

## Subsidized Secondary School Education in Kenya

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### Abstract

### Review Article

This paper is an opinion on the role of the Kenyan government in financing secondary school education. In particular the paper discusses the subsidized secondary school education policy that was introduced in 2008. The paper focuses on; definition, rationale, implementation, achievements and challenges facing the policy. It is the view of this paper that if subsidized secondary school education policy is properly implemented it will enable the country achieve access, equity, quality and relevance which are fundamental characteristics that define and drive systems of education and training. In this regard, the paper calls for austerity measures when handling subsidized secondary school education funds.

**Keywords:** Subsidized secondary school education policy, secondary school education in Kenya.

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### DEFINITION

According to Mwangie [1], subsidies in education refer to the money or any assistance granted by the state to the education sector to reduce the cost of education and make it affordable to all. Based on this conception, Aroni [2] sees subsidized secondary school education (S.S.S.E.) to be a situation where children who have completed primary school education are given an opportunity to receive secondary education without paying for tuition costs. Oketch and Somerset [3] reported that, subsidized secondary education is a government strategy of reducing secondary school costs borne by households so as to improve equity of access to secondary education by all children regardless of their social-economic backgrounds.

### Rationale

Subsidized secondary school education was introduced in 2008 as a follow up to the Free primary education (F.P.E) that had earlier been introduced by the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government in 2003 [4]. According to Gathuru [5], Maiyo [6], Ndolo, Simatwa and Oyondo [7], and Ohba [8] S.S.S.E. aimed at;

1. Making secondary education affordable to all by reducing fees burden to parents;
2. Providing equal opportunity to all secondary school going age entry to secondary education regardless of their social class, gender, and ethnic background, physical and mental disability;

3. Enhancing transition of pupils from primary schools to secondary schools especially due to the high number of pupils brought about by free primary school education that had earlier been introduced in 2003;
4. Enhancing access, enrollment, retention and completion rates (curbing dropout rates) of students at the secondary school level;
5. Providing adequate resources to students especially candidates so as to improve their academic performance and general quality of education;
6. Adhering to constitution requirements, international education commitments and other international conventions (such as, Education for All (E.F.A)) to which Kenya is a signatory. According to these policy documents, basic education (which includes secondary school education) is a fundamental human right and a social responsibility of the state to its citizens.
7. Improving literacy level and acquisition of relevant human and social capital for sustainable development. This is as outlined in Kenya's economic blue prints such as; Vision 2030, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and;
8. Free secondary education (F.S.E) as one of the manifestos of the 2007 Presidential campaign.

### Implementation

The first step in the implementation of the policy was a stakeholders' forum which led to the

formation of the National Taskforce on Affordable Secondary School Education [9]. The key mandate of the Taskforce was to examine the cost of secondary school education as indicated in form one admission instructions and thereafter identify modalities for the implementation of FSE. The guidelines on FSE issued by the Ministry of Education (M.O.E) were based on the recommendations of this taskforce (MOE/G1/9/1/44).

In February, 2008 the Kenyan Government announced the release of 2.9 billion shillings for S.S.S.E and allocated Kshs. 10,265 to every student to cater for tuition and operational costs annually [2]. The funds were distributed as follows;

**Table-1: Distribution of secondary school education funds by MOE 2009**

Vote head	Amount in KSHS
Tuition	3600
Repairs, maintenance and improvement	400
Local transport and travel	400
Electricity, water and Conservancies	500
Activity	600
Personal emoluments	3965
Medical	300
Total	10265

**Source:** Ministry of education (2009) on distribution of secondary school education funds

Currently the S.S.S.E has been fully rolled out. To enhance smooth disbursement of the funds Cheptile [10] observes that, at the beginning of every academic year the Ministry of Finance (M.O.F) releases funds to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology's (M.O.E.S.T) bank account for all students enrolled in public secondary schools in the country that year. Within forty eight hours of receipt, the M.O.E.S.T is required to disburse the funds to the bank accounts of the various public secondary schools countrywide as per the number of students enrolled in those schools [11]. Once they expected the funds, secondary school Principals are required to issue an official receipt of Kshs. 10,265 to each student for the payment of tuition fees. Each student is then required to endorse the tuition fund received by signing a receipt which will is then submitted to the M.O.E.S.T by the Principals.

To ensure that the money received is used appropriately audits are carried out annually by the M.O.E.S.T MoE, 2010 [12]. In some instances, however, the M.O.F. releases the funds in installments and thus the M.O.E.S.T is forced to disburse the funds to schools in installments as well [10].

In order to enhance further enrollments of students the government has introduced bursaries for needy and bright students, employed more teachers, availed instructional materials including text books, and expanded school infrastructure [4]. In S.S.S.E parents and guardians have the responsibility of meeting other

requirements such as, lunch, transport and boarding fees for those in boarding schools, besides development projects [13].

### Achievements

The S.S.S.E has had immense impact to students' enrolment to secondary school education. For instance, the Kenya Economic Survey [14] indicates that the total enrolment rate between 2009 and 2010 increased from 1.15m to 1.70m. This signified a 12.6% increase in enrolment. In particular Fwaya [15], observes a steady increase in enrolment from the year 2007 to 2011. He observes that enrolment increased 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 1,500, 015 (804, 119 boys and 695, 896 girls) in 2009. It can also be observed that the number of students sitting for national examinations (K.C.S.E) has been increasing annually since the inception of S.S.S.E. This indicates that S.S.S.E has had a positive impact on student enrolment in secondary school education across the country.

Closely related to enrollment is transition rate which denotes the proportion of graduates who transcend from one level of schooling to another (in this case from primary school level to secondary school level [4]. According to Ndolo, Simatwa and Oyondo [7], a positive trend in transition has also been recorded with transition rates increasing from 43.3% (boys 43.8% and girls 42.6%) in 2000 to 56% (boys 57.2%, and girls 54.7%) in 2005, surpassing the set target of 70% by 2010 and reached 72% in 2012. Similarly, according to Economic Survey 2015 [16], the transition rate from primary school to secondary school rose to 80.4% nationally in 2014 from 76.8% in 2013. Further in order to achieve higher transition rates the jubilee government introduced the 100% transition policy. According to this policy (100 percent transition) all pupils exiting the primary school level after class eight are admitted to secondary schools to pursue their studies.

Concerning retention and completion rates, Gura [4], observes that there has been a fall in dropout rate in secondary schools. He asserts that the prevalence of dropout cases reduced from a high of 46.82% in 2007 to a low of 18.6% in 2013. This indicated a huge fall in the dropout rate which is also equivalent to a very high retention and completion rates. He asserts that this can be directly attributed to the increased government support to secondary school education through S.S.S.E. The rapid increase in number of universities and other colleges in order to meet the ever rising number of students exiting secondary school level signifies an achievement in government's efforts to curb dropout rates through S.S.S.E.

Research indicates a slow but significant development of school facilities. For instance, Fwaya

[15] opines that the S.S.S.E has improved secondary school general infrastructure. In particular, he observes that due to S.S.S.E. the number of secondary schools has increased from a total of 6566 secondary schools in 2008 to 7308 in 2009. The pupil book ratio has improved to nearly 1:1, while there is now conducive environment for participation in co-curricular activities. Further, S.S.S.E together with bursaries given at ward, constituency and county level has relieved parents the burden of financing secondary school education. The ease created by S.S.S.E policy has seen parents afford extra money for financing school projects such as; building of laboratories, libraries, classrooms and even purchases of busses and other school property.

With the introduction of S.S.S.E in 2008, there has been a positive progress towards the achievement of gender equity. For instance, statistics indicate that girls enrolment increased by 4.1% from 767,847 in 2010 to 819,014 in 2011 while boys enrolment rose by 3.7% to 948,706 in 2011 [7]. Generally speaking, improved performance in national examinations by girls even in areas where it was a taboo for girls to go to school is a clear indication that S.S.S.E is on the right track in its aim to achieve equity and quality education.

### Challenges

According to Aroni [2], Chabari [17], Muchiri [18] and Ndolo, Simatwa and Oyondo [7], there has been delays in release of funds for S.S.S.E. For Sikoe [13] this has been a major challenge to school planning process. In particular, the delays or inadequacy of amount disbursed often results to periods in the academic calendar that pupils have to make do without essential teaching and learning resources. This affects the education programmes offered [19]. Muriithi [19] cites the first quarter of 2009 as having delayed disbursement of S.S.S.E. funds due to large scale draught that occurred during that period. Sikoe [13] blames the delays in disbursement of S.S.S.E funds on lack of clear data of students' enrolment in secondary schools by M.O.E.S.T. This paper supports the introduction of National Education Management Information System (N.E.M.I.S) which will enable the government to gather information on student enrollment in each school on time. This will expedite the process of disbursement of S.S.S.E funds to schools.

The most critical element in the education process is the people charged with the task of effecting desirable change in the development of children and the youth [4]. However, Aroni [2] and Orodho [20] indicate inadequacy of teachers in relations to the increased student enrollment. According to Muriithi [19], the average number of teachers per school decreased from 19 in 2007, 12 in 2008 to 11.9 in 2009. He points out that the average number of teacher shortage per school increased from 3.6 in 2007, 4.0 in 2008 to 4.3 in 2009 while the number of untrained teachers increased from 23% in 2007, 29% in 2008 to 33% in 2009. The average

teacher pupil ratios stood at 45:1 in 2007, 48:1 in 2008 to 52:1 in 2009. Wamutoro [21] in support of this says that, the number of teachers available has not been sufficient to handle the subjects at hand. This state of affairs has forced schools to employ Board of Management (B.O.M) teachers some of whom are form four leavers and are allowed to teach despite lack of any training in the teaching profession. This in itself is a contradiction of the aims of S.S.S.E. in which quality of education offered is prioritized. If efforts are not put in place to address this dire situation, the successful implementation of the new competence based curriculum (C.B.C) in Kenya might remain a mirage. This is because the curriculum emphasizes on teachers; identification and nurturing talents, instilling competencies, together with formative assessment. This requires qualified manpower in order to succeed.

Effective delivery of curriculum is possible with the availability of quality teaching and learning resources. Without teaching and learning resources, learning will always be teacher centered and pupils will not learn how to work independently or in groups Republic of Kenya, 2008 [14]. The introduction of S.S.S.E has overstretched available resources rendering them inadequate [4]. Wamutoro [21] noted that, inadequacy of instructional materials has many negative effects to both teachers and students. This is because it leads to poor instruction in class and thus failure of schools to achieve their set educational objectives. The situation might even turn from bad to worse if more funds for buying instructional resources for implementing the new curriculum are not made available. C.B.C. promotes career specialization at senior secondary school level with some of the career pathways offered (for example; arts, sports and science and, science, technology, engineering and mathematics) being resource intensive.

Physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories libraries have a bearing on both quantitative growth and quality of education. Studies on S.S.S.E [2, 17, 6, 7] reveal a state of inadequacy in physical facilities for instruction. In agreement Muriithi [19] observes that in 2007 there were 1.2 million students in Kenya's secondary school system. 400,000 students joined secondary school in 2008 at least 4,000 new classrooms, were needed to accommodate the 1.4 million pupils expected in public secondary schools in 2008. However, these facilities were not provided for leading to overcrowded classes [15, 21, 8]. Crowded classrooms make it difficult for children to write and teachers find it difficult to move around to help needy learners or to mark student's work [4]. Muriithi [19] concludes that, many secondary schools in Kenya are in a state of disrepair and lack essential facilities. This inadequacy in physical facilities will continue to be a major drawback especially in the implementation of S.S.S.E, unless proper measures are put in place to solve it.

Gura [4] points out that most of the principals, their deputies and teachers who are the actual implementers of the policy are never adequately prepared to deal with the challenges of S.S.S.E. He asserts that, most of the administrators have been appointed to positions of leadership without prior training and orientation and even after appointment they are never in-serviced. He further observes that these often results in administrative deficiency that continues to plague the S.S.S.E program. Koriyow [22] opines that, accountability and planning for schools financial resources are of low quality. He cites a report by the M.O.E 2010 which observes lack of secondary public school audits and utilization of financial resources reports in marginalized regions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Government of Kenya through M.O.E.S.T should increase the capitation and expedite the process of cash disbursement to the schools. In addition, there is need to incorporate other government agencies like Constituency Development Fund (C.D.F), Economic stimulus package and Non Governmental Organizations (N.G.Os) to supplement the S.S.S.E funds. Further, principals should involve the community around them to aid in school development programmes and projects. The schools should also initiate income generating projects to supplement government funding. This will ensure smooth running of schools without compromising the quality of education.
2. There is need to employ more teachers in order to be able to accommodate all those who join secondary school education from the primary schools. In addition, the Teachers Service Commission (T.S.C) should devise ways of motivating principals and teachers. The aim of this is to compensate them for the extra workload they undertake as a result of the S.S.S.E programme.
3. Teachers should be empowered with teaching and learning resources to enable them implement the curriculum more effectively in schools. Further, there is need for regular visits by Educational Standards and Quality Assurance Council (E.S.Q.U.A.C) to school. The E.S.Q.U.A.C will ensure proper and quality implementation of S.S.S.E despite the limited instructional resources. This will help maintain high standards of secondary school education in Kenya.
4. There is need to build more secondary schools and learning facilities such as; classrooms, laboratories, libraries in order to avoid overcrowding during the learning process.
5. T.S.C should develop a Career Progression Guide (C.P.G) which will streamline teacher promotion to administrative positions. Moreover, the M.O.E.S.T should organize more capacity building programmes for both Principals and teachers to equip them with requisite skills and abilities to

handle the emerging issues with the implementation of S.S.S.E.

## CONCLUSION

The S.S.S.E program has had significant impact on the life of youth in the country. The government therefore needs to come up with modalities of making it more effective and efficient. This will not only benefit the current generation of youth but future generations.

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