

Government funding on access to secondary education in Kenya: Challenges and prospects

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Abstract

One of the major challenges facing secondary education sub-sector in Kenya over the years is low transition rate from primary to secondary level of education. This has contributed to low enrolment at secondary schools with a wide gap existing between primary and secondary enrolment. With the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2003, the gap would have widened further if efforts were not made to enhance access to secondary education. Low enrolment had been occasioned by introduction of the cost sharing policy in 1988. The government of Kenya, through sessional paper No.1 of 2005, made a commitment to increase transition from primary to secondary school from 49 to 70% by the year 2010. This would be made possible by the government supplementing parents' efforts in meeting education costs at secondary level. The government supported the poor and needy students through bursaries. Further, tuition free secondary education policy was implemented in 2008 with the government's commitment to pay tuition fees for all students enrolled at secondary level. The government has also made efforts to enhance access by providing bursary funds to the needy to meet other educational needs charged above tuition fees through the constituencies. With the government efforts, transition rate to secondary level of education has since increased from 59.6% in 2007 to 70% in 2010. The cost of education in Kenya has continued to escalate over the years due to rising cost of living. Many people from the low income group are finding it difficult to sustain their children in secondary school hence lowering gains made in transition. This paper utilizes secondary data to critically analyze financing of secondary education in Kenya. In particular, the paper discusses the impact of the tuition free secondary education and bursary schemes on enrolment in secondary schools in Kenya. It also analyses the strengths and weaknesses of these programmes in enhancing access to secondary education.

Key words: Free secondary education, constituency bursary fund, enrolment, transition, drop-out.