
**INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY FACTORS ON PUPIL'S TRANSITION
FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAIKIPIA WEST
SUB-COUNTY, KENYA**

Mr. Peter Murage Mwangi, Prof. Kanjogu J. (PH.D), and Dr. Ngunjiri, M.

Department of Curriculum and Educational Management, Laikipia University, Kenya

ABSTRACT

Kenya introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and Free Secondary Education (FSE) in 2008 to attain 100 percent transition rate from primary to secondary schools. In spite of this, only 60% of primary graduates transitioned to secondary schools by 2015. The purpose of the study was to investigate the extent to which community factors could have been at play in Laikipia West Sub-County. Using *ex-post facto* research design, data was collected using self-delivered questionnaire from a sample of 411 respondents (280 teachers and 131 PTA chairpersons) in public primary schools in the area of study. The sample was selected using stratified random and simple random sampling techniques from a target population of 1064 respondents. Collected data was analyzed through simple regression at .05 alpha level using SPSS version 21.0. Findings from the study revealed that community factors were significantly influencing transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools ($\beta = -.167$) at 0.5 significance level. The study recommended that the local community should support secondary education by constructing more classrooms.

Keywords: Community factors, transition, primary to secondary school

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Formal education plays an important role in socio-economic development of every society (Todaro & Smith, 2006). As a result of public financing of free primary education in many countries, demand for both primary and secondary education has risen. In an effort to meet the rising demand for education, many developing countries allocate a higher proportion of their budget on education than other sectors of their economy (World Bank, 2011). The increased

government expenditure on education has in turn caused a rapid increase in global enrolment at all levels of education.

According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2014), the global enrolment at primary school level rose from 400 million to 691 million representing 58% expansion rate. Secondary enrolment in the same period increased from 184 million to 544 million students which translated to 34% expansion rate. In spite of the noted increase in enrolment, expected social returns to investment in education have not been fully realized due to high dropout and repetition rates. This wastage scenario has impacted negatively on transition rates across different education cycles. In 2013, transition from home to primary, primary to secondary, and secondary to tertiary institutions globally stood at 58%, 34%, and 19% respectively.

According to UNESCO (2012), low transition from primary to secondary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa is rooted in a myriad of community factors key among them, low community support in regard to provision of adequate school facilities. In recognition of the importance of secondary education, the government of Kenya included it as part of basic education in 2008 thereby introducing Free Secondary Education (FSE) in the same year (BBC, 2008). This policy greatly reduced the burden of financing secondary education by parents. To actualize this policy initiative, the annual government expenditure on the social sector was increased from K.Shs. 149.5 millions in 2008 to K. Shs. 335.1 billion in 2014 (Republic of Kenya, 2015). However, it needs to be noted that although public expenditure on education increased between 2008 and 2015, allocation to the sector as a percentage of total government expenditure has been declining. The percentage budgetary allocations to the ministry of education in relation to the annual national budget declined from 21.0% in 2012 to 18.7% in 2014.

This data implies that while the economy of the country has been growing, there is declining budgetary allocation to education. This may have led to low expansion in the education sector, a factor which may have contributed to low transition rates from primary to secondary schools. This is a worrying scenario if it is realized that secondary education lays learners foundation for further education and training.

In Laikipia West Sub-county whose primary schools are focused by the study, transition from primary to secondary schools has consistently been lower than 60% even after FDSE. This implies that in that period, more than 45% of primary school pupils did not proceed to secondary education. This has the implication that there could be risk factors undermining the government's efforts to attain 100% transition rate in the sub-county and the country at large which if not addressed may not augur well for the desired socio-economic development in the area.

Available literature by Reche (2012) and Muriuki (2011) has averred that there are several community factors that tend to constrict learning opportunities at the lower levels of education in developing countries, including political interference on education dispensation at the local level, inadequate support towards education by opinion leaders, and the general negative attitude towards education.

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which community factors could be influencing pupils' transition from primary to secondary schools in Laikipia West Sub-county in Kenya.

The null hypothesis for the study is; Community-based factors have no statistically significant influence on pupils' transition from primary to secondary schools in Laikipia West Sub-county in Kenya.

Literature Review

The structure and organization of communities influence transition of pupils from primary to secondary school. Most important is community participation in academic affairs. According to Corkum, McGonnell, and Schachar (2010), performance in school depends on how parents and teachers cooperate in matters relating to learners. This cooperation enables both parties to understand their children better. Parents get to know challenges facing their children while in school and what could be done to deal with the problems. When students know that their parents inquire about their performance from teachers, they work hard to avoid colliding with either the parents or teachers. Parents also get to know which areas to guide their children or help them in the areas of their weakness.

Parents' willingness to participate in school development promotes learning. According to UNESCO (2014), in schools where parents are actively involved in school development, students are likely to do well in exams since they are encouraged by both the teachers and the parents. Those students who do not receive encouragement or assistance at home to do homework end up performing poorly in national examinations and may therefore earn low marks in primary which demotivate them from joining secondary schools.

In many parts of Kenya, local leaders have also been noted to interfere with the school management issues, for instance by influencing appointment and transfer of head teachers. When local politicians conflict with school administration, it demoralizes them which may affect the performance of teachers in teaching and eventually performance of pupils in their national examinations.

Community attitude towards education and especially education for girls influences transition. Many communities especially in Africa discriminate their girls which have a negative impact on their education. In some communities, people do not believe that girls deserve more than elementary education up to primary school level (Brock-Utne, 2000). As a result, girls when compared to boys have lower attendance, retention and performance in schools, which reduces their chances of proceeding with education beyond primary school level. In Kenya, Ruto, Ongwenyi and Mugo (2009) noted that girls in nomadic communities are discriminated from getting education and information. In poor areas some parents are unable to afford sanitary towels for their girls, while some of the schools in these areas lack toilets. At home, girls are often given heavy domestic workload which interferes with their school work. They also fall victims of early marriages and teenage pregnancies. This reduces their chances of completing primary education and accessing secondary schools.

The opportunity costs for education also influence transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools. Action Aid Kenya (2006) says that in some communities especially in ASAL's, little attention is accorded to the benefits of education given that children are expected to carry out household and the overall pastoral economy. Pastoralists have also been opposed to modernization since colonial period since the policies aimed at replacing their cattle culture with a settled agricultural one. Furthermore, nomadic pastoralists practice a non-monetary economy and do not therefore see the benefit of selling animals to educate their children. In fact, their constant migration in search of pastures makes them have no attachment to a particular place, which would commit them to develop an education facility.

Role models in a community shape the aspirations of learners since they serve as real life examples of potential pupils to overcome their challenges and excel in a profession (Reche, 2012). In many African communities, most educated people live in urban areas which deny the young people in rural areas the much needed role models. Consequently, young people in these communities lack the desired motivation to excel in school. This is worsened by the fact that some of the most influential and successful people in rural areas are not well educated. In light of this, young people perceive education as a non-beneficial undertaking.

Physical access to secondary school in terms of distance from home to school is another impediment to transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools (World Bank, 2009). In Kenya, transition from primary to secondary school is usually determined by availability of Form One vacancies in secondary schools. There are over 26,000 primary schools and only 8,000 secondary schools across the country. However, these schools are highly concentrated in urban and high productivity areas. Since most of the Kenyans live in rural areas, those in less productive areas may not find a nearby local school to enroll. The long distance from such

schools therefore hinders children from accessing education (Kipserem, Mugo, Ruto, & Angwenyi, 2009).

Long distance from school also exposes students to insecurity, which is a key factor that influences their school attendance, academic achievement, and transition to secondary schools. According to UNESCO (2014), almost half of pupils who complete primary schools lack opportunities to enroll in secondary education. For example, in low productive North Eastern parts of the country, only 40% of pupils are in a walking distance to a secondary school, compared to almost 80% in the resources endowed Central region. Distance is even a greater challenge to girls' transition, since they are more sensitive to physical distance due to safety concerns (Alderman & King, 1998).

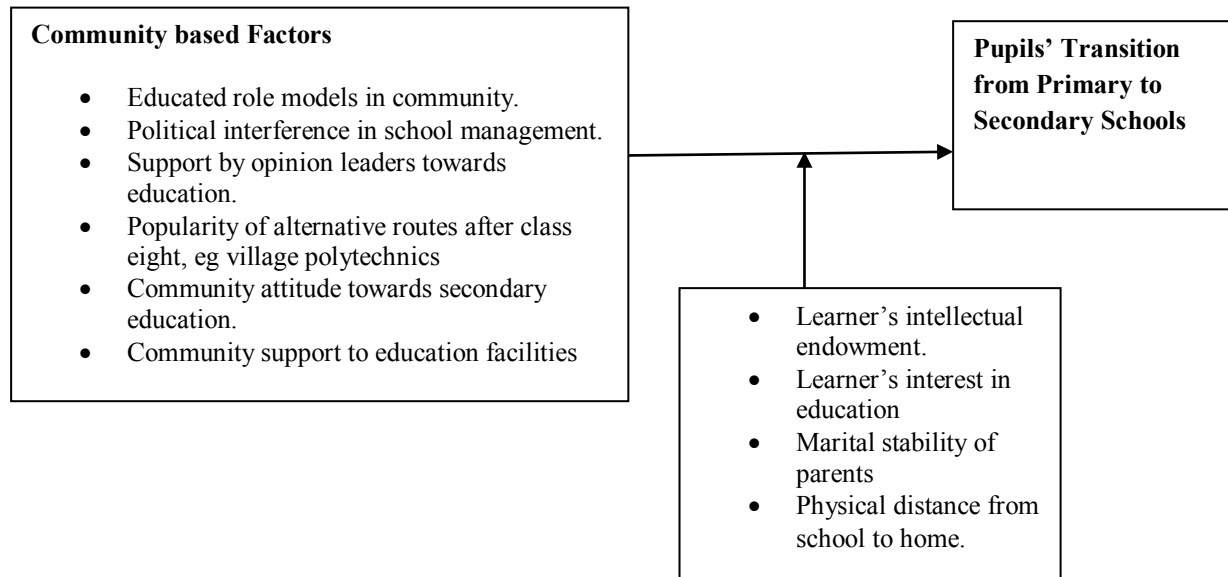
Theoretical Framework

The current study was guided by the Rational Choice Theory (RCT) developed by Boselli in 1984 (Coleman, 2000). The theory holds that parents are utility maximizers who make decisions from clear value preferences. The theory purports that parents pursue the best interests of their children, and since most of the decisions regarding education in schools are influenced by parents, they are in a position to demand quality services for their children from schools, and quality teaching to their children by teachers.

Community involvement is necessary for a school to grow and students to perform well. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (1998), community participation is enhanced by competition between schools. Parents' and communities' according to RCT compare their schools with those located in other areas, with a view to identifying ways of making their school better in terms of learners' performance. This enhances their level of school involvement, which in turn improves students' performance and progression to subsequent education levels. Rule (1997) have rendered support to this position by averring that competition between schools enhances enrolment of students by forcing schools to become more responsive to community, parents and student's needs. This scenario generates a good environment for learning in which teachers are always committed towards students' learning in effect unhindered mobility across different grade levels.

Thus, if a school produces graduates with good academic and non-academic abilities, parents will be motivated to educate their children in the institution and vice versa (Greene, 2001). This has implications on pupils' transition from primary to secondary schools – if parents get value out of the resources they invest in secondary education, they are likely to encourage their children to complete primary education in order to secure admission in secondary schools. The converse is the case.

Conceptual Framework



Methodology

The study adopted *ex-post facto* research design. This design was applied in light of the fact that the study sought to determine retrospectively the extent to which community factors (independent variable) may have influenced transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools (dependent variable) in Laikipia Sub-county (Kerlinger, 1986).

The study targeted a population of 1,064 respondents composed of 933 teachers and 131 chairpersons of Parents and Teachers Association from all the 131 public primary schools in the study area. The study was carried out on a sample of 411 respondents composed of 131 PTA chairpersons and 280 teachers. All the PTA chairpersons (n=131) in the 131 schools in the sub-county participated in the study. The study adopted two probability sampling designs to sample teachers; stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The starting point in applying the two sampling designs was to determine the required sample size of teachers who would participate in the study. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size (n) in a given population (N), the ideal sample in a population of 933 subjects is 280 cases. This is equivalent to 30% of the total population. Using this sampling fraction, teachers in each of the 131 schools were stratified by gender and 30% cases in each gender category selected through simple random sampling technique. This sampling procedure ensured that every teacher in a given school had an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample (Wiersma, 1995).

Data was collected using self-delivered questionnaires to teachers and PTA chairpersons. The questionnaires comprised of six items, each with a five – point Likert scale on community factors that impact negatively on pupils’ transition from primary to secondary schools in Kenya. The items had five response options labeled Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Respondents were requested to select the option that best described their perception on the extent to which a specified factor could be undermining transition of pupils to secondary schools in their respective schools.

Piloting of the instruments was carried out in five schools in the neighbouring Laikipia East Sub-County. The instrument was accepted after it achieved a cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of .79. Nominal scale data was analyzed through frequency counts and percentages, while interval scale data was subjected to simple regression analysis so as to test the hypothesis at .05 alpha level. This was accomplished by use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0.

Results and Discussion

The study sought to investigate and answer the following research question.

To what extent do community – based factors influence pupils’ transition from primary to secondary schools in Laikipia West Sub-County in Kenya?

The indicators for community factors were;

- i. Lack of educated role models in community.
- ii. Political interference in school management.
- iii. Lack of support by opinion leaders towards education.
- iv. Popularity of alternative routes after class eight, eg village polytechnics
- v. Community’s negative attitude towards secondary education.
- vi. Lack of community support to education facilities.

To achieve this objective the following null hypothesis was formulated.

Community-based factors have no statistically significant influence on pupils’ transition from primary to secondary schools in Laikipia West Sub-county, Kenya

The hypothesis presumed that community-based factors have no statistically significant influence on pupils’ transition from primary to secondary schools. To ascertain the truth of this assumption, simple linear regression analysis was carried out. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Simple Linear Regression Analysis between Community-based Factors and Pupils Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools

Variable		r	r ²	Constant	df	F	p
Dependent	Pupils' transition	-.694*	0.482	93.575	1,379	352.631*	.000
Independent	Community-based factors		Beta (β)	Regression coefficient		t	
			-0.694*	-1.835		-18.778	.000

Note: * means significant at .05 alpha level.

Table 1 shows that community-based factors had a negative linear correlation with transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools ($\beta = -0.694$; $p = .000$). The r^2 value of 0.482 further indicates that Community-based factors accounted for 48.2% of the total variance in transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools. This implies that statistically, community-based factors and transition of pupils were not independent. The F- ratio as indicated in the table also significant ($F(1,379) = 352.631$; $p = .000$).

This indicates that community-based factors had a significant negative influence on pupils' transition from primary to secondary schools. In this regard, the null hypothesis that community-based factors have no statistically significant influence on pupils' transition from primary to secondary schools was rejected at .05 level of significance. This led to the conclusion that if community-based factors are minimized, the environment would be more conducive to learning. As a result, children are more likely to progress through primary schools and subsequently transit to secondary schools.

The finding that community-based factors significantly influence pupils' transition from primary to secondary schools in Laikipia West Sub-County is consistent with the findings of a study by Reche (2012) in Mwimbi Division, Maara Sub-County, which revealed that pupils' performance and transition to secondary schools were being undermined by political interference and lack of positive role models in a community. Other studies, (e.g., Muriuki, 2011; Corkum *et al.* 2010) have similarly observed that inadequate support by a community's political class is negatively

correlated with pupils' attitude towards formal education and by implication teacher- parent relationship which a critical input on pupils' academic progression.

From the findings generated by the study, the study concludes that community factors negatively influence transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools in Laikipia West Sub-county, Kenya. From this finding, it can be concluded that community factors such as inadequate educated role models, political interference in schools, inadequate support for education by local opinion leaders, easy access to income generating activities among pupils, community's negative attitude towards secondary education, and inadequate secondary schools hinders transition of all KCPE examination graduates to secondary schools.

The study recommends that the local community through opinion leaders should support education by constructing more secondary schools.

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