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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE EQUITY AND QUALITY IMPLICATIONS OF FREE DAY SECONDARY EDUCATION (FDSE) POLICY IN KENYA: WHAT IS THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENT?

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ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the financing mechanisms of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) education policy focusing on the sustainability of the programme in terms of fostering the desired equity and quality of education provided. It is concerned with one main question: What is the unfinished business in the current education financial arrangement in Kenya? To answer the question, the paper sets out to achieve three objectives: To profile the current trends in enrollment and equity in secondary school education in Kenya; to assess the funding strategy for the secondary education sectors in the country; and to examine the emerging challenges and implications of the free education policy in Kenya in order to establish the unfinished business. The source of data for the paper was a combination of secondary data through desk literature review and primary data from interviews with 136 secondary school teachers and principals pursuing their school-based degree programmes at Kenyatta and Mount Kenya Universes during the 2012/2013 academic year. The major finding is that while on the one hand the implementation of the policy has resulted into exponential quantitative growth in students' enrollment; on the other hand , the education sector is fraught with multifarious and intertwined finance related challenges of providing quality and equitable education thereby resulting in conspicuously wide and severe regional and gender disparities in access to, and quality of education. The funds meant for the day secondary schools are grossly inadequate and irregularly remitted to schools and this has exacerbated acute shortages of essential learning physical and human resources forcing teachers to resort to unconventional instructional techniques. The overall impact has been low quality outcomes of education and emergence of compulsory latent user charges to be shouldered by the already over-burdened poor households, especially those residing in urban slums and ASAL regions. It is concluded that the unfinished business in the current Government funding strategy is to make is sustainable and hence there is an urgent need to devise alternative additional sources of funding in order to increase the current capitation from a flat rate of Khs.10, 265 to 32,747 for boys and 33,707 for girls who should get an extra Ksh.960 to meet their sanitary needs. It is recommended that day secondary schools in Kenya should be encouraged to generate extra funds from income generating activities and work out mechanisms of eradicating all bottlenecks related to additional educational financial burden for children from poor socio-economic backgrounds that hinder them from accessing equitable and quality education.

INTRODUCTION

Background Information

Notwithstanding the milestones achieved since the launch of the Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) programme in 2008 in Kenya which has resulted into exponential student enrollment in secondary schools in the country, this paper contends that one thing is certain: there is an unfinished business of providing adequate financial provisions and/or arrangements that can not only sustain the current high students enrollment trends but also ensure attainment of equity and quality of the education provided. This paper is premised on the fact that since FDSE programme was put in place to ensure all eligible students, especially those from poor socio-economic backgrounds, access secondary education of high quality without any undue financial obstacles, the current government financing mechanisms has not been adequate and stable enough to achieve the intended noble objective. What seems to emerge is that the funding strategy, especially the student capitation of Ksh.10, 265 put in place in 2008 has never been reviewed despite the high inflation trends that have been experienced in the country over the years. The overall impact of all these developments is that the bulk of the funds that currently finance the programme in the form of latent costs (in the name of cost sharing) has been indirectly passed over to the poor parents who are supposed to have been cushioned from the adverse effects of cost sharing by the introduction of the FDSE policy in education. It is against this backdrop that the theme of this paper which focuses on interrogating the unfinished business in financial arrangements under the FDSE and its possible impact on equity and quality of the education produced under the policy is derived.

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State of the Art Review

The launch of Free Secondary Education (FSE) in 2008 was meant to address illiteracy, low quality education and low completion rates at the secondary level, high cost of education and poor community participation (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

Unlike the FPE initiative, which had reference to enormous conventions, resolutions and literature, free secondary education initiative could have been triggered by the politically charged climate that engulfed the country during the 2007 general election which implied that the country may not have been very prepared for its implementation. However, there was government commitment to increase transition from primary to secondary by seventy percent in all districts (Ohba, 2009). According to the Free Secondary Education policy, the government was expected to meet the tuition fees of KShs 10,265 per student, while the parents were required to meet other requirements like lunch, transport and boarding fees for those in boarding schools, besides development of approved school projects. This was in line with the government commitment to ensure that regional special needs and gender disparities were addressed (Ohba, 2009). These efforts were a positive move towards the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All. As a result, the introduction and subsequent implementation of policies on Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and Free Day Secondary Education in 2008 in Kenya has made education sector budget in the country to substantially increase over the years (Republic of Kenya, 2012a). The education sectors public spending was allocated colossal funding which increased from Khs.92.2 billion (equivalent to US$ 1.08 billion) in 2005/2006 to Ksh.169 billion (US $1.88 billion) in 2009/2010 fiscal year to meet the new demands of the policies (Republic of Kenya, 2012). On average, the education sector accounted for 28 percent of the aggregate public expenditure in 2005/2006 and dropped marginally to 26 percent in 2009/2010 fiscal years (Republic of Kenya, 2013). The country's education expenditure as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has remained fairly constant ranging from 6.1 percent in 2005/2006 to 6.2 during the 2009/2010 financial year (Republic of Kenya, 2012a). These efforts to devote meaningful funding to education is justified against the backdrop that available evidence from literature review suggests a positive and significant correlation between indicators of quality and financial allocation (Oketch and Ngware, 2012; Brookings Institution, 2013).

Following the Jomtien Declaration of 1990 and the Dakar Framework for Action of 2000, the Government of Kenya launched free day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2008. The objective of this programme was to increase access and to cushion poor households by abolishing school fees. As a result, enrolment in public primary schools rose from 5.9 million in January 2003 to 9.4 million in 2010, an increase of 59.32% in GER. The number of secondary schools has increased from a total of 6,566 secondary schools in 2008 to 7,308 in 2009 against 26,666 primary schools over the same period. Enrolment grew from 1.18 million students in 2007 (639,393 boys and 540,874 girls) to 1,328,964 (735,680 boys and 593,284 girls) in 2008 and further to 1,500,015 (804,119 boys and 695,896 girls) in 2009(Republic of Kenya/UNICEF, 2012). The GER for secondary increased from 27.3 % (28.8% for boys and 25.7% for girls) in 1999 to 47.8% (50.9% for boys and 46.3% for girls) in 2010. The NER recorded an increase from 28.9% (29.8% for male and 27.9% for female) in 2008 to 35.8% (36.5% for boys and 35.1% for girls) in 2010, having progressively improved from 13.7 % (13.5% for male and 13.9% for female) in 1999. The gender disparity index as at 2009 stood at 0.96 % (Republic of Kenya, 2012a). Total secondary school enrolment is expected to rise sharply over the period 2009 to 2015. This is as a result of a number of factors, including: the impact of free primary education and hence the growth in numbers completing class 8; the policy of increasing the transition rate to over 75% by 2012; the expected 100% transition rate by 2015 and the implementation of the Free Day Secondary Education policy and internal efficiency gains in primary and secondary schools. Public secondary school enrolment is expected to increase from 1.03 million students in 2007 to 2 million in 2012 and 2.2 million by 2015. Enrolment in both public and private secondary schools is projected to increase to 2.18 million students in 2012 and 2.4 million by 2015(Republic of Kenya/UNICEF, 2012).

Using a benchmark of a maximum class size of 45:1, the required number of classrooms will increase from 31,473 in 2007 to 52,279 by 2015. The projected number of teachers required for public secondary schools based on Average Teaching Load (ATL) of 18 hours per week is expected to rise from the current 51,200 teachers in 2010 to 76,481 teachers by 2011. This translates to a teacher shortage of 21,728 teachers in 2011; 24,971 teachers by 2012 and a PTR of 24:1 by 2012 which is less than the recommended 35:1. Improving efficiency in teacher utilization by increasing average teaching load to between 20 and 24 hours average teaching load per week, and ensuring that teachers teach at least two school subjects will immediately cut the teacher shortage by around 32%. It is estimated that the MoE should be projecting to provide Basic Education for about 15.8 million children (ECDE, Primary and Secondary education); and tertiary education and skills development programmes for about 6.3 million youth by 2015(Republic of Kenya/UNICEF, 2012). Based on the lessons leant during the implementation of FPE, it would be expected that implementation of free secondary education was to be faced with a myriad problems. Research on FPE indicated that there were many challenges facing its implementation (Republic of Kenya, 2005; UNESCO, 2005a, 2005b). For example, UNESCO (2005a) carried out an assessment of the Free Primary Education programme in Kenya in 2005. The assessment found out that some of the major challenges facing free primary education initiative were increased student numbers; shortage of teachers; lack of clear guidelines on admission; lack of consultation with teachers and parents; delay in disbursement of funds by the government; and expanded roles for head teachers. The recent assessment of basic education in Kenya by Republic of Kenya/UNESCO (2012) similarly documented that despite milestones achieved towards attaining UBE by 2015, Kenya still faces a number of challenges, some of them significant in improving access, equity, quality and relevance of education, especially in the urban slums and ASAL regions

Needless to say, these strategies to generously finance education system in Kenya is hinged on the philosophy, vision, mission and target goals pursued through clearly stated objectives (Republic of Kenya, 2012a, 2013). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education in Kenya is guided by the National Philosophy, which places education at the centre-stage of the country‘s human and economic development strategies (Republic of Kenya, 2013). Thus, the education system focuses on the acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as provision of lifelong learning (Republic of Kenya, 2013; United Nations, 2013). In line with the current United Nations (2013) and other educationally relevant international conventions and protocols which Kenya is a signatory to, the education in the country emphasizes provision of a holistic, quality education and training that promotes the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of learners, instilling values such as patriotism, equality of all human beings, peace, security, honesty, humility, mutual respect, tolerance, co-operation and democracy, through education (Odhiambo, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2012a, 2012b,2013; United Nations, 2013). Ultimately the overall vision of education service provision in the country is to have a globally competitive quality education, training and research for Kenya's sustainable development. To achieve this, the Ministry has endorsed Vision 2030 and shall focus education and training towards achieving the goals of the Vision (Republic of Kenya, 2012a, 2013).

In the same vein, effective pursuance of these objectives, which emphasizes access, equity, quality and relevance as fundamental characteristics that define and drive systems of education and training, enough and sustainable funding must be provided. Thus, it is the contention of this paper that the design and implementation of an effective education and training systems that is cognizant of the four characteristics should be based on sound financial base of the country. Over the years, the Kenya Government has vigorously expanded access to quality and relevant system of education and training, through a partnership between the state, parents, the community and key stakeholders with an intention of according equal opportunity to all, thereby ensuring equity (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; Odhiambo, 2012; Wasanga, Ogle and Wambua, 2011a, 2011b). Nonetheless, it is the contention of this paper that these indicators presuppose that the education system is not only adequately financed, but these finances are available in ways that neither exclude any learner by gender or region of residence nor leave any deserving learner behind (United Nations, 2013; UNESCO, 2012). The contention finds support in the Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda under the auspices of the United Nations (2013) aver that it is important to target learning outcomes , and to make sure that every child performs up to global minimum standard upon completing primary education (United Nations, 2013). However, they caution that education should be perceived as being about far more than basic literacy and numeracy (United Nations, 2013; Brookings Institution, 2013). Their perspective is that while the targets of education are about access to school and learning, educations aims are wider and financial implication are colossal (United Nations, 2013). They reiterate that as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the child, education should be geared towards enabling children to realize their talents and full potential , earn respect for human rights and prepares them for their role as adults(United Nations,1989; United Nations, 2013). Eventually, they counsel that education should also encourage creative thinking, teamwork and problem solving amongst others (United Nations, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

This paper is framed by the Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement developed by Hargreaves (2001). Thus, Hargreaves (2001) developed a theory of school effectiveness and improvement based on: outcomes, both cognitive and moral; leverage, which is the relation between teacher input and education output; intellectual capital, which is the sum of the school's knowledge and experience; and social capital, that is, networks of trust and collaboration. In this theory, Hargreaves (2001) argues that the conventional model of measuring school effectiveness (and by extension improvement) is an inadequate tool for the analysis of school success and failure. Hargreaves (2001) posits that the concept of 'school ethos' helps to make sense of the correlation between a number of school processes, but it does not automatically allow one to test the model in detail, or to predict the performance of a school from any close analysis of identifiable factors. Nonetheless, he proposes a new theoretical model of schools, which provides a working model both of effectiveness and improvement. The theory has four theoretical underpinnings, namely outcomes, leverage, intellectual capital, and social capital, which are related to desired educational outcomes and the financing strategies of an institution. In this context, while outcomes are indicators that measure cognitive and moral outcomes; leverage gauges the relation between teacher input and educational output. Thus, in conceptualizing intellectual capital, Hargreaves argues that instead of teachers employing too much effort and yielding little fruit, effective schools concentrate on effective strategies allowing a large impact to result from relatively low effort (that is, working smarter not harder). Outstanding schools use combinations of high leverage strategies. Understanding school effectiveness involves exploring how high leverage works (Hargreaves, 2001).

With respect to social capita, Hargreaves, (2001) uses this model to present definitions of effective and improving schools, stating that an effective school mobilizes its intellectual capital (especially its capacity to create and transfer knowledge) and its social capital (especially its capacity to generate trust and sustained networks) to achieve the desired educational outcomes of intellectual and moral excellences, through the successful use of high leverage strategies grounded in evidence-informed and innovative professional practice. An improving school increases its intellectual capital (especially its capacity to create and transfer knowledge) to achieve the educational outcomes of intellectual and moral excellences, by learning...to use higher leverage strategies based on evidence of 'what works' and/or innovative professional practice. In this context, this paper perceives the Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement as being appropriate in examining the funding related challenges facing effective implementation of free secondary education in public secondary schools in Kenya under the FDSE policy. The appropriateness of the theory in this paper is justified due to the fact that all the theoretical concepts – outcomes, leverage, intellectual capital, and social capital – have a bearing on the quality of education which in turn is dependent upon effective funding mechanisms. Needless to say, the desired outcomes of free secondary education policy are to eliminate all barriers related to education financing that facilitates provision of quality secondary education to every Kenyan child graduating from primary schools to secondary school in the country, regardless of gender, ethnic background, or socioeconomic status. Thus, using the theory, the paper seeks to profile the challenges that could hinder desired outcomes and creation of intellectual capital and social capital in public secondary schools under the current Free Secondary Education (FDSE) policy in Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

When free day secondary education was introduced in 2008, the ministry quickly registered progress in enrolment at the secondary school level. Secondary gross enrolment rates increased by 278,828 while net enrolment decreased by 285,109 in 2008. During the same year, the gross enrolment rate for boys (46.3%) was higher than that of girls estimated at 38.8 percent (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). Despite these milestones achieved towards attaining UBE by 2015, Kenya still faces a number of challenges, some of them significant in improving access, equity, quality and relevance of education, especially in the urban slums and ASAL regions. The overall problem addressed in this paper is that there appears to be some unfinished business in the funding mechanism of the PDSE policy as manifested in lack of a clear picture and understanding of how this noble FDSE policy is currently being implemented and the emerging funding related challenges as well as their cumulative impact on access to, equity and quality of educational provision in the country.

Purpose and Objectives

The overall purpose of this paper is to assess and establish the status of basic education in Kenya under the free education provision with respect to access to, equity and quality implications of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) policies in Kenya. It is concerned with one main question: What is the unfinished business in the current education financial arrangement in Kenya?

To answer the question, the paper sets out to achieve three objectives: i) To profile the current trends in enrollment and equity in secondary school education in Kenya; ii) to assess the funding strategy for the secondary education sectors in the country; and iii) to examine the emerging challenges and implications of the free education policy in Kenya in order to establish the unfinished business.

Research Methodology

The paper used mixed methods involving quantitative data from intensive review of literature from secondary sources that included Government documents, education review reports on education, statistical abstracts and appropriation account documents; and primary data from interviews with a purposively selected sample of 136 secondary school teachers and principals pursuing their school-based degree progrmmes at Kenyatta University during the 2012/2013 academic year. The literature review focused on access, equity and quality trends as well as the funding mechanisms. The interviews with key respondents focused on emerging challenges as a result of the free education policies in educations and suggestions on the most appropriate capitation levels for the FDSE policy in Kenya.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Financing Education in Kenya

Available data indicate that Kenya‘s public spending on education has continued to rise over the years, particularly since the introduction of the free primary education in 2003. A closer scrutiny of the data in the table reveal that the sector‘s total expenditure increased from Kshs.92.6 billion in 2005/6 to Kshs.160 billion in 2009/10. On average, the education sector accounted for 28 percent of the aggregate public expenditure in

Table 1. Education Expenditure 2005/2006 fiscal years to 2009/2010

Budget Item/financial year	2005/2006	2007/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
Education as % of GDP	6.1	6.0	6.2	6.3	6.2
Education as % of GOK Total expenditure	28.0	26.0	23.2	25.0	26.7
Education recurrent as %as % GOK total recurrent	32.1	32.8	31.0	31.7	32.7
Education development as% total education development	10.3	7.4	6.0	7.9	7.8
Education recurrent as % total education expenditure	93.0	92.4	91.9	91.0	93.1
Education development as as total education expenditure	7.0	7.6	8.1	9.0	6.9
Appropriation in aid as % of education expenditure	5.3	4.8	5.7	4.3	3.8

Source: Appropriation Accounts, MPER, various, Republic of Kenya, (2012a)

Table 2. Public Education Expenditure 2005/2006/2009/2010

Budget Item/financial year	2005/2006	2007/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
General Administration and Planning	10.8	9.19	9.75	7.26	12.36
Primary Education %	53.7	56.03	52.01	49.81	46.60
Teacher Education %	0.34	0.19	0.36	0.29	0.17
Special Education %	0.21	0.34	0.35	0.43	0.13
Early Childhood Education %	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.18	0.15
Adult and Continuing Education	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.12	0,09
Secondary Education %	2.17	2.17	3.46	4.85	4.73
Technical Education %	13.39	14.43	10.9	12.39	11.28
University Education %	92.60	103.86	121.32	136.89	160.33
Total Expenditure[in Ksh. Billion]	93.04	92.43	91.88	91.05	86.46
Recurrent percent	6.96	7.57	8.12	8.95	13.54
Development Percent	73.99	73.86	76.21	75.79	69.41
Basic Education					

Source: Appropriation Accounts, MPER, various, Republic of Kenya, (2012) 2005/6 and 26 percent in 2009/10. The country‘s education expenditure as percentage of GDP remained fairly constant ranging from 6.1% in 2005/6 to 6.2 % in 2009/10. Table 1 contains data on public expenditure in education for the period from 2005/2006 fiscal year to 2009/2010 financial year. As reflected in Table 1, primary education sub-sector received the highest percentage allocation of public education spending; 53.070% in 2005/06 and 46.60% in 2009/10. In 2009/10 secondary education, technical and university education sub-sectors received 27%, 4.5% and 11% of total education spending, respectively. The salient message portrayed with the data in Table 2 is that the Government of Kenya attaches a lot of emphasis in the development of basic education as reflected in the overall allocation of over 70 percent of the total educational expenditure to this level of education. In fact the primary education sub-sector has consistently been allocated about half of the funds budgeted for the education Ministry. The high allocation to primary education is consistent with the MDGs and EFA goals of attaining 100% NER and completion rate by 2015 and can be associated with increased access to primary education (NER of 92% in 2009). However, unit cost spending shows a different picture, as portrayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Unit public spending by level of education, 2005 to 2008

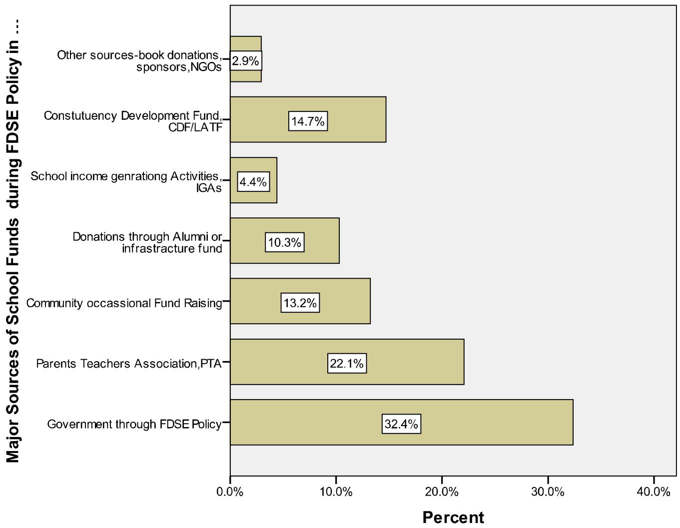
Unit Cost	2005	2006	2007	2008
Primary	6,251	6,862	7,457	7,781
Secondary	20,783	24,918	29,485	58,585
Technical	24,651	32,302	43,474	55,318
University	113,867	143,353	138,417	137,707
Secondary as a percentage	3.3	3.6	4.0	7.5
of Primary	3.9	4.7	5.8	7.1
Technical as a percentage	18.2	20.9	18.6	17.7
of Primary	38,787	42,592	47,011	52,012
University as a percentage	0.16	0.16	0.16	0,15
of Primary	0.54	0.59	0.63	1.13
GDP Per capita	0.64	0.76	0.92	
Primary as a percentage	2.94	3.37	2.94	
GDP per capita				
Secondary as a percentage				
of GDP per capita				
Technical a a percentage				
per capita				
University as a percentage				
of GDP per capita				

Source: Appropriation Accounts, MPER, various, Republic of Kenya,(2012a)

Table 3 shows estimated government (recurrent) spending per student enrolled in the respective levels of education. Primary education public unit spending increased from Kshs.4, 945 in 2003 to Kshs.7, 781 in 2008 at current prices. The unit public spending at secondary education (Kshs.58, 585) was 7.5 times that of primary education in 2008 and 1.13% of GDP per capita.. The 2008 unit spending at secondary education level includes the annual free day secondary school per capita allocation to public schools across the country.

The Main Sources of Funds under the FDSE Policy in Kenya

The main sources of secondary education in Kenya include households and the government (Republic of Kenya, 2012, Odhiambo, 2012). Other sources of funds are private sector, religious organizations, communities, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and development partners largely the donor community. The cost of secondary education borne by the government and households consists of salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff, bursary allocations capital investments, school fees, tuition and transport, amongst others. Figure 1 carries data on main sources of funding FDSE in secondary schools in Kenya.



Source: Interviews and field data by researcher (2013)

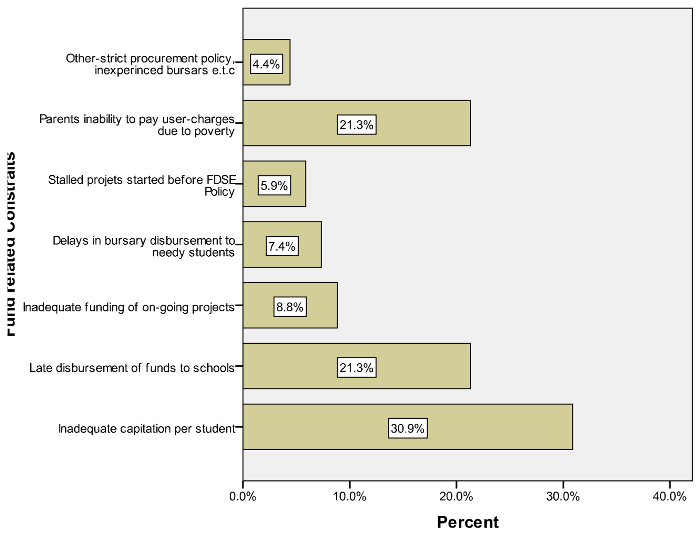
Figure 1. Main sources of funds for the FDSE Policy

Figure 1 carries data that indicates that under the FDSE policy, the major sources of funds are: Government capitation for each student sent directly to schools (32.4 %); parents through the Parent’s Teachers Association (22.1%); Constituency Development Fund (14.7 %) and community initiatives through funds drive(13.2%). The others are donations (10.3%), school income generating activities (4.4 %), and donations such as book donations during Annual General Meetings (AGMs) which constitute a paltry 2.9 percent. The message portrayed by the data in Figure 1 is that the government support to FDSE is still very minimal since parents still shoulder a large financial burden through parents’ teachers’ organization and community funds drives in addition to other costs such as uniforms, lunch programme and transport. In fact, it was strongly argued by the teachers and headteachers interviewed that the amount of money allocated to each individual student was too small to warrant calling this policy a truly free day secondary education programme.

Funds Related challenges in implementing FDSE Policy

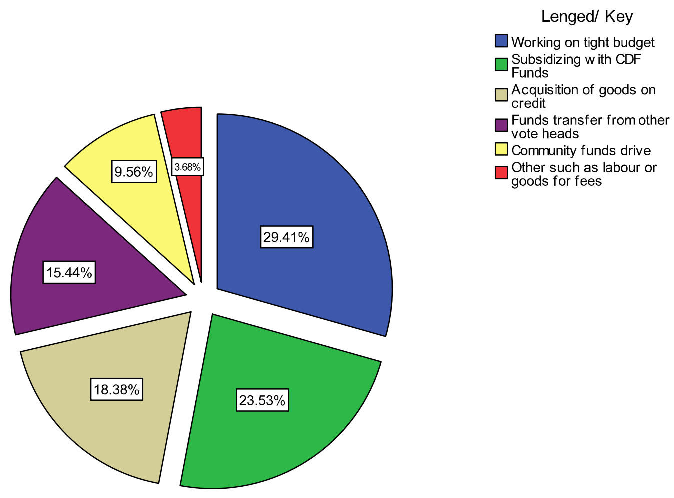
The implementation of FDSE in Kenya is currently facing a myriad of funds related constraints which are not satisfactorily met by the FDSE programme. Figure 2 demonstrates that the major constraints include: Inadequate capitation per student (30.9 %); parents’ inability to pay the ser-charges agreed upon through the parents’ teachers association (21.3%); late disbursement of the meager finds to schools (21.3%); inadequate financing of on-going school projects (8.8); amongst others. From the data carried in the figure, it is quite evident that a majority of secondary school teachers and principals reported that inadequate funding through a capitation of Ksh.10, 265 which was set in 2008 was grossly inadequate to meet the financial needs and operations of day secondary schools in the country.

Figure 2: Funds related constraints experinced after implementation of FDSE



Source: Interviews and field data by researcher (2013)

The coping strategies applied during financial constraits



Footnote

The other factor which was cited by over 20 percent of the respondents is the inability of parents to pay the latent user-charges in the form of school uniforms, which most parents felt were expensive; the cost related to lunches, which the parents believed is covered in the FDSE allocation; national examinations as well as internal assessment tests; transport and some development fees charges to cover for the cost of desks and support staff such as watchmen; amongst others. The respondents pointed out that most parents apart from being poor are actually becoming irresponsible as they still think that their children's education was fully catered for by the Government of Kenya through the FDSE programme. It is also reported that there was persistent lateness in disbursement of the money meant to implement the FDSE programme. This delay in remittance of the finances was making the overall implementation of the programme very difficult since at times money meant for the first tranche arrived in schools nearly at the end of the term. This finding, coupled with the fact that most projects started before the implementation of the policy had practically stalled. The implication of these challenges related to financing of education which is branded as free day secondary education is that the implementation of the programme cannot be efficient and effective. Most of the school projects which are meant to facilitate effective learning have practically stalled with the implementation of FDSE policy in day secondary schools.

Coping with Funds Related Challenges

The coping strategies employed by most school managers I event of financial shortages include: working on very tight budget lines (29.41 %); subsiding government funding with PTA funds approved by parents during Annual General meetings (AGMs) constituting 23.53 percent; acquisition of goods and services on credit (18.38 %) ; funds transfer by from one vote head to the other with approval of the Board of Management (BOM) constituting 15.44 percent and community funds drive constituting 9.56 percent (amongst other measures.

The overall implication is that the current funding level is grossly inadequate and hence there is a need to find out what is the unfinished business in the planning of the FDSE policy in Kenya.

Impact of Free Basic Education on Equity and Quality in Kenya

The challenges discussed are already having a negative impact on implementation and outcomes of the FDSE programme in Kenya as illustrated in Table 4. The data I the table indicate that a large proportion of respondents contend that the FDSE policy has compromised the quality of education as cited by 28.8 percent. It is also evident that the FDSE programme has exacerbated scarcity of essential instructional resources especially in the recently established day secondary schools.

Table 4. Impact of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) Policy in Kenya

Impact of Free Day S secondary Education (FDSE)	Frequency	Percent
Lowering of quality of education , especially in	39	28.68
recently established schools	32	23.53
Inadequate essential instructional resources	11	8.09
especially in science subjects	7	5.15
Poorly maintained and dilapidating school	29	21.32
infrastructure	18	13.23
Shortages of qualified teachers and overreliance on	136	100.00
BoM teachers		
Overcrowding in classrooms resulting into high		
pupil/teacher ratios		
Other (inadequate or no libraries , laboratories, or		
school transport)		
Total		

Source: Interviews and field data by researcher (2013)

The other negative impact of the FDSE programme is that although it has caused the student enrollment in secondary schools to skyrocket, this has in effect resulted into serious overcrowding of students in classes. Consequently, this overcrowding has automatically resulted into high pupil/

teacher ratios. The cumulative impact of over stretched teachers handling large class sizes in the context of scanty instructional resources and poorly maintained school infrastructure has resulted in dilution of quality of education provided in these institutions. The subjects which have been hit hardest are the science subjects that require adequately equipped laboratories which are currently either not available or inadequately resourced with requisite reagents, equipments or specimens.

The Suggested Appropriate Capitation levels

Over the recent years, the proportion of secondary education expenditure to total education budget was shown to range between 21 and 26 percent. Table 3 indicates that the capitation for each student in day secondary schools in Kenya was set at Ksh.10, 265 and has static since 2008 during the launch of the FDSE programme. The Task Force chaired by Odhiambo (2012) noted this anomaly and recommended that there was need for an increase of 20 percent above the 2008 grants, which together with an ICT component of Ks.500 and a lunch component of Ksh.5,799 should move the current per capita grant from Ksh.10,265 to 19,238 (Republic of Kenya, 2012; Odhiambo,2012). The Odhiambo (2012) also suggested that girls should be allocated a special allowance of Ksh.585 to meet their sanitary pad needs, shifting their capitation to Ksh.20,413 per female student. Table 5 carries data which represent the respondents suggested level of funding by item. From table 3, it evident that with the current high cost of living and the fact that the current allocations were done haphazardly, the paper suggests that the current capitation per male and female student should be increased to Khs.32,704.50 and 33,707.60 per year, respectively.

Table 5. Current, Odhiambo (2012) and Proposed Level of capitation for FDSE as of 2014

Item funded under FDSE Policy	Current Since, 2008	Odhiambo (2012)	Proposed 2014
Text books, Exercise books	2,185	2,622	4,457.40
Laboratory (Infrastructure)	728	1,000	1,700
Equipment	300	360	612
Teaching and learning materials	-	500	850
ICT Infrastructure and materials	70	84	142.80
Reference materials(dictionary,	113	136	231.20
atlas ,log tables, e.t.c)	5	60	102
Teaching guides	-	800	1,360
Chalk, dusters, register and	199	239	406.30
stationery	800	960	1,632
Assessment and Examinations	400	400	680
Repairs , Maintenance and	-	100	170
Improvement (RMI)	500	600	1,020.
Local Transport and Travel	-	250	425
(LTandT)	-	200	340
Administration costs	-	5,799	9,858.30
Capacity building of BoM	500	600	1,020
Electricity and Water	3,965	4,758	8,088.60
Environment and sanitation	500	360	612
Science and Technology	-	565	960.50
Lunch component	10,265	19,263	32,747.10
Activity Fees	10,265	19,828	33,707.60
Personal Emoluments			
Students Health and Safety			
Sanitary pads for Girls			
Total Boys			
Total Girls			

Source: Republic of Kenya, (2012a) and Field Data by Researcher (2013).

The computation of the proposed level of capitation has been done to include a lunch grant allocation of Ksh. 9,858.30 and a sanitary pad grant for girls estimated at Ksh.960.50 per female student per year making the girls overall capitation of Ksh.33, 747.10 which is a modest figure compared to the suggested figure of Ksh.58, 585 per pupil as was previously reported from the literature review (Republic of Kenya, 2012; Odhiambo, 2012).

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, it is evident that this paper has unearthed a plethora of specific constraints related to education financing under the free basic education in Kenya. These challenges beleaguering the provision of quality and equitable basic education that emerged which include, but not limited to , the following: inadequacy of FDSE grants; resource mismanagement in the schools; inadequate and or dilapidated infrastructure; unplanned construction of schools; high poverty incidences that affect households; co-existence of understaffing and overstaffing; high latent cost of education as a result of unregulated school levies; proliferation of un-coordinated school projects; delays in remittance of funds from the Ministry of Education; amongst others. The cumulative impact of these challenges has adversely compromised the envisaged equity and quality of education to be provided through the FPE and FDSE policies in Kenya. The recommendations that follow are geared towards reversing the identified negative impact of the cost-related factors on access and quality of education in Kenya. First, on the issue of the inadequate financing of education through FPE and FDSE policies, it is recommended that the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education should step up the current allocation of funds to individual students in primary and secondary schools in the country. The Ministry of Education should also encourage and work out logistics of soliciting for additional funds from other sources such as school income generating activities. The Government of Kenya should not abrogate its responsibility of developing adequate and appropriate school infrastructure such as classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, adequately stocked libraries and Information and Communication (ICT) laboratories. The parents and communities on their part should cater for strictly regulated and monitored expenses related to national examinations, internal assessments, and transport and affordable school uniforms. Secondly, the Government of Kenya policies on FPE and FDSE within the context of EFA and MDGs is to enhance access to, participation and gender equity in basic education. However, attainments of these objectives still remain elusive and utopia at all levels of education and training. Although gender parity in enrolments has been improving steadily, especially at the national level, these statistics reveal conspicuous regional and gender disparities when unpacked at the regional level and examined with a gender lens. The cost of latent cost of education imposed by individual learning institutions on the already over-burdened and poor households is blamed for this negative impact. It is recommended that the current trend whereby the children from the poorest socio-economic backgrounds only significantly benefit at the primary school level and access less at secondary and tertiary levels should be reversed.

Thirdly, it has been established that the pupil/teacher ratio at primary school level increased from 1:39 in 2003 to 1:45 in 2009 portraying an impressive stable trend at the national level, but displaying gross disparities within regions, with the worst affected being ASALs districts and areas affected by insecurity. The situation is unlikely to improve since the teacher shortage in primary schools is about 40,000 and about 20,000 at secondary level at the national level but with more disappointing statistics regionally due to skewed abilities to recruit teachers locally beyond the ones provided by the Teachers Service Commission. It is recommended that the current staff rationalization process meant to balance teacher recruitment and deployment should be expedited and special consideration be given to schools and regions that have for long endured the negative impact of the scarcity of the qualified teaching force. Fourth it is also evident that the textbook/pupil ratio for lower primary has improved from one textbook for more than 10 pupils before 2003 to 1:3 by 2007, reaching 1:2 in 2008 and 2009. For upper primary, TPR has improved from 1:2 in 2007 to almost 1:1 in 2008 and 2009 for the majority of schools. However, these have weakened sharply since 2009, and small schools do not benefit from economies of scale, and have ratios far higher than this (Value for Money Audit Report (2009). The GOK budgetary allocation for the sector is insufficient and this does impact negatively on the provision of resources such as textbooks, PTRs and Retention Rates are also affected. Completion Rates stood at 76.8% (79.2% boys and 74.4% girls) in 2010, although these already show a decline from the previous year, 83.2% (88.3% and 78.2% for boys and girls respectively). To this end, it is recommended that alternative sources of funding for both the primary and secondary sectors of education be urgently put in place in order to eliminate the acute financial stress to basic educational institutions as well as the resultant negatives trends of inequity and dilution of quality of basic education being observed.

Fifth, the other contentious yet critical finding is that free primary school capitation grant of KShs. 1,020.00, which was instituted in 2003 and Ksh.10, 265 in secondary schools instituted in 2008, has not been increased to keep pace with inflation. Consequently, schools have resorted to charging parents levies for a range of activities, including supplementary assessment examinations, additional tuition and development levies. The other requirement that all pupils should wear uniform is an extra cost burden on parents. The interviewed teachers and headteachers argued strongly that graft and mismanagement has been domesticated in most basic education institutions and expressed fear that the free primary and secondary programmes now face a possibility of being withdrawn or suspended by key development partners funding the programme. If these revelations are genuine enough then this paper recommends that enhanced training of education managers in effective financial management followed by radical governance reform including the introduction of legislation to take legal action against corrupt officials and the institution of strong financial management procedures to revitalize the programme should urgently be put in place. Sixth, it was established that huge latent user-charges have found their way into the FPE and FDSE progrmmes in basic institutions in the country. To this end, it is strongly recommended that the guideline regulating imposition of levies should be reviewed and enforced. Levies should not be used to deny children opportunity to attend school. Although the Parents Teachers Associations (PTA) area allowed suggesting the extra levies to be imposed to parents sometimes consensus is largely stage managed with little consultation with parents regarding their ability to raise such extra school levies. In addition, as a requirement , the new Constitution requires the national government to target areas with peculiar characteristics and to extend additional funding or county governments in those areas should provide supplementary grants to avoid additional school levies. It is also recommended that since the children from the poor households were more severely affected by the latent user charges sneaked into financing education at school level, the poor should be cushioned against these adverse effects of cost-sharing by redesigning and enhancing bursary allocation to focus more sharply on the poor and deserving students. In addition, bursary funds should be enhanced to the entire secondary school cycle to all orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) and ensure sustainable support for the beneficiary to complete the entire school cycle. In the event that full FSE is not practical in the short term, the Ministry of Education should consider enhancing bursary funds to OVCs. To this end there should be no other fees related constraints to the children from poor backgrounds. In particular, there should be no compulsory remedial tuition. Even when this remedial tuition is necessary and provided, no child should be denied such services because they cannot afford to pay for remedial tuition. Hence, there is need to increase access to post-primary education among the low income groups. This is particularly so because whilst increasing access to primary education is critical in laying the foundation for entry to higher education, primary education is not sufficient in itself in reducing poverty; ensuring sustainable development and meeting the skills needs identified in Vision 2030.

Seventh, it is established there is a long delay in release of funds from Treasury, which in turn leads in delays in remittance of funds to schools. This point was stressed by the teachers and principals interviewed who maintained that basic education institutions cannot follow a strict implementation tempo when basic learning resources are either inadequate or reach schools late. It is recommended that the disbursement schedules for monies released from the National and County Governments, the private sector, NGOs, households, communities, religious organizations and development partners should be sent to County Director of Education (CDE) and Sub-County Education Officers (SCEOs) for monitoring purposes according to laid down time frame. Eighth, it is evident that recurrent spending, predominantly administrators and teachers' salaries, accounts for over 90% of education sector public spending. However, although the amount of funds directed towards development has been less than 10 percent of total public expenditure in education over the years, there was a marked improvement during the 2009/2010 fiscal year when the vote reached a high 13.54 percent. There is therefore need to identify interventions towards improving efficiency across the sector. Some options for reducing recurrent expenditures should include improving teacher utilization especially in secondary education where teaching loads need to be brought up to between 20 and 24 hours per week to meet international norms, and by implementing enrolment-based differentiated norms at primary education. Finally, there is need to specifically address finance related challenges affecting vulnerable groups at Basic Education level including school-going age children in informal urban settlements, ASALs, inclusive and special needs education. It is recommended that innovative approaches including sustainable support for mobile schools in the sparsely populated and nomadic parts of the country, improved health and nutrition programmes, sustained school feeding and capacity building for teachers in the local communities should be intensified. In additions secondary school bursaries (with support from the Ministry of Education, constituency bursary committees and local communities) should target the poor and vulnerable children who should be identified right from primary and maintained at secondary school level be provided with total financial support to ensure complete access to, retention and productive participation in the entire basic education cycle.

To end, this paper strongly argues that the introduction of Free Primary (FPE) and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in Kenya were very innovative and adroitly formulated policies but these policies have not yet fully seen the light of the day by achieving the objectives for which they were meant to accomplish. The finance related constraints to effective implementation of the FPE and FDSE policies have led to a situation whereby equity and quality of education has been compromised. The resultant wide and severe regional and gender disparities in access to, and quality of education among some pockets of the Kenyan society have hit the last blow to the success of the programmes. On this account, the paper reaches a well considered final verdict that overall attainment of Universal Basic Education (UBE) by 2015 is still a mirage and utopia in Kenya and, therefore, it is not yet times to celebrate total success. Although this paper has further shed brilliant light on the plight of the poor by examining the skewed incidence benefit of public funding on basic education, the dominant tone of this paper is that the children from poor households are still disadvantaged despite the introduction and implementation of FPE and FDSE, and this terse message should urgently reach the planning and decision –making desk at the Ministry of education in Kenya to make timely corrective measures.

The parting shot in this paper is that although the Government of Kenya thorough the Ministry of Education has made commendable progress towards meeting education for all (EFA) initiatives in quantitative terms at the national level, the unfinished business is reversing the regional and gender disparities coupled with the emerging negative impact of these policies on equity and quality of education in the country. To this end, there is urgent need for concerted efforts among all key education stakeholders in the country to eradicate all the financial related bottlenecks by pragmatically translating these free education policies from rhetoric chimera to practice.

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