

# Effect of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy on Students' Retention in Kakamega East Sub County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** In 2008, the Kenyan government introduced subsidized secondary education with an aim of enhancing access to secondary education. The launch was meant to address, amongst other things, the problem of low retention rate witnessed in secondary schools. This study sought to establish the effect of subsidized secondary education policy on students' retention in Public Day secondary schools in Kakamega East Sub-County. The study was guided by Production Function Theory. The study adopted survey design and its target population comprised of all Principals of the 35 Public Day Secondary Schools and 1 DEO. A census of all the 35 Public Day Secondary Schools was undertaken. Data from school principals was collected by use of a questionnaire while those from the DEO was gathered by the aid of interview schedule. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of Paired Sample t-test while Qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Both Qualitative and Quantitative data was merged for presentation. The findings were presented descriptively and use of tables, means, range and percentages. The study established significant difference in students' retention rates before and after the introduction of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy. It was therefore concluded that the Subsidized Secondary Education Policy had positively contributed to retention rates in Public Day Secondary Schools. However, to improve further on retention rate of the secondary schools, this study recommends that the government should increase capitation to cater for extra levies that are not covered by the policy and to improve on the status of human and physical resources.

**Keywords:** Students' Retention, Subsidized Secondary Education Policy

## 1. Background

-As Kenya moves towards the realization of Universal Primary Education, focus is now shifting on provision of secondary education (Onsumu et al, 2006). Furthermore, there has been a growing recognition that although primary education is very important for individual welfare, it is never the less an insufficient condition for national economic growth and poverty eradication (UNESCO, 1961). The recognition is that Primary School leavers are still too young to become economically independent, and socially engaged in various activities. For some children, completion of Primary Education means the end of schooling. It is against this backdrop that in the year 2008, the government launched an ambitious Free Secondary Education in place of Cost Sharing Policy which came about as a result of pressure from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund through the Structural Adjustment Program (Republic of Kenya, 1988).

Although Cost Sharing Policy was introduced based on genuine economic reasons, it adversely affected participation in secondary education for the majority from low and middle family (Maritim, 2008; Kiveu and Maiyo, 2009). Amongst the impact of cost sharing policy was low retention rate.

Studies have shown that secondary education faces a myriad of challenges due to internal efficiency in terms of retention rates. Sub Saharan African countries rank lower as far as achievement of secondary education is concerned. This is evidenced by the fact that, secondary education has only been benefiting a tiny minority, usually the well-offs, leaving rural and urban slum dwellers disadvantaged. This therefore calls for education policy makers and educators to

address the challenges of increasing internal efficiency in secondary school education (World Bank, 2005).

Recognition of the importance of secondary education, by developing countries, Kenya being one of them, led to high budgeting allocations to education after their independence (UNESCO, 1961). To enhance secondary education, the government in 2008, as stated above, introduced Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) as a strategy to make education affordable to many parents (Getange, Onkeo and Orodho, 2014; Orodho, 2013, 2014; Republic of Kenya 2013). The launch of Free Secondary Education (FSE) was further meant to address among others, low retention rates at secondary level (Republic of Kenya, 2005; 2008; Oyaro, 2008).

The government of Kenya therefore announced the release of Kshs.2.9 billion for Subsidized Secondary Education (SSE) in February; 2008. Every child was allocated Kshs.10265 every year to cater for free tuition and operational costs. This allocation would not however cater for examination fees and development of physical facilities. This remained the responsibilities of the parents. It was the hope of all the education stakeholders that with this subsidy (SSE), problems of internal efficiency in our secondary schools, amongst them low retention rates, would be rooted out. The effect of the policy had not been ascertained in Kakamega East Sub County, hence this study.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to establish the effect of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy (SSEP) on retention of students

in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub-County.

### 1.2 Hypothesis

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in students' retention rates in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub-county before and after the introduction of Subsidized Day Secondary Education Policy.

### 1.3 Scope of the Study

The study confined itself to the effect of SSE policy on students' retention, in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega-East Sub-County. Furthermore, collection of data was only on enrolment and repetition between 2004-2007 and 2011-2014 in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega-East Sub-County. Only Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega-East Sub-County were considered for the study.

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Surveys are used to measure associations or relationships between things and the ensuing data could be used to provide a causal explanation to phenomena (Polland, 2005). The design was suitable for this study because it enabled collection of data from the secondary schools to establish the effect of SSEP on retention of students in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub County.

### 2.2 Study Area

This study was undertaken in Kakamega East sub-county in Kenya. It borders Kakamega North sub-county to the north, Kakamega Central sub-county to the west, Kakamega South sub-county to the south and Nandi County to the east (KNBS 2009). The sub-county is divided into two administrative Divisions namely Ileho and Shinyalu (KNBS 2009). It covers an area of 427.4km<sup>2</sup>. It has a population of 159,475 people with a population density of 358 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (KNBS 2009). The sub-county receives approximately 1750 mm of rainfall annually with mean temperatures of about 27<sup>o</sup>c. The sub-county is generally productive due to high rainfall and good arable land in most of the areas.

Major economic activities in the area include: bodaboda transportation, small and medium trading activities, mixed farming and Jua kali industry. Sugar cane, tea, and coffee are grown as cash crops whereas maize, millet, beans and potatoes are grown as food crops. The Sub-County boasts of Tourists' attraction sites such as Kakamega Forest and the famous "Crying stone".

There are 95 Primary schools and 42 secondary schools in Kakamega East Sub-County. Thirty five of the secondary schools are Public Day Secondary Schools. The sub county has an enrolment of 50,057 primary school pupils and 13,238 secondary school students. There are 6354 and 6884 boys and girls respectively in secondary schools. The public day

secondary schools have an enrolment of 4508 boys and 3935 girls. The justification for the choice of the study area was in the fact that education reports show high level of internal inefficiency in Kakamega East over the years.

### 2.3 Study Population

The target population of this study comprised of the 35 Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub-county distributed as shown in Table 1. Data was collected from the principals and the DEO.

**Table 1:** Distribution of Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub-County by Division

Division	Number of Secondary Schools
Ileho	12
Shinyalu	23
Total	35

The Principals were used as respondents in this study because they were the custodians of school data such as students' enrolments and repetition hence gave firsthand information. Data from the DEO corroborated information provided by the school principals on effect of SSE in the sub-county.

### 2.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

According to Mugenda (2003), where time and resources allow, a researcher should take as big a sample as possible. Since the sub-county had only 35 secondary schools, census of all the secondary school principals was undertaken. Purposive sampling was used to pick on the Sub-county Director of Education in Kakamega East Sub County as key informant on the state of internal efficiency in the Sub County.

### 2.5 Data Collection Instruments

Data was collected by use of questionnaire and interview schedule. Whereas questionnaire was used to gather data from school principals, interview schedule was used to collect information from the D.E.O.

### 2.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Qualitative data from the DEO and school Principals was analyzed thematically with respect to study objectives. On the other hand the quantitative data collected included student enrollment and repetition between the years 2004-2007 and 2011-2014. The data was used to calculate average students' retention rates between the years 2004 – 2007, representing the period before subsidized secondary education policy was introduced –and 2011-2014, the period when the policy was in place.

This study sought to establish the effect of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy on retention rate of Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub-county by establishing if there was significant difference in retention rate of Public Day Secondary Schools in the sub-county before and after the introduction of the Subsidized Secondary Education

Policy. Paired sample t-test was used to establish significance difference in retention rates before and after the introduction of subsidized secondary Education. Qualitative and quantitative data were merged for presentation. Data was presented descriptively and by use of tables, means, and percentages.

### 3. Findings and Discussions

The purpose of the study was to establish the effect of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy on retention of students in Public Day Secondary schools in Kakamega East Sub-county. In order to realize the objective, data on enrolment and repetition, between the years 2004-2007, when the Subsidized Secondary Education Policy had not been introduced and between the years 2011-2014, after the Subsidized Secondary Education Policy had been introduced, was collected. The data was used to calculate the retention rates before and after the Subsidized Secondary Education Policy and were averaged at school level for all the forms over the years under investigation. The findings are presented in Table 2:

**Table 2:** Average Retention Rates from Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub-County.

School Code	Average School Retention Rate Before SSE(2004-2007)	Average School Retention Rate After SSE (2011-2014)
1	82.8	92.8
2	78.9	95.9
3	77.3	93.4
4	76.7	95.9
5	80.1	96.6
6	77.7	92.4
7	74.5	87.2
8	75	92.5
9	81.3	95.3
10	75.5	92.5
11	82.3	96.8
12	79	93.2
13	76.1	81.1
14	70.2	88
15	65.9	79
16	74.4	92
17	85.7	93
18	72.6	80.3
19	88.3	93.6
20	64.4	65.4
21	77.3	85.9
22	79.3	71.5
23	73.7	92.4
24	77.8	93.9
25	82.1	92.3
26	72.1	77.5
27	71.7	84.6
28	71.3	82.7
29	76.3	87
30	78.2	88.1
31	62.1	79.6

Data in Table 2 reveal that the general retention rate in Kakamega East Sub-county before the Subsidized Secondary Education Policy was low. The table shows that before the policy, the highest retention rate was 88.3% for school code 019 while the lowest retention rate of 62.1% was recorded in school code 031. The Range between the highest and the lowest retention rate was 26.2%. Many schools, 21(67.7%), had retention rate of between (70-79%), while 7(22.6%) schools, had retention rate of over 80.0% and only 3(9.7%) schools, had a retention rate of below 70.0%. However, after the Subsidized Secondary Education Policy, the retention rates were comparatively high. The highest Retention rate of 96.8% was noted in school code 011 while the lowest retention rate was 65.4% in school code 020. Many schools, 17(54.8%), after the policy, recorded means of over 90.0% while 9(29.0%) had retention rates of between (80-89%). 4(12.9%) schools, had retention rate of between (70-79%) and only 1(3.2%) school, had a retention rate of below 70.0%. Comparatively, the range before and after Subsidized Secondary Education Policy, were 26.2% and 31.2% respectively. The highest retention rates before and after the policy, were 88.3% and 96.8% respectively showing some positive improvement, the trend that is also reflected in the lowest retention rates of 62.1% and 65.4% respectively, before and after the policy. Many schools, 21(67.7%), before the policy, had their retention rates clustered between (70-79%) while after the policy, the retention rates of many schools, 17(54.8%), were clustered between (90-99%). This is an indication of a positive improvement in retention rates. The highest improvement was noted in school code 004 with a positive deviation of 19.2% while the lowest improvement was noted in school code 020 with a positive deviation of 1%.

Further, Paired sample t test was conducted to determine if there was significant difference in students' retention rates in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub-County before and after the introduction of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy (SSEP). The test outputs are presented in tables 3, 4 and 5;

**Table 3:** Paired Samples Statistics for significant difference in students' retention rates

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1				
Retention Rates before SSEP	76.213	31	5.7102	1.0256
Retention Rates after SSEP	88.242	31	7.8499	1.4099

**Table 4:** Paired Samples Correlations for significant difference in students' retention rates

Pair 1	Retention Rates before SSEP & Retention Rates after SSEP	N	Correlation	Sig.
		31	.662	.000

**Table 5:** Paired Samples Test for significant difference in students' retention rates

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Retention Rates before SSEP - Retention Rates after SSEP	-12.029	5.9028	1.0602	-14.194	-9.864	-11.346	30	.000

The paired sample t-test showed sample mean of 76.213 (SD=5.7102) for before the introduction of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy which was statistically different from 88.242 (SD=7.8499) for after introduction of Subsidized Secondary Education Policy;  $t(-11.346) = -12.029$ ,  $p=.001$ . The 95% confidence interval for the test mean ranged from -11.194 to -9.864. As such, with p value of .001, which was less than .05, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

The findings of this study were supported by the views of both the Sub-county Director of Education and the Principals. The Sub-county Director of Education through an interview had the view that Subsidized Secondary Education Policy had improved the retention rate in the Sub-county. Most Principals (96.8%), through their questionnaires also held the same view apart from 1 Principal (3.2%), who felt that the policy did not improve the retention rate.

The findings of this study also are in line with the findings of other studies done earlier. For instance, Deardon, L. et al, (2007), in their studies entitled, "Education Subsidies and School Dropout" found out that the subsidy increased retention in full time education. The same views are shared by Mwangi, D. (2011), in his study-Contribution of Subsidies to Students' participation.-found out that education subsidies like Free Day Tuition, increased retention rates in schools. Ngetich (2015), in his study,-An Analysis of Retention Rate Before and After the Introduction of the Government Funded Tuition-found out that, this contributed to the increase in retention rate.

Be that as it may be seen from the findings of this study, the mean of 88.242 implies that 11.758 of students still are not retained in schools in spite of the Subsidized Secondary Education Policy in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub-county.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study concludes that Subsidized Secondary Education Policy positively affected students' retention in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kakamega East Sub-county.

#### 5. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it was noted that significant number of students might not have been retained in school due to extra levies that parents are forced to make, like PTA projects and co-curricular payments. The study therefore recommends that the government should increase capitations so as to cater for these extra levies that poor parents are forced to make. Government and other partners should help in improvement of physical facilities so as to minimize on extra levies from parents.

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