Funding Amounts of Free Day Secondary Education and Student Retention: A case of Migori County, Kenya

Madeleine Sophie Barat Achieng'

PhD Candidate (Educational Administration and Planning), Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

Elizabeth Nduku

Senior Lecturer, Education Administration and Planning, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

Harriet Njui

Professor, Curriculum Studies and Instruction, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

Abstract

Funding of secondary education according to European Commission (2014) is the focus of much debate in Europe today. This has challenged decision makers and educationists all over Europe to seek new ways of ensuring that sufficient funds are made available for schools while using public resources efficiently. Most developing countries also face great challenges associated with funding of secondary education. In Kenya, free day secondary education was introduced in 2008 to enhance transition and retention of students from primary to secondary schools. Studies have shown that student retention is still a major challenge among the vulnerable and marginalized students. The government of Kenya has continued to explore different ways of financing education in order to improve quality and expand secondary education. This study was anchored on retention theory and sought to add knowledge and literature related to funding of secondary education and student retention. The sample of the study consisted of 19 schools, 228 students, 76 class teachers, 31 parents, 19 school principals and 1 Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed method research design using a cross sectional survey design for the quantitative method and a case study design for the qualitative method. Data were collected using questionnaires, interview guides, document analysis guide and focus group discussions. Descriptive and inferential statistics were generated using MS Excel 2018 and SPSS version 21. Qualitative data from the interviews and focus group discussions were analysed thematically and report given in narrative form and direct quotes. The findings revealed that free day secondary education funding had contributed to the improvement of student retention in Migori County over the last four years. The study recommended that the government should review the amounts allocated for free day secondary education and consider investment in education a key priority.

Key words: Funding, free day secondary education, student, retention

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Funding of secondary school education and student retention according to OECD (2017) is still a challenge in both developed and developing countries. OECD (2017) contended that it is important for world governments to come up with well-developed systems of allocating funds since money for funding comes from public budgets. Rueckert (2019) also posited that while basic education is theoretically free in many African countries, informal fees charged on compulsory items like uniforms, lunch programmes, extra lessons or funds to support school buildings among other school activities see parents forced to pay fees. This has made secondary education in most African countries expensive, forcing children from poor and vulnerable backgrounds to drop out of school.

A study by Odumbe, Simatwa and Ayodo (2015) further revealed that absenteeism of students from school, low family income, long distance travelled by students to school and back, entry behaviour and attitude of students towards the school resulted to poor performance in day-secondary schools in Migori sub-county. Marwa (2015) also established that absence of school fees, uneven distribution and limited school spaces affected student attendance in Kuria West sub-county, Migori County. The aforementioned studies confirmed that absenteeism and student attendance in secondary schools in Migori and Kuria West sub-counties is a problem but did not focus on FDSE funding and student retention. The current study therefore sought to find out the influence of FDSE funding amounts on student retention in all of the seven sub-counties in Migori County.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

The study sought to establish the influence of the funding amounts of free day secondary education on student retention in Migori County. Reviewed literature indicate that Migori County is among the 20 Counties in Kenya that still record a GER of 56.4% and NER of 46% below the national average of 58.2% and 47.4% respectively. Twelve years down the line after the launch of FDSE the net attendance at secondary school level is still at 46% with gender parity index at 0.79 compared to the national level of 0.89 (UNICEF, 2017). The purpose of the study was therefore to increase knowledge and add literature related to funding amounts of free day secondary education and student retention in Migori County, Kenya.

1.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The study was guided by retention theory which has its roots in the works and writings of Vincent Tinto on examination of student drop-out characteristics (Tinto, 1975). According to Atif, Richards and Bilgin (2016), "Vincent Tinto's theory of student departure seeks to explain the student withdrawal process" (p. 6). It emphasizes on two main variables, goal commitment and institutional commitment. Goal commitment represents the degree to which a student is motivated to graduate or complete his/her training in an institution whereas institutional commitment represents the level at which the student is motivated to graduate from a specific institution.

The main principles of Tinto's theory on effective retention include: first, institutional commitment to students, meaning that students' welfare is given priority before the institutional

goals. The second principle is educational commitment. This means that retention programmes in educational institutions must take care of all students without discrimination. The third principle is the social and intellectual community commitment to students. This means that the institutional programmes should focus on developing social and supportive educational units in which all students are absorbed and accommodated as gifted members of the institution (Tinto, 1993).

Atif, Richards and Bilgin (2016) summarized Tinto's theory in these words, "students tend to remain in the institution when they have clear goals for themselves and perceive that their institution is a powerful vehicle in achieving their goals" (p. 6). Connolly (2016) further added that according to Tinto's theory, "the decision to drop out arises from a combination of student characteristics and the extent of their academic, environmental and social integration in an institution" (p. 1). Other works by Tinto according to Connolly (2016) brought about a longitudinal explanatory model of departure where Tinto proposed that "the stronger the individual's level of social and academic integration, the greater his/her subsequent commitment to the institution and to the goal of college graduation" (p. 2).

Tinto's 1993 model has four segments and according to Connolly (2016), the first is labelled "pre-entry attributes and this embraces factors linked to family background, skills, abilities and prior schooling" (p. 3). The second part is labelled "goals/commitment". This second part includes "the intention the student has and his/her external commitments to drop/stop-out decision" These two segments according to Connolly (2016) can be said to "represent characteristics the student possesses at the time of entry and a student's disposition in terms of intentions and motivational factors" (p. 4). The third part of Tinto's 1993 model includes "both formal and informal aspects of institutional experiences and the interaction/effect of the academic and social" (p. 5). Connolly (2016) contended that according to Tinto (1993) "academic and non-academic staff are both seen as having the ability to influence the departure decision" (p. 5). The fourth part of Tinto's model is labelled "academic and social integration". Tinto found that "a student's sense of academic and social belonging impacts on his/her retention and graduation". Positive campus experiences tend to "increase integration into the academic and social systems while negative experiences tend to weaken academic/social integration" (p. 6).

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Secondary education according to Jacob and Lehner (2011) is widely believed to "provide the optimum setting to prepare young people, predominantly adolescents, for healthy and productive adult lives, including participation in social, political and economic spheres" (p. 3). It is therefore imperative that students who join this level of education maximize their experiences therein. Among countries with a success story of free secondary education is Finland. According to OECD (2013), Finland's "expenditure on educational institutions at all levels is 6.5% of GDP, slightly above the OECD average of 6.3%". OECD (2013) indicated that almost all expenditure on educational institutions is from public sources. "Pre-primary to higher education is free, based mainly on public funding sources" (p. 16). Just like Denmark, the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Finance and local authorities fund basic education. "Municipalities receive funding according to a formula that balances the proportion of population and its socio-economic

status and they decide democratically how to distribute funding across different areas, including education" (p. 16).

The levels of autonomy municipalities give to schools in allocating the resources differ depending on the municipalities. Each municipality allocates specific resources based on its needs. "System-level policies also assure equity for Students". According to OECD (2013) "basic education is free and textbooks and a daily meal are provided" (p. 16). This is in agreement with Lau (2015) who asserted that "basic schooling in Finland is free, and it is illegal for a school to charge school fees" (p. 17). Schools provide free lunches among other incentives. This has indeed improved student retention; an approach Kenya can adopt to make free day secondary education achieve the desired goal of realising student retention.

Another successful story of free secondary schooling is in Sweden. According OECD (2017) "schools are mainly financed through municipal taxes and money follows the students to the schools where they are enrolled" (p. 17). The school governing body then distributes these funds to different departments. The departments use the targeted grants to finance specific activities like teachers' training, major repairs, maintenance, construction, transport, and extracurricular activities. The Swedish Institute (SI) (2015) indicated that "from the age of six, every child in Sweden has access to free education". According to SI (2015), "the school system is regulated through the Swedish Education Act which mandates nine years of school attendance for all children from the year they turn seven" (p. 1). This policy has ensured that all children are granted the same access to education.

Secondary education in the Asia-Pacific region is "largely funded by the government" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 16). Foreign aid according to UNESCO (2013) is also "an important source of funding for some countries" (p. 16). The Asia-Pacific region is a highly diverse region consisting of the smallest and the largest countries of the world, as well as the poorest and richest economies. According to UNESCO (2013), most education systems in Asia-Pacific region spend an insufficient level of government expenditure on education and so other major sources of funds include "household sources and private entities" (p. 20). Lower secondary education is part of "compulsory basic education programme and is provided for legally" (p. 20).

Most countries in Asia-Pacific according to UNESCO (2013) use formula funding as a method of delivering funding to educational institutions. Resources are demand-driven and are provided to educational institutions based on need-based estimates as a lump sum block grant annually or in quarterly/monthly instalments. Normally, the block grants are supplemented by additional funds which are based on some criteria such as number of students. Even though lower secondary education is free in Asia-Pacific, "some countries have opted for targeted measures such as eliminating fees and/or providing incentives to only selected groups". In Bangladesh for example, secondary education is free for girls up to the secondary level in order to reduce gender inequalities, while in India, some states have abolished fees for girls in secondary and tertiary education (p. 20).

Scholarships for disadvantaged children are common in many countries in Asia-Pacific, according to UNESCO (2013). For example during the period of economic crisis, Indonesia

introduced a scholarship programme in secondary education to cover the costs of fees. It seemed that this intervention effectively reduced dropout rates and increased retention at the lower secondary level. In Mongolia, "children of families under the poverty line receive free school bags, stationary and textbooks" (p. 21). The total grant to schools consists of a flexible budget based on per student cost. The formula in Mongolia endeavors to favor rural schools. The government compensates 60% of the textbook costs incurred by disadvantaged families, an initiative that governments in other developing countries can learn from if vulnerable students have to afford secondary education.

In Viet Nam for example, "funds provided by the state are distributed on the basis of per capita-grant, taking into account the existence of disadvantaged groups" (p. 21). Fees are partially waived for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the poor and ethnic minority, which is a good practice that SSA countries can learn from. In Nepal, disadvantaged children from marginalised communities and those residing in remote regions receive free education, meaning no paying tuition and admission fees and getting free textbooks. This is an approach that has promoted retention of students in schools.

In many countries in SSA, the public sector largely provides education, especially at the lower levels. UNESCO (2011) noted that education in SSA is often a "major part of government expenditure and in the current economic context; governments have to make difficult decisions about mobilizing and allocating resources, especially in the light of rising demands from other public service sectors such as health and infrastructure" (p. 28). UNESCO (2011) also noted that "there is also competition for resources within the education system, for example funding primary schools versus universities" (p. 28). According to UNESCO (2015), "the abolition of school fees has led more children to access secondary schools (p. 113). However "substantial proportions of adolescents of secondary school age have continued to work outside of school" (P. 116).

Funding of secondary education in some African countries according to Nwoko (2015) "is a concurrent responsibility of both the federal and state governments" (p. 9). In Nigeria for example, provision of secondary education is the "responsibility of both federal and state governments under the constitution" (p. 9). According to Nwoko (2015), the "federal government makes nationwide policies and runs secondary and post-secondary institutions including universities, polytechnics and colleges". The federal government funds these institutions "through annual budgetary allocations and several targeted intervention funds, including the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, debt relief grant and constituency projects of federal legislators". Nwoko (2015) asserted that "these funds also benefit state government schools however, poverty and cultural barriers such as child labour and early marriage are key demand side issues affecting student retention" (p. 9).

Nwoko (2015) contended that a recent analysis estimates that "children from the lowest wealth quintile are nearly three times more likely to be out of school." Girls seem to be more affected "than boys, although the gap is slowly closing". In his study Nwoko (2015) found that "Nigeria's governments at all levels have and are implementing numerous initiatives to widen access to and improve the quality of basic education" The study revealed that "between 16% and

18% of global out of school children are in Nigeria" (p. 9). Nwoko (2015) recommended that the state government should "show commitment to basic education by contributing to its funding rather than relying on local contributions" (p. 21). The study by Nwoko (2015) focused specifically on financing secondary education in Nigeria creating a geographical gap that the current study intended to fill.

In East Africa a study by Oketch and Rollestone (2007) pointed out that "the experience of Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya shows that the elimination of fees at primary level can have dramatic results" (p. 36). Secondary education however is facing challenges and this is supported by a report done by Rafiki Thambo Foundation (2015) in Uganda which stated that although the government provides free secondary education, most families still need to pay for uniform and books and so "many families simply cannot afford to send their children to school" (p. 1). The report stated that only 23% of boys and 19% of girls complete lower secondary school. Retention in rural public secondary schools in regions like Kabale remains a big challenge because of poverty.

Many parents still struggle to afford pens, exercise books, school uniforms and even school lunch for their children. In addition, "30% of girls drop out of secondary school once they start menstruating simply because they cannot afford sanitary towels" (p. 3). Like the education sectors in "most sub-Saharan African countries, the Ugandan education sector faces a lot of challenges" (p. 2). An article by Huylebroeck and Titeca (2015) confirmed that "the intention of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in Uganda of increasing access to quality education has not been achieved to date" (p. 349). Using quantitative and qualitative data, Huylebroeck and Titeca (2015) concluded that reduced teacher compensation and congested classrooms affected educational performance. The study by Huylebroeck and Titeca (2015) created geographical, theoretical and methodological gaps that the current study intended to fill.

Kenya introduced FDSE in 2008 and some studies reveal that subsidised free secondary education has led to increased enrolment in secondary schools. A study by Mualuko and Muhavi (2013) on "government funding on access to secondary education in Kenya" using secondary data concluded that the "rise in enrolment following free education is an indicator that the government should enhance transparency and accountability in government departments to win back donor confidence in financing education" (p. 1654). The study utilized secondary data to critically analyze financing of secondary education in Kenya. Mualuko and Muhavi (2013) contended that "efforts should be made to ensure that those who enrol do not drop out by cushioning parents from the low income bracket" (p. 1654).

The study recommended that there is a need for the government to exploit options of targeting financial assistance to benefit the needy and vulnerable groups more on the basis of household incomes. Mualuko and Muhavi (2013) recommended that access to secondary education should be enhanced by addressing geographical disparities and that the government "should formulate policies that can regulate charging other levies such as motivation fees which drain the poor parents" (p. 1655). This study created a methodological gap that the current study intended to fill.

A study by Gura (2015) on the "effects of Kenya's subsidised secondary education programme on access, retention, equity and quality in Nyakach sub-county, Kisumu County, Kenya", also established that the implementation of the programme "negatively affected the quality of education offered in schools" (p. 11). The programme had also not succeeded in ensuring gender equity except improved access to secondary education.

Another study by Muganda, Simiyu and Riechi (2016) on "the relationship between subsidised free day secondary education and retention in secondary schools in Kenya" established that subsidised free education "increased enrolment and transition rates and reduced dropout rates at secondary education level in Bungoma County, Kenya" (p. 123). The results indicated that "enrolment and transition rates of learners in Bungoma County had increased since the introduction of SFDSE by the government in the year 2008" (p. 123). Because of the importance of subsidised free day secondary education, "the study recommended that the Kenyan government should increase the amount allocated per child" (p. 123). The study created a methodological and a theoretical gap that the current study intended to fill.

A study by Chepkoech (2018) on "influence of tuition free secondary educational subsidy on students' participation rates in public secondary schools in Kasarani, Nairobi County, Kenya" established that effective and efficient utilisation of tuition free subsidy led to increased equity in enrolment rates of students in secondary education and that tuition free secondary education reduced repetition rates. The study was anchored on "human capital theory developed by Schultz in 1971" (p. 13). Chepkoech (2018) concluded that tuition free secondary education subsidy played a very important role in increasing students' participation rates in secondary education. The study further recommended that the subsidy be increased by the government to cover levies for lunch and school uniforms and that this should be disbursed on time. The study created geographical and theoretical gaps that the current study intended to fill.

3.1 Methodology

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed method research design. The purpose of the convergent design according to Creswell and Clark (2011, p. 77) is to "obtain different but complementary data on the same topic". The intent in using this design was to bring together the differing strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of the quantitative method such as large sample size, with those of the qualitative method such as small sample, and in-depth information. Creswell (2014) explains that "the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and compares the two databases to determine if there is convergence, differences or some combination" (p. 213). Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017) were in agreement by stating that in convergent parallel mixed method design "the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research are performed independently and their results are brought together in the overall interpretation" (p. 117).

The quantitative design in this study was a cross-sectional survey because the intent of the study was to establish the general understanding of how the implementation of free day secondary

education funding has influenced student retention in Migori County. The choice of the cross-sectional survey as a quantitative design is supported by Levin (2006) who posited that "cross-sectional studies are carried out at one time point or over a short period and are usually conducted to estimate the prevalence of interest for a given population" (p. 24). Kendra (2019) was in agreement when she asserted that "participants in this type of study are selected based on particular variables of interest" (p. 1). The qualitative design was a case study since the aim of the study was to arrive at a detailed description and understanding of the FDSE funding programme. This is in agreement with Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) who contended that "a case study is a type of ethnographic research study that focuses on a single unit such as one group or one programme and its main goal is to arrive at a detailed description and understanding of the entity (p. 29).

3.2 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The study used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to draw the samples since it adopted a mixed method research design. According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2012) "probability sampling techniques permit the researcher to specify the probability or chance that each member of a defined population will be selected for the sample" (p. 150). The researcher drew probability samples from schools, class teachers and students. Nonprobability sampling also called non-random sampling is "the process of selecting a sample using a technique that does not permit the researcher to specify the probability, or chance that each member of a population has of being selected for the sample" (Gay et al. 2012, p. 159). The researcher drew non-probability samples for the County QASO, school principals and parents.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Creswell and Clark (2011) contended that "in mixed methods research, the data collection procedures consist of several key components" (p.171). The components include "sampling, gaining permissions, collecting data, recording the data and administering the data collection" (p. 171). Data collection in this study proceeded along two strands: quantitative and qualitative. The "intent of probabilistic sampling in the quantitative strand was to select a large number of individuals who are representative of the population" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 174). In the qualitative strand, "inquirer purposefully selected individuals who could provide the necessary information" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 173). She sought permission to collect data from participants. In order to collect the required data, four research assistants had an orientation with the researcher. The orientation involved briefing of research assistants on key terms used in the tools and the main information targeted from the tools. All items in the questionnaires were discussed with the research assistants.

While in the field, the researcher introduced the research assistants to the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government officials, the Ministry of Education, State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education officials, the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer and schools principals. The research permit given by NACOSTI was used to access the County Commissioner, County Director of Education and the school principals. Finally the school principals gave permission to the researcher to have access to teachers, parents and students. Once

permission was granted, the researcher booked appointments and organised with the teachers and students when to distribute the questionnaires.

The researcher also organised with class teachers how to get parents for the focus group discussions. She made appointments with the school principals and County QASO and arranged for appropriate times for the interviews. "Collection of quantitative and qualitative data in this convergent parallel mixed method design was done concurrently" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 180). Each set of data were given equal weight.

3.4 Data Analysis/Interpretation

Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2011) contended that "mixed analysis is a term used for analysing data in mixed research" (p. 2). According to Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2011), mixed analysis "involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques within the same framework" (p. 3). In this study, the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data occurred concurrently. Burke and Larry (2014) called this class of analysis "multidata-multianalysis because both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques are used" (p. 795). Quantitative data was edited, cleaned for completeness, accuracy and consistency. Coding was done using MS Excel 2018 software and analysis followed using version 21 of the SPSS software. A "regression analysis" was used to find out whether the independent variables predicted the given dependent variable (Burke & Larry, 2014, p. 707). A "correlation coefficient analysis" was also used to show the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable (Burke & Larry, 2014, p. 752).

Qualitative data analysis involved preparing and organising data, reducing data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes and finally representing data in narrative form as recommended by Creswell, (2013, p. 180) and Boeije (2013, p. 76). The "process of coding involved aggregating the texts into small categories" (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). These categories eventually formed themes. The researcher then interpreted the themes guided by the research questions and finally represented data in narrative form and direct quotes.

4.1 Findings, Interpretations and Discussions

Free Day Secondary Education Policy was implemented by the government of Kenya in 2008 in tandem with the International Conventions and Protocols that encourage governments to provide universal education to its citizens (Republic of Kenya, 2013). The objectives of this policy was to facilitate the transition from primary to secondary schools; accommodate the enrolment gains made at primary level through the free primary education rolled out in 2003; and improve quality, equity and retention in the provision of secondary school education (Ayako, 2015). Through the free day secondary education programme, every student is currently entitled to Ksh.22, 244 per year. Apart from this capitation that goes to operational and tuition cost of education, the "Ministry of Education Science and Technology disburses funds that go into infrastructure development, laboratory equipment, sanitary care, information communication technology and teaching and learning resources" (Okoth, Maneno & Amuka, 2018, p. 32).

4.1.1 Funding Amounts and Student Retention

Information gathered by the researcher from the County education documents indicated that there had been an improvement in the growth of student retention between 2014 and 2015, and 2016 and 2018 (County Government of Migori, 2018). Figure 1 gives an illustration of this trend.

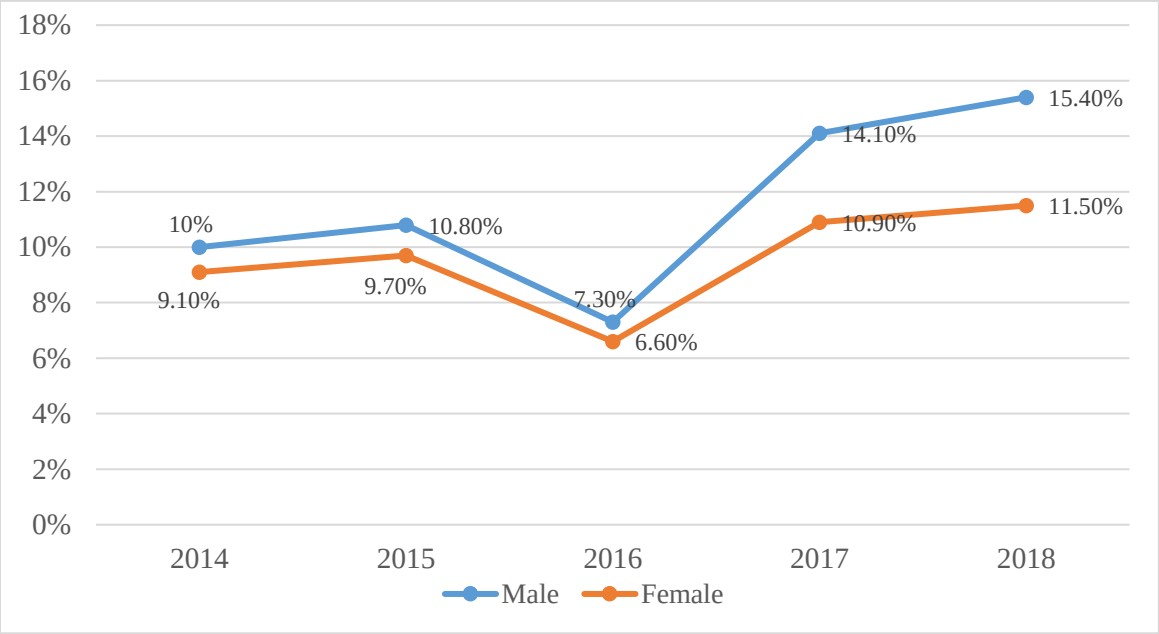

Figure 1. Annual Retention Growth Rates from 2014-2018, County Government of Migori, 2018.

Figure 1 shows that there was a slight increase in student retention between 2014 and 2015. Retention among the male students increased from 10% to 10.80% while that of female students increased from 9.10% to 9.70% (County Government of Migori, 2018). The QASO had this to say about retention: "since the implementation of FDSE programme students are no longer sent home for school fees, most parents are able to engage in income generating activities that enable them to provide food and clothing for their children including school uniform" (QASO, personal communication, July 8, 2019).

The reasons given by the QASO are supported by UNESCO (2015) report which stated that "the abolition of school fees at this level had led more children to access secondary schools" (p. 113). However Figure 9 shows that 2015 and 2016 witnessed decreases in student retention growth rate. Retention of male students in Migori County dropped from 10.80% to 7.30% while that of female students dropped from 9.70% to 6.60% (County Government of Migori, 2018). The analysis drawn from the County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022 alluded to this drop to financial constraints and slowing economic growth in Kenya that led to the delay in release of the FDSE funds which further affected school operations.

The QASO had also this to say "the extra charges on remedial and lunch programmes keep some students away from school" (QASO, personal communication, July, 8, 2019). There was

however an increase in retention between the years 2016 to 2018. The retention rate of male students increased from 7.30% to15.40% while that of female students increased from 6.60% to11.50% (County Government of Migori, 2018). One main reason for the increase in student retention according to the MoES&T, (2018) was that the government had increased the capitation grant from Kshs.12, 870 to Kshs.22, 244 per child, therefore relieving the parents of paying extra levies.

4.1.2 Views of School Principals, Class Teachers and Parents on Funding Amounts and Student Retention

The study sought to find out the views of school principals, class teachers and parents on FDSE funding amounts and how the amount given had influenced student retention. School principals and class teachers are the main implementers of the programme while parents are the beneficiaries. The views of the principals and class teachers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Views of School Principals and Class Teachers on FDSE Funds and Student Retention

Views	School Principals		Class Teachers	
	F	%	F	%
Improved	14	72	157	69
Not Improved	5	28	71	31
Totals	19	100	228	100

Note. F=Frequency. Researcher, 2020.

Table 1 shows that there were 14 (72%) of the school principals who were in agreement that the increase in grant capitation had seen an improvement in student retention. Principal A from Uriri sub-county had this to say: “The increase in the amount of FDSE funds has led to an improvement of class attendance since a number of economically challenged students are now able to access day secondary education because it is free” (Principal A, Uriri sub-county, personal communication, June, 31, 2019). Responses from 157 (69%) of the class teachers were in conformity with those of the school principals. Majority of the class teachers were in agreement that the increase in grant capitation from Kshs.12, 870 to Kshs.22, 244 had seen an improvement in student retention.

Table 1 also shows that 5 (28%) of the school principals felt that FDSE funds had not improved student retention. Principal A from Migori sub-county had this to say: “The funding is not quite enough as some requirements such as activity fees or even teaching and learning materials cannot be met” (Principal A, Migori sub-county, personal communication, July, 15, 2019). This was supported by 71 (31%) of class teachers who felt that FDSE funds had not improved student retention. Their argument was that the funds were insufficient to keep students in school as most schools had strenuous budgets because of delays in disbursement of the FDSE funds. The views of majority of school principals (72%) and class teachers (69%) that FDSE funds had seen an improvement in student retention are supported by the findings of Muganda, Simiyu and Riechi (2016) who established that “subsidised free day secondary education had increased enrolment and transition rates and reduced dropout rates of the learners at secondary education level” in Bungoma

County, Kenya (p. 123).The findings by Wanjala and Koriyow (2017) also support the views by some principals (28%) and class teachers (31%) that FDSE had not improved student retention. Wanjala and Koriyow (2017) argued that even after the introduction of subsidised fee the enrolment rates in Wajir County, Kenya remained low. The reason given is that "finances to support free tuition secondary education were inadequate and delayed before disbursement" (Wanjala & Koriyow, 2017, p. 247).

Parents from the three focus groups had this to say: "The amount given for the year is not enough since we have to buy school uniforms and pay for lunch programme" (Kuria West Focus Group Discussion, personal communication, July, 12, 2019); "The money is not enough, we need addition" (Nyatike Focus Group Discussion, personal communication, July, 13, 2019); "The money is not enough since we have to pay extra fees inform of lunch programme" (Migori Focus Group Discussion, personal communication, July, 14, 2019). The parents resonated with school principals and class teachers that the amount given by the government was inadequate. They expressed concern that they still had to pay extra levies in the form of a lunch programme and extra tuition to keep their children in school. A concerned parent had this to say: "It is quite less, you know this current economy, things are difficult, and so the government should consider increasing the current amount" (Concerned parent, personal communication, July, 12, 2019). The QASO was in agreement with the parents when he said: "the FDSE funds are not adequate due to rising costs of items and inflationary trends in the country" (QASO, personal communication, July, 8, 2019).

All the views of the QASO, school principals, class teachers and parents are supported by Mwangi (2018) who established that "FDSE funds were inadequate to keep a student in school for a whole year". He recommended that the government "should increase funding for free day secondary education in public day secondary schools" (p. 14). Muganda et al. (2016) also recommended that "due to the importance of SFDSE which had enhanced retention, the amount allocated per child should be increased and the government should remove the extra burdens from the parents by removing extra charges" (p. 123). Ayako (2015) however argued that sustainability of funding post primary education in Kenya remains a major challenge to the government and this may explain why the FDSE funds are still not sufficient for smooth running of public day secondary schools.

The findings on how funding amounts provided for free day secondary education have influenced retention rates of students in public day secondary schools are supported by retention theory that puts an emphasis on effective retention programme for all students. The government in this study is committed to making basic education free since it "pays Kshs.22, 244 annually for every secondary school student" (Wanzala, 2019, May 9). A major source of student departure or dropout identified by Tinto's theory of retention (1975) is the inability by students to remain in a learning institution because of the inability "to make the adjustment to the academic and social life of the institution" or school (p. 4). In this study the inability by most students to remain in school is because of poverty. FDSE funds should cushion economically challenged students and so it is

important that the funds are used well by the school principals' in order to promote student retention.

5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

From the study findings, the following conclusion was drawn: That, FDSE funds have contributed to the improvement of student attendance and that there has been a slight change in student retention in Migori County over the past four years. Though schools no longer send students home for fees as before, the FDSE funds are not adequate due to the rising costs of items and inflationary trends in the country. The Government of Kenya should therefore increase FDSE capitation in order to realize 100% retention rate and school principals should use the funds well to promote student retention.

From the findings and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made to different implementers and education practitioners with the aim of improving the implementation of FDSE funding programme in public day secondary schools. These recommendations are important because investing in secondary education has many development benefits and Kenya's vision 2030 recognises education as the route to economic prosperity.

The study recommended that there is a need for the government to review the amounts allocated for FDSE funding since the current Kshs.22, 244 per student, per year is not adequate. This is important because of the rising costs of goods and services. Different counties have different needs and this calls for consideration. The FDSE grant should not be distributed at a flat rate to all students. The inflationary trends in the country also calls for review of the amounts disbursed. The government should consider investment in education a key priority and should therefore fund the first and the second level of education from tax revenues of the state. The causal mechanism in this study is funding. This should provide an intervening space for policy recommendations and actions in order to improve student retention. The Government should involve other key stakeholders like private partners to support the FDSE funding programme.

The study also recommended that there is a need for the Ministry to improve the Education Financial Management Information System (EFMIS) by putting stringent measures in place to ensure that funds provided for through FDSE support all students to complete secondary education. The MoES&T should formulate policies that can regulate charging of levies such as motivation fees which drain poor parents. There should be regular inspections in schools by the MoES&T to ensure that FDSE funds are used to promote student retention.

References

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Razavieh, A. (2002). *Introduction to research in education.* (6th ed). United States: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.

Atif, A., Richards, D., & Bilgin, A. (2016). *A student retention model: Empirical, theoretical and pragmatic.* Retrieved from http://www.researchgate.net

Ayako, A. B. (2015). Financing post-primary education in Kenya: A review of structure, trends challenges. *International Journal of Education and Research, 3*(4). Retrieved from http://www.ijerm.com

Boeije, H. (2013). *Analysis in qualitative research.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Burke, J., & Larry, C. (2014). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches.* (5th ed.). USA: Sage Publication.

Chepkoech, L. J. (2018). *Influence of tuition free secondary educational subsidy on students' participation rates in public secondary schools in Kasarani, Nairobi County, Kenya.* (Master's thesis, University of Nairobi).

Connolly, C. (2016). *Student retention literature: Tinto's model.* Retrieved from http://www.corneliathinks.wordpress.com

County Government of Migori. (2018). County integrated development plan 2018-2022. Retrieved from http://www.cog.go.ke

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five approaches.*(3rd ed.). Washington DC: Sage Publication.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. P. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications, Inc.

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2014). *Financing schools in Europe: Mechanisms, Methods and criteria in public funding.* Luxembourg: EACEA.

Gay, L. R., Airasian, P. & Mills, G. (2012). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications.* (10th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson.

Gura, E. O. (2015). *The effects of Kenya's subsidised secondary education programme on access retention, equity and quality: A case of Nyakach sub-county, Kisumu County, Kenya.* (Master's thesis, Kenyatta University).

Huylebroeck, L., & Titeca, K. (2015). *Universal secondary education in Uganda: Blessing or curse? The impact of use on educational attainment and performance.* In: Reyntjens, F., Vandeginste, S., & Verpoorten (eds.) L'Afrique des Grands Lacs: Annuaire 2014-2015. Antwerp: University Press Antwer, p, 349-372.

Jacob, W. J., & Lehner, S. (2011). *Secondary education.* Retrieved from http://www.epdc.org

Kendra, C. (2019). *How does the cross-sectional research method work?* Retrieved from http://www.verywellmind.com

Lau, W. (2015). *Means to an end: A comparative review of Finland and Singapore's basic Education systems.* (Master's thesis, Lund University).

Levin, K. (2006). Study design III: *Cross-sectional studies*. Retrieved from http://www.researchgate.net/publication

Marwa, P. S. (2015). *Determinants of transition rate improvement for girls from primary schools to secondary schools in Kuria West, Migori County, Kenya.* (Master's thesis, Kenyatta University).

Ministry of Education. (2018). *National education management information system.* Retrieved from http://www.nemis.education.go.ke

Mualuko, J. N., & Muhavi, S. L. (2013). Government funding on access to secondary education in Kenya: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Educational Administration and Management, 1*(1), 001-005.

Muganda, A. J., Simiyu, A. M., & Riechi, A. (2016). The relationship between subsidised free day secondary education and retention in secondary schools in Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice, 7*(17). Retrieved from http://www.iiste.org

Mwangi, G. (2018). *Influence of educational subsidies on completion rates in public day secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya.* (PhD Dissertation, South Eastern Kenya University).

Nwoko, C. (2015). *Financing education in Nigeria: Opportunities for action.* Retrieved from http://www.reliefweb.int

Odumbe, A. G., Simatwa, E. M., & Ayodo, T. M. (2015). Factors influencing student academic performance in day secondary schools in Kenya: A case study of Migori Sub-County. *Greener Journal of Educational Research, 5*(3), 078-097.

OECD. (2013). *Educational policy outlook*: Finland. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org

OECD. (2017*). Education policy outlook: Sweden.* Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org

Oketch, M., & Rolleston, C. M. (2007). *Policies on free primary and secondary education in East Africa: A review of the literature.* Retrieved from http://www.create-rpc.org

Okoth, J. O., Maneno, R., & Amuka, L. A. (2018). Education quality assurance and standards in Kenya: Overseeing curriculum implementation and delivery in secondary schools- A case of Taita Taveta. *African Journal of Education and Practice, 3*(2), 30-41.

Onwegbuzie, A. J., & Combs, J. P. (2011). Data analysis in mixed research: A Primer. *International Journal of Education, 3*(1). doi: 10.5296/ije.v3i1.618

Rafiki, T. F. (2015). *Factsheet: Education in Uganda.* Retrieved from http://www.rafiki-foundation.org

Republic of Kenya. (2013). *The basic education act* 2013 No. 14 of 2013. Nairobi.

Rueckert, P. (2019). *10 barriers to education around the world.* Retrieved from http://www.globalcitizen.org

Schoonenboom, J., & Johnson, B. (2017). How to construct a mixed method research design. *Springer*. doi: 10.1007/s11577-017-0454-1

Swedish Institute. (2015). *Equal access to free education.* Retrieved from http://www.sweden.se

Tinto, V. (1975). 'Dropouts from higher education. A theoretical synthesis of recent research'. *Review of Educational Research* (45), 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1993*). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

UNESCO. (2011). *Priority gender equality guidelines*. Paris: UNESCO Publication Board.

UNESCO. (2013). *Financing of secondary education in the Asia-Pacific Region.* Bangkok.

UNESCO. (2015). *Education for all 2000-2015. Achievements and challenges.* Paris. UNESCO.

UNICEF. (2017). *Migori social sector budget brief (2013-2014 to 2015-16).* Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org.esaro/UNICEF

Wanjala, G., & Koriyow, H. A. (2017). Impact of subsidised fees on students' access to quality education in public secondary schools in Wajir County, Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research, 5*(7). Retrieved from http://www.ijern.com