in enrolment should be accompanied by improvement in quality of instruction and retention if the set goals of basic education are to be achieved. The paper is based on a study that investigated the factors that affect retention and participation of pupils/students in basic education. The study was carried out in twenty four counties in Kenya. Descriptive survey research design was used. The study targeted learners in primary and secondary schools, teachers, school administrators, BOG/ SMC's and education officials. The research instruments used to collect data were questionnaire and interview guide. They were piloted and validated for reliability. Means and standard deviations were used to describe the data gathered during the main study. Data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Findings were presented in form of tables, pie charts and graphs. It is expected that the findings of this study will provide insightful reference that can help enhance pupils/students retention and participation in education.

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Introduction

The United Nations (UN) recognizes education as a basic human right that must be accorded to every child. The struggle to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Education for All (EFA) still remains a major concern in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Most African countries are battling with illiteracy, inequity, lack of quality and irrelevance of the education of their people. The Government of Kenya has committed itself to the provision of quality and relevant education which is accessible to all citizens as stipulated in the international conventions (Jomtien World Conference, 1990 on Education for All and the Dakar Framework for Action, 2000). Identifying sustainable financing options that maximize on access, equity, relevance and quality is, therefore, critical in the education sub-sector. The right to education has been underscored in various education forums world over since 1948, the year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in subsequent conventions such as the Jomtien World Conference (1990) on Education for All (EFA) and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000). This is in line with the Dakar Convention which the government committed itself to the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Education For All (EFA) by 2015 as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Kenyan education policy

contained in Sessional Paper No. I of 2005 has its main goal for education as "Education for All by 2015".

According to the Constitution of Kenya (2010), Section 53(1) (b) every child has a right to free and compulsory basic education (covering both primary and secondary levels). Kenya Vision 2030, the country's blue print for development, envisages education as an enabler that can propel the country into a high level economy by the year 2030. The overall goal for education, training and research is to reduce illiteracy by increasing access to education, improving the transition rate from primary to secondary schools, and raising the quality and relevance of education.

In pursuant of these national and international goals, the government introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2008. A Task Force was appointed to work towards alignment of education to the Constitution and was mandated to recommend policies and strategies that would propel the country towards access to quality education for all Kenyans. These interventions by the government have seen tremendous improvement in enrolment of pupils/students in schools. Retention and participation is a crucial aspect of education for all. This paper looks at the impediments to retention and participation in education and recommends ways of surmounting the challenges to retention

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and participation.

Statement of the Problem

The retention and participation of students in school is a major concern for the Ministry of Education as, for instance 1.54 million additional pupils enrolled in class one in the year 2003 at the inception of FPE but only 741,507 (386,832 boys and 354,575 girls) graduated (KCPE in 2010), meaning that about 0.8 million children either dropped out or repeated (MoE 2004). Either way, this is a concern for the Ministry of Education as resources are wasted yet targets are not met. Both the government and development partners spend a lot of taxpayers' money on financing, human resources, and infrastructure to provide Free Primary Education or Subsidized Secondary Education, but the high school dropout rate realized after the release of KCPE and KCSE is not only alarming but also undermines these efforts by the government and education partners. School dropout has profound social and economic consequences for pupils/students, their families, and the nation. Pupils/students who drop out of school will in future be more likely to be unemployed, to earn less than those who graduate and may commit crimes causing insecurity to the community they come from and the nation. This is why the research sought to establish the factors that influence retention of pupils in schools and those that lead to pupils/students dropping out of the same schools.

The research is useful in that it helps inform on factors that influence both retention and drop out of pupils/students. Findings can be used to develop better policy interventions to check the dropout rate thereby help retain pupils/students in school. The findings may also be used to seek funding to finance interventions that check dropout rate, improve retention and increase participation rates.

Objectives

- 1.To investigate the causes of pupil/student drop out in schools in Kenya.
- 2.To examine factors that influence retention of pupils/students in schools in Kenya
- 3.To establish strategies necessary for retaining pupils/students in schools in Kenya.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of pupil/student drop out in schools in Kenya?
- 2.What factors influence retention of pupils/students in schools in Kenya?
3. What are the strategies available to ensure retention of pupils/students in school?

Scope and limitations of the Study

The study was carried out in twenty four counties out of the forty seven. Forty sub-counties were involved in the study. Ten schools, both primary and secondary, from each sub-county formed the study group. There are forty seven counties in Kenya but the research excluded counties in the North Rift, Western and Nairobi regions of the country. This was because of:

- i) The short timeframe within which the research was to be completed.
- ii) Inadequate funding.
- iii) There was insecurity due to ethnic mistrust and animosity in some areas at the time of the study.

However, to alleviate the limitations, the research team sampled 17,040 respondents from varied backgrounds, which was deemed to be an adequate representation of the sample size. In addition, several strategies to collect in-depth data were put in place.

Significance of the study

The research findings are useful to the Ministry of Education as they help in understanding and documenting factors affecting both retention and participation of students at Basic Education level all over the country. The data collected is also useful as it can be used to develop a regression equation that can use collected data from the field to approximate closely the actual data from schools with maximum error of less than 5%. Findings can further be used for effective policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Consequently, more children will be retained in school and participate to graduation.

It is hoped that resources provided by the government, development partners and well-wishers will be well invested and utilized in education as wastage will be reduced and targets will be achieved. More people will improve their quality of lives because they will participate in gainful employment as they possess better knowledge and skills – making the economy to perform better.

The research findings will be used to develop better policy interventions to check the dropout rate, help field officers develop better implementation strategies and evaluation plans. The findings may also be used to seek funding to finance interventions that check dropout rates, improve retention and increase participation rates.

Research Methodology

The study employed various research methods to come up with the findings. The methods are briefly discussed here.

Research Design

The research used descriptive survey design to investigate the research problem. The purpose of descriptive survey research was to explore and describe (Kathuri& Pals 1993). Gall and Borg (1996) point out that a descriptive survey research design is the most appropriate when the purpose of study is to provide a detailed description of a phenomenon.

Study Area

The study was conducted in primary and secondary schools in twenty four out of forty seven counties in Kenya.

Population of the Study

The target population for the study was all PDE's, all DEO's, all Students/Pupils, all head teachers, all Principals, all Class teachers in all primary and secondary schools, school managers e.g. BOG/ SMC members and area chiefs. The population of study comprised all schools (N=38,000) - primary (29,000) and secondary (9,000) as indicated on the KNEC list of 2011 in Kenya. Pupil enrolment increased from 5.6 million in 2003 to 8.9 million in 2011 in primary schools. Student enrolment increased in secondary schools from 1.093 million in 2008 to 1.74 million in 2011 largely due to free day secondary education (FDSE) programme. National completion rate in secondary education improved from 46 % in 2008 to 74% in 2011.

Sampling Procedure

The sample frame included PDE's/ DEO's, SMC/ BOG members, area chief, head teachers, class teachers and pupils/students in primary and secondary schools. According to Cohen and Manion (1985) and Adam and Schavaeveldt (1985) there seem not to be a universally accepted sample size. Kathuri and Pals (1993) state that a minimum sample size of 100 subjects in a major group and 20-50 subjects in a minor sub-group could be sufficient. However, a sample should be as large as possible to be representative of the target population (Gall & Borg, 1996).

Sample Size

A sample size of 17,040 elements or respondents was used out of the total population. This sample size was arrived at after taking into consideration the number of variables being looked into and the type of research design. A large sample of the population was used to avoid type I error where the samples could be too small to give a good representative sample in a descriptive study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The sample size was drawn to guarantee an acceptable level of reliability for the desired data population parameters. It was also used to ensure adequate representation of the strata being studied. Since there was an inverse relationship between sample size and the margin of error, a large sample size was used. The sample size of 17,040 constructed a 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of almost ± 4.4 .

Since the target population was above 10,000, the sample size was derived from the following formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p q}{d^2}$$

Where:

n= the desired sample size (if target population is greater than 10,000)

Z= the standard normal deviate at the required confidence level (1.96 for 95%)

P= the proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristics being measured

q= 1-q

d= the level of statistical significance set (0.05)

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.37) (0.6)}{(0.05)^2}$$

n= 17000

However, to get better representation from each stratum and to minimize the margin of error, the statistical significance (d) was set at 0.37 as below:

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.39) (0.6)}{(0.05)^2}$$

n= 17040

The population was then partitioned into a number of more homogenous sub-sets based on their characteristics i.e. 16000 students- 40 pupils/students per school out of the ten schools in each sub-county were randomly sampled, 1200 teachers- three teachers per school, 400 principals, 44 educational officials-thus 6 County Directors of Education and 40 Sub-county Education Officers, 400 BOG/SMC and 40 chiefs (one from each Sub-county) to ensure adequate representation from each stratum.

Key informant interviews were conducted at the sample sites. The semi-structured form was used to guide the questions for uniformity in all the sample areas. This was administered to the County Directors of Education, Sub-county Education Officers, BOG/SMC, Chiefs and Students/Pupils. The key informants were well versed with education matters and students/pupils dropout in their area of jurisdiction.

Simple random sampling was used to select a sample size of 400 head teachers and 1200 class teachers. The head teachers were requested to identify teachers who had been teaching for the past four years after which random sampling was done to select a sample of 3 class teachers. Four CDE's and 40 SEO's were selected purposively. Purposive sampling is useful when there exists a need to limit the sample to cases that are likely to be "information rich" with respect to the study (Polit, 1995; Patton, 1990 and Good, 1972).

Thus, purposive sampling supported the researchers in sampling specific publics.

Research Instruments

According to Gay (1992), questionnaires offer considerable advantages in administration as they present an even stimulus to large numbers of people simultaneously and provide the researcher with an easy accumulation of data. For this study, two instruments were used namely Questionnaire and Interview schedule. Documents were also perused and analyzed. The instruments were developed based on the objectives of the study. The head teachers' questionnaire was developed in such a way that the questions asked were based on the various objectives of the study and had three sections - A, B and C. The Teachers' questionnaire had sections A, B and C based on the various objectives of the study seeking data about dropout in schools. There was also a questionnaire for students/pupils and an interview guide for the CDE's, SEO's, BOG/SMC members and the chiefs.

Data Collection Procedures

After approval of research, a letter from the Ministry of Education was obtained to enable researchers collect data across the country. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview schedules which were administered to the respective respondents. Each respondent was encouraged to respond individually and enough time was given to all respondents for accuracy purposes.

Data Analysis

The completed questionnaires were collected for data editing, coding and analysis and classified on a prepared sheet as per objectives of the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Data were analyzed with the aid of a computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data were analyzed for content before being put into the computer package.

Validity

Validity of the research instruments was judged in two ways: face validity and content validity. The items of the instruments were presented in various sections according to the objectives of the study. Content validity is a measure to which data collected using an instrument represents the specific variables of study. Fowler (1984) recommends use of experts to assess the validity of the instruments. A panel of eight experts from research department, Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards office, Directorate of Basic Education and Directorate of Secondary and Tertiary Education in the Ministry of Education were given the questionnaires and the objectives of the study. The experts were requested to assess the questionnaires individually and provided feedback to the research department. Their recommendations were incorporated in the final questionnaire.

Reliability

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) state that reliability is the ability of an instrument to yield the same results when used repeatedly to collect data. The head teachers' questionnaire and the Class Teachers' questionnaire were piloted in two counties each (Nairobi and Central). Piloting of the research instruments involved 4 head teachers and 8 class teachers in each county. Reliability of the instruments was calculated using the Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α) method.

Sample size of all the Respondents.

| Locaon | Educ Admin | | HT/PRINC | | BOG/SMC | | Chief | Studs/pupils | | Total |
|-------------------|------------|--------|----------|---------|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|------|-------|
| The whole country | PDE | DEO | HT | PRINC | BOG | SMC | Chief | S | P | 17040 |
| | 6 (80%) | 40 (%) | 200 (%) | 200 (%) | 200 (%) | 200 (%) | 40 (%) | 8000 | 8000 | |

Key

PDE – Provincial Director of Education

DEO's – District Education officers

HT – Head teacher

PRINC - Principal

BOG – Board of governor

SMC – School management committee

Educ Admin – Education Administrators

Thus a total of 17,040 subjects were used in the study.

This method is appropriate in situations where instruments are administered once (Wiersma, 1986). Kothari (2004) also recommends the use of the method where a tool has Likert-like items. The instruments were accepted as they yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.72 and above. If the instruments produce a coefficient below the threshold, the instruments were re-examined. The items that might lead to low reliability and are not required to respond to objectives were removed. The instruments were re-run and the reliability determined.

Ethical Considerations

This study ensured that participants' right to privacy, protection from physical and psychological harm was maintained through the provision of clear and sufficient information about the study to the respondents to enable them make a decision on whether to participate in the study or not. Confidentiality of the information provided was assured. All protocol regarding permit acquisition and informing relevant authorities was done as required.

Findings of the Study

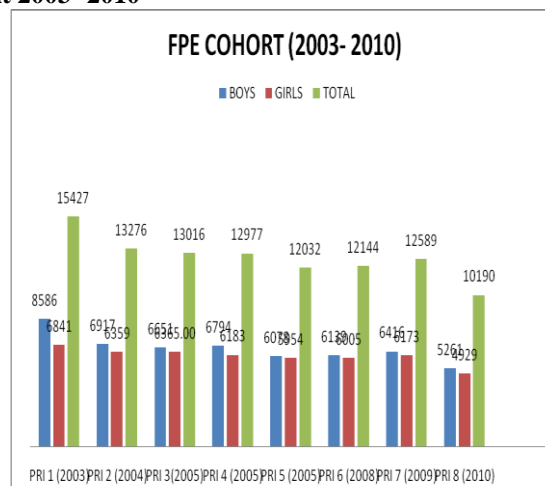
The study was conducted from April 2012 to August 2012. The researchers set out to investigate the causes of students/pupils dropout and strategies that can be taken to retain students/pupils in schools. The sections that follow document characteristics of the respondents, school dropout, causes of the dropout and strategies to be taken to retain students/pupils in school.

School Dropout

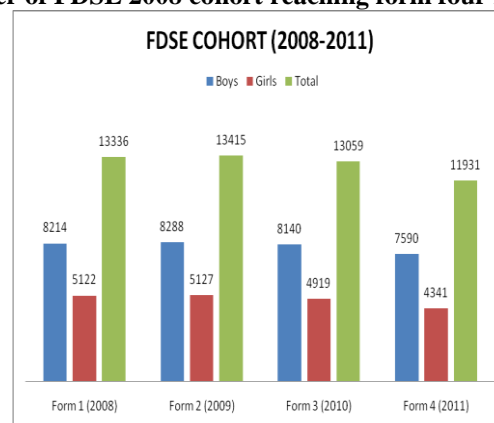
Data analyzed from the field study traced the FPE 2003 to 2010 and FDSE 2008 to 2011. These cohorts indicated that there was dropout of pupils/students from schools. This section shows this dropout at primary and secondary school levels as well as presents emerging trends.

Dropout at Primary school level

At the primary school level it was observed that in 2003 a total of 15,427 pupils (8,586 boys and 6,841 girls) were enrolled in the sampled schools and only 10,190 (5,261 boys and 4,929 girls) graduated in 2010. This means that a total of 5,237 (33.9%) pupils (3,325* boys and 1,912* girls) dropped out of school during the period (KNEC 2011).

Number of FPE Primary One Cohort Reaching Primary Eight 2003 -2010**Dropout at Secondary school level**

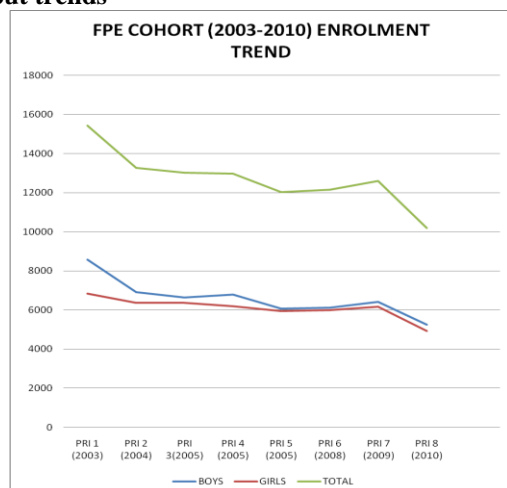
At the secondary school level, it was observed that in 2008, a total of 13,336 (8,214 boys and 5,122 girls) joined form one in the sampled schools and out of this only 11,931 graduated on completion of secondary education cycle in 2011. The numbers of those who completed (11,931) reflected a drop of 10.1% (1,405 students-624 boys and 781 girls). The drop was higher between form three and four (MoE 2011).

Number of FDSE 2008 cohort reaching form four in 2011

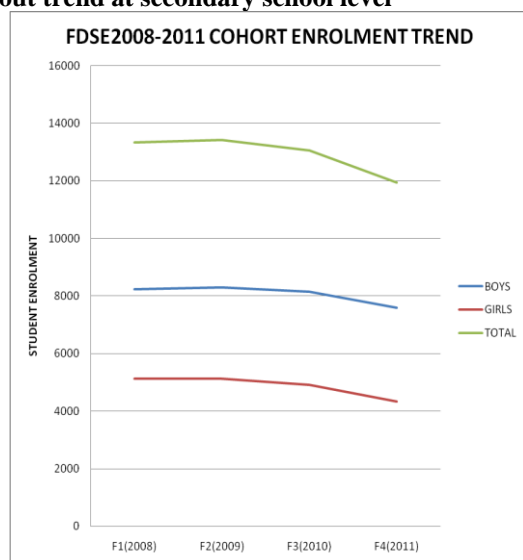
Dropout Trends

The charts that follow indicate how enrolment declined progressively from class one to eight and from one to four respectively. This decline is greater between primary one and two and seven and eight. Furthermore girls' enrolment was observed to decline at a higher rate than boys'. A similar trend was observed at secondary school level with the sharpest decline observed between forms three and four. However, at form two the enrolment trend indicated a slight increase. Girls' dropout was higher than the boys.

Drop out trends



Drop out trend at secondary school level



Causes of student/pupils dropout in schools

Various causes can be attributed to school dropout as the results showed.

School environment

The results for this item were: 30.0 % strongly disagreed, 23.3% disagreed, and 26.4% agreed 15.1% strongly agreed while 5.2% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 41.5% agreed while 53.3% disagreed. This means a sizable number of respondents believed the school environment could lead to dropout especially an unfriendly school environment.

Pupil transfer

The results for this item were: 26.5 % strongly disagreed, 18.4% disagreed, and 35.1% agreed 13.9% strongly agreed while 6.1% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 49.0% agreed while 44.9% disagreed. Generally this meant that a large percentage (49.0%) saw haphazard transfers in schools

as a major contributor that leads to learners dropping out of school. That, therefore, meant that proper strategies should be put in place to track the learner's movement between the releasing school and the receiving school.

Pregnancy

The results for this item were: 13.5 % strongly disagreed, 11.7% disagreed, 48.7% agreed, 19.9% strongly agreed while 6.2% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 68.6% agreed while 25.2% disagreed. This was seen to be a very large percentage that was worrying and if the trend persisted then the value for learning would not be realized. This finding was in tandem with the comments of the DC, Kericho West. While commenting on pupil pregnancy in schools (The Standard of 11/11/11) he lamented that *boda boda* (motorcycle) operators were doing a disservice to the district (meaning they made pupils/students pregnant). Thirteen girls were sitting for their KCPE while pregnant in that district in 2011. He also faulted the parents for not counseling their daughters on dangers and consequences of premature sex. He said, "This is a disturbing matter in the education sector and to us in the district" (pg. 28).

Marriage

The results for this item were: 18.0 % of the respondents strongly disagreed, 18.1% disagreed, and 44.6% agreed 12.5% strongly agreed while 6.8% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 57.1% agreed while 36.1% disagreed. This was seen to be in line with Kaufman *et al.* (2001) who observe that some young women marry or move into their partner's home following a pregnancy, and are thereby subject to the financial and labour priorities of their new household, which may not place a priority on their continuing with education. It is thus evident that many parents still don't understand the value of girl-child education as they marry them off early before they complete their studies.

Ethnic clashes

The results for this item were: 33.0 % strongly disagreed, 19.6% disagreed, and 24.3% agreed 14.6% strongly agreed while 8.4% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 38.9% agreed while 52.6% disagreed. Most of the respondents who agreed were mainly from the Rift Valley region. Majority of the respondents did not see ethnic skirmishes as a cause of learners' dropping out of school. Still a sizable percentage (those from areas affected by ethnic clashes) showed that this caused dropout from school.

Orphan hood

The results for this item: 9.4 % strongly disagreed, 9.9% disagreed, and 42.2% agreed 34.4% strongly agreed while 4.2% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 76.5% agreed while 19.3% disagreed. This enormous percentage is disturbing owing to the fact that education is seen as an economic booster to any country, community or individual. Generally most orphans have inadequate resources to support their education hence they drop out of school. These findings are in agreement with the literature review especially research done by Baumer and Lutz (2003) which found that the socioeconomic status of a student's neighborhood is more associated with the probability of dropping out of school than adolescents' delinquent behavior, student attachment to school and parents, and parental control over adolescent behavior. They suggest that students in socio-economically distressed neighborhoods feel that school completion offers little either to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood or to provide mobility into a better one. There was need for mechanisms to be put in place to support the affected children

socially and economically so that they remain in school. That is the only way such wastage can be avoided.

Staffing

The results for this item were: 21.7 % strongly disagreed, 25.7% disagreed, and 29.3% agreed 16.8% strongly agreed while 6.4% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 46.1% agreed while 47.4% disagreed. The result shows that quite a good number of the respondents who participated in answering that item associated learner dropout to the fact that learning institutions experience teacher shortage. These reactions concur with the reviewed literature especially the findings of Riechi (2006) which assert that teachers are the main medium through which students learn especially during the foundation years. Learning involves guided practice of the instructions (Ridell, 2003). The teacher gives direct instruction through his ability to describe, demonstrate, and explain the content expected to be delivered (MOEST, 2004). Effective delivery of the curriculum requires the teachers to prepare, use appropriate teaching materials and visual aids (Colclough & Lewin, 1993). With the introduction of free primary education in 2003 and free day secondary education in 2008, teaching and learning might have been compromised by large classes whereby teachers handled large classes, with 60, 70, 100 pupils (UNESCO Report, 2005). Teacher-pupil interaction was minimal and teachers could only move with the brighter pupils leaving out the slow learners. Without the personalised attention, the weak learners may not perform well and eventually dropout of school (Nuthall, 2004).

School levies/fees

The results for this item were: 13.6 % strongly disagreed, 18.0% disagreed, and 42.3% agreed 20.9% strongly agreed while 5.2% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 63.1% agreed while 31.6% disagreed. Finn (1989) and Hess (2000), while discussing the reasons for dropout, identified no single cause for dropping out but opine that researchers have typically followed two distinct lines of inquiry. The first line examines individual student factors such as social and economic environment and ethnicity. The second line identifies the institutional factors and the conditions of schooling that impact dropping out. This, therefore, means that if levies of various kinds are introduced in a school where learners inhibit such trends that boarder on poverty, then that means that such pupils/students will not have any other alternative but dropout. It was observed that little levies continued to apply in some schools despite the fact that schooling had been made free by the government.

Drug and substance abuse

The results for this item were: 13.3 % strongly disagreed, 13.6% disagreed, and 43.2% agreed 21.4% strongly agreed while 8.4% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 64.6% agreed while 26.9% disagreed. This means it was seen by the respondents as an important factor that led to pupils/students dropping out of school.

Poverty

The results for this item were: 4.9 % strongly disagreed, 6.7% disagreed, and 39.6% agreed 46.2% strongly agreed while 2.6% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 85.8% agreed while 11.6% disagreed. According to the research done by the American National Research Council, home environment, and the economic context within which students live play a major role in defining whether children would dropout or remain in school (Fine, 1987; National Research Council, 2001; U.S. General accounting office, 2002).

Pupils/Students repeating the same class

The results for this item were as follows: 18.7 % strongly disagreed, 25.4% disagreed, and 37.8% agreed 12.5% strongly agreed while 5.7% were undecided. On a weighted scale, 50.3% agreed while 34.1% disagreed. Again what this meant is that most respondents found repetition as an important cause of dropping out.

Other causes suggested by the respondents

Other than the listed causes on the questionnaires, the respondents were provided with an open ended question on causes of dropout in schools. The respondents suggested the following as other causes of students/pupils dropout: negative attitude to education (20.1%), child labour (14.5%), family related issues (12.1%), peer pressure (7.7%), effects of tourism (6.25%), and pressure to perform (1.8%). What this shows is that dropout from school is a factor of varied causes.

Using one way ANOVA for differences among the means, the analysis revealed that certain factors were not prominent nationally but only in certain regions of the country. These included transfer of pupils/students (common in Nyanza), early marriage (in Rift Valley), understaffing (in Nyanza) and clashes (in Rift Valley).

Strategies that can be used to retain students/pupils in schools

Strategies proposed by principals/head teachers

A total of 339 Head teachers/Principals responded to the questionnaire and suggested the following remedies to the problem of school dropout: timely release of FPE/FDSE funds (19.55), community sensitization (18.65), strengthen guidance & counseling (12.4%), adequate staffing (12.4%), introduce/enhance School Feeding Programme (11.5%), ensure child friendly schools (9.1%), provide adequate facilities (5.35).

It was apparent from the school administrators that they could contain the problem of student/ pupil dropout if free primary education and free day secondary funds were released in a timely manner. The same school managers faulted the community in which schools are found for compromising their efforts and not supporting them in retaining learners in school. They pointed out that the communities failed to take back to school truant children. They viewed this as a cause of eventual dropout hence need for frequent sensitization to the communities from which the learners came.

The principals and head teachers felt that if guidance and counseling was enhanced at school then it could also be a remedial strategy that would minimize dropout in schools. It was also noted that pupils/students felt wasted by staying in school when in real sense learning was inadequate due to teacher shortage. This factor demotivated learners leading to non-appreciation of learning. Hunger, unfriendly schools and lack of adequate facilities were also cited by school managers as causing learners to dropout. They felt that if all these anomalies were addressed then, learners would fully participate in learning.

Strategies

Proposed by teachers on the role of parents

The following strategies were given by the teachers on how parents/guardians can assist in curbing drop out in schools: provide guidance and support to their children (30.8%), establish close working relationship with teachers (28.0%), provide basic needs and pay school levies/fees (12.9%), sensitize pupils on importance of education (8.5%), provide conducive home environment (2.5%).

Strategies proposed by teachers on the role of the community

The following strategies were given by the teachers on how the community can assist in curbing drop out in schools: financial/material support to schools (29.9%), ensure conducive school environment(17.3%), sensitize the community on importance of education (15.1%), stop retrogressive cultural practices(12.4%).

Strategies proposed by teachers on the role of the government

The following strategies were suggested by the teachers on measures the government can put in place to curb drop out: more funding (39.6%), employ more teachers(26.9%), enforcement of education regulations (8.8%), enhanced school feeding programme (4.7%)and affirmative action on children with special needs(3.6%).

Strategies proposed by students/pupils

A total of 284 students/pupils responded to the questionnaire on items that required them to suggest measures that can be taken to curb drop out in schools. The following remedies were suggested by the students/pupils: guidance and counseling (50.7%) support to the needy students/pupils (21.1%)encourage dialogue (14.1%), child friendly schools(7.4%)eliminate school levies/fees(1.8%), provide adequate facilities (1.8%).

However, students/pupils who came from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and who had had academic difficulties in the past found guidance and assistance from teachers especially helpful. Caring adults, too, are among the assets that young people need to succeed (Benson, Galbraith, &Espeland, 1998). Participation in school activities is an additional strategy for schools to help students get attached to school hence prevents dropping out. This was in agreement with the findings reviewed in the literature.

Strategies proposed by the provincial administrators

Among the remedies proposed by provincial administrators included: sensitize both parents and learners(29.0%), support needy children(2.8%), make schools learner friendly (20.2%), provide enough teachers(17.3%), enforce regulations & implement policies on compulsory school attendance(8.5%).

From the findings it is evident that many factors lead to pupils/students dropping out of school. The problem, therefore, equally requires a multi-faceted approach to tackling it. No single institution can tackle the problem alone.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine factors that affect retention and participation of pupils/ students in basic education. The specific objectives were to ascertain the causes of student drop out in schools, and to establish strategies that can be taken to retain pupils/students in schools. From the research findings, it is evident that drop out is a real problem in schools in Kenya. It affects both primary and secondary schools. It was noted that both external and internal factors contributed to school dropout. The trend continued despite the fact that the government was making every effort to ensure that education was affordable to all Kenyans. To address the challenges leading to school dropout, therefore, all stakeholders have a role to play in order to ensure pupils/students complete their schooling.

Recommendations

The findings of the study clearly indicate that despite the effort the government has made in terms of providing quality and affordable education to Kenyans, the gains are being

compromised by the big number of learners dropping out of school. Consequently, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should enact policies that prohibit forced repetition and provide penalties for school managers who engage in the vice.
2. The school calendar should be re-aligned to the government financial year to streamline disbursement of funds to eliminate delays that were experienced in release of funds.
3. The government should enhance bursary provision to orphans and needy learners especially in secondary schools.
4. The government should prohibit collection of extra levies by school management.
5. The Ministry of Education should employ more teachers.
6. Quality assurance of schools to be more frequent and thorough to ensure schools adhered to government guidelines concerning free education.

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