



THE SOURCES AND PROPORTION OF PUPILS TRANSITING FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL FROM 2013 TO 2017 IN MBITA SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Free Secondary Education policy was introduced in Kenya in 2008 with an aim of making secondary education affordable so as to enhance access, transition, retention and student academic performance. The purpose of the study was to establish the proportion of pupils transiting from primary to secondary education level from 2013 to 2017 in Mbita Sub-county. The results indicate that an average primary to secondary transition rate of 60.71%, with girls at 60.28% and boys at 61.18% in the sub-county between 2013 to 2017. The main sources causing low transition rates were sources of forgone earnings such as fishing, transport sector, charcoal burning / selling and peasant farming. By use of Pearson's r , a strong negative correlation of -0.789 was obtained between forgone earnings and transition. This means that an increase in forgone earnings would decrease transition. There is thus need for the government to introduce incentives such as additional bursary allocations to the poor, increase FTSE fund and empower the locals through poverty eradication strategies.

Keywords: education, primary, secondary, transition

1. Introduction and Background

The flow of students from one level of education to another known as transition is an integral part of education development. This is thought to be a good indicator of balanced or unbalanced development of education between two levels. However, it has been reported that a large proportion of primary graduates fail to proceed to secondary

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school level all over the world (Ebel, 2009). This has been attributed to a number of reasons. For instance, Kariuki (2006) argued that school based factors such as school rules, attitudes, the curriculum, teachers, physical facilities and management practices does affect transition rates. In addition socio-economic and cultural factors such as parental level of education, parental occupation, family size, parental involvement or students' own attitudes towards education also have an effect on transition rates. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the access to secondary and tertiary education remains limited to most young people. For example in the school year ending in 2005, the median transition rate from primary to secondary education was 62% (UNESCO, 2009). There are also marked disparities in transition rates in terms of gender among many countries. The study further shows that, transition rate for boys (66%) was 9 points higher than their girls' counterparts (57%). Very low transition rates of below 50% were also reported in several countries including Burundi (34%), Botswana (35%) and Cameroon (33%). However, the report indicates a rising enrollment in the region with over 12 million more students, up from 20.6 in 1999. Despite this significant enrollment trend, the average secondary NER in Sub-Saharan Africa was 25% in 2006. This implies that nearly 78 million of the regions' secondary school age children were not enrolled in secondary school (UNESCO, 2009).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Free Secondary Education policy was introduced in Kenya in 2008 with an aim of making secondary education affordable so as to enhance access, transition, and retention and student academic performance. However this has not been achieved in Mbita Sub-County where the transition rates from 2010 to 2014 are 39.4, 41.2, 40.4, 54.5, and 59.2 which are lower than the neighbouring Suba sub-county transition rates of 56.2, 54.4, 61.1, 59.1 and 68.1 and the national rates of 68.9, 69.4, 68.4, 76.8 and 80.4 for the same period. This study therefore sought to establish the transition rates and main sources of leading to low transition in Mbita Sub-County. The findings may provide an explanation as to why FTSE has not made secondary education affordable to all pupils in the sub-county.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives:

- 1) To establish the proportion of pupils transiting from primary to secondary education level from 2013 to 2017 in Mbita Sub-county.
- 2) To determine sources leading to low transition rates in Mbita Sub-County.
- 3) Establish measures that can be put in place to mitigate low transition rates.

2. Literature Review

Transition is the number of children who continue from one level of education to another; it is the key indicator of the degree of access to education. Transition therefore reflects the efficiency of education system (Kimitai, 2010). Globally, the secondary Gross

Enrolment Rate rose from 43% to 68% between 1970 and 2009. This means that enrolment in secondary schools represented 68% of the targeted school age population. However, the situation varied considerably across and within regions (UNESCO, 2011). During the period 1970- 2009, enrolment growth in secondary education was highest in North America and Western Europe. This is not surprising given the combination of high participation in secondary education and the declining school- age population in this region.

Karugu, Oanda and Sifuna (2006) say, most African countries are largely modeled on educational systems of England and France. A study of the two countries' education system indicates that in England most pupils move from primary school to secondary between ages 11 to 16 or 18. No charges are made for admitting pupils to publicly funded secondary schools. Most secondary schools are comprehensive, accepting pupils without regard to academic ability. Secondary education like primary education is compulsory up to 16 years of age in France (Karugu et al, 2006). In both countries primary education is free and compulsory thus promoting transition rate. In 2002, the Gross Enrolment Ratio in secondary school for both boys and girls was 26% in Sub- Saharan Africa. The low transition rates from primary to secondary education for both boys and girls means that secondary education in Africa is not accessible to the majority of the relevant age groups (Karugu, Oanda and Sifuna, 2006). The concern is why has attainment of Universal Primary Education been elusive in many African countries?

Most recently, Ndolo and Simatwa (2016), conducted a study on impact of Free Secondary Education on Primary to Secondary Transition rate in Mbita and Suba Subcounties. The study adopted *ex-post facto* and correlational research designs. The study population consisted of 37 principals, 2775 students, 1 Sub-county Schools Auditor and 2 Sub-county Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. They observed that Free Secondary Education policy has positively and significantly influenced Primary to Secondary school transition rates. This is because it has made secondary education affordable to many pupils, and their parents. However, the study also noted that for the last five years, at least 40% of the standard eight pupils in any given year still failed to move to Secondary education level in the following year.

Ngware, Abuya, Admassu and Oketch (2009) examined whether household characteristics matter in schooling decision in urban Kenya. They reported that, the whole transition rate across all the study sites was about 75%. There was no noticeable difference by gender except in Nakuru where the rates were substantially slightly higher than the national level transition rate estimated to be 73% in 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2012). Both sexes combined, the lowest rate of transition is observed in Mombasa (66%) while highest in Kisumu (83%). There was strong association between the household head level of education and transition rate as well as household wealth index and probability of the transition. This is consistent with findings in previous studies examining the association between household socio-economic and schooling outcomes by Ngware et al., 2009. Ngware et al., (2009) present the following arguments. One, that students from high socio-economic households get academic support from

educated parents and are more likely to score high in primary school leaving examination. Secondly, In addition, better- off-households have more economic resources to let children continue their secondary education than children from low socio-economic background.

However, when national data are disaggregated to the sub- counties and school levels, major differences in response to Free Secondary Education policy become apparent. In Suba sub-county for example the transition rate stood at 69% (72% boys and 62% girls) in the year 2010. The girls' transition rate is far much below hence generating a lot of pertinent questions on gender parity and regional disparities remain key issues to address. In 2013, transition rates for Mbita and the neighbouring Suba subcounties were 46% and 69% respectively while according to Economic survey, 2015 the national primary to secondary transition rate rose to 80.4 per cent in 2014 from 76.8 per cent in 2013. The improvement in Primary to Secondary transition rate can partly be attributed to the implementation of Free Tuition Secondary Education (FTSE) and expansion of education facilities. While it's clear that transition rate in Mbita is lagging behind the neighbouring sub- counties' and the national transition rate, the reviewed studies did not address transition in Mbita Sub-county.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Descriptive survey design was found appropriate as it enabled the researcher to gather information on the head teachers' form one students' and dropouts' opinion on causes of low transition and main sources of forgone earnings in Mbita sub-county within a short time. Descriptive survey research gives statistical information about aspects of education. The design was chosen because the study involves a broad category of stakeholders in education. Correlational method describes in quantitative terms the degree to which variables are related.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Transition Trends by gender in Mbita Sub-County from 2013 to 2017

The first research question to be answered was; 'What is the proportion of pupils transiting from primary to secondary education from 2013 to 2017 in Mbita Sub-county?' The data was used to calculate the transition rates and the results are summarized in Figure 1 and 2.

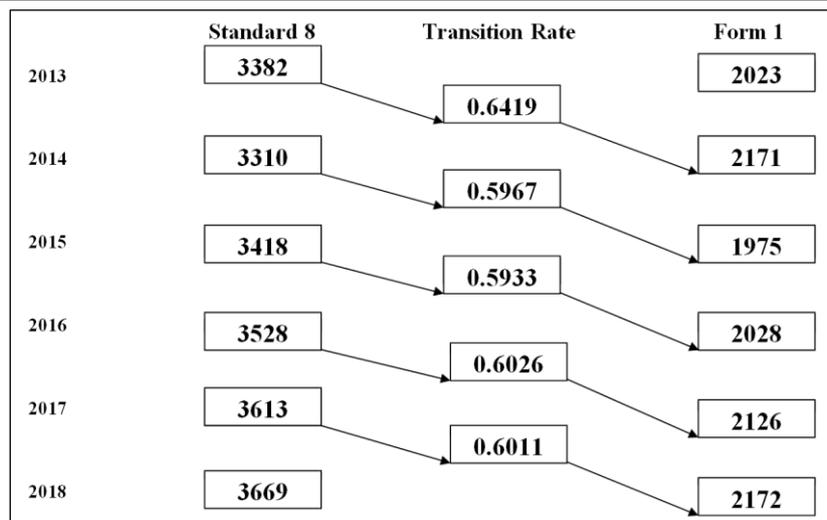


Figure 1: Transition rates from 2013 to 2017

The results in Figure 1 do indicate that the average transition rate in the sub-county is 0.6071. It further indicates that an average of 39.29% of pupils failed to join form one during the period under study. This high percentage is a waste of resources given that these children are beneficiaries of FPE and that the government is committed to pay their tuition at secondary level. These findings concur with the fact that in the past decade there has seen tremendous increases in primary school access but the secondary school access remains low. In 2009, the secondary net enrollment rate was approximately 50% (World Bank, 2009), while the primary to secondary school transition rate was equally low at 55% (MOE, 2010). Despite the recent reductions in secondary school fees, these fees still present a major financial obstacle.

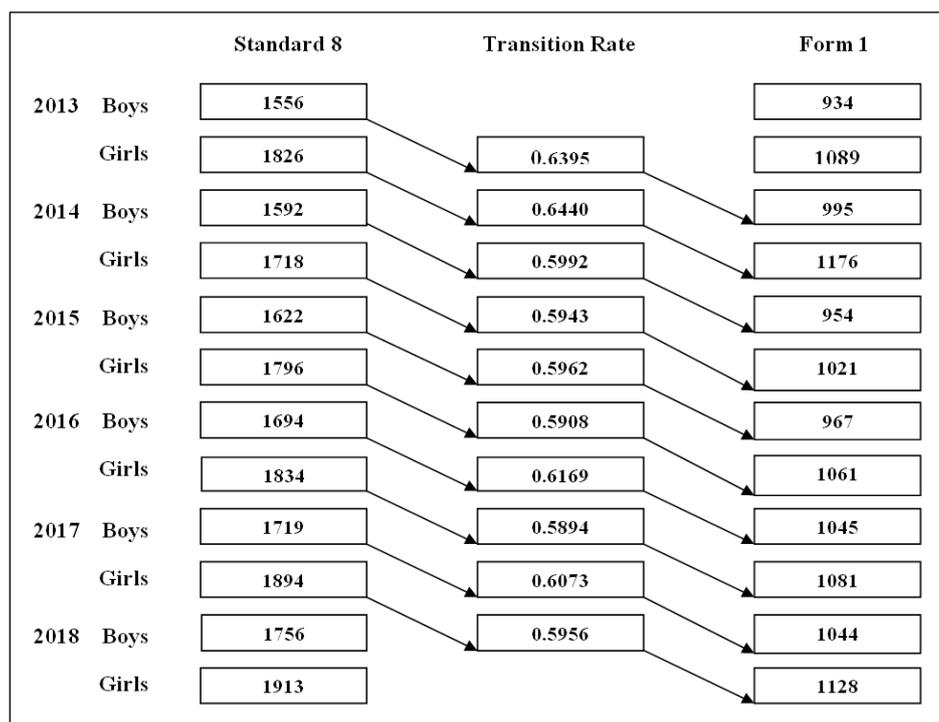


Figure 2: Transition Rates by Gender from 2013 to 2017

Figure 2 indicates that boys have high chances of joining form one in any given year than the girls. Figure 2 also reveals gender differences in transition rates among boys and girls. The average transition rate for girls was found to be 0.6028 which is lower by 0.009 points to that of boys 0.6118. Thus on average fewer girls (60.28%) transited to secondary school than boys (61.18%). This is despite the fact that the enrolment of girls in class eight (52.49%) was higher than boys (47.51%) for the period under study. This is a strong indication that girls require extra support to enroll in secondary schools than the boys in the sub-county. Other studies have also shown gender differences in transition rates among boys and girls (UNESCO, 2009).

5. Main Causes of Low Primary to Secondary Education Transition In Mbita SubCounty

A sample of 43 Primary school Head Teachers were therefore asked questions on the main causes of dropouts during primary to secondary education transition. Responses were as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Main Causes of Dropouts During Transition

Causes of Dropouts	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of fees	22	51.0
Forgone earnings	8	18.6
Poor attitude of parents	6	14.0
Poor performance	1	2.3
Teenage Pregnancies	2	4.7
Early Marriages	4	9.4
Total	43	100

From above it can be observed that lack of fees (51%) and earnings forgone by primary school pupils (18.6%) are the main causes of dropout during primary to secondary education transition in Mbita Sub-county. This reveals that monetary factor is the greatest contributor to low transition rates from primary to secondary school in the sub-county. This may be associated to high poverty levels in the sub-county. According to constituency rating on poverty index the sub-county was rated among the poorest in the country (GoK, 2016). This indicates the need for the government to enhance poverty eradication strategies in order to address the problem of low transition from primary to secondary in the sub-county.

The results also indicate low percentage of dropouts due to poor parental attitude (14%) and early marriages (9.4%) possibly because these are cultural factors which take long to change. Finally, it can be seen that the policy on automatic transition regardless of performance and affirmative action that allows pregnant girls to be in school until delivery has almost succeeded in mitigating for dropout cases due to poor performance (2.3%) and teenage pregnancies (4.7%). The problem of early marriage seems also to dog the sub-county despite the enactment of the children's Act in 2001. This has been a major problem also associated with poverty where parents marry off

their daughters to gain wealth. The factor is the fourth rated contributor (9.4%) to low transition rate. Other studies (UNICEF, 2001) have also cited earlier marriages as a major contributor to low transition rates in school. UNICEF (2001) argues that where poverty is severe, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden where one less daughter is one less mouth to feed. The above findings are illustrated in the pie-chart below (Figure 3).

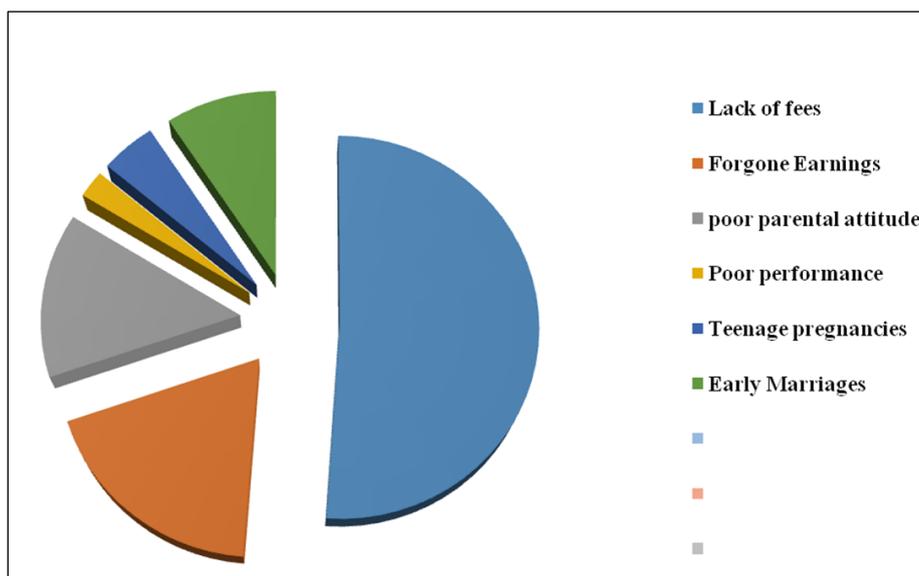


Figure 3: Causes of low transition in Mbita Sub-county

In agreement with the findings of this study, Werunga, Musera and Sindabi (2011) observed that a good number of parents found that the opportunity cost of education was too high and hence engaged their daughters in income generating activities such as cooking and other domestic chores (20.4%) as well as being hired by others as house help (13.0%). Other money-making activities children engage in included farming (24.6%), Selling in market centres (21.0%), and hawking (14.0%). This to parents contributed more towards raising the family's standard of living as compared to schooling of the girls. According to the World Bank (2008) study in Eritrea, girls are given various household chores as compared to boys, which often prevent them from accessing and participating in secondary education. A project of buying donkeys to help girls save on their energy and time for secondary school studies was then started in Eritrea.

A study by Warimi and Waiyego (2016) on Learners' transition rates from primary to secondary schools in Kenya, similarly established that the major factors that influenced pupils to fail were poverty, lack of parental support and indiscipline. Other factors mentioned included, child labour, lack of role models in the society and peer pressure.

In line with the findings of this study, Mbiti (2007) argues that family is the first medium, for transmitting culture to the children. The family is a whole world for all young children and its members basically teach a child what matters in life. Desires of

achievement and motivations to excel in school are passed on from parent to child. The behaviors that adults encourage or discourage and their provision of discipline affect the child's academic performance. Many children do well in school because their home and family environment have provided them with good preparation for succeeding. Others do poorly because they have not been well prepared and schools have not succeeded to mitigate this disadvantage. This explains why parental attitudes still has a significant influence (14%) on transition.

6. Measures to Mitigate low transition in Mbita Sub-County

The head teachers form one students, dropouts and the Sub-county Quality Assurance and Standards Officer were asked to give suggestions on measures to help mitigate on low transition in Mbita Sub-county. Their suggestions were read and summarized in according to themes below. They observed that since the Kenyan education system insists on a free and compulsory primary education as well as a subsidized secondary education, the government should:

- 1) Ministry of education should develop and enhance firm policies that protect learners from negative social cultural factors including child labour, learners pregnancy and socio-cultural mistreatments.
- 2) The government should increase the FTSE allocation to include uniforms and meals and medical care.
- 3) Secondary schools should enhance income generating activities that provide work programmes to needy students.
- 4) More emphasis should put on talents as opposed to learners academic abilities to make secondary schools more learners friendly even to low achievers.

7. Conclusions

The following conclusions were made based on the objectives of the study.

- 1) The study indicates an average transition rate of 60.71%, meaning 39.29% of pupils still failed to transit to secondary education during the period of study.
- 2) The findings further revealed gender differences in transition rates among boys and girls. The average transition rate for girls was found to be 0.6028 which is lower by 0.009 points compared to that of boys at 0.6118. Thus on average fewer girls (60.28%) transited to secondary school than boys (61.18%). This is despite the fact that the enrolment of girls in class eight (52.49%) was higher than boys (47.51%) for the period under study.
- 3) Many pupils majority being girls are still missing out on secondary education due to failure to transit from primary to secondary education. This reveals inefficiency in provision of secondary and therefore wastage of education resources meant to educate these dropouts.
- 4) Though there is a slight increase in transition rate over the years due to improvements in the implementation of FTSE programme, 100% transition rate is

- 5) far from being realized. It is therefore necessary to address the factors, not covered by FTSE policies that still hinder pupil transition.

8. Recommendations

There is need to urgently address the problem of low transition of pupils from primary to secondary as a result of poverty. This can be achieved by either giving incentives to parents in terms of food stipends to parents to lower the level of opportunity cost of sending a child to secondary school. Long term strategy would be to initiate poverty eradication strategies that will empower the locals financially. There is need to address the problem of gender difference in the transition of pupils from primary to secondary. This can be achieved by organizing stakeholders' sensitization meetings by the ministry and other interested parties to educate the locals on the need to give equal chances for both boys and girls to continue with secondary education. There is also need to fully enforce the law on those parents who marry off their children at a tender age in the sub-county. There is need for concerted efforts by the government, the local community and other stakeholders such as NGOs, local councils and business people to assist the needy to acquire secondary education through bursaries and scholarships in the sub-county.

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