



Education Finance Policies and their Responsiveness to Delivery of Basic Education A Case of Rural Schools in Laikipia County.

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the responsiveness of education finance policies by the government of Kenya on the delivery of quality basic education in rural schools. Sampled schools in Laikipia County in Kenya were the locale of the study. The aim was to evaluate the responsiveness of the policies on desired outcomes in curriculum, co curriculum and extra curriculum activities. The county has Laikipia East, Laikipia West, Laikipia Central, Laikipia North, Kirima and Nyahururu Sub Counties. Two rural schools were selected in each of the sub counties. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and a sample of 12 schools was considered sufficient for the study. A questionnaires and an interview schedule were prepared. The reliability of these instruments was tested using inter-rater reliability test because the study relied on subjective opinions of the principals. The correlation yielded was 0.83 which indicates a strong correlation between education finance policies and school activities. The researcher gave out structured questionnaires to school principals. Interview schedules were also prepared. School principals are the agents of the ministry of education authorized to incur expenditure (Education Act, 2003). Upon the response by the respondents, data was analyzed and literature review was conducted. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency and percentages. The study established that education finance policies had a significant effect on school activities such as curriculum support programs, co curriculum and extra curriculum activities. Such policies include the piloted centralized fee payment through e-citizen application system, disbursement of capitation to schools in tranches instead of disbursing the total amount allocated to the school in the financial year, lack of a law governing the amount of money to be disbursed to schools, lack of targeted controls to protect the money from predatory activities and corruption by various stakeholders.. The education finance policies and school activities correlated at ($r=0.93$). Based on these findings, the study concluded that education finance policies have a huge effect on the delivery of basic education. Centralized school fees payment policy by use of the E citizen Application, late disbursement of capitation to schools, allowing the ministry of education to exercise discretion on when to send capitation and how much to send per learner, lack of clear deterrence on the part of school administrators, ministry officials and other senior officers from seeking to get handouts from school principals whenever they visit schools, in a significant way contributed to lack of financial resources in schools leading to a drop in learning support activities. The study recommended that education finance policies need to be formulated in a manner that makes availability of money to schools a priority throughout to enable schools meet their financial obligations. . The study further recommended that other controls such as disbursement of capitation to schools in several tranches in an academic year should be reviewed and schools should be sent all the capitation allocated to them in one disbursement per year in the month of August being that the financial year for the government starts in July. Laws and regulations should be put in place to deter predatory activities on school money by ministry of education officials. Early Childhood Education (ECD) should be financed by the government in line with article 53 of the constitution of Kenya, vision 2030, Education for all and Millennium Development Goals as obligated by the government.

1. INTRODUCTION

The government of Kenya through the ministry of education has on several occasions published policies guiding the education finance. Issued under article 35(3) of the constitution of Kenya, a policy framework by the ministry titled; *A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING; REFORMING EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN KENYA*, sought to realign the human capital development needs of the country to the constitution of Kenya 2010. The constitution of Kenya 2010 conferred a number of rights to the child through the bill of rights. The Education Act Cap 211 had not taken care of this rights. The Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on Policy Framework on Education, Training and Research did not effectively take care of skills and competencies required to achieve vision 2030 in form of a foundational framework. Kenya further needs to meet her international obligations such as achieving the milestones under the Millennium Development Goals and the education for all both of which obligate the contracting parties to spread an all-inclusive education to all citizens. The education policy is also expected to enable Kenya to effectively prepare and adopt to a changing social economic needs of the citizens, globalization, climate change and modernization of the world economy. The policy on education and training therefore envisage a curriculum that successively develops the knowledge, skills, competencies, as well as lifelong learning dispositions of the citizens. This is in line with the ideals of vision 2030 and the constitution 2010. Under this policy, the government provides free and compulsory basic education that is equitable, qualitative and relevant to the Kenya's development goals. It is guided by the principal of universal access to education for every child under the age of the majority. The age of majority in Kenya is eighteen years. Article 53 of the constitution of Kenya states in part that; every child will

be entitled to free and quality education regardless of their social condition, gender, regional background and disabilities. Early Childhood Education has been mainstreamed by the policy framework on education and training as part of basic education. Unfortunately, early childhood education was allocated as a devolved function. This has affected its quality and access as there is no professionalism as would have been if the Teachers Service Commission had been given the mandate to recruit, discipline and retool the teachers teaching this young Kenyans. In order for this policies to be responsive to the stated desired needs, the financing has to be done in a manner that ensures that education is equitable, accessible, and free and of good quality. The most affected part when education finance policies put in place become disruptive to learning due to inadequacy of the availed finance and lack of disbursement as it has become a trend, is the quality of education.

Methodology

Chapter 4 of the constitution of Kenya is on the bill of rights. Article 53 is dedicated to children. Article 53 (b) confers to children a right to free and compulsory education. The education Act of 2013 gives effect to article 53(b) and states in part that every child shall have a right to free quality education regardless of their social condition, gender, regional background or disabilities. This study aimed at finding out the responsiveness of education financing policy on the delivery of basic education in rural school. To find out the responsiveness of the finance policy to quality education, on- discrimination on basis of gender and facilitation to access to free basic education, the researcher gave out questionnaires to principals in selected rural day schools in Laikipia County in Kenya. The questionnaire requested the principals to give their opinions on the following questions.

Research Question 1: Is the education finance policy responsive to the aspiration of free access to education?

The government allocates money as grant to every learner. Eight vote heads are funded by the government and parents are left to fund three vote heads. The government funds teaching and learning material, repair maintain and improvement, local travel and transport, administrative costs, electricity water and conservancy, activity fees, personnel emolument, medical and insurance which amount to Ksh 22,244 while the parent is expected to pay for a percentage of personnel emolument, equipment and stores and top up amounting to a maximum of Ksh 16,952 as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Composition of Capitation Grant in Rural Public Day Secondary Schools, Laikipia.

Vote Head Per Student	State Subsidy(Ksh)	Parent Fee (Ksh)	Total (Ksh)
Teaching learning material	4,792	0	4,792
Repair, Maintain and Improvement	2,886	0	2,886
Local travel and transport	1,833	0	1,833
Administration costs	1,572	0	1,572
Electricity water and Conservancy	2,151	0	2,151
Activity Fees	1,256	0	1,256
Personnel Emolument	5,755	1,918	7,673
Medical Insurance	1,999	0	1,999
Equipment and Stores	0	13,034	13,034
Top-up	0	1,961	1,961
Total Capitation	22,244	16,952	39,157

Source: Ministry of Education, Kenya Government Guidelines (2013)

As seen in the above table, the government of Kenya funds education of Kenyan children and the financial allocation of various vote heads as seen in the table is meant to help the school learn smoothly while providing the required services and aid that support learning. In the application production theory where input to output model is analyzed, the vote heads above are the input and the students' performance is the output (Hulse and Livingstone, 2010). 98% of the respondents observed that when the government started funding basic education, the number of students went up in schools.

Research Question 2: Is the Education Finance Policy Responsive to Quality Education?

The results in the table below are studies in one category of school in 2024. The results indicate lack of money in schools contributes to lack of participation in co-curricular activities by sub county schools. The sub county schools are always day secondary schools. The day secondary school featured in the table below is in the rural area. 90% of day secondary schools are in rural areas where majority of parents are either peasant farmers or casual laborers. Unlike the other categories of schools, day secondary schools are products of Constituency Development Fund. They have no enough land for soccer and such other games like rugby that require a big field. They have no hall nor theatre. They rely totally on funding from the government. This explains their poor results in performance and participation across all the categories in the co-curricular order of events. Therefore the financing policy seems to favour other categories of schools and is not responsive to quality of education and especially in rural day secondary schools.

Table 2. The poor performance could be attributed to scarcity of necessary resources amid increased enrolment.

School level	Participation in games. Term 1 2024	Participation in drama. Term 1 2024	Participation in music. Term 1 2024	Participation in science and engineering fair 2024	Performance in KCSE 2023
National	Had 7 teams	Had 6 out of 8 items	Had 4 out of six presentations	Presented 8 out of 13 categories	Mean score of 10.3
Extra county	Had 6 teams	Had 5 out of 8 items	Had 5 out of 6 presentations	Presented 3 out of 13 categories.	Mean score of 7.2
County	Had 4 teams	Had 6 out of 8 items	Had 3 out of 6 presentations	Presented 1 out of 13 categories	Mean score of 6.8
Sub County	Had 2 teams	didn't participate	didn't participate	didn't participate	Mean score of 2.8

Macharia (2013) agrees with these findings and points out effective school management and teacher motivation as primary determinants of overall academic performance; these factors have direct correlation with resource availability. Ngaiwa (2015) who carried out a study on factors influencing academic performance in Sabatia sub-county, Kenya, identified lack of resources and poor commitment by teachers in performing their role in class. These findings reinforce the research findings not only on the availability of resources but efficient utilization of the scarce available resources as factors influencing mean performance in rural public day secondary schools in Laikipia County.

Research Question 3: Is the Policy on Financing Education Responsive to Non Discrimination on Social Back Ground?

To avoid discrimination in education due to social background of students, and the fact being that the state is the key financier of education, the guarantor of the right to education without social discrimination must be addressed while formulating a policy on financing education. UNESCO committee on economic, social and cultural rights recommended that the state party should increase the budgetary allocation to education and take measures to ensure that there are no hidden costs that could affect access to learning or quality of learning. Further, the state should take measures to ensure child schooling in informal settlements, arid and semi-arid areas access quality education. UNESCO (2017)

Parents living in informal settlements, arid and semi-arid areas are poor and unable to finance education for their children. Thus, schools in these areas are fully reliant on the state. The failure by the state to finance these schools adequately is discriminatory in that the schools are left without resources to operate while their counter parts in well off areas are supported by their parents. Laikipia is a semi-arid place and prone to poverty. Rural schools in this area are fully reliant on funding from the government.

The table below shows amounts disbursed to schools in 2023 and first term 2024 and the Attendant Debt Consequences.

Year	School	Population	Amount Disbursed (Ksh)	Amount not Disbursed	Amount owed to Suppliers (Ksh)
2023	A	300	2,331,000	4,329,000	2,300,000
	B	650	5,050,500	9,379,500	5,627,700
	C	210	1,631,700	3,030,300	2,297,200
	D	700	5,439,000	10,101,000	9,324,000
2024	A	300	1,110,000	5,550,000	6,296,000
	B	650	2,405,000	12,025,000	14,285,700
	C	210	777,000	3,885,000	5,094,400
	D	700	2,590,000	12,950,000	18,648,000

Source: Researcher (2024)

As is seen in the table above, the amount of money released to schools has been too little. In year 2023 for instance, the government released 20% of the money in the first term, 15% of the money in second term and nothing in the third term. Thus, the amount released to schools in the year 2023 was 35% of the total owed to student which is Ksh 22200. When we come to the year 2024, the government released in term one Ksh 3700 per student which is 16.67% meaning 83.33% of the capitation is still owed to schools. The implication of this has been that the schools are not able to pay their debts to suppliers. In some cases, suppliers have taken schools to court. Schools rely on suppliers for grains, shop supplies like soaps, sugar, salt, etc., laboratory equipment and tools, games equipment and tools etc. The other implication has been schools choosing to expend on only what would make the school to continue operating. Therefore, games have been shelved, music and drama due to lack of money. In some cases where suppliers have refused to supply more goods till they are paid the debt owed, schools have had to ask parents to buy printing papers and students exercise books. Teachers employed by school boards and other school staff have also borne the brunt of this as schools have failed to pay them. This has led to challenges such as resignations

where teachers keep moving to other areas leaving the schools under staffed. The lack of disbursement of money to schools on time and in some cases the lack of disbursement at all- like it happened in third term 2023- has led to poor quality education given that in areas with a high poverty index, households were unable to buy exercise books, printing papers and help employ board teachers. Learners therefore had to stay for months without learning in some given subjects. Those that are gifted in sports or music or drama never got an opportunity to practice and showcase their talents as schools games, music and drama calendar would dictate. Atieno, J. (2014) while studying the influence of teaching and learning resources on students' performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, found out that due to different social economic endowment, lack of funding to schools adequately could lead to discrimination especially against students from low income areas.

Findings.

1. There was increased enrollment over the years in rural public day secondary schools.
2. Transition from primary to secondary schools had drastically improved since inception of free day secondary schools in 2013.
3. Rural day secondary schools are fully reliant on government funding as the only source of income.
4. Schools were struggling to remain operational due to fiscal consolidation policy by the government that led to disbursement of only 35% of the annual capitation to schools.
5. The capitation to schools in the term one of 2024 was only at 33.3% of the expected amount further worsening the financial crisis.

CONCLUSION

The education financing policy was responsive to free access to education. The education financing policy was not responsive to quality of education and it was discriminating on social economic background. Performance by day schools in co curriculum activities and in KCSE exams was heavily influenced by the finance policy by the ministry of education. The schools were denied access to opportunities to compete fairly with the other categories of schools which had alternative sources of income and parents of financial means who could supplement what the government sent to the schools.

Recommendations.

1. The government should send all the money due to schools in one tranche of Ksh 22200 to enable the schools to budget and expend money properly.
2. Controls on money disbursed to schools should be further improved to ensure government officials don't intimidate principals to use the money on purposes not expected of the school. There was a particular case of a magazine printed by the Teachers Service Commission where principals are forced to buy for their schools. They have to buy two copies. Yet the capitation to schools is not meant for such expenses.
3. Policy makers should formulate a finance policy that ends discrimination based on social economic background.
4. To improve on quality of education, schools need to be adequately funded so that they can afford to hire teachers, support staff and expend on stationery, food, fuel, and tools needed for co-curricular activities.
5. The amount currently set as capitation per student of Ksh 22200 is enough but a reduction of the same to the proposed Ksh 16000 would affect day secondary schools severely given they do not have another source of income.
6. Like in the United States, the government should set an equalization fund to be sent to schools in high poverty index areas to increase their ability to compete favorably with their better endowed counterparts.

Further Research Direction

1. This research was carried out in rural day secondary schools in Laikipia County. A similar research should be carried out across the country to help policy makers formulate policies properly informed by facts across the country.
2. The study focused on how the policy on free basic education responds to the right to quality education, free access to education and non-discrimination on social economic background. A study needs to be done on how finance policy on free basic education responds to the right to non-discrimination of basis of physical disability. Of essence the research should find out whether those with physical disability are considered when allocation per student is made to schools.

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