

Effects of Instituted Management Strategies on Enrolment in Public Tuition Free Day Secondary Schools in Nairobi County

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Abstract:

To improve on student enrolment at secondary school level in Kenya, the principals are expected to implement strategies that ensure class sizes of 45 students. The purpose for this study was to establish the effects of instituted management strategies on enrolment in public tuition free day secondary schools in Nairobi County. The study adopted a mixed research method which incorporated descriptive survey and phenomenological research designs. The target population comprised of government school principals, class teachers, and form four students. Stratified, simple random sampling technique was used to sample 10 schools and 10 class teachers while purposive sampling used to select 10 principals and 84 students. Data were collected through document analysis guides, questionnaires and discussion guide. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and percentages) while qualitative data coded into themes. The findings showed the schools had an enrolment mean of 94% and 82% at entry and exit points respectively. The school management strategies appeared effective though further improvement was needed. The recommendations included removal of all barriers to secondary education, change of form one placement criteria from random to direct placement in the day schools, and construction of more school facilities.

Keywords: School Management Strategies, Enrolment, Public Tuition Free Day Secondary Schools, Free Secondary Education in Kenya, Student Enrolment in Secondary School

1. Introduction

With global realization of Universal Primary Education (UPE), the focus in many nations worldwide has shifted to improving access at secondary school level (World Economic Forum, 2014). However, despite the need for secondary education, the trend in school enrolment across the

world varies from country to country. According to World Bank (2014) secondary schools in developed countries have good enrolment of over 90% in most of the countries unlike developing countries like Africa where the levels are below 40% in most countries. The varying statistics are attributed to different factors ranging from governments' commitment to free and compulsory secondary education in developed countries (UNESCO, 2012) to lack of secondary school places, students drop outs and repetition in developing countries such as Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2007, 2009, 2013; World Bank, 2007). To improve on secondary school enrolment, the government of Kenya, in the recent past, has subsidized the cost of secondary education through public day schooling established through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) kitty (Republic of Kenya, 2004). In addition, students in these schools have benefited from tuition free day secondary education programme rolled out in the year 2008 (Republic of Kenya, 2013). The aim of this move was to make secondary education accessible and affordable.

In Nairobi County, the Public Tuition Free Day Secondary Schools (PTFDSS) were established in already existing public primary school in low income or slum areas. According to Nairobi City County (NCC) (2014) report, though the creation of PTFDSS was a noble idea, it created tension and problems of resource allocation with the already existing primary schools. The NCC report further indicates that these schools were also experiencing problem of insecurity. According to United Nations (UN)-HABITAT (2015), high levels of poverty were prevalent in Nairobi County slums. These challenges seemed to have negatively impacted on enrolment a finding that confirms those of Mudege, Zulu and Izugbara (2008). Mudege et al. found that insecurity impact negatively on schooling among urban slum children in Nairobi.

Education in Kenya is a partnership involving all the stakeholders (Republic of Kenya, 2005). Therefore, at the national level, the government was striving to improve enrolment through day schooling and tuition subsidies, while at the local level, school principals had a role of ensuring government's strategies were implemented. For example, the school principals are responsible for ensuring that student enrolment in their schools' met the required threshold of 45 students per class in order to attract government funding (Republic of Kenya, 2012). To address factors causing under enrolment, several strategies have been suggested for implementation in schools. However, the application and effectiveness of those strategies in schools remains unclear. For example, to improve on enrolment Ngware, Onsomu, Muthaka and Manda (2006) recommended the expansion of secondary schools' infrastructure, improving efficiency and effectiveness of bursary schemes, school and community partnership and local resource mobilization.

The high cost of secondary education in Kenya has been a great impediment to student enrolment especially among the low-income families. To reduce the cost burdens, Kabaki in 2010 made some recommendations on effectiveness of strategies relating to tuition free secondary education funds. This includes disbursement and regularly reviewing and rationalizing fees and levies through District Education Boards (DEBs) in secondary schools. On their part, Glennerster, Kremer, Mbiti and Takavarasha (2011) suggests merit scholarship programme for students from poor backgrounds, conditional cash transfer to encourage educational enrolment among the poor and grants to finance remedial education. Some of the recommended strategies

by Glennerster et al. (2011) are in line with those of Ohba (2009) who recommended that government policies aimed at expanding access to secondary education for the poor should identify and target socially disadvantaged children requiring financial support to access secondary education.

An investigation in Kenya by Mwangi (2012) established that despite the subsidies in education, the wastage in form of drop-outs and repetition was apparent. To address the wastage rate, the study recommended establishment of boarding schools, subsidizing cost of boarding schools, sensitising community on importance of education and reinforcement of guidance and counselling in the schools. The establishment of boarding schools would have cost implications for the already burdened parents and hence may not be a solution. The recommendation of sensitizing community on importance of education was worth investigating in this study, especially its influence on enrolment.

Given the challenging issues of resource allocation, insecurity, and slum poverty facing the PTFDSS in Nairobi County (NCC, 2014), it remains unclear whether or not these schools are able to enrol the ministry of Education (MoE) recommended number of students. The MoE recommends class sizes of 45 students for effective utilization of educational resources (Republic of Kenya, 2013). In addition, the effectiveness of the strategies recommended for improving enrolment exemplified by Glennerster et al. (2011), Kabaki (2010), Mwangi (2012), Ngware et al. (2006), and Ohba (2009) remains unclear in these schools as the issue of implementation is not widely addressed in the reviewed studies. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the effect of instituted school management strategies on enrolment in Public Tuition Free Day Secondary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya.

2. Methodology

The study adopted a mixed research method which incorporated descriptive survey and phenomenological designs respectively. The 24 PTFDSS had a targeted population of 74 teachers and 955 form four students. The teachers were comprised of 24 government school principals and 50 class teachers. The statistical formula for finite population

$$n = \frac{z^2 p \cdot q \cdot N}{e^2 (N-1) + z^2 p \cdot q}$$

[provided by Kothari (2004) was used to compute the sample size (teachers) for the study. Where: n = the sample size desired; z= standard normal deviation at the required confident level (1.96); p= the proportion in the target population estimated to have the characteristics (0.99); q=1-p; e = the level of statistical significance (.05). The sample size of 10 schools, 10 school principals, and 10 class teachers was obtained. In addition, a group of 12 students from each school in seven schools where students were available for focus group discussion was purposively selected. Eliot and Associates (2005), Frank (2012), and Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2009) recommend a focus group of 10 to 12 students. The insights from these studies guided the selection of 84 students. The selection was based on mixed abilities

(academic and extra-curricular), gender, and social economic backgrounds. The class teachers and school documents provided the needed information.

Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to sample the schools and class teachers. The school principals of the sampled schools were automatically included in the sample while the students were purposively selected. The quantitative data for descriptive survey were collected through document analysis guide and questionnaires. The analysis was by use of descriptive statistics (mean and percentages). The qualitative data were collected by use of discussion guide and analysed through coding and generation of themes. Ethical considerations made throughout the entire process. This included obtaining all the authorization documents for conducting research and seeking of consent from all the respondents. In addition confidentiality and anonymity was also observed during reporting for purposes of protecting the respondents and schools from any physical or psychological harm. To avoid plagiarism, ideas of other researchers and scholars were acknowledged throughout the entire study.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic Information

The schools' demographic information indicated that seven schools were full day secondary schools while two had introduced a boarding section for girls in form one and two only, while boys had been phased out. The schools were established under CDF kitty between year 2004 and 2009. Seventy seven per cent of the sampled principals had a Master's degree while 22.2% had a Bachelor's degree. All sampled principals had more than fifteen years of teaching experience. Administratively, 55.5% of the sampled principals had headed their current schools for three years while 33.3% had been head teachers for between four to six years. Majority (77.8%) of class teachers had a Bachelor's degree in education while 22.2% of them were Diploma holders. In addition, 66.7% of these class teachers had taught in their current schools for four years or more and had taken responsibility as class teachers from the year 2011. The other 33.3% had taken responsibility as class teacher from the year 2012. The sampled form four students were 84 comprising of 30 boys and 54 girls. Majority (88.1%) of them came from low socio-economic background while a minority (11.9%) came from middle socio-economic background. This minority consisted of students that did not live in slum areas and had parent (s)/ guardian(s) in formal employment.

3.2 Enrolment Levels

Table 1 shows the actual enrolment data for 2011/2014 student cohort. To compute enrolment rate, the ratio of Actual Enrolment and Expected Enrolment expressed as a percentage was used.

Table 1
2011/2014 Student Cohort Enrolment in PTFDSS from Form 1 to 4

School	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Form 4	Average Enrolment	Expected Enrolment	Enrolment Rate (%)
A	40	40	40	40	40	45	89
B	40	38	37	35	38	45	84
C	50	45	40	35	43	45	96
D	39	40	39	39	39	45	87
E	41	40	38	38	39	45	87
F	42	42	41	40	41	45	91
G	46	33	32	31	36	45	80
H	42	39	39	40	40	45	89
I	40	38	37	34	37	45	82
Actual Enrolment	380	355	343	332	353	405	87
Expected Enrolment	405	405	405	405	405	405	100
Enrolment %	94	88	85	82	87	100	87

Note: Data on 2011/2014 Student cohort enrolment in PTFDSS in Nairobi County, compiled from Schools' documents (Admission registers, Class registers and Mark books)

Table 1 shows that the total enrolment for 2011/2014 student cohort from the nine secondary schools in Form One was 380 students in the year 2011 while the expected enrolment was 405 students. This translated into an enrolment rate of 94%. However, from Form Two to Four, the student cohort enrolment decreased from 355 (88%) to 343 (85%) and further to 332 (82%) students respectively. This translated into an average enrolment rate of 87% as most schools failed to enrol 45 students per class. This was below the expected 100% enrolment rate.

The inability of these schools to enrol recommended number of students was further illustrated by class teachers' response to the range of enrolment across the forms from entry to completion as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Class Teachers Response Rate on 2011/2014 Student Cohort Enrolment Range

Class Enrolment Range	Class teachers' Responses %
Above 50 – Over enrolment	11.1
45-50 – Good enrolment	27.8
40-44 – Average enrolment	61.1
30-39 – Under enrolment	-
Below 30 – poor enrolment	-
Total	100

The information gathered from class teachers showed that on average, 61% of the schools had an enrolment that ranged from 40 to 44 students per class, 28% had an enrolment of 45 students and

above, and another 11 % were over enrolled. This was an indication that more than half of these schools were not fully enrolled with the recommended number of students per class.

3.3 Effects of Instituted Management Strategies on Enrolment

To determine the effect of school management strategies on enrolment, the researchers first established the extent of their application in improving student enrolment in PTFDSS. The participants' responses to the strategies in the questionnaire were probably an indication that the strategies were instituted because they were perceived to be effective. The extent of these strategies in improving enrolment was further determined by assessing evidence for positive influence on student enrolment. The data on application of strategies for improving students enrolment in this subsection was gathered from school principals. Their responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
School Principals' Response on Application of Strategies for Improving Enrolment

Variable	Strategies	Principals %	
		Agree	Disagree
Enrolment	• Admitting and enrolling all students placed in the school by Ministry of Education.	33.3	66.7
	• Admitting all students requesting for vacancies in the school	55.6	44.4
	• Adhering to Ministry's guideline on school fees charged	55.6	44.4
	• Expanding school facilities to cater for growing population	100	00.0
	• Providing adequate and well equipped tuition facilities	100	00.0
	• Allowing re-entry of young mothers to school	66.7	33.3
	• Sensitizing parents on importance of education	100	00.0
	• Allowing parents to pay school fees in instalments	100	00.0
	• Initiating income-generating activities to lower cost of education	88.9	11.1
Mean	Principals' responses on Strategies for improving Enrolment	77.8	22.2

Table 3 shows that 66.7% compared to 33.3% of the principals indicated that they applied the strategy of admitting and enrolling all the students placed in the school by the MoE. However, although the strategy appeared widely applied, the report from the students and the documents indicated that the strategy was not effective. This was because in each school only one or two students acknowledged having been placed in the school by the MoE. Further analysis of the five available random lists of students placed in five PTFDSS by the MoE and the actual number that reported showed an admission of only 80 (12.8%) students out of the placed 627 students. This seems to indicate that majority of the students placed in these schools did not report.

On the other hand, 55.6% of the principals indicated that they applied the strategy of admitting all the students requesting for vacancies in their schools. This was affirmed by the findings from the schools' internal admission lists and KCPE result slips that showed 76.4% of students got admission through requests. Those seeking admission in form one and had the required KCPE entry mark were admitted. Those seeking admission in other forms (levels) and the with required KCPE mark were admitted directly in some schools while in others they went through an interview. The administration of interviews to students possibly implies that only the bright students were accepted and which confirms the response of 44.4% of the principals who indicated not all the students making requests were admitted.

With regards to the MoE's guidelines on school fees charged, responses from principals showed that 55.5% compared to 44.4% indicated to have adhered. Further assessment of the schools' documents (fees structures) showed that the fees charged were within the MoE guideline. However, there was negligible difference (1.8%) in enrolment between schools where principals adhered to fees guidelines and those who did not.

100% of the school principals agreed that they applied strategies that included expanding school facilities to cater for growing population and providing adequate and well equipped tuition facilities. The responses of school principals regarding these strategies were affirmed by the response of students and class teachers in some of the schools. For example, on the expansion of school facilities and provision of adequate and well equipped tuition facilities, the researcher gathered that apart from one secondary school that had one stream, five schools had two streams, two schools with three streams and one with four streams. The expansion in facilities seems to indicate a positive response to growing enrolment. However, there was still need for further expansion because in some schools students indicated their schools lacked a second science laboratory, a library, dining hall, and enough classes.

Allowing re-entry of young mothers to school was another strategy used in improving enrolment. 66.7% compared to 33.3% of the school principals indicated their use of this strategy. In the focus group a few students in some of the schools stated that they knew of their friends who had dropped out of school due to pregnancy and later joined another school. The drop out by students affects enrolment negatively. The researcher further gathered that some of the young mothers repeated a form especially those who were out for a longer period while those who had dropped for a short period re-joined the same class.

The strategy of sensitizing parents on importance of education had a 100% agree response from the principals. The response by school principals was affirmed by students who said their parents were sometimes called to school to discuss their discipline matters as well as academic performance. The class teachers also indicated that parents were sensitized during academic seminars on the importance of educating their sons and daughters and that in a way helped keep some of the students in school.

Payment of school fees in instalment as a strategy was widely applied as indicated by responses (100%) from the principals and evidence in documents such as fees commitment forms and notes from parents. Some schools allowed parents to pay fees in two or three instalments per time. However, in some schools students with outstanding fees were sent home at the end of every of month to collect the fees balances. Another alternative strategy widely applied by 88.9% of the school principals was initiating income-generating activities such as hiring school facilities to lower the cost of education. However, it was not possible to establish if the money collected subsidised the cost of education in those schools.

3.4 Students' Views on Enrolment Trend

The report from students affirmed incidence of declining enrolment. They reported that when in form one, they were many but their number kept decreasing as they moved to upper classes. In addition, some students dropped out due to inability to pay school fees, some girls got pregnant and other students found school boring hence went into business.

3.5 Students' Experience from the Instituted Strategies

When students were asked to explain how they got enrolled into their current schools, they responded as follows: In six schools, parents/guardians searched for form one places after their sons and daughters failed to be placed in any school. However, in one school most students obtained an admission letter. Majority (60%) of students joining other forms did both oral and written interviews before admission.

Responding to payment of school fees, students indicated that school fees was one of the greatest impediments to schooling. Although their principals allowed them to pay fees in installment, majority were not able to pay and eventually dropped out. Further, revelation shown that students paid more money that was not included in the fee structure. They indicated that such monies were for remedial classes, computer lessons, home science practical, and school trips. Some of the students indicated that they were not able to raise the amount making them to be sent away from school regularly.

A further investigation from the students on mode of school fees collection showed that four secondary schools had an organized school fees payment commitment schedule. In three other schools, parents were allowed to write a commitment note/letter explaining how they would pay the school fees. The students appreciated fees payment in installment because it enabled them stay in school learning while their parents searched for money.

When asked to comment about their school's infrastructure, students in all the schools stated that there was need for improvement. For example, students in two schools said the most urgent thing was a dining all because in one school they ate in a tent while in the other students walked around the school compound eating after were served with food. Two other schools stated a need

for school library since there was none while three stated a need for a second science laboratory to facilitating their learning.

4. Discussion

The finding on Table 1 shows most of the PTFDSS had an enrolment of less than 45 students in a class. This seems to imply that schools had spaces for enrolling more students to cater for the demand of secondary education in Nairobi County. Given that education had been subsidized at this level and these were day secondary schools one would expect an over-enrolment in most of these schools. However, this was not the case. The inability by these schools to attract enough students could be an indication that access to secondary education was still a challenge to many families. This finding concur the findings of Mwangi (2012), the World Bank (2007), and Republic of Kenya (2007, 2009, 2013).

The notable declining trend in enrolment from entry to exit point was probably an indication that some of the schools' management strategies were not very effective in maintaining students in school. For example the strategy of enrolling students placed in the schools by MoE was not effective because there is an indication that most of the students placed in the PTFDSS did not report. This finding seems to confirm the finding by Makori, Onyura, Chebolwo, Yegon & Kandle (2015) that established majority of the students in Baringo County of Kenya did not report in the schools they were placed. Their parents were dissatisfied with the form one selection process perceived to place well performing students in poor local secondary schools. This seems to imply the strategy was not very effective in improving enrolment in this category of schools.

The alternative strategy for enrolling students who made requests appeared effective because of higher enrolment. However, the finding showed that students who had good or average marks and made request to join the schools were enrolled. However, those making request in the upper level classes had to sit for an entrance examination. The act of administering an entrance examination was possibly an indication that only the academically fit students got enrolled and the unfit students were left out. These finding contradicts suggestions by Ohba (2009) and Republic of Kenya (2013) of removal of all barriers to education in order to improve enrolment. Since the PTFDSS were not fully enrolled with students there is need to admit those seeking admission without subjecting them through an interview.

The finding of negligible difference between adhering to or not adhering to school fees guidelines and enrolment agrees with the finding of Masese (2005) that found no significant correlation between fees charged and student enrolment. However, the finding that some students were not able to pay extra monies implies that the cost of education was still high. According to Republic of Kenya (2013) some of the government policies for enhancing financing of secondary education include providing infrastructure and establishment of a cost effective system of sustainable financing. The Government of Kenya in the recent past has tried to lower the cost of

secondary education exemplified in the new school fees structure released in the year 2015 by the MoE (Biegon, 2015). The lowered cost of education may increase enrolment.

The finding on positive influence of expanding school facilities to cater for growing population and providing adequate and well equipped tuition facilities on enrolment concur the finding the finding by World Bank (2017). According to this World Bank report, a girls' school in Afghanistan in the province of Balkh was seeing greater student enrolment due to better facilities. The study findings further concur with the recommendations made by Kaguma (2012) who supported expansion of existing school plant in order to improve student enrolment. Currently in Kenya the expansion of school infrastructure is the responsibility of the government and not the parent. Biegon(2015) reported that in the new secondary school fees guideline the Cabinet Secretary for Education noted the figures of Kshs. 9,000 and Kshs. 53, 000 for day and boarding schools respectively. These figures were arrived after the removal of the responsibility of developing infrastructure from parents and shifting it to the Constituency Development Fund and County Governments.

The finding that re-entry of young mothers improved enrolment affirms findings of Kiage, Simatwa & Ayodo (2014) who found that failure to implement re-admission of teenage mothers to school in Transmara Sub County of Kenya led to decline of girls' enrolment in boarding schools. This appears to imply that enrolment of young mothers in schools to some extent improves enrolment. Sensitizing parents on importance of education also appears to have positive effect on enrolment. The principals' responses as well as class teachers and students reports confirmed this. This finding affirms Mwangi's (2012) recommendation for sensitisation of parents on importance of education as a means of improving enrolment in schools.

Payment of school fees in instalments appears to positively affect enrolment. The responses of the students and principals confirmed the mode of payment which gave students an opportunity to stay in school and learning while their parents searched for school fees. However, the finding that some parents only paid fees after their sons or daughters were sent home concur that of Adongo (2017) which established from a Kenyan school that some parents wait for their kids to be sent home from school in order to pay their fee balances. An investigation by O'Hara (2016) found that most private schools in United Kingdom allow parents to negotiate a monthly direct debit payment or other forms of instalments systems in paying fees. This implies that fees payment in instalment influence schooling positively.

The finding that 88.9% of the school principals applied the strategy for initiating income-generating activities to lower the cost of education possibly indicates it was effective in improving enrolment. However, what was evident is that extra monies were raised from hiring of schools' facilities, fields and buses but its use was not clear. There is need to direct such monies collected to running of school activities in order to lower the cost. Ngware et al (2006) recommends for local resource mobilization in order to lower the cost of education. This consequently is likely to improve enrolment.

5. Conclusion

The PTFDSS sampled in this study seemed to indicate good enrolment although they did not meet the expected class enrolment of 45 students. Generally these schools gave an indication of having played a major role in meeting the demand for secondary education and addressing the government's initiative of expanding secondary education to the poor in urban slum areas. To improve enrolment further, the study recommends removal of all the barriers that deny students an opportunity to enrol in secondary education. These barriers from the study finding include entrance examination, cut off admission mark, and extra levies.

Instituted schools' management strategies for improving enrolment had varying influence. There was need for improvement on strategies in order to bring class sizes to the MoE recommended number of 45 students per class. It is recommended that form one placement criteria in PTFDSS be changed from current random to direct placement of students into nearest secondary schools. The finding shows that most of the students placed in the PTFDSS by MoE did not report to those schools. There is also need for school principals to adhere to the MoE's fees guidelines in order to lower cost of education.

Most of the schools seemed to lack enough science laboratories, libraries and others dining halls. The inadequacy could have negative implication on enrolment. To enhance enrolment in PTFDSS, the MoE should ensure effective disbursement of monies for free secondary education for expansion of schools' infrastructure. This will assist in meeting the demand for education in the process of making secondary schooling completely tuition free from the year 2018.

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