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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ACCESS TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS EDUCATION IN UASIN GISHU COUNTY IN KENYA BEFORE AND AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBSIDIZED SECONDARY EDUCATION (SSE)

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish the difference in access to Secondary School education before and after implementation of Subsidized Secondary Education (SSE). Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect students' data from thirteen public secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County in Kenya. The data was processed using descriptive statistics and the results' significance determined using t- test at 95% confidence level. In the year 2006 and 2007 the total number of students in the thirteen schools was 2475 and 2639, respectively. This figures represented a 6.6% annual increment in the student's enrolment. Following the implementation of SSE in the year 2008, the enrolment of students increased significantly ($P < 0.05$) first to 2761 (4.6% annual increment) and then to 3233 (17.1% annual increment) in 2009. When the enrolment levels were compared between urban (758 and 1642 students in 2006-2009, respectively) and rural (715 and 872 students in the same years) schools, this study found that urban schools enrolled more students following the SSE implementation. The ratios of male to female students was 1.6:1, 1.7:1, 1.45:1 and 1.44:1 in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009, respectively. These results showed that the number of female students increased significantly ($p < 0.05$) as compared to the males following the implementation of SSE. In conclusion the findings of this study revealed that there was a general increase in the students' enrolment level with the urban schools enrolling more students than the rural schools following the implementation of SSE. Though the SSE appeared to have enhanced female students' access to secondary school education the enrolment of boys was still higher in Eldoret East Uasin Gishu County.

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INTRODUCTION

Based on endogenous growth models, education has been shown to be an investment in human capital (ROK, 2005) which has a positive relationship with earnings as well as the overall productivity and economic strength of a country (Psacharopoulos and Woodall, 1985). It has also been reported that education is a factor in poverty reduction and a determinant of economic growth (Onsomuet *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, sustainable development in a country is only possible if the country has a critical mass of educated people. Secondary education enables its graduates to pursue specific fields of training at the college or university so as to gain skills that qualify them to join the country's labour force. The secondary school education therefore plays a pivotal role in providing the country with human capital (Ngware *et al.*, 2006). High costs of education, high levels of poverty, and unfriendly environment especially for children from poor

households and those with special needs have been reported to hinder access to education in public secondary schools in Kenya (MOE, 2007). In addition, poor infrastructure and lack of adequate manpower in the teaching force at the secondary school level have also contributed to poor access to secondary school education in Kenya (MOE, 2007). In the year 2007, a report on the economic composition of enrolled students at the secondary level showed that only about 4% of secondary students were drawn from the poorest per capita expenditure quintile, 7.3% from the lower middle-income group, 11.4% from middle income group, 16.2% from upper middle while 28.2% came from the richest quintile (MOE, 2007). These analyses revealed that access to secondary education in Kenya is skewed in favour of the rich (CBS, 2004).

In a bid to improve this situation, the government of Kenya introduced the subsidized secondary education in the year 2008. KSh. 10,265 is given per student per year leaving parents to cater for accommodation, uniforms, examinations and travel costs. Subsidy by the Government of Kenya to secondary schools was justified by the fact that; Primary

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education alone is not sufficient to provide the quality skilled human resource necessary for our country's sustainable development. Moreover, Primary school graduates complete the 8 years of schooling when they are still too young to engage in meaningful development activities. In addition, children from poor families who fail to join secondary schools because of lack of school fees often revert back to illiteracy, thus reversing eight years of investment in their primary education (Kibaki, 2008). Given the massive increase in enrolments after the introduction of free primary education, there was a concern also that if secondary schools continue to charge fees, the majority of poor children who successfully entered and completed free primary education would be unable to continue to secondary level. Subsidized secondary education was therefore considered as a potential strategy to expanding access to education for the poor. Therefore this study was carried out to investigate the effect of subsidized secondary school education on access in Eldoret East district in Uasin Gishu County.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this research in which data on access to education was collected. The information about access was from form two students, class teachers and Head teachers selected from the 36 registered public schools of Eldoret East District. Two hundred students, Twenty Four class teachers and Thirteen Head teachers from thirteen randomly selected schools in Eldoret East district participated in the study. Information about access was collected from them through self-administered questionnaires. The study used stratified sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Questionnaires and document analysis were the main tools used to collect data. The selection of these tools was guided by the nature of the data collected, the time available as well as by the objectives of the study.

Data analysis

The data obtained in this study was processed using descriptive statistics where the various parameters were expressed in the form of means and percentages. The data was further analyzed using student t- test at 95% confidence level to establish the levels of significance.

RESULTS

General Enrolment of Students

In 2006 (two years before the implementation of the SSE in Kenya) the total number of students enrolled in the 13 day and boarding public secondary schools in Eldoret East district was 2475. The enrolment increased to 2639 (6.6% annual increment), 2761 (4.6% annual increment) and 3233 (17.1% annual increment) in 2007, 2008 and 2009, respectively (Fig 1).

The data presented here show that there was a significant ($P < 0.05$) annual increment (17.1%) in student's enrolment two years (2009) after the SSE implementation. The enrolment rate

increased by more than 10% above the previous annual increment levels.

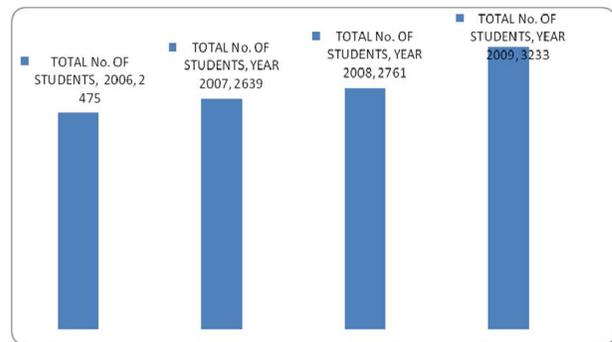


Figure 1. Total number of students in day and boarding public schools in 2006 to 2009

Number of boys and girls enrolled in day and boarding public schools

In the year 2006 and 2007 the total number of boys in the 13 schools was 1526 and 1646 (7.9% annual increment) whereas the number of girls was 949 and 993 (4.6% annual increment), respectively (Fig 2).

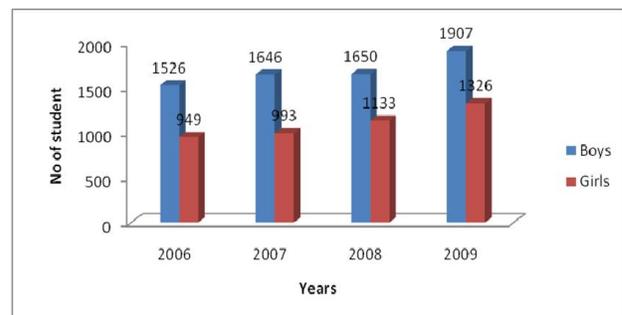


Figure 2. Boys and Girls enrolment in public schools in 2006 to 2009

These results showed a boy: girl ratio of 1.6:1 and 1.7:1 in 2006 and 2007, respectively. Following the implementation of SSE in 2008 the annual increment in enrolment was 0.2% for boys and 14% for girls and the ratio changed to 1.45:1. In 2009 the boys' enrolment was at 1907 which was 15.6% annual increment from 1650 in 2008 whereas the girls' enrolment was at 1326 which was a 17.0% annual increment from 1133 in 2008. The ratio of boys to girls changed to 1.44:1 in 2009. The enrolment of both boys and girls increased significantly ($P < 0.05$) following the SSE implementation. However, although the number of boys remained higher than that of girls the gap between the genders showed a slight decline as seen in the ratios above.

This study also investigated the levels of students' enrolment in rural and urban public schools in Eldoret East District. Data from four rural and four urban secondary schools showed that enrolment of students in Urban Schools was higher than that of rural schools after the implementation of SSE (Fig 3). In 2008, when SSE was implemented the number of students in the four

urban schools had increased significantly ($P < 0.05$) from 847 to 1358 (60.3%) as compared to 765 to 870 (13.7%) in the rural schools (Fig 3).

lunch and other miscellaneous expenses for day scholars whereas for students in boarding schools the boarding fee is the key financial burden. With the general annual increment of

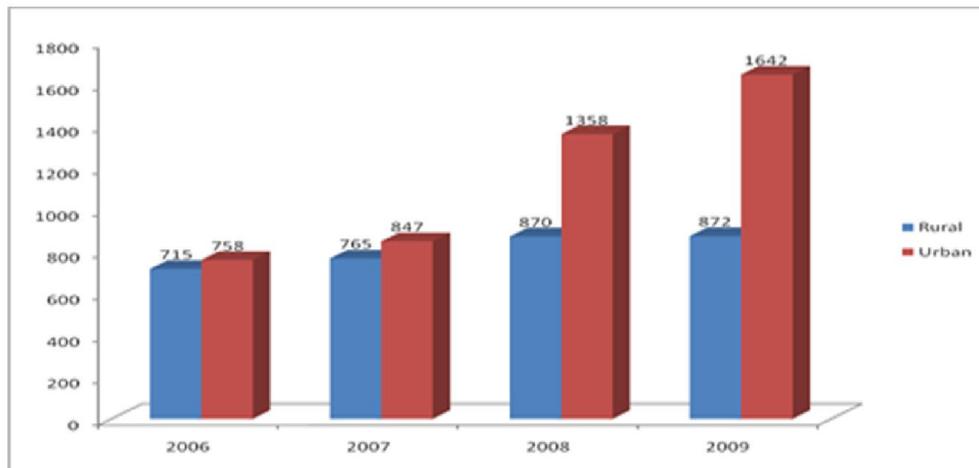


Figure 3. Rural and urban School's enrolment before and after SSE implementation

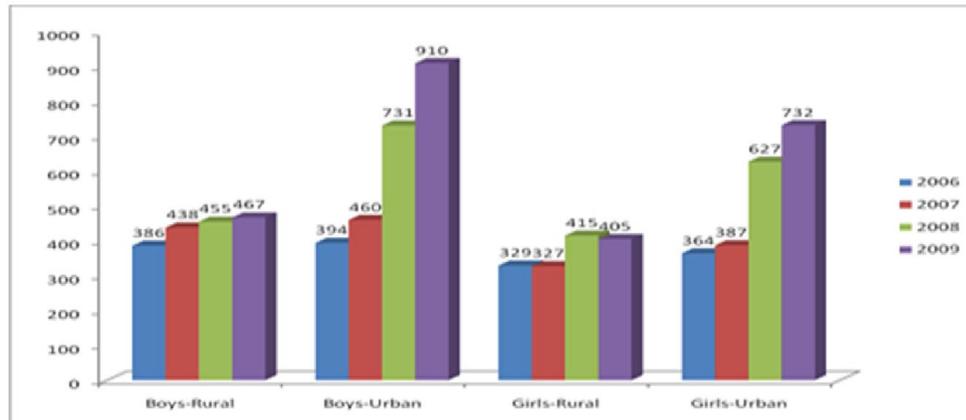


Figure 4. Boys' and Girls' enrolment in Rural and Urban School before and after SSE implementation

When the enrolment was analyzed by gender the results showed that urban schools' enrolment had increased more than that of the rural schools for both boys and girls following SSE implementation. It was however observed that in the 2007-2008 the increment in the girls' enrolment 387 to 627 (61%) was apparently higher than that of boys, 460 to 731 (59%) (Fig 4) in the urban schools in Eldoret East District.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Education is one of the indicators of a country's development and in Kenya the attainment of secondary education remains crucial in giving the country the potential to economic, social and political development. In introducing the SSE, the government of Kenya offered Kshs. 10,265 per student per year (Ngare, 2007) to cater for tuition, personal emoluments, water, electricity and conservancy and administrative costs which were previously borne by parents/guardians. Parents of secondary school students in Kenya are now only left to finance their children's school uniform, transport to school,

more than 10% following the implementation of SSE, the financial input by the GOK into the costs of secondary school education appeared to have alleviated the financial burden of most parents particularly those with low earnings. For example, reports from previous studies have shown that the costs of schooling has a direct impact on the enrolment levels and where this is high quite a number of children miss to be enrolled for education at any level that has financial demands. Parents in Indonesia, China, the Solomon Islands, and many African countries in some previous studies cited user fees as a major obstacle to enrolling their children in schools (Saroso, 2005; Yardley, 2005; Pacific News, 2005). Therefore, when education costs are reduced, subsidized or completely removed, substantial increase in enrolment rates are bound to be achieved. This was the case in Uganda where enrolment rates increased by 68 percent and Malawi by 49 percent when user fees were removed (Kattan, 2006). Such trends have also been reported for Kenya at the primary school level following the introduction of free primary education in 2003 (Oketch and Somerset, 2010). Since the trend in secondary schools in

Eldoret East has indicated increase in student's enrolment, it highly possible that the programme has had the same effects in the other parts of the country. These findings therefore suggest that the response to SSE has been positive and that it is highly possible for the country to achieve the critical population of individuals with secondary education if the programme is sustained. Secondary school graduates play key roles in the country's strategies to improve the human capital that is required for sustainable development and particularly the achievement of the MDGs. Therefore, the GOK must strive towards the sustainability of the SSE programme in all regions of the country.

The data presented in this report showed that there was a higher increase in the urban day schools' enrolment as compared to the rural day schools. Apparently the data also showed that the annual increment of girls' enrolment in the urban schools was higher than that of boys during the first year of SSE implementation. These findings suggest that the government subsidy in secondary education has been more effective in urban day schools than in rural day schools, an outcome which may be attributed to the fact that urban schools are easily accessible and have more physical and human resources than the rural schools. These findings are in agreement with the report that poverty and rural residence are strongly associated with low enrolment (Birdsall *et al.*, 2005). In many African nations, rural rates of enrolment lag far behind the very modest national rates, particularly for rural girls, whose rate of enrolment is less than 15 percent in several countries (Birdsall *et al.*, 2005). In most parts of the world, governments spend significant resources on education and while such outlays have led to a tremendous expansion of schooling, they have not reduced the level of disadvantage for many groups, especially those in rural areas, including the economically challenged families, women, ethnic or religious minorities and indigenous rural folks. Even in countries where the overall enrolment rate is high, there are still areas with little access to education due the presence of high levels of poverty (Patrinos, 2002). Therefore, if the government of Kenya is to achieve much nationally, it is important that the rural secondary schools be given special consideration and modalities put in place that can help increasing and sustaining the high enrolment rates.

Gender disparity in the access of education is a major issue in many regions of the world with most countries enrolling more males than females. In the present study our data showed that male's enrolment remained high although there was a slight reduction in the gender ratios (Boy: Girl). These findings lend support to Holmes (1999) and Ngware *et al.* (2007) reports that, being male increased the probability of secondary education participation in most Kenyan communities. Although the present study did not investigate specifically the factors affecting the girl child enrolment, it is highly possible that most Kenyan parents value the education of male children more than that of females given the cultural roles of these genders in most of the communities in the country. From a cultural perspective, some communities in Kenya have argued that the expected returns from educating female children are less. This is on the basis of communities' perception that female children will be married and, therefore, join the marital

household (Zoe, 2007). In situations where families don't have adequate funds to send both boys and girls to school, girls have often been selected against and they end up missing education (Holmes, 1999). Additional factors that may contribute to low enrolment rates for girls are the absence of female teachers who are expected to be role models for the girl child (Deolalikar, 1999; Holmes, 1999; Mukudi, 2004). The disparity in gender enrolment in Eldoret east and other regions of the country therefore may require a special attention. It is envisaged that the findings of the present study will provide baseline data to assist in developing policies geared towards addressing gender disparity in education in Eldoret East and other regions of the country. For example, the government should consider the expansion and improvement of classrooms and provision of boarding and sanitation facilities that create a gender responsive environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion this study found that SSE increased enrolment in secondary schools in Eldoret East. Although the enrolment of male students remained higher than that of girls there was a slight reduction in the gender ratios suggesting that more girls were enrolled in Eldoret East Secondary schools following the introduction of SSE. Urban schools' enrolment increased more than that of the rural ones. The government and other stakeholders therefore should put measures in place to ensure the program is sustained and the disparities in enrolment between boys and girls and rural and urban schools are addressed.

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