



RESEARCH ARTICLE

FREE DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLING IN KENYA: AN AUDIT FROM COST PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Secondary education in Kenya takes four years to complete, catering for students aged 14 to 17 years; it leads to the award of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). In 2008 free Day Secondary Schooling was rolled out as stipulated in Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) launched in July, 2005, where government committed herself to ensure that Free Education went beyond primary school. Under the secondary education plan, each student is allocated Sh10,625 per year, with 1.7 million students benefiting from the programme in the year 2011. In fact, the transition rate from primary to secondary has risen to 72% in 2011, up from 47 percent in 2002 according to 2011 Economic Survey. Education Ministry takes the lion's share of the budget. In the financial year 2002/2003 the ministry was allocated 64.1 Billion shillings with figure raising astronomically to 193.3 billion shillings in this financial year according to 2011 Economic Survey (RoK, 2011). In addition education is well funded through bursaries, Constituency bursary Fund, Economic Stimulus program and NGO funds. Learning as a Kenyan secondary boarding student remains a preserve of a few. This is because of the Rogue Head Teachers who are untouchable, Cash 'Commissions', The 'Silent' corrupt Ministry, Mega projects Motivational fees for teachers, Remedial teaching programmes and Misuse of already acquired resources. Ways in which schools would save on fees charged to parents include use of Biogas or Solar, use of workable Strategic Plans and Service Charters, income generating projects and introduction of School Vouchers. It's possible to reduce amount of fees paid to as little as 20,000 shillings per annum for all boarding schools if prudence is exercised in financial management and of course various cost saving measures are put in place. Education is the only social service that can guarantee universalism in life claims. There is no better equalizer than education. It is the only weapon that can help fight impunity, ethnicity and mushrooming of outlawed sects. This is what foundation of Vision 2030 should be all about.

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INTRODUCTION

According to UNESCO (2004) all countries must ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes. In most countries, primary and secondary education account for the largest share of education budgets. The sector has three very important roles: to prepare young people for adulthood, working lives, and further learning. Hence the school holds the key for transmitting values for adult life, skills for work life and cognitive readiness to engage in higher levels of learning. Data on gross and net enrolment ratios show that while much progress has been made in recent years, a significant percentage of primary school-age children still do not have access to education, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and in the Arab States. The picture is even more dismal for secondary education. Only 25 per cent of secondary school-age children had access to this level of education in sub-Saharan Africa in 2006. The South and West Asian region, with a 45 per cent net enrolment rate,

also has a long way to go. Overall, in the developing countries, approximately one out of two children of secondary school age is enrolled in school. The poor participation rates mean that, in 2006, more than 95 per cent of all out-of-school children at primary level were residing in developing countries, which hardly represents any improvement since 1999(UNESCO, 2004). More than 45 per cent of these children are in sub-Saharan Africa. Compounding the frequently poor quality of primary and secondary education in developing countries are low access rates and high drop-out rates. These are often inequitably distributed across gender, socio-economic, rural or urban and linguistic groups. Secondary education in Kenya takes four years to complete, catering for students aged 14 to 17 years; it leads to the award of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). Since 1985, Kenya's education system has included eight years of primary schooling and four of secondary (Eshiwani 1990, Ferre 2009). In the formal education system, secondary education is strategically placed in such a way that it connects primary schooling, tertiary education and the labour market. It can be regarded as the transitional level that connects those in the education system from low to higher echelons of

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education. It plays a key role as a transitional level of education that links basic education with skills and professional development, without which one cannot cross to or achieve them (World Bank, 2005). Secondary school prepares students for university education, or diploma or certificate training in various fields of specialization.

In 2008 free Day Secondary Schooling was rolled out as stipulated in Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) launched in July, 2005, where government committed herself to ensure that Free Education went beyond primary school. Under the secondary education plan, each student is allocated Sh 10, 625 per year, with 1.7 million students benefiting from the programme in the year 2011. In fact, the transition rate from primary to secondary has risen to 72% in 2011, up from 47 percent in 2002 according to 2011 Economic Survey. Table 1 shows enrolment by form and sex in secondary schools, from year 2006 to 2010. The total progressive enrolment by sex is well illustrated in the following graph. All tiers of education are steadily rising indicating the rate of social demand in education. A taskforce reviewing the education system in line with the Constitution wants schools to open in September, days after Parliament has passed the Budget and funds released by Treasury for free learning. The taskforce has also recommended that the amount disbursed to schools be doubled to reflect the rising costs of living. This means each child is to get Sh2,040 under the primary school plan and Sh21,250 under the free-day secondary education. More than 7,000 secondary schools are under the government's free education programme started in 2008. Education Ministry takes the lion's share of the budget. In the financial year 2002/2003 the ministry was allocated 64.1 Billion shillings with figure raising astronomically to 193.3 billion shillings in this financial year according to 2011 Economic Survey (RoK, 2011). In addition education is well funded through bursaries, Constituency bursary Fund, Economic Stimulus program and NGO funds. The table 2 shows the funds allocated to the 3 tiers of education system increases every year. This is well illustrated in Figure 2 below. Most rural day secondary schools charge no fees save for average of 2000 shillings per term for lunch program. Parents who intend to enroll their children in boarding secondary schools should be gearing up for huge fee increases come year, 2012 attributed to the raising cost of basic commodities. It will cost an average of over 100,000, 70,000 and 50,000 shillings for National, provincial and district national schools respectively in addition to the government subsidy to educate a student per annum. The cost of all these categories of schools in Kenya is illustrated in Figure 3. Day schools are the cheapest. There are many other unaccounted penalties. In a country where over 50 per cent of Kenyans live below the poverty line these exorbitant fees will only help stratify the already strained society. But why the ever sky rocketing high fees in schools headed by our very own sons and daughters? Reasons include the following;

#### **Rogue Head Teachers who are untouchable**

Through very strong associations heads of schools have made themselves demigods and formed voting blocks that intimidate even head of state or religious organizations that sponsor them. The rich take up vacancies left vacant by children who cannot afford to pay the huge fees.

#### **Cash 'Commissions'**

Unscrupulous suppliers ensure heads receive kickbacks in form of commissions to secure future orders. Parents are forced to buy substandard uniforms and other necessities from school or selected shops. In Kenya there are legislated procurement procedures and of course the Public Officers Ethics Act but they are never adhered to

#### **The 'Silent' corrupt Ministry**

The fact that some Ministry of education officials are corrupt is already in public domain. Recently director of public prosecutions ordered the fresh investigations into the 4.6 billion shillings free learning funds. The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission is to establish how senior officials in Education Ministry embezzled billions in outright theft, fictitious projects and diversion of money to unintended programmes (Siringi and Sigei, 2011). Again Heads are used as conduits for activity fee collected from parents and government.

#### **Mega projects**

Heads have been known to propose commissioning of projects that are too expensive for the poor parents. Rome was not build in a day and if really a school must have a project it must be one at a time and installments spread over a reasonable periods of time.

#### **Motivational fees**

Kenyans glorify and worship grades and they pay dearly for them. In some schools teachers are paid up to 10,000 shillings for every 'A' scored. Parents also have to fund trips to Dubai, Israel and other Holiday Destinations. Do parents know that with as low as grade D one can rise through the education ladder and become a university professor?

#### **Modern parents who are middle income earners**

Parent meetings have become a show of might for middle income earners. They will raise up their hands and stand to endorse heads' unilaterally decisions including buying of air conditioned buses and trips to Dubai.

#### **Cost Saving Measures**

It is possible to reduce amount of fees paid to as little as 20,000 shillings per annum if prudence is exercised in financial management and of course various cost saving measures are put in place. This include

#### **External Auditing**

Sometimes in 1990s office of the President dispatched a group of auditors from Efficient Monitoring Unit to various schools. They came up with reports having implicated heads misappropriating millions of dollars. Unscrupulous lawyers on bases of lacking legal backing dismissed the reports. Yet the district schools auditors and their counterparts at provincial level, every year give a clean bill of health to heads.

Table 1: Enrolment by form and sex in secondary schools, 2006-10

FORM	2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	Boys	Girls								
Form 1	161,588	137,873	170,650	143,045	207,212	180,461	232,854	212,467	266,707	232,226
Form 2	132,015	119,077	173,165	149,840	196,500	163,164	202,045	175,098	232,145	211,799
Form 3	120,978	115,443	157,572	134,793	181,775	190,987	190,987	156,785	216,786	181,823
Form 4	131,491	111,615	137,304	113,899	161,026	136,275	182,764	154,546	199,333	160,682
Sub Totals	546,072	484,008	638,690	541,577	746,513	635,698	808,650	698,896	914,971	786,530
Grad Totals	1,030,080		1,180,267		1,382,211		1,507,506		1,701,501	

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2011

Table 2: Ministry of Education expenditure (in KES million)

YEAR	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
<b>RECURRENT EXPENDITURE</b>						
Primary Education	6,5818	7,871.0	7298.8	7,970.5	9,861.7	
Secondary Education	14,322.9	8,009.7	14,622.4	14,455.5	17,840.5	
Universities	14,158.6	10,941.5	12,899.8	16,266.5	33,784.5	

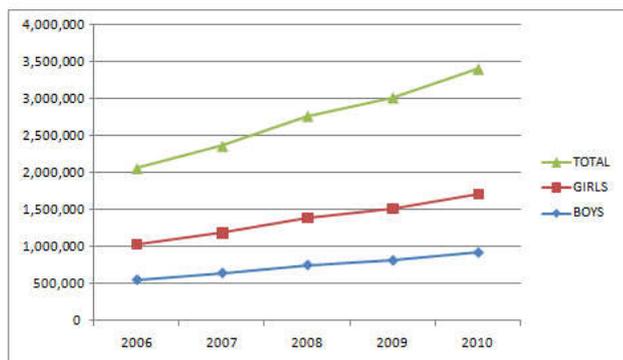


Figure 1: A graph showing progressive students enrolment by sex

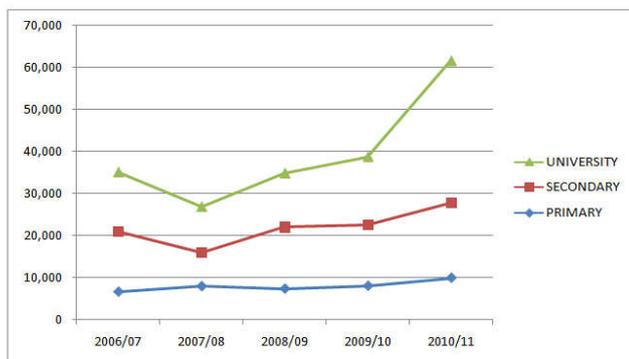


Figure 2. Ministry of Education expenditure (in KES million)

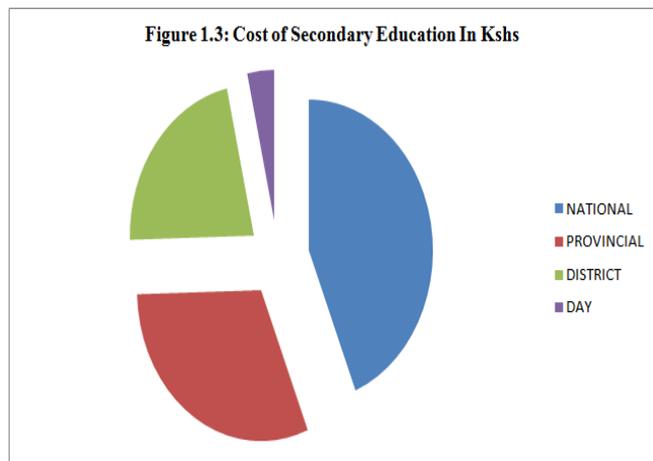


Fig. 3. Cost of secondary education expenditure (in KES millions)

**Legislated Procurement Procedures**

In Kenya there are legislated procurement procedures and of course the Public Officers Ethics Act. In schools deputy heads ought to chair the committee in charge of procurement. The deputy often rubber stamps the single sourced items worth millions of shillings. After all anyone who has ever deputized know the agony of being number 2. If proper procurement procedures are followed schools would save millions of dollars. Cereals must be purchased during harvesting seasons and from the locality.

**Conservation of already acquired resources**

Schools loose Millions of Shillings in careless issuance of resources. Library Catalogue System, Professional Stores Ledger Keeping would help preserve these resources. It's possible to buy permanent desks or beds rather than wooden ones that have to be replaced every year.

**Intrinsic Motivation**

Success on its own intrinsically motivates the members of staff. Why should someone be rewarded with huge cash awards for work he/she is employed to do? Rich parents who want to bull doze decisions in AGMs should not be given a chance to do so.

**Doing away with remedial teaching programmes**

Parents busy schedules are capitalized by teachers who demand to have our children throughout the year. Curriculum is prepared by professionals and piloted before being rolled out for implementation. 39 weeks are normally adequate to cover syllabus and leave the rest of the year to make Jack or Jackie a jovial child. Permanent secretaries have attempted to oppose remedial teaching programmes with no success.

**Energy saving-Biogas, Solar etc**

Green energy has become a norm for those who want to make safe an environment they leave in. Isn't building of Biogas plant or installation of Solar panels a better priority than purchase of ultra modern bus ?. Human dung is biodegradable and is not in short supply in school set up.

### Strategic Plans and Service Charters

A strategic plan in the education sector is the physical product of the strategic planning process and embodies the guiding orientations on how to manage an education system within a larger national development perspective, which is evolving by nature and often involves constraints. (Chang, 2008). Most schools operate like headless chicken, and have no direction or timeframes for their many activities. It can take a whole day for a parent to get simple service like collection of exam results. While big firms like Safaricom, Kengen Equity Bank take about an hour in their AGMs schools waste a whole day to communicate bad news of increased fees. Most modern day firms no longer have bureaucracy of who should chair a meeting or whether there is quorum. Strategic plan is not only a working tool of 21<sup>st</sup> century but makes one accountable to his customers or clients.

### Income generating projects

When the former president, Moi advised universities in early (1990s) to look for alternative sources of income people thought it was unworkable. Today public universities are not only self sufficient but help to supplement salaries of lowly paid lecturers. Schools should be given back to competent managers who should be mandated to hire heads who can be innovative enough to start incoming generating projects.

### Introduction of School Vouchers

According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia a school voucher, also known as an education voucher, is a certificate issued by the government, which parents can apply toward tuition at a private school (or, by extension, to reimburse home schooling expenses), rather than at the public school to which their child is assigned. An alternative to the education voucher is the education tax credit, which allows individuals to use their own money to pay for the education of their children or to donate money towards the education of other children. It has been practiced in the Netherlands, since 1917 with public and private schools being given equal financial status under the constitution. For more than 80 years, parents have preferred Private schools. Perhaps this would end debate on admission quotas in secondary schools.

### CONCLUSION

Secondary education has become a gateway to further widen the gap between the rich and the poor. The authors make the following recommendations

- More day schools should be established and the government must cease giving any subsidy to boarding schools. What is meant for boarding schools should be channeled to day schools to improve infrastructure and create a level playing field. It makes no sense to continue pumping more funds to the provincial and national schools largely dominated by the rich while the poor continue to learn in dilapidated structures.
- Board of governors must be empowered to deal with heads who have made management of schools as one man show. With promulgation of new constitution on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2011 and devolution of board of

governors should be mandated to recruit heads of schools through competitive interviews.

- Heads of schools should be people who have entrepreneur skills. Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and taking calculated risk, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports everyone in day-to-day life at home and in society; makes employees more aware of the context of their work and better able to seize opportunities, and provides a foundation for entrepreneurs establishing a social or commercial activity (European Commission, 2008). With establishment of income generating activities school would get be in a position to fund recurrent expenditures.
- The annual KCSE national order of merit list must be done away with as it serves no useful purpose. What is the rationale of ranking a school that is well endowed with resources and admitted the best students in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) as position one while a poor village day school as last? This is like proverbial story of race between hare and tortoise. What should be adopted is value added index from previous exam.

Education is the only social service that can guarantee universalism in life claims. There is no better equalizer than education. It is the only weapon that can help fight impunity, ethnicity and mushrooming of outlawed sects. This is what foundation of Vision 2030, Kenya's development blueprint, should be all about.

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