

Strategies used to improve Participation of Students in Secondary School Education in Kakamega County, Kenya.

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Abstract

Education plays a vital role in the development of human capital that is imperative in the modern technological and information age. However many factors, for example individual and household characteristics, socio-economic status, school related factors and government policies, have substantial impact on the participation in education in general and secondary school education in particular. The introduction of free primary education and subsidized secondary education in Kenya was responsible for the marked increase in enrolment. However, a sizeable number of children, boys and girls alike, remain out of school owing to a number of reasons. The study set out to evaluate the strategies used to improve students' participation in secondary school education in Kakamega County. This study used a conceptual model where social and economic conflicts as represented by poverty and drug and substance abuse on one side and effects on students' participation in secondary school education on the other. The measurable indicators for participation were enrolment, retention, progression and completion of secondary school education. The research was *ex post facto* in which evaluation and correlational designs were used. The study population was 20274 students in county and sub county secondary schools in the three sampled sub-counties of Kakamega North, Mumias East and Kakamega East as well as 63 principals, 63 guiding and counselling teachers, parents and guardians, religious leaders, chiefs, NG-CDF managers and Sub County Directors of education. Purposive sampling was used to select the three sub counties, stratified random sampling was used to select the schools while purposive, simple random and stratified random sampling were used to identify all other respondents. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews schedules and FGD. Data were analysed using the SPSS programme where descriptive statistics such as correlation coefficients, percentages and frequencies were used. The study identified challenges that impacted negatively on students' participation in secondary school education in Kakamega county. The respondents proposed strategies that, if properly implemented, would go a long way in improving students'

participation in secondary school education. The proposed ameliorative strategies included financial support through bursaries and scholarships, making the learning environment friendly by involving all stakeholders in guidance and counselling, motivation and mentorship programmes through guest speakers and pastoral services, improved school management practices and monitoring programmes and economic empowerment of feeder communities to ameliorate the effects of poverty on students participation in secondary school education.

Key words: *Access, participation, learning environment, mentorship*

1. Introduction

1.1 Participation in secondary school education in Kenya

In Kenya, participation in secondary school education has not achieved set goals and targets (Republic of Kenya, 2012). The rate of transition from primary to secondary education increased from 46 percent in 2003 to about 60 percent in 2007. However gender disparities were observed both at primary and secondary school levels. In 2006, the secondary school gross enrolment rate, number of enrolled children as a percent of the number of children in the official school-age group, was a paltry 6.3 percent in the North Eastern province, 8.6 percent for boys and 3.6 percent for girls. The national average at the time was 32.2 percent with 34.6 percent for boys and 29.9 percent of girls. From the statistics given, it was observed that girls' gross enrolment rates were lower than boys' across regions. Even then the relatively high gender ratios achieved at the primary level in certain regions were not maintained due to high girl child attrition as many girls drop out of school. The effects of this low representation in education were reflected in the labour market, where women represent only 30 percent of all wage employees in the modern sector (Republic of Kenya 2008).

Mwangi (2004) observed that a combination of poverty, disease and retrogressive cultural practices continued to deny many children the right to education. Even with the introduction of Free Primary Education and subsidized secondary education, access to education continued to be a pipe dream for many Kenyan children. The introduction of free primary education and subsidized secondary education in Kenya was responsible for the marked increase in enrolment. However, a sizeable number of children, boys and girls alike, remained out of school owing to a number of reasons. These reasons included demand for domestic labour in the homes such as assisting in looking after their young siblings, child marriage, household chores, and bereavement within the family and looking after the sick members of the family.

Studies by Eshiwani (1984) and Kinyanjui (1987) revealed a picture of inadequate girl-child education in terms of enrolment, retention and completion. The number of girls who join school in class one was found to be significantly lower than that of boys. To compound the problem, girls had a higher attrition rate so that only a small percentage of girls who join school actually complete the cycle. The boys on the other hand, were found to persist in school and had a higher cycle completion rate.

Murunga (2012) carried out a study on factors influencing students' participation in education in public day secondary schools in Vihiga District, Kenya. The study used a sample of students, class teachers and students and used descriptive research design. The study revealed

that social and cultural factors like early marriages, domestic chores, preference for education of boys over that of girls within the family, negative cultural beliefs, and initiation ceremonies were significantly associated with low participation of students in secondary school education in Vihiga district (county). Other factors found to affect participation included level of education of parents, parental support and interest in their children's education. The study also found that social and economic challenges like payment of school fees, lack of basic necessities, truancy, indiscipline and distance from school contributed to low participation of students in secondary school education. Based on the findings it was concluded that many factors ranging from social economic and cultural affected students' participation in secondary school education in Vihiga district (county). The findings of the study by Murunga were particularly relevant to the current study. This study therefore sought to find out if the same factors obtain in Kakamega county.

Njeru and Orodho (2003) set out to evaluate access and participation in secondary school education in Kenya. The study randomly selected four (4) provinces (Regions) namely North Eastern, Coast, central and Western. From each province, one district (county) was purposively sampled. The key respondent sources included the Ministry of Education, Science & Technology (MoES & T) staff and opinion leaders at the community levels. The study also used personal interviews based on unstructured interview schedules; group discussions and direct observation to collect data. The study revealed that:

At the national level, the high cost of education (fees and related school levies) and household poverty level are the critical factors affecting student enrolment and participation. (Njeru and Orodho 2003, p3)

The study also found that, among other factors, cultural challenges like bias against the girl child, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced early marriages negatively affected participation of the girl child in education in general and secondary school education in particular especially in the arid and semi-arid (ASAL) areas. The indicators of participation included declining gross enrolment ratios (GER) and completion rates. The study therefore recommended, *inter alia*,

(the need) for innovative strategies to enhance access to, and participation in secondary education. Some of the opportunities lie in: Creation of an enabling environment for private investor participation; Special secondary school levies on certain luxurious commodities....Setting up or strengthening the existing bursary funds at the district, divisional, location, and constituency levels to supplement the MoES&T bursary fund....Establish school based fee waiver mechanisms and income generating activities. Schools can work out modalities through which poor parents can pay fees for their children in kind, using equivalent resources and/or direct labour, to facilitate education financing among the very poor households. On the retrogressive socio-cultural traditions and religious values and practices, (there was need for community sensitisation and) enforcement of legal enactments to compel parents to educate (their children) (Njeru and Orodho, 2003. p 4).

This study was found to be relevant to the current one and could be replicated in a different spatial temporal context that is Kakamega county. Gitonga (2009) carried out a study on factors influencing girl-child participation in secondary school education in Nyahururu division (sub-

county) of Laikipia district (county). The study sought to explore the factors that militated against participation of the girl-child in secondary school education. The study observed that transition rate for girls was a paltry 48.5% which meant less than half of the girls in a cohort would transit to the next level. The transition rate for boys was marginally higher at 51.5%.

This study used a descriptive research design. The study showed that both family and school related factors hindered the girl child from accessing and completing secondary school education. The major hindrances to participation in secondary school education were lack of school fees due to poverty, lack of moral and material support from parents/guardians as well as other family members. It was also found that over and above engaging in domestic chores, the girl child was a victim of discrimination, a mind-set that was buttressed by negative attitudes within the family setting and school which, invariably, affected her participation in secondary school education. The study recommended that to improve girl-child participation in secondary school education, there should be deliberate affirmative action to support her participation. The study by Gitonga, though relevant, narrowed down to participation of the girl child. The present study looked at the factors affecting participation of both boys and girls in secondary school education in Kakamega county.

2. Methodology

This study used the *ex post facto* evaluation research design. The purpose of this design is to evaluate the impact of social intervention strategies or to determine the impact of a social intervention strategy (Powell, 2006).

The study was conducted in Kakamega County, Kenya. The target population was principals of county and sub county secondary schools (323), school guiding and counselling teachers (323), parents/guardians, religious leaders, chiefs, NG-CDF managers and sub county directors of education (13). This study used purposive sampling technique to select principals, chiefs, NG-CDF managers and Sub county directors of education, while simple random was used to select parents/guardians. Data were collected by use of questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussions for primary data collection and document content analysis as secondary data collection tools. This study yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. The responses from interviews and focus group discussions were also captured and presented *verbatim* from respondents. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.

3. Results and Discussion

The respondents were asked to rank the social and economic challenges and how they affected students' participation in secondary school education. The mean rankings were computed and the findings were as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean rank of social and economic conflicts by principals

Conflict	Severity Value	Rank
Poverty	1.2045	1
Broken Family Units	1.5000	2
Child Labour	1.5227	3
Drug and Substance Abuse	1.9318	4
Orphan Hood	2.0455	5

Initiation ceremonies	2.5909	6
Teenage Pregnancy	2.7442	7
Funerals	3.0682	8
Boy-Girl Relationships	3.5455	9
HIV and AIDS	3.7727	10

(Source: Field data, 2018).

From Table 1, poverty was ranked as the main conflict affecting students' participation in secondary school education in Kakamega County by the respondents. Others were broken family units, child labour, drug and substance abuse. Ranked last but not necessarily least in importance was HIV and AIDS probably due to the fact that with availability of ameliorative drugs, the effect of the disease on families may have been reduced.

3.1 Strategies used to improve participation in secondary school education

The respondents were asked to indicate various strategies used to improve student participation in secondary school education. The results were presented in the following sections.

3.1.1 Guiding and Counselling Teachers

The guiding and counselling teachers were asked to state the strategies that were in place to improve students' participation in secondary school education. The results were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Strategies to improve participation by GAC teachers

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Bursaries/CDF	21	95.45	1
Roll call	20	90.90	2
Guiding & Counseling	19	86.36	3
School rules	19	86.36	4
Parents meeting	18	81.81	5
Feeding programs	17	77.27	6
Pastoral services	15	68.18	7
Guest Speakers	11	50.00	8

(Source: Field data, 2018).

The results in Table 2 show that bursaries and CDF were the most preferred strategy to improve student participation in secondary school as shown by 95.45% of the sampled guiding and counselling teachers. It was followed closely by roll call as shown by 90.90% of the respondents. It was found that boarding and day schools carried out at least two roll calls in a day to ensure that all students were in school. Guiding and counselling was reported as strategy by nineteen (19) guiding and counselling teachers (86.36%). The respondents indicated that they carry out various guiding and counselling services relating sexuality, drug and substance abuse and to orphaned children who were prone to suffer poor academic performance, absenteeism and drop outs.

School rules were also used as strategies as indicated by nineteen (19) teachers (86.36%) of the sampled guiding and counselling teachers. The teachers reported that they had school rules and regulation and regulations that guided attendance of school and lessons. Schools which put emphasis on their school rules, motto, vision and mission statement were found to have higher students' participation. Parents meetings were reported as a strategy by eighteen (18) guidance and counselling teachers (81.81%) to improve participation in secondary school education. These meetings provided an opportunity for a tripartite approach to addressing students' issues. Pastoral services and guest speakers were reported as a strategy used by fifteen (15) and eleven (11) guidance and counselling teachers respectively. The topics covered during the sessions included sex education, motivational talks and mentorship programmes.

3.1.2 Strategies to address challenges of drug and substance abuse

Guidance and counseling teachers were asked to state strategies they use to address the challenges of drug and substance abuse in their schools. Their responses were tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Strategies to address challenges of drug and substance abuse

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Guiding and Counselling	22	100	1
Continuous Sensitisation	22	100	1
Involving Medical personnel	21	95.45	2
Involving local administration	19	86.36	3
Teachers as role models	16	72.73	4
Conferences on drug abuse	11	50.00	5

(Source: Field data, 2018).

From Table 3 it was seen that all the twenty two (22) sampled guiding and counselling teachers (100%) reported that they use guiding and counselling and continuous sensitisation as strategies for addressing the challenges of drug and substance abuse in secondary schools. Other strategies outlined by guidance and counselling teachers were involving medical personnel to sensitize students deal with medical and psychological issues (95.45%), involving local administration (86.36%), assign teachers as foster parents and mentors (72.73%) and regular meetings and conferences on the effects of drug and substance abuse.

3.1.3 Principals

The sampled principals were asked to state the strategies that were in place to improve students' participation in the secondary school education. The results were as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Strategies to improve participation by principals

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Student Inspection	18	81.81	1
CDF/Bursaries	16	72.72	2
Guiding & Counseling	15	68.18	3
Tripartite (Teachers, Student, Parents)	15	68.18	3
Guest Speakers	14	63.63	5
Pastoral services	12	54.54	6
Liaising with Local Administration	10	45.45	7
FSE/FDSE	9	40.91	8

(Source: Field data, 2018).

The data in Table 4 shows that eighteen (18) principals (81.81%) from the sampled schools in Kakamega county indicated that regular inspection of students was a strategy that they used to try to improve students' participation in secondary school education. It was observed that prohibited substances and drugs found their way into school through students especially during visiting days, half term and opening days. Principals indicated that impromptu inspection would deter students from bringing prohibited items to school. They reported that this method was an effective deterrent except where some members of staff, teaching and support, were complicit in the vice. Principals reported that most needy students benefitted from CDF bursaries which had reduced fees balances. This was found to be an effective strategy of improving students' participation in secondary school education as shown by sixteen (16) principals (72.72%). It was reported that, all students who applied for bursaries at their constituency and county levels were awarded. However, principals indicated that the amount disbursed per student was not enough to clear the fee balance. The principals recommended a *pro rata* system of awarding bursaries based on the amount of outstanding fees.

All the sampled schools reported that they had functional guiding and counselling units. Fifteen (15) principals (68.18%) reported that guiding and counselling units were effective in improving students' participation in secondary school education by averting drop out cases. However, principals indicated that the main challenge facing guidance and counselling units was lack of trained personnel. From Table 8.2 it was also noted that fifteen (15) principals (68.18%) reported organizing meetings between teachers, students and parents whose object was to discuss various aspects of students' participation in secondary school education key among them being discipline and academic performance. Other strategies reported to be used by schools included guest speakers (63.63%), pastoral services (54.54%), local administration (45.45%) and FDSE (40.91%).

3.2 Strategies to address the challenges of drug and substance abuse in secondary schools

The sampled principals were asked to indicate the strategies they use in addressing the challenges of drug and substance abuse in their schools. The responses were summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Strategies to address challenges of drug and substance abuse

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Guidance and counselling	22	100	1
Conferences on drug abuse	22	100	1
Community sensitisation	19	86.36	2
Regular inspection	17	77.27	3
Local administration	15	68.18	4

(Source: Field data, 2018).

From Table 5, it was evident that all the twenty two (22) principals (100%) indicated that guidance and counselling as well as regular meetings and conferences on drug and substance abuse were the most preferred strategies of dealing with the challenges of drug and substance abuse in secondary schools in Kakamega county respectively. Nineteen (19) principals (86.36%) reported using community sensitisation targeting to reduce incidents of the school surrounding community supplying drugs to students. Seventeen (17) principals (77.27%) indicated that they used regular school inspection to discourage students from keeping and abusing drugs in school while fifteen (15) principals reported to be using the local administration to curb the availability of drugs and illicit substances within the school locality. This was especially to address the fact that availability was found by this study to be a major factor predisposing secondary school students to drug and substance abuse by secondary school students.

3.3 Religious leaders

The study sought to find out if religious organisations offered any form of support to vulnerable students affected by diverse social and economic challenges. The results were as presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Support by religious organisations

Support	Frequency	Percentage
Guiding and Counseling	4	44.4
Provision of Basic Needs	5	55.6
Bursaries/Sponsorship	4	44.4

(Source: Field data, 2018).

From data in Table 6 it was observed that all of the sampled respondents indicated they offer various forms of support to the affected students. The support was categorized into three main categories. The results revealed that four (4) religious leaders (44.4%) indicated they offered guiding and counseling both to students and parents especially on issues related to domestic violence, HIV and AIDS and broken family units. They reported engaging with parents and other family members to facilitate reconciliation and to ensure students were brought up in a family that supports their education. The results further revealed that they provided basic needs and other learning requirements to the affected students as shown by five (5) religious

leaders (55.6%). This was mainly advanced to poor families, single parents and total orphaned students. They included books, school uniform, clothes and food among other things.

Four (4) of the sampled religious leaders (44.4%) indicated that their organisations supported education by giving bursaries and sponsorship either directly or indirectly to the affected students. Direct support entailed giving support to the affected students while indirect support was by way of identifying and approaching sponsors and or benefactors on behalf of the affected students.

3.4 Strategies to improve participation by Chiefs

The sampled chiefs were asked to indicate the strategies that are used to improve students' participation in secondary school education. Their responses were presented according to the social and economic challenges that they identified to be prevalent in their areas.

3.4.1 Poverty

To overcome challenges related with poverty, all the sampled chiefs indicated the need to free secondary education so as to ensure students do not drop out due to fee challenges. The chiefs also suggested the need increase NG-CDF allocation especially to public day secondary schools as they hold the highest number of children affected by poverty. The interview results further revealed that there was need to enhance provision of sanitary towels to female students. One of the sampled chief suggested that there was need to utilize *Uwezo* and Youth funds to enhance academic participation in secondary school. One of the sampled chiefs indicated that the introduction of Buffalo Bicycle project by a donor to assist children reach school attracted students and improved participation in secondary education especially in day schools. The aim of this project, the chief reported, was to allow poor student to access school and cushion girls from sexual exploitation by *boda boda* riders. There was also need to improve income from farming and business so as to empower local community economically for them to support their children's education.

The sampled respondents indicated that there was need to enhance guiding and counselling programmes both for students and parents who were victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, family separation and affected or infected with HIV and AIDS. The chiefs further recommended that children affected or infected with HIV and AIDS besides counselling, should be supported by allowing them to access full bursary and other sponsorship and should have access to Anti-retroviral drugs (ARV) and other medication at no cost.

3.4.2 Drug and substance abuse

The sampled chiefs indicated that there was need to enhance guiding and counselling aimed at achieving behaviour change among students. They recommended that local administrators should hold public *barazas* to sensitize the people on effect of drug and substance abuse not only to their household but also the community.

The local administrators also indicated there was need for team work by all stakeholders, parents, school management and government agencies to address to menace of drug abuse.

One of the chiefs said that;

As senior chief Mahira location, I hold two public *barazas* every month so I sensitize and mobilize *wananchi* (citizens) to avoid drugs and substance abuse and report the culprit engaging in the business to relevant authorities. (Interview, Chief, Mahira Location, 03/09/2018; 8:30 AM).

3.4.3 Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy was found to be associated with poverty, *boda boda*, drug and substance abuse, family separation, domestic violence, circumcision and funeral ceremonies at night. Therefore, the sampled chiefs indicated that there was for concerted effort in curbing the factors associated with teenage pregnancy. These included the banning of night funeral celebrations commonly referred to as disco *matanga* in the village to regulate the attendance of school going children. The senior chief Mahira observed:

Contrary to commonly held view, a majority of teenage pregnancies are caused by elderly people rather than by fellow schoolmates. The perpetrators are fairly well off members of the community who take advantage of the girls' naivety and poverty to lure them to having affairs. Fellow students may only be responsible for a small fraction. Therefore, measures to address this problem must go beyond the school. (Interview with the Chief, Mahira location on 3rd September, 2018)

From the foregoing, the problem of teenage pregnancy goes beyond the school and requires a multi-sectoral approach to effectively address it.

3.5 Strategies by National Government - CDF managers

National government constituency development fund (NG-CDF) managers were asked to indicate the strategies they use to improve participation in secondary school education in their constituencies. They indicated that their main support for education was through disbursement of bursaries to needy students as well as infrastructural support to schools. The NG-CDF managers were asked to indicate the amount disbursed as bursary to support education. Their responses were as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Amount disbursed by NG-CDF for secondary school education

Category of Schools	KK North	Mumias East	Kakamega East
National School	100,000	5000 per child	120,000
Extra County Boarding School	200,000	5000 per child	80,000
County Boarding School	200,000	5000 per child	50,000
Sub County Boarding School	600,000	5000 per child	10,000
Day Schools	1,000,000	5000 per child	740,000

(Source: Field data, 2018).

From Table 7, it was observed that each constituency used different criteria and modalities of disbursement. In Kakamega North for instance, day schools received the highest allocation which decreased to the lowest in national schools. This was explained by the fact that only a few students are selected to join national schools from each constituency. In Mumias East, each child received Ksh. 5,000 regardless of the school classification. The total number of students that have benefitted from Mumias East CDF were 1871 with over Ksh 9.3 million disbursed annually. In Kakamega East, day schools were awarded Ksh. 740,000. Others were national schools at 120,000, extra County schools at Ksh. 80,000, county boarding schools were awarded 50,000 and sub county boarding schools Ksh. 10,000. From the findings, it was revealed that day schools received the highest allocation in all three sub counties probably due to higher student numbers.

3.5.1 Adequacy of NG-CDF funds to applicants

The NG-CDF were asked to indicate whether the funds allocated were sufficient and their responses were as presented in Figure 1.

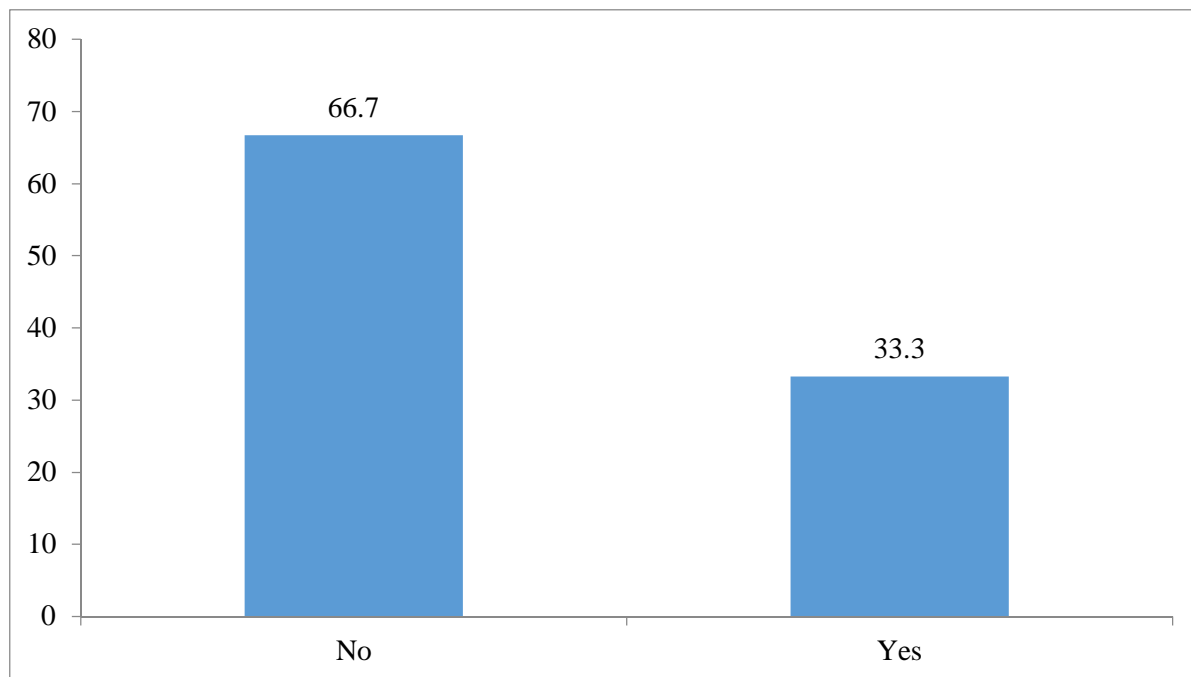


Figure 1: Adequacy of NG-CDF funds (Source: Field data 2018).

Data in Figure 1 shows that two (2) managers (66.7%) indicated that the CDF funds were not sufficient while one (33.3%) said the money was enough.

3.5.2 Percentage of total amount demand exceed the funds allocated or budgeted

The respondents were asked to state whether the demand (Total amount by applicants) exceeded the funds allocated or budgeted for. The results were as shown in Figure 2.

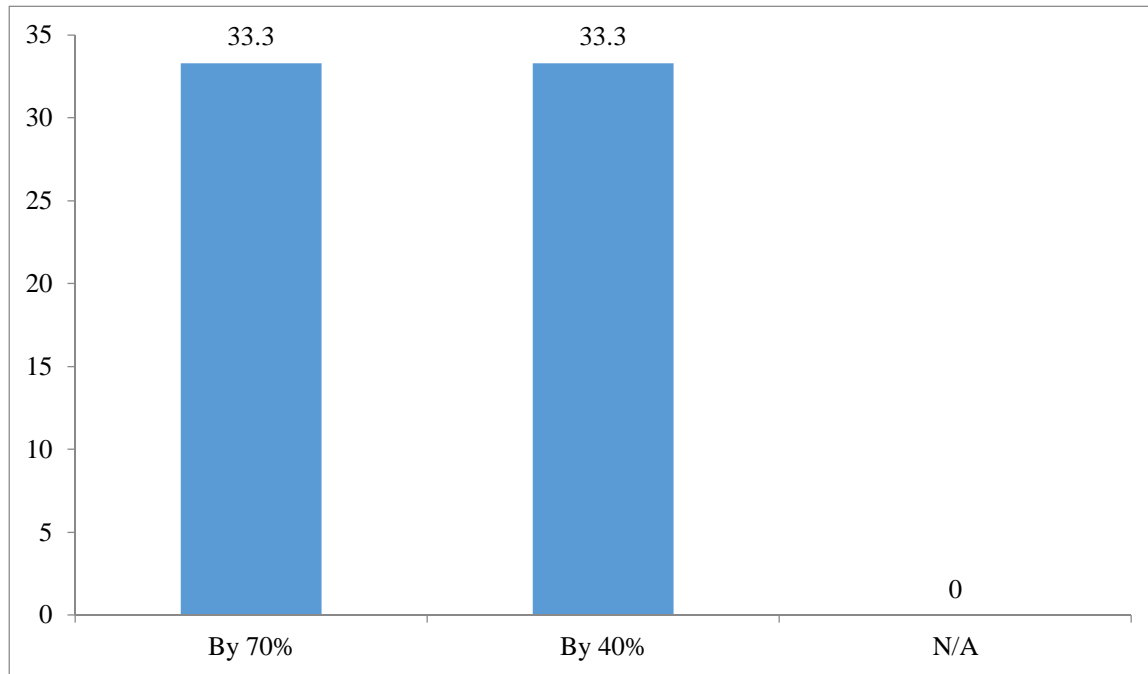


Figure 2: Percentage of demand exceeding budget. (Source: Field data, 2018).

From Figure 2 the respondent from Kakamega East indicated that demand exceeded budgeted funds by 70% while in Kakamega North demand exceeded budget by 40%.

3.5.3 Sufficiency of amount disbursed per student

The study sought to find out if the amount disbursed per student was sufficient for full academic year. The results were as shown in Figure 3.

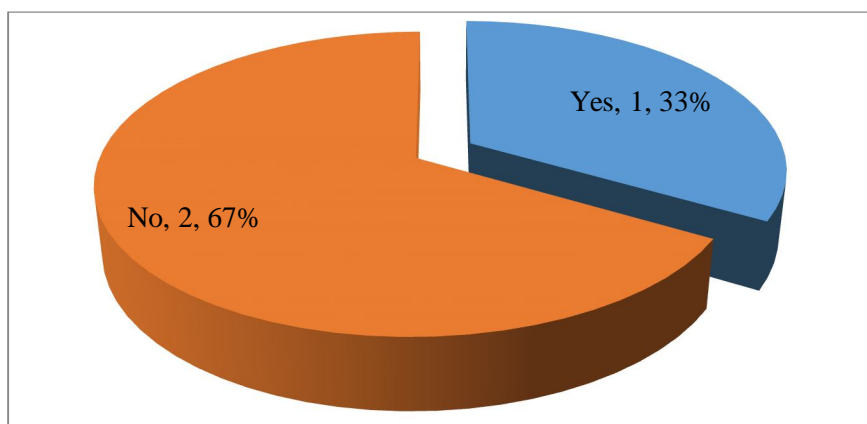


Figure 3: Sufficiency of CDF funds per student. (Source: Field data, 2018).

Data in Figure 3 shows that only one of the respondents (33%) indicated that the amount disbursed per student was sufficient for full academic year as it was meant to supplement the parent effort rather than to replace it while two (2) respondents (66.7%) indicated that the amount disbursed not sufficient.

3.6 Findings on strategies to improve participation by Sub county directors of education

The Sub County Directors of Education were asked to state strategies that were put in place to improve students' participation in secondary school education in their respective sub counties. Their responses were as shown in Figure 4.

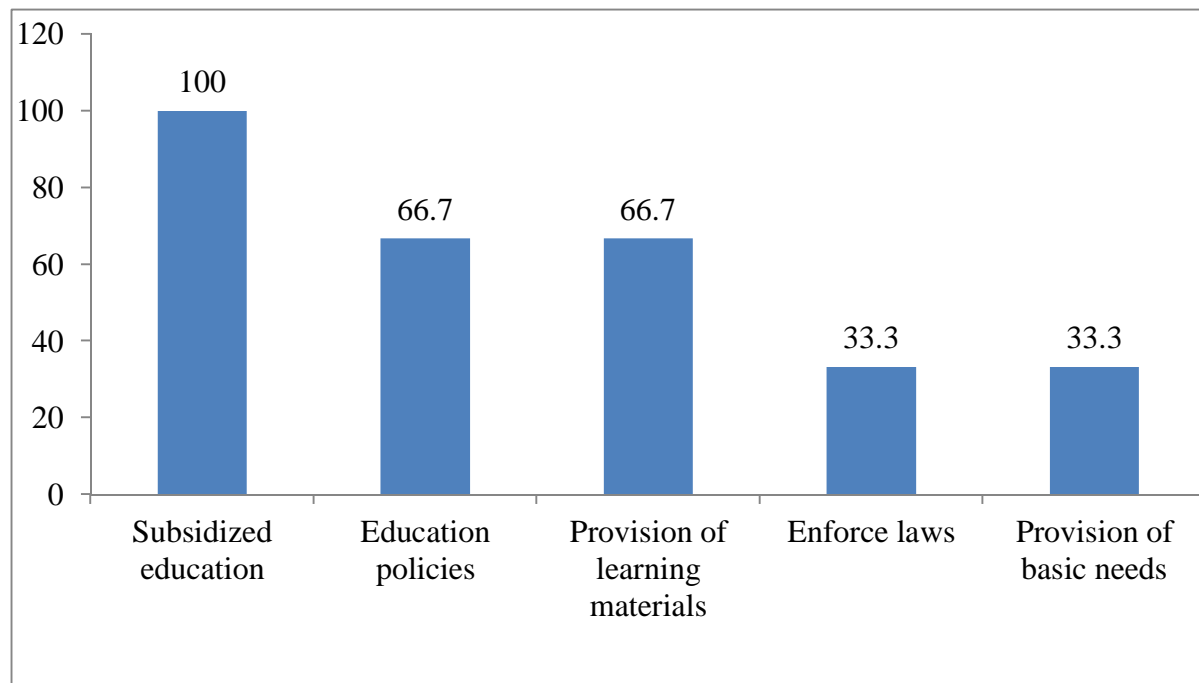


Figure 4: Strategies to improve participation in secondary school education. (Source: Field data, 2018).

Data in Figure 4 shows that all the three (3) sampled sub county directors of education (100%) indicated that the government implemented subsidized secondary education as the main intervention strategy to increase participation in secondary school education. Other strategies reported to be in use by the sub county directors of education included the enforcement of policies that promoted participation in education like the Constitution of Kenya 2010, the Children's Act 2000 and the Basic Education Act 2013. The Sub county directors of education also indicated that the government provided learning materials (66.6%) and provision of basic needs like sanitary pads (33.3%) to the girl child to reduce incidents of absenteeism.

3.7 Strategies to address the risk factors of drug and substance abuse

The sub county directors of education were asked to state the strategies used in their sub counties to address the risk factors that predispose secondary school students to drug and substance abuse. Their responses were summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Strategies to address risk factors

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Guiding and Counselling	3	100	1
Community Sensitisation and harmonisation	3	100	1
Enforcement of legal guidelines	3	100	1

(Source: Field data, 2018).

Data in Table 8 shows that all the three (3) sampled sub county directors of education (100%) indicated that they use the three methods namely guiding and counselling students, engaging the community through sensitisation on the effects of drug and substance abuse and in collaboration with other relevant government agencies, enforce legal guidelines on drug and substance abuse. Particularly important was enforcing the guidelines on the proximity of licenced alcoholic beverage outlets to schools. The Alcoholic Drinks Control Act 2010 Section 12 (1) (c) states that

... the premises in respect of which the application (*for licence*) is made are located at least three hundred metres from any nursery, primary, secondary or other learning institutions for persons under the age of eighteen years (Republic of Kenya, 2010 p. 16).

The sub county directors observed that a multi-sectoral approach towards addressing the challenges of drug and substance abuse would shield learners from falling victim to the vice.

3.7.1 Challenges of drug and substance abuse by secondary school students

The sampled sub county directors of education were asked to indicate the challenges posed by drug and substance abuse to secondary school education in their sub counties. The results were as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Challenges of drug and substance abuse in secondary schools

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Absenteeism	3	100	1
School dropout	3	100	1
Immoral behavior	3	100	1
Poor academic performance	3	100	1
Indiscipline	3	100	1
Psychological (e.g. depression)	3	100	1

Health problems	2	66.67	2
Addiction	2	66.67	2

(Source: Field data, 2018).

The results in Table 9 show that all the three (3) sub county directors of education (100%) were in agreement that drug and substance abuse by secondary school students led to absenteeism, school drop-out, immoral behaviour, poor academic performance indiscipline in schools and psychological challenges like depression among abusers. Two (2) sub county directors each (66.67%) indicated that drug and substance abuse by secondary school students leads to health problems and addiction.

3.7.2 Effectiveness of the strategies

The respondents were further asked to indicate whether the strategies were effective in improving students' participation in education at the secondary school level. Their responses were as presented in Figure 5.

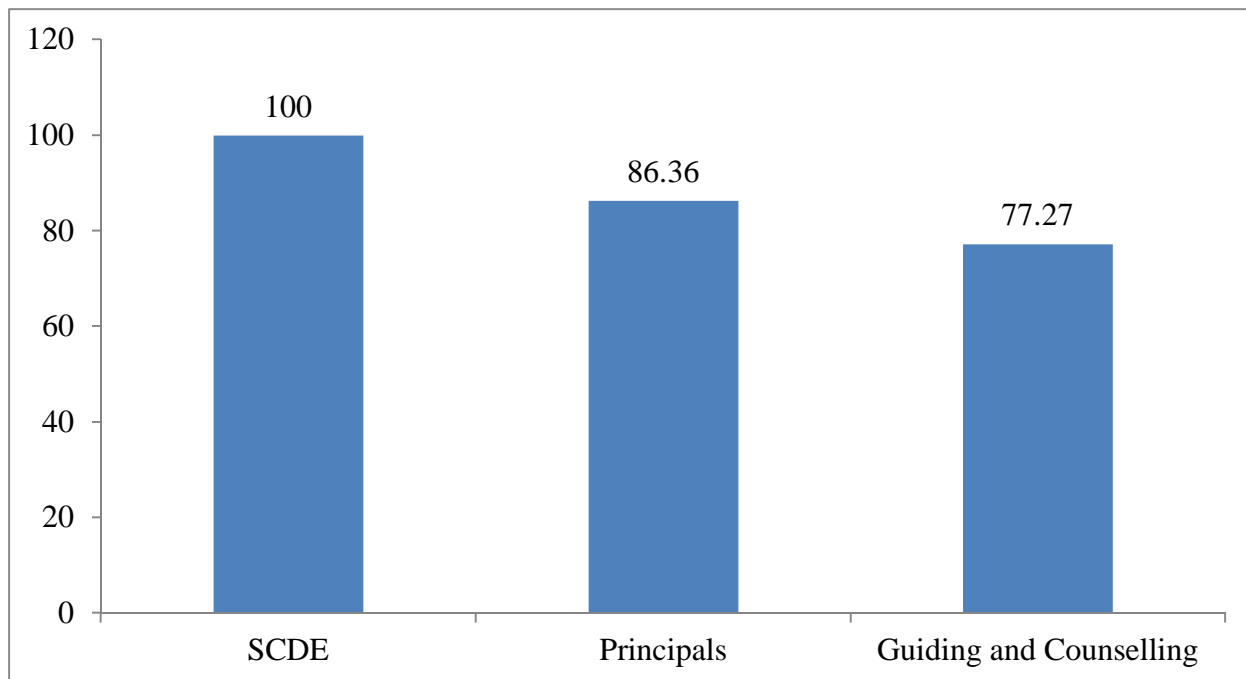


Figure 5: Effectiveness of strategies. (Source: Field data, 2018).

From Figure 5, all the sampled sub county directors of education indicated that the strategies were effective in promoting students' participation in secondary school education. They indicated that the strategies cumulatively led to higher levels of retention, reduction in drop-out rates, lower incidents of absenteeism and higher completion rates. The results also showed that 86.36% of the sampled principals and 77.27% of the guidance and counselling teachers indicated that the strategies adopted were effective in promoting students' participation in secondary school education in Kakamega county in particular and in Kenya in general.

3.8 Recommendations by respondents

The respondents were asked to make recommendations on how to address the social and economic challenges militating against students' participation in secondary school education in Kakamega county. The responses were as presented in Figure 6.

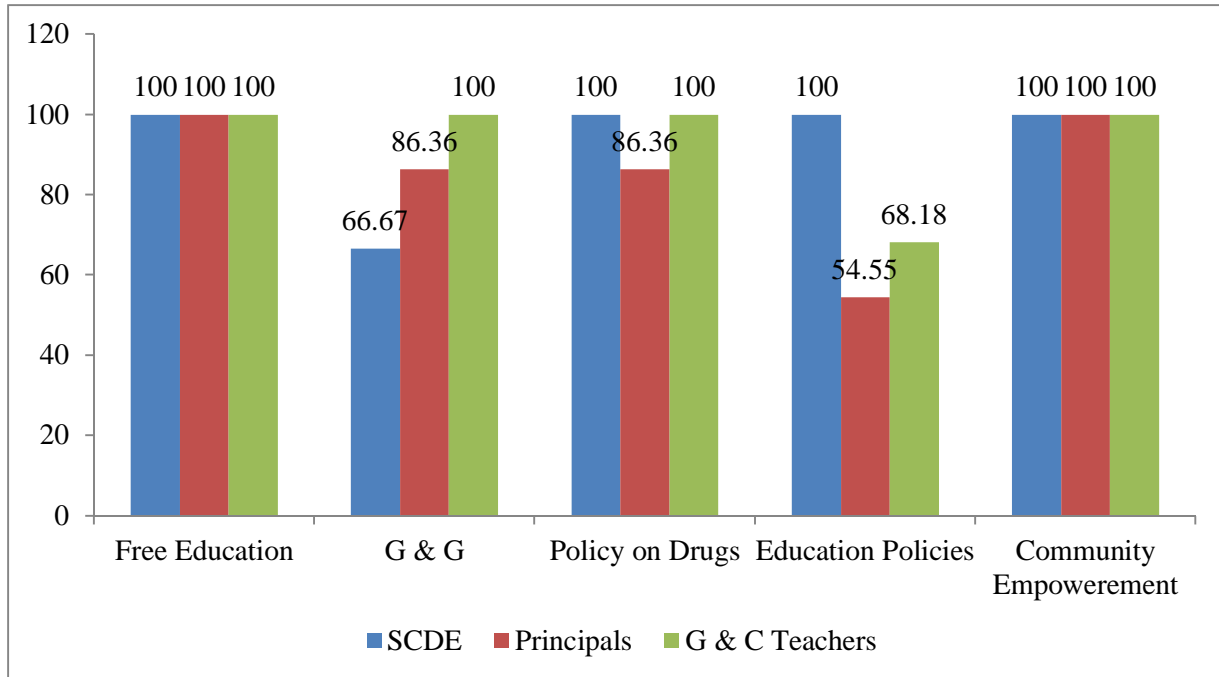


Figure 6: Recommendations on challenges facing secondary school education (Source: Field data, 2018).

3.8.1 Free education and sponsorship of students

The respondents observed that poverty was the main social and economic challenge that negatively affected students' participation in secondary school education in Kakamega County in general.

All the respondents (sub county directors of education, principals and guidance and counselling teachers) were unanimous in recommending the full implementation of free basic education. They indicated that free basic education should include all learning accoutrements that may be required by the learners.

3.8.2 Strengthening of guiding and counselling units in schools

All guidance and counselling teachers (100%) recommended the strengthening of guidance and counselling services while two thirds (66.67%) of the sub county directors of education and 86.36% of the sampled principals made the same recommendation. The strategies that were recommended by respondents to strengthen guidance and counselling included training of staff in guidance and counselling as well as introduction of mentorship programmes in all secondary schools.

3.8.3 Government policies on drug and substance abuse

Drug and substance abuse was found to significantly affect students' participation in secondary school education. All the sub county directors of education and guidance and counselling teachers as well as 86.36% of the principals recommended the enactment and enforcement of more stringent policies and legal frameworks on drug and substance abuse and a multi-pronged approach in dealing with the drug menace.

3.8.4 Education policies

All the sub county directors of education indicated that there was need to enact new policies to enhance student participation in secondary school education. These include guidelines fees and other school levies. This recommendation was based on the finding that poverty was a major challenge affecting participation in secondary school education in Kakamega county.

The sub county directors of education also indicated that there was need to strictly enforce laws banning corporal punishment and all forms of physical and psychological abuse of students in secondary schools. Other policy shifts recommended by sub county directors of education were to control transfers of students across schools as it was associated with poor academic performance and to abolish class repetition because it was found to be a significant cause of students dropping out of secondary school. More than half of the principals (54.55%) indicated that boy-girl relationships and teenage pregnancies affected participation in secondary school education and therefore recommended that single sex secondary schools should be encouraged over mixed schools.

The results further showed that 68.18% of the sampled guiding and counselling teachers stated that there was need to implement in totality the re-entry policy for girls who may be forced to leave school due to pregnancy so as not to lock them out from participating in secondary school education.

3.8.5 Community empowerment

All respondents (sub county directors of education, principals and guidance and counselling teachers) recommended the local community to be empowered economically through job creation and the provision of an enabling environment for them to engage in gainful income generating activities to support education activities. They also recommended community sensitization so as not to aid or abet the use of drugs and alcohol. It was observed that some communities around schools supplied the prohibited substances to students.

4. Conclusion

This study revealed that social and economic challenges/conflicts prevalent in Kakamega county affected students' participation in secondary school education. These challenges included high poverty levels, drug and substance abuse as well as teenage pregnancy. These challenges combined to contribute to drop out, transfers between schools, child labour, absenteeism and class repetition.

5. Recommendation of the study

The study recommended strategies that, if adopted and implemented diligently, would ameliorate the problem of students' participation in secondary school education in Kakamega county in particular and Kenya in general. This study recommends that the government should come up with sustainable financial support strategies to cover all tuition and non-tuition costs of education. Only then would education be seen to be free and universally accessible.

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