



Full Length Research Paper

Impact of free Secondary education policy on gender equality in secondary school education in Kenya: A case study of Kericho County

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the basic human rights that are universally proclaimed internationally. In fact it is a precursor to all other basic human rights. The Free Basic Education policy adopted by many countries in the world among other policies aim at achieving equity in education. In most countries of the world gender equality in education is a major concern. The study conducted in Kericho County, Kenya aimed at establishing the influence of Free Secondary Education policy on gender equality in education. This study established that gender parity indices before Free Secondary Education policy were 0.633, 0.649, 0.610 and 0.620 for the years 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively. After introduction of Free Secondary Education policy the gender parity indices were 0.580, 0.570, 0.590 and 0.659 for the years 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. The gender parity index dropped and later increased in 2011. The expectation was that parity index would improve since the main challenge was thought to be school fees, hence the subsidy. These findings means that Free Secondary Education policy alone cannot be used to improve on gender inequality in education. The other factors like early marriages, preference for the boy child, girl child's attitudes and enhancement of compulsory basic education policy should be integrated in the Free Secondary Education approach so that gender parity in education can be achieved.

Keywords: Impact, Free Secondary Education Policy, Gender Equality, Secondary School Education Kericho County, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Education is vital in eradication of poverty, reduction of child mortality rates, fight against disease epidemics such as HIV and AIDs and developing a global partnership for development. It is therefore one of the contributors to achievement of Millennium Development Goals. The aim of the Millennium Development Goals is to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. These goals were derived from earlier international development targets, and were officially established following the Millennium Summit in 2000, where all world leaders present adopted the United Nations Millennium

Declaration (World Bank, 2000) and Education for All which is a global movement led by UNESCO, aiming at meeting the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. UNHRC (2012) considers educational both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. UNESCO (2004) gave the report on the state of the right to education worldwide. The report concluded that the

Table 1. Net Enrolment Rates for Secondary Students in Kericho County from 2006 to 2011

Years	Number of Students				Total	Deviation
	Boys	%	Girls	%		
2006	20,135	51.30	19,134	48.70	39,269	—
2007	22,363	55.40	18,005	44.60	40,368	1,099
2008	21,785	52.90	19,126	46.50	41,167	543
2009	20,083	50.90	19,382	49.10	39,465	-1,331
2010	21,219	52.10	19,497	47.90	40,719	2,139
2011	22,119	54.70	18,326	45.30	40,445	-1,274
2012	22,968	54.90	18,870	45.10	41,838	1,393

Source: Ministry of Education, County Director of Education Office Kericho, 2012

global human rights minimum standards mandated that education be free so that it can later be made compulsory to all children.

The Free Basic Education Policy has been adopted in most countries of the world. The main aim is to ensure every child gets primary education which is considered basic as well as subsidized secondary education. World Bank (2011) states that some countries are now declaring free universal secondary education. Secondary education is the stage of education after primary education in many countries worldwide. This level of education is considered basic in many countries Kenya included. In recent years countries like Angola, Benin, Botswana, Uganda and several other countries of sub-Saharan Africa have introduced the Free Secondary Education Policy to be in line with both Education for All Goal and Millennium Development Goals international agendas (World Bank, 2000) where they came up with the following goals: to expand early childhood care and education, provide free and compulsory primary education for all, promote learning and life skills for young people and adults, increase adult literacy by 50 per cent, achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015 and improve the quality of education.

The Free Secondary Education Policy was adopted in Kenya to increase enrolment. According to the Ministry of Education (2012), the overall sector objectives are to ensure equitable access, attendance, retention, attainment and achievement in education. The Free Secondary Education policy aims at making secondary school education completely free and preferably compulsory as part of the basic education as in the case of other countries such as Japan and UK (Arnot, 2010).

According to UNESCO (2011) the global, participation in upper secondary education is on the increase. In 2009, enrolment at this level of education represented 56% of the relevant age group compared to 45% in 1999. Europe is the exception, with enrolment rates exceeding 100%, due to young people enrolling in multiple programmes. In the Americas, 70% of young adults are enrolled in upper secondary courses, followed by East Asia with 48% and West Asia with 40%. The enrolment ratio is lowest in Africa, with only 29% of young adults in upper secondary

education. Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring and Evaluation Quality (2012) indicates that in Zanzibar secondary school Gross Enrolment Rate in 2000 was 85.5% while the Net Enrolment Rate was 54.7%. In 2005, the secondary school enrolment rate in Kenya had risen to 934,149 and in 2008 it was at 1,030,080 which was a 15% increase. The free secondary education which was introduced in 2008 has led to high enrolment rates in secondary schools. This has also been accelerated by the Free Primary Education which was started five years earlier than the Free Secondary Education. According to the Kenya Economic Survey (Republic of Kenya, 2011) the total enrolment rate between 2009 to 2010 for primary and secondary schools increased from 8.83m to 9.38m that is 6.2% increase and 1.15m to 1.70m that is 12.6% increase respectively. Kericho District is one of the districts in Kenya that has had unsteady enrolment trends as given in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the net enrolment rates for students in Kericho County from 2006 to 2011. Republic of Kenya (2010) shows that in the 2009 Census 49,386 (48.75%) were male and 51,945 (51.26%) were female between the ages of 15 to 19 years in Kericho county. These youths are supposed to be in secondary school. This shows that most children who are supposed to be in school are not there. The above case shows that over the years the rates have been fluctuating despite the Free Secondary Education Policy.

Gender parity is one of the factors that affect equity in education. Worldwide 64% of illiterate people are female according to the Educational Response (2008). In Sub-Saharan Africa the gender parity for primary education is less than 0.85 indicating that for 100 boys fewer than 85 girls are enrolled. World Bank, (2008) indicate that girls are more disadvantaged and it is very common in Africa and in parts of Asia. Of the 53 countries with a Gender Parity Index below 0.97, 31 are in Africa, 17 in Asia and just 5 in the rest of the world. According to the Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2006-2011 the total enrolment for 2004 for secondary schools was 926,149 with 48% being female students. Republic of Kenya (2010) shows that in the 2009 census 49,386 (48.75%) were male and 51,945 (51.26%) were female between the ages of 15 to

19 years in Kericho county. This group of youth is supposed to be in secondary school but according to Table 1, it has been ranging between 48.72% to 45.30% for girls and 55.40% to 50.74% for boys of the total numbers enrolled in schools.

Objective of the study

To determine the influence of Free Secondary Education policy on gender equality in secondary education in Kericho County.

Synthesis of literature on gender equality in education

Gender parity is a problem worldwide. The girl child seems to be disadvantaged compared to the boy child, more so in developing countries. Studies by UNESCO, (2011) indicate that globally, about 39 million girls of lower secondary age are currently not enrolled in either primary or secondary education, while two - thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate adults are women. Only about one - third of countries have achieved gender parity at secondary level. This means that there is a crisis that should be addressed. The goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by the year 2005 was missed in 122 countries. Gender parity in primary education was achieved in 118 (63%) of 188 more developed countries and 37% of 144, less developed countries (UNESCO, 2009a).

A study carried out in America by the Asia Society, (2014) indicates that there is a problem of persistent underachievement by American students, especially low income and minority children, against U.S. standards and international benchmarks. On the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress, for example, less than 33% of all eighth grade students nationally score at or above the proficient level in mathematics (NCES, 2007a) and less than 32% score at or above the proficient level in reading (NCES, 2007b). It further revealed that there is consistently a sizable difference between minority and non-minority students, and between poor and non-poor students on these indices. For example, 42% of white eighth graders are categorized as at or above proficient in mathematics and 40% in reading, whereas less than 12% of eighth grade African American students and nearly 16% of Hispanic students at grade 8 are at or above proficient in mathematics, and less than 16% of students from both groups are at or above proficient in reading. Results from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2006) Program for International Student Assessment show nearly 25 percent of U.S. 15-year-olds scored at the lowest level of proficiency or below in science (OECD, 2007).

Equity in terms of Gender parity index is an issue worldwide but worst in developing countries and it often more pronounced in secondary, technical and vocational than in primary education. In South and West Asia, along with sub-Saharan Africa, girls accounted for 44% of students in secondary education in 2007, but just 27% and 39%, respectively, in technical and vocational education (UNESCO, 2010).

According to Usher and Medow (2010), Mexico and Germany have students' bodies where the gender balance is closest to fifty-fifty, however in both countries male students make up the majority of students. These are the only two countries in which this is the case. A study on Contextualizations and Recontextualizations of Discourses on Equity in Education done by Haugen (2009), found that despite differences in equitable functions the losers in both educational systems tend to be the same: pupils from lower socio - economic backgrounds and ethnic minorities. It is likely that those pupils whose parents have enjoyed only limited schooling and other vulnerable children in terms of their low socio - economic status, potential special needs and in some cases ethnic and language background make up the tail of underachievement.

A study carried out by the State University (2002) on equity in education in the United State of America found that there are critics on public education arguing that many children do not have equal opportunities to learn and are not likely to attend a quality school. In fact, critics suggest that the education system perpetuates poverty and disadvantage, providing rich and poor schools with stark contrasts in learning environments and physical surroundings. Impoverished neighborhoods typically house run-down schools with less money and poor conditions, while affluent neighborhoods house newer and safer schools providing better learning environments. Furthermore, ethnic minority students are more likely to attend the lower-quality urban schools. While there have been many efforts to improve this inequality of opportunity, such efforts are only the first step in achieving equity, even with millions of dollars invested in federal programs.

UNICEF (2009) in its analysis revealed that boys' enrolment rates were significantly lower than those of girls in Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines and Thailand. In 2011, the East Asia and Pacific Regional United Nations Girls' Education Initiative undertook a research review to investigate the issue of boys' underperformance in these four countries. The methodology used was a broader gender analysis utilized the information provided in the case studies, government policy reviews and analyses of other relevant sources. The findings of these underlying gender dynamics were that boys are considered more independent, believed to be less interested in learning, and have the potential to earn money while working means that boys are more likely to

leave school.

According to the Educational international response to global monitoring report (2008) only universal access to equitable quality education can be fully achieve human and social development goals. According to their study the data showed that the number of adults who cannot read or write declined by 10.4% from 864 million to 774 million between 1985 and 2004. But what remained unchanged is that 64% of illiterate people worldwide were women. Despite progress in the same period striking gender parity still prevailed in Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. In sub-Saharan 150 million adults cannot read or write in a ratio of 76 women for every 100 men. There has been progress towards increasing primary school enrolment yet 72 million primary school aged children are still denied their right to education, 57% of whom are girls. Girls accounted for 60% out of school children in the Arab states and 54% in the sub-Saharan Africa, India, Nigeria and Pakistan account for 27% of all out of school children. Thirty-five fragile states identified by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development accounted for almost 37% of all out of school children in 2005 (UNESCO, 2009a).

A study carried out in Philippine by Rosario (2011) of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies observed a marked improvement in school attendance in some towns and cities after Comparing enrollment data before and after the social policy program was implemented. Manasan gathered data from 340,000 indigent families in 160 municipalities and cities in the 20 poorest provinces, where the program's first expansion phase was implemented in March-December 2008, covering the pre-implementation period 2004-2007 and first years of implementation, 2008-2010. In areas outside of Metro Manila and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Manasan observed that the number of students in public elementary schools grew by 0.6 percent in 2004-2007, and by 3.5 percent in 2008-2010.

According to the studies carried out by UNESCO (2010) in sub-Saharan Africa it indicated that between 1999 to 2007 the average net enrolment rate in primary school education had increased from 56% to 73% and also the population out of school had reduced by nearly 13 million from 1999 to 2007. Unfortunately, 25% of the region's primary age children were still out of school which accounted for nearly 45% of the global out of school population.

Oketch and Rolleston (2007) found that in East African countries efforts had been made to expand access to education ever since they gained their independence from British colonial rule in the early part of the 1960s. However, still there are those with no access, those who are excluded after initial entry, those at risk of dropout, and a majority excluded from any form of secondary education. In Niger, secondary school enrolment ratio was less than 11% and 97% in Seychelles and South Africa. Gender bias was also noticed whereby the boys

were given a priority compared to the girls who were rarely given a chance by the parents (UNESCO, 2010).

A study carried out in Uganda by Takashi and Asankha, (2011) concluded that when the Free Secondary Education was started it led to increased enrollments and the girls seem to benefit more from the policy. Longitudinal survey was used to get data from sampled households and descriptive statistics was used to analyze and report the findings.

Mulama (2004) reports that in Kenya about 1.9 million children of ages 5-17 have not yet been able to access Free Primary Education because they are busy working. The Central Bureau of Statics estimates that 17.5% of the 1.9 Million children are employed as domestic workers. More than a half of the children in Kenya that is 8.6 million out of 16 million live below poverty line. Under such circumstances, parents force their children into working including the domestic sector to supplement family income.

Studies carried out by the World Bank (2005) on gender equity in junior and senior secondary school education in sub-Saharan show that 56% of children live in countries with gender disparities in primary gross enrolment ratios and it was not surprising that girls were generally disadvantaged. For instance one in ten children were found living in countries where Gender Parity Index for primary education is less than 0.85 indicating that for every 100 boys few than 85 girls were enrolled. It further indicated that gender parity against girls are highest in Benin, Cote'Divoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali and Togo with fewer than 60 girls per 100 boys entering secondary schools.

Studies carried out in Africa countries by Joseph (2012) indicates that there are countries with least improved gender gaps. The countries where 75 or fewer girls for 100 boys are enrolled in primary education were as shown in Table 2.

A study on gender equity in education scorecards was carried out in nine countries in Africa. This study used quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study adopted a cross sectional survey and case study designs. It employed a scorecard in form of a questionnaire which was given to each countries lead researcher. The following were the findings of the study.

This study indicated that most of these countries gender equality in education was generally good but some needed to improve. This was an indication that these countries need to improve gender parity in education. Kenya introduced free secondary schooling education programme with a target of raising student enrolment to 1.4 million by the end of the year (BBC, 2008). According to Economic Survey (2008) the government has so far released more than \$41m to pay for the different phases of the programme which proved to be a success to relieve the poor and marginalized communities from in accessing education equally. The free primary education, which is also compulsory, saw

Table 2. Countries in which 75 or fewer Girls for every 100 Boys are enrolled in Primary Education

Country	Gender Parity index
Chad	63
Yemen	66
Central Africa Republic	67
Niger	68
Benin	70
Ethiopia	71
Burkina Faso	71
Cote d'Ivoire	74
Guinea	75
Mali	75

Table 3. Gender Equality in Education

Country	Score
Namibia	6.630
Kenya	6.543
Tanzania	6.215
Swaziland	6.037
Zambia	6.060
Uganda	5.637
Malawi	5.406
Ethiopia	5.336
Zimbabwe	4.866

Key:**Score**

Below 5

6-7

8-9

9 and above

Description

Need for improvement

Good

Very Good

Excellent

many children, particularly from poor families, enjoy an opportunity to be in school. Based on reports by the Ministry of Education (2008), the number of boys and girls enrolled in primary school has risen from five million to a staggering eight million. According to the ministry of education strategic plan 2006-2011 the total enrolment for 2004 for secondary schools were 926,149 with 48% being female students and 52% being male. While in primary schools it stood at 108.0% for boys and 101.6% for girls.

A study on an evaluation of the implementation of Free Primary Education in selected public secondary schools in Kakamega District carried out by Luvega (2007) found that there was a significant relationship between Free Primary Education and enrolment of school going age children. Apparently, pupils in the area of study have taken advantage of the new policy to access education. Studies carried out by Oketch and Oketch (2010) it indicated that over the full eight year primary cycle the response was of course more muted, total

enrolments rising from 6.13M in 2002 to 7.16 M in 2003 (17%). This finding was from a case study carried out in four districts, Nairobi, Kajiado, Kisii and Nyeri.

Gender disparity remains a great concern in secondary schools in Kenya despite the free education policies. For instance, the ratio of boys to girls who sat for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in 2009 was 55:45 countrywide. The areas most affected were Nyanza Province and North Eastern Province where the ratio of boys to girls was 70:30.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) was based on the concept that free secondary education policy influences gender equality in secondary education.

The Government of Kenya adopted Free Secondary Education policy to enhance transition of pupils from primary school education to secondary education. In this

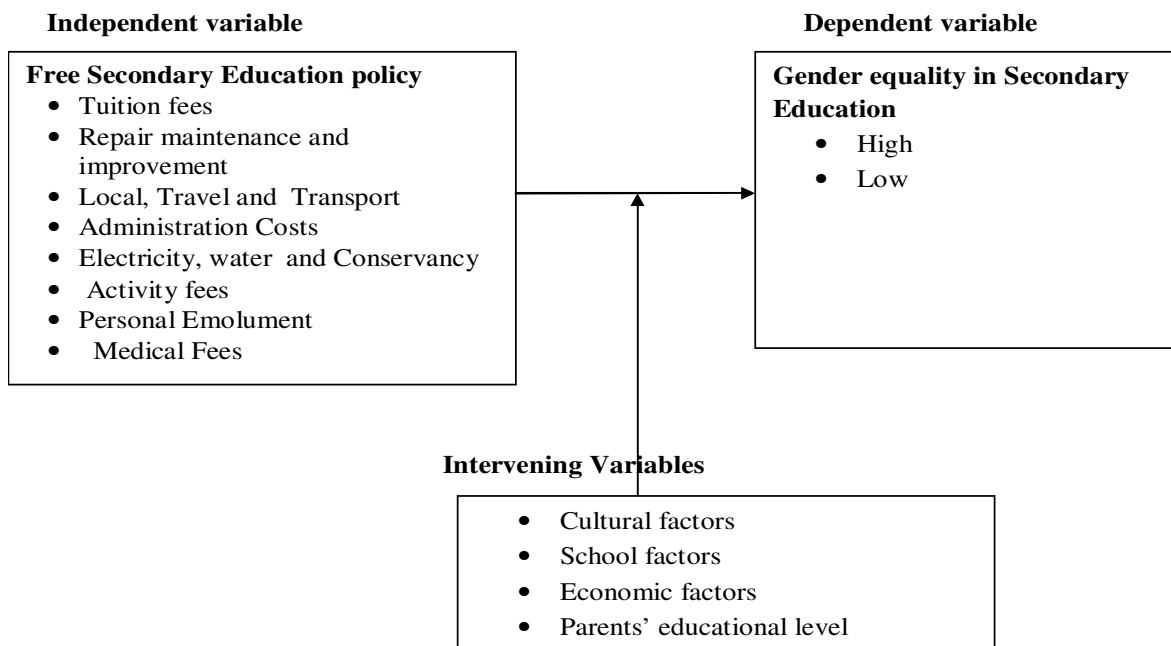


Figure 1. A conceptual Framework showing the Influence of the Free Secondary Education Policy on Gender Equality in education

respect, it was expected that the free secondary education policy would not only enhance the transition but also enhance gender equality in secondary education. When secondary school education is subsidized by the government catering for tuition ,fees, repair, maintenance and improvement of physical facilities, provision for local travel and transport , administrative costs, electricity, water and conservancy, activity fees, personal emolument and medical fees the expectation are that gender equality in secondary education should improve. This is because the parental obligations which were envisaged to discourage the enrolment of the girl child would have been reduced. Nevertheless, the influence of free secondary education policy would be either high or low depending on the influence of intervening variables that is cultural factors, economic factors, school factors and parental level of education. The purpose of conceptual framework is to help the researchers focus on the variables of the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research designs adopted for the study were ex post facto and descriptive. A conceptual framework was adopted that indicated the relationships between the independent variables, dependent variable and intervening variables. The study population consisted of 110 secondary school principals, 1,253 teachers, 5 District Quality and Assurance Standards Officers and

10,460 form four students in Kericho County. Face and content validity of instruments were determined before use. The reliability of the instruments was also determined through a pilot study by test re-test method. The instruments were found to be variable at a significance level of 0.05.

Gender Parity Index formula (UNESCO, 2009b) was used to determine gender parity indices. The gender parity indices were calculated by dividing the number of female students of the given grade by that of the male students of the given grade yearly. Cohort analysis approach was used to actualize the influence of free secondary education policy on gender equality in secondary education. That is:

$$GPI \frac{t}{i} = \frac{F \frac{t}{i}}{M \frac{t}{i}}$$

Where:

$GPI \frac{t}{i}$ = Gender parity index of a given indicator i in year t

$F \frac{t}{i}$ = Female value of a given indicator i in year t

$M \frac{t}{i}$ = Male value of the same indicator i in year t

Table 4. Government subsidy to Schools based on Capitation: Free Secondary Education Policy

Vote head	Amount (Ksh)
Tuition	3,600
Boarding, Equipment and Stores	0
Repair, Maintenance and Improvement	400
Local Travel and Transport	400
Administration Costs	500
Electricity, water and Conservancy	500
Activity Fees	600
Personal Emolument	3,965
Medical	300
Total school Fees	10,265

Source: Ministry of Education (2008)

Table 5. Parents and Government contribution to Education of Children in Secondary Education after in after implementation of Free Secondary education Policy

Type of School	Free Secondary Education in 4 years	Percentage (%)	Costs incurred by parents in 4 years	Percentage (%)	Totals
Days scholars in mixed schools	41,060	40.43	60,509.65	59.57	81,569.65
Boarders in mixed schools	41,060	27.40	108,803.85	72.60	112,863.85
Girls boarding	41,060	25.62	119,178.57	74.38	160,238.57
Boys boarding	41,060	24.88	123,964.43	75.12	165,024.43

RESULTS

The research question responded to was:
What is the influence of Free Secondary Education policy on gender equality in secondary education in Kericho County?

Implementation of Free Secondary Education Policy

The government of Kenya adopted Free Day Secondary Education subsidy known as Free Secondary School Education policy in January 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2008). The Free secondary education subsidy is Kshs. 10,265 per child per year. The breakdown is as shown in Table 4.

The rationale for Free Secondary Education Policy was to ensure equity in education by reducing the burden of fees borne by parents /guardians and enhance transition from primary schools to secondary schools, which at that time aimed at increasing the transition to 70%. The gross enrolment rate for primary schools was 107.6% and 36.8% for secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2007). This study established that parents' and Free Secondary Education policy's contribution to education of children in secondary schools was as shown

in Table 5.

The government spent Ksh. 41,060 for four years while the parents spent the following on average for four years in mixed day schools they spent Ksh. 60,509.65, for boarders in mixed schools they spent Ksh 108,803.85. In girls boarding and boys boarding they spent Ksh. 119,178.57 and Ksh. 123,964.43 respectively.

To establish the impact of Free Secondary Education on gender equality in secondary education 2004 cohort and 2008 cohort were used to compute the gender parity indices. The 2004 cohort represented the control group that is the group that did not benefit from free secondary education while the 2008 cohort represented the group that fully benefited from free secondary education policy. To accomplish this, first enrolment of each cohort was established and then gender parity index was calculated. The results were as shown in Tables 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Table 6 shows that students who enrolled in form one in the year 2004 were 2207 boys and 1396 girls. These students progressed through the system and those who completed the cycle in 2007 were 1425 boys and 883 girls. The gender parity index was calculated using the following formula (UNESCO, 2009b):

Table 6. Students Enrolment in Kericho County before Implementation of Free Secondary Education policy

Years	Form I		Form II		Form III		Form IV	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
2004	2207	1396						
R	7	6						
N	0	0						
2005	2231	1401	2004	1300				
R	9	5	17	10				
N	0	0	188	164				
2006			2031	895	1739	1061		
R			18	12	56	42		
N			191	161	383	236		
2007					1766	1063	1425	883
R					49	40	61	35
N					376	245	506	141
2008					1371	902	1451	890
R							74	39
N							245	264

Key: R= repeaters in that year N= new students in that particular year

$$GPI \frac{t}{i} = \frac{F \frac{t}{i}}{M \frac{t}{i}}$$

Where:

$GPI \frac{t}{i}$ = Gender parity index of a given indicator i in year t

$F \frac{t}{i}$ = Female value of a given indicator i in year t

$M \frac{t}{i}$ = Male value of the same indicator i in year t

$$2004 \text{ Form 1} = \frac{1396}{2207} = 0.633$$

$$2005 \text{ Form 2} = \frac{1300}{2004} = 0.649$$

$$2006 \text{ Form 3} = \frac{1061}{1739} = 0.610$$

$$2007 \text{ Form 4} = \frac{883}{1425} = 0.620$$

The parity index did not change much from form one 2004 to form four 2007. That is before Free Secondary in 2004 the gender parity index was 0.633, in 2005 it was 0.649 while in 2006 and 2007 it was 0.610 and 0.620 respectively. These findings show that for every 100 boys in 2004 only 63 were girls, while in 2005 for every 100

boys in form 2 the girls were 65. In 2006 for every 100 boys there were 61 girls and in 2007 for every 100 boys there were 62 girls. It can be observed that the gender parity index was moderate. Nevertheless the number of girls enrolled were far below the number of boys.

Table 7 also shows that before introduction of Free Secondary Education gender parity index slightly decreased with progress of students from form one to form four. It can also be noted that the number of boys who repeated and dropped out was slightly higher than the number of girls who repeated or dropped out. It is also worth noting that the number of new boys who joined classes at all grades was higher than the number of girls who also joined the same classes. This means that cases of student drop out may not have been as serious as expressed because students seemed to have been transferring from one county to another and only may actually dropped out altogether.

Table 8 shows that students who enrolled in form one in the year 2008 were 2919 boys and 1696 girls. These students progressed through the system and those who completed the cycle in 2011 were 1656 boys and 1083 girls. The gender parity index was calculated using the following formula (UNESCO, 2009b).

$$GPI \frac{t}{i} = \frac{F \frac{t}{i}}{M \frac{t}{i}}$$

$$2008 \text{ Form 1} = \frac{1696}{2919} = 0.581$$

$$2009 \text{ Form 2} = \frac{1487}{2610} = 0.570$$

Table 7. Gender Parity in Secondary Education, in Kericho County before implementation of Free Secondary Education Policy

Years	Form	Gender	Number of students	Percentage (%)	Parity index
2004	1	Boys	2207	61.25	0.633
		Girls	1396	38.75	
2005	2	Boys	2004	60.65	0.649
		Girls	1300	39.35	
2006	3	Boys	1739	62.11	0.610
		Girls	1061	37.89	
2007	4	Boys	1425	61.74	0.620
		Girls	883	38.26	

Table 8. Students Enrolment in Kericho County after Implementation of Free Secondary Education policy

Years	Form I		Form II		Form III		Form IV	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
2008	2919	1696						
R	7	6						
N	0	0						
2009	2923	1691	2610	1487				
R	7	5	95	11				
N	0	0	212	18				
2010			2611	1487	2183	1237		
R			100	23	68	46		
N			191	161	501	234		
2011					2189	1063	1656	1083
R					71	40	96	38
N					178	245	561	269
2012							1650	1075
R							98	38
N							561	261

Key: R= repeaters in that year
N= new students in that particular year and class

$$2010 \text{ Form 3} = \frac{1237}{2183} = 0.590$$

$$2011 \text{ Form 4} = \frac{1083}{1656} = 0.657$$

The parity index changed from form one 2008 to form four 2011. That is, with implementation of Free Secondary in 2008 the gender parity index was 0.58, in 2009 it was 0.57 while in 2010 and 2011 it was 0.59 and 0.66 respectively. These findings show that for every 100 boys in 2008 only 58 were girls, while in 2009 for every 100 boys in form 2 the girls were 57. In 2010 for every 100 boys there were 59 girls and in 2011 for every 100 boys there were 66 girls. It can be observed that the gender parity index was low. The number of girls enrolled were far below the number of boys.

From Table 9 it can also be observed that after the implementation of Free Secondary Education policy the gender parity index decreased and then started increasing. This means that more boys were attracted by the policy than girls. Another factor that contributed to this trend was over age, a factor that favoured male students than female students. Nevertheless free secondary education policy positively influenced gender equality in secondary school education as signified by some increase in gender parity index. Relatively the number of girls who repeated and dropped out overall decreased slightly compared to that of boys.

Table 10 provide a summary of the comparison gender parity indices in secondary school education before and after implementation of Free Secondary Education. A critical analysis reveals that Free Secondary Education did not have much influence on gender equality in secondary education. This means that other

Table 9. Gender Parity in Kericho County after Implementation Free Secondary Education Policy

Years	Form	Gender	Number of students	Percentage (%)	Parity index
2008	1	Boys	2919	63.25	0.58
		Girls	1696	36.75	
2009	2	Boys	2610	63.80	0.57
		Girls	1481	36.20	
2010	3	Boys	2183	62.91	0.59
		Girls	1287	37.09	
2011	4	Boys	1656	60.35	0.66
		Girls	1088	39.65	

Table 10. Summary of Gender Parity Indices before and after Implementation Free Secondary Education policy in Kericho County

Form	Parity index before Free Secondary Education	Parity index after Free Secondary Education
1	0.63	0.58
2	0.65	0.57
3	0.61	0.59
4	0.62	0.66

factors such as culture, distance from schools, poverty, inflation, teachers attitudes, principles management styles, motorbike transport operators, early pregnancies, and hopelessness among the educated unemployed militated against the positive influence of the Free Secondary Education policy on gender equality in secondary education in view of the influence of these factors and given the fact that in the general population the ratio of boys to girls is about 1:1, fewer girls were still transiting as before the implementation of free secondary education. The main objective of free secondary education was actually to enhance transition from primary school education to secondary school education (Ministry of Education, 2008) since this not being actualized as was expected, the inhibiting factors should be addressed. This could be addressed by increasing the capitation fee for each student probably by 100%.

DISCUSSION

Gender equality in secondary school in Kericho county was low as signified by low gender parity index. This findings are consistent with the findings of world bank (2005) study that revealed that in African states like Benin, Cote'D ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali and Togo, the gender parity index was 0.60 which means that for every 100 boys there were 60 girls. The gender parity index was slightly higher in form IV because of high dropout and repetition of boys than girls. Furthermore these findings are consistent with those of UNESCO (2009a) which indicated that 64% of the worldwide

illiterate population were women. In 2010, Kenya's parity index for candidates who sat Kenya Certificate of secondary education examination in 2009 was high because 55% of the candidature was boys while 45% was girls meaning that the gender parity index was 0.82. However, there was variation depending on which part of the country. For instance the gender parity indices of Nyanza province and North Eastern province in 2010 was 0.42 meaning that for every 100 boys there were 42 girls. This was lower than that of Kericho County. This finding was inconsistent with the Ministry of Education position as indicated in the 2006-2011 strategic plan that out of 926,149 secondary school students before Free Secondary education, in 2004, forty eight percent were girls while 52% were boys with a gender index of 0.92 which was higher than that of Kericho County. These findings are unique, because the 2009 national census indicated that out of the 49,386 children aged between 15 and 19 years, 51.26% were female and 48.74% were male, making gender parity index of 1.05.

The Kenyan situation was similar to that of South and West Asia along with sub –Sahara African countries where girls accounted for 44% of student in secondary school education in 2007. The findings of this study also concur with the study by World Bank (2005) on gender in gender in junior and senior secondary school education in Sub-Saharan countries which indicate that more of the children were normally boys and girls were less in number. Studies carried out in Uganda by Takashi and Asankha (2011) after the introduction of free secondary school education policy revealed that girls benefited more than boys.

This study also established other factors that influenced gender parity indices. These included discrimination against the girl child, school fees and levies, child labour, poverty, indiscipline, early marriages, pregnancies, peer pressure, poor performance in class work and motorbike transport business. With regard to discrimination against the girl child, one of the girls during focus group discussion stated, "when parents are not in a position to provide for their children the first child to be compromised in terms of education is the girl child." This means that the girl child is discriminated against and is always vulnerable. This in effect reduces participation of the girl child education to the final stage regardless of her potentiality and diligence. The Quality Assurance and Standards Officers and Directors of studies also echoed the same sentiments. One of the Directors of studies noted "it is a common practice for parents to sacrifice the girl child's education for the boy child's education. This is because the society patriarchal, a paradigm that seem to be endemic and will never change". This finding is consistent with the findings of UNESCO (2011) that established that in Seychelles and South Africa boys were given priority compared to girls who are rarely given a chance by parents to go to school.

School levies were cited as a factor that influenced students enrolment and participation in secondary education for both boys and girls. This is because levies are child-based, unlike in primary school education where they are parent-based. Moreover the government subsidy, free secondary education, value has been devolved by inflation. In this respect the quality assurance and standard officer emphasized "students who are sent home continually to collect levies very frequently lose hope and eventually drop out or repeat classes. Girls are affected more by this practice than boys". The students also indicated during focus group discussion that girls were highly discriminated against and they also complained that school levies were quite high on the ratio of girls to boys, this findings are inconsistent with those of UNICEF (2009) which revealed that boys' enrolment rates were significantly lower than those of girls in Malaysia and Thailand.

Child labour is another fact that was emphasized by the quality assurance and standards office, Director of Studies and students who explained that some students and especially girls opt to stay out of school to be employed to earn a living for their families. Infact one of the students stated, "Two of my school mates dropped out in form one to be employed as house maids on advise of their parents. As a result at the end of every month the girls sent money to support their families." In Kericho county the main businesses that attract child labour include tea picking on large plantations, sugar cane cutting /harvesting lagging and motor bike transport.

Poverty was another factor that play a major role in student drop out and over age enrolment poverty has multiplier effect, whereby children drop out of school to

serve as house helps, herders, get married or hawkers' assistants. This finding is in agreement with that of Onyango (2003) who in his study on factors influencing girls' performance in mathematics in Nyanza province, Kenya found that drop out rate for girls was highly besides poor academic achievements in mathematics. This finding also concur with that of state university (2002b) which revealed that in United States of America many children do not have equal opportunities to learn because of poverty. It is also in agreement of with the study carried out in America by Asia society (2011) which revealed that there is under achievement of American students especially those of low income parents.

Early marriage and pregnancies were found to be major factors that affect gender parity index in Kericho county. Many girls perform well in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education but fail to access secondary school education either because they are pregnant or have gotten married immediately after sitting Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examinations. This finding concurs with that of Achoka (2007) whose study revealed that early marriages and pregnancies were causes of girls failure to be in school. It also agrees with Musyimi's (2011) study finding that in Makueni county, Kenya teenage pregnancies were some of the factors that affect girls continuity in secondary education.

Indiscipline was found to be one of the factors that affect gender parity index in Kericho county. In this respect indiscipline is a factor that affect boys more than girls. The Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, Director of Studies and students were emphatic on this factor. In fact one of the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers stated "Boys in senior classes become undisciplined and cause disruptions in schools when they realize that they cannot make it academically" in essence such undisciplined students use this option to drop out of school so that they join fellow peers as touts in boys parks, hawking and hotel business as attendants. This finding concurs with that of Musyimi (2011) in Makueni county, Kenya, who found that indiscipline was one of the factors that led to drop out rates and eventually affected gender equality in secondary school education.

Motor bike transport business was rated highly by the quality assurance and standard officer and students as a factor that influenced drop out of both boys and girls, but none for the girls. This in effect had reduced the girls enrolment. The Director of Studies during interview stated, "motorbike transport business has relay confused students, especially the girls in day schools where motor bike transport operators, lure girls into sexual activities in exchange of money, transport services and other goodies. In the end girls get married on pregnant and drop out or repeat classes."

Peer pressure is a factor that influences gender inequality in education in Kericho county. Girls are highly

vulnerable in this case, up to and including indulgence into sexual activities. This findings are consistent with the findings of Musyimi (2011) in Makueni county, where he found that peer pressure was one of the factors that led to drop out of girls thereby affecting gender parity index negatively. Achoka (2007) also found that students drop out of school due to peer pressure.

Drug abuse and trafficking is a factor that influences gender inequality in education Kericho County. The influence is however minimal. The most affected children are boys who are vulnerable particularly to bhnag smoking and taking of illicit drinks besides *kuber*. Students who get addicted to these drugs or are involved in trafficking eventually fail to cope with their education and drop out.

Poor performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary education and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education by girls was cited by quality assurance and standards officers, Director of Studies and students as a factor on girls continuity in education. Some schools insist on excellent performance and use unacceptable tricks to discourage their education such tricks include reprimands rather than guidance and counseling for the weak students. They even encourage girls to abandon schooling as they believe they would never make it. Poor performance by their seniors discourages some seniors as they are meant to view themselves as wasting time and money.

School fees is a factor that influences negatively the gender equality in secondary school education. For example Free Secondary Education caters for only 40.4% of the required fees by day scholars while parents and / guardians cater for 59.6%. Parents with children in co-educational schools cater for 72.6% while the Free secondary education caters for 27.4%. For the non-coeducational secondary schools, free secondary education caters for 25.6% and 24.9% while parents cater for 74.4% and 75.1% for girls and boys in girls and boys schools respectively (Table 5).

CONCLUSION

The impact of Free Secondary Education policy on gender equality in education at secondary school level was minimal. This is because the purpose of the subsidy was grossly misunderstood by parents and guardians who believed that Free Secondary Education policy had relieved them of the responsibility of educating their children by providing all the nitty-gritty of secondary school education. This is why there was a decline in gender parity index in the first three years of Free Secondary Education policy's implementation. Notwithstanding the influence of Free Secondary Education Policy on gender equality in secondary school education, other factors such as students' attitude,

parental level of education and family income also influenced the gender parity.

RECOMMENDATION

The government should increase the Free Secondary Education fund to cater for at least three quarters of the cost of educating students in secondary schools. This would enhance equity in education to a reasonable level.

The policy on free and compulsory basic education should be actualized by putting in place the required structures. Principals of secondary schools should facilitate guidance and counseling services in secondary schools to deal efficiently and effectively with factors that militate against gender equality in secondary school education. These factors include drug abuse, indiscipline, flirtation, fornication, early marriages, pregnancies and negative attitude towards schooling.

The policy on repetition should be enforced by school principals. This is because forced repetition leads to dropping out by most students.

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