

Towards Free Day Secondary Schooling in Kenya: Exposing the Impediments

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Abstract

Secondary education provides a vital link between basic education and the world of work, on one hand, and further training on the other. It is therefore an important sub-sector of education in the preparation of human capital for development and provision of life opportunities. Secondary education in Kenya takes four years to complete, catering for students aged 14 to 17 years and it leads to the award of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. The objectives of secondary education are to acquire necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for the development of the self and the nation and to promote love for and loyalty to the nation among others. There are several impediments that have hindered government efforts to provide free day secondary schooling. These include, the New Constitution that made Teachers Service Commission autonomous, unregulated school levies by education officials, heads associations, remedial teaching, and failure by sponsors to play their oversight role and corruption in ministry of education. It is recommended that the students who are not likely to benefit from formal secondary schooling should be provided with options to access secondary education, through alternative methods such as distance learning and skills training. In addition, Kenya Certificate of Primary Education should be scrapped to reduce the demand for boarding schools except among the nomadic communities. With the necessary legislation in place, the government should hire private auditors to ensure prudent use of public resources.

Keywords: Secondary School, School Fees, Corruption, Performance Teaching

1. Introduction

Secondary education provides a vital link between basic education and the world of work, on one hand, and further training on the other. It is therefore an important sub-sector of education in the preparation of human capital for development and provision of life opportunities. However, despite its importance in the process of development, the costs of provision and expansion of quality secondary education have been escalating while resources for secondary education have been dwindling.

A powerful case can be made for the expansion of secondary education in developing countries on the grounds of growth, poverty reduction, equity, and social cohesion. The argument is particularly germane for countries that have achieved high levels of primary education coverage but still have low enrollments at the secondary level (World Bank, 2005). The global trends demand that more skills, values, and attitudes are necessary to exploit any global opportunity. Therefore, as has been noted by the World Bank (2005) provision of good quality secondary education is a critical tool in generating the opportunities and benefits of social and economic development.

According to sessional paper no. 14 of 2012 the importance of secondary education globally has grown considerably especially in developing countries with the success of Universal Primary Education (UPE). Indeed, secondary education is now basic and tuition fees can only be payable to persons who are not Kenyan citizens (RoK, 2012). Government can now be held accountable for ensuring that every child aged 4 to 17 years is in school and receiving quality education. The momentum of the provision of Free Secondary Education received a boost from President Uhuru Kenyatta, who set 2017 as the year his government would fully achieve free quality secondary education. The Kiremi Mwiria led Task force however set the target year to be 2015 (RoK, 2014). Secondary education in Kenya takes four years to complete, catering for students aged 14 to 17 years and it leads to the award of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE).

2. Objectives of Secondary Education in Kenya

The objectives of secondary education are to:

- Acquire necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for development of self and the nation.
- Promote love for and loyalty to the nation.
- Promote harmonious co-existence among the peoples of Kenya.
- Develop mentally, socially, morally, physically and spiritually
- Enhance understanding and respect for own and other cultures and their place in contemporary society.

- Prepare students for global citizenship;
- Enhance understanding and appreciation of inter-relationships among nations.
- Promote positive environmental and health practices.
- Build a firm foundation for further education and training.
- Develop ability for enquiry, critical thinking and rational judgement.
- Develop into a responsible and socially well-adjusted person.
- Promote acceptance of and respect for all persons.
- Enhance enjoyment in learning.
- Identify individual talents and develop them.
- Build a foundation for technological and industrial development.
- Develop into self-disciplined individual who appreciates work and time management.

Table 1 below represents enrolment in secondary schools by class and sex from 2010 to 2014. The total enrolment in public and private secondary schools rose by 9.5 per cent from 2.1 million in 2013 to 2.3 million in 2014. The total enrolment of girls increased by 10.0 per cent from 1.0 million in 2013 to 1.1 million in 2014 while that of boys grew by 6.6 per cent. The survival rate at secondary school level from form one to four declined in 2013 from 90.0 per cent to 88.4 per cent in 2014. The net enrolment ratio increased from 38.5 per cent in 2013 to 48.3 per cent in 2014. This means 2, 472, 473 (51.7%), Kenyans aged between 14-17 years cannot access secondary school education. Transition rate from primary to secondary increased from 76.8 per cent in 2013 to 80.4 per cent in 2014 (RoK, 2015).

Table 1. Secondary Schools enrolment in 2010-2014

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
Level	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Form 1	266,707	232,226	276,965	244,636	282,555	249,573	327,775	289,753	339,134	328,017
Form 2	232,145	211,799	240,552	219,469	274,195	239,743	288,238	253,739	324,143	304,455
Form 3	216,786	181,823	224,637	188,408	239,149	218,278	267,221	228,869	291,440	261,088
Form 4	169,899	141,899	206,552	166,501	223,132	188,198	244,463	204,204	247,537	214,060
Total	855,537	767,847	948,706	819,014	1,019,031	895,792	1,127,697	976,565	1,202,254	1,107,620
Grand Total	1,653,384		1,767,720		1,914,823		2,104,262		2,309,874	

Source: Ministry of Education Science and Technology.

3. Impediments to Free Day Secondary Schooling

The following are the main impediments to free secondary school education in Kenya.

3.1 New Constitution that made Teachers Service Commission Autonomous

On 27th August 2010 Kenya enacted a new constitution replacing the old one that had been in place since independence in 1963. The promulgation of this new constitution marked the end of one of longest journeys in Kenya's history; a two decade struggle for reforms. Over 67% of Kenyan voters approved this new constitution in a referendum that paved way for historic and spectacular moment in Kenya's democracy. Chapter 15 of the constitution created Commissions and independent offices, one of which is Teachers Service Commission. The functions of the Teachers Service Commission are registering trained teachers, recruiting and employing trained teachers, distributing employed teachers to public school or institution, promoting and transferring teachers, disciplinary control, and termination of employment among teachers.

The duties made ministry of education loose control of secondary schools heads. On 8th April 2015 the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Science and technology in exercise of the powers conferred by section 95 of the basic Education Act published Basic Education Regulations 2015. This would have enabled the cabinet secretary to directly manage and control head teachers. The regulations were also meant to operationalize the Basic Education Act, 2012. The Ministry wanted head of institution to be "a person who exercises delegated authority of cabinet Secretary in charge of education to manage and account for all resources". The cabinet secretary was the one to appoint the head.

This means the heads would answer to the cabinet secretary in charge of Education even as TSC is mandated under constitution to employ, promote and discipline al teachers. Thus the disciplinary procedure is elaborate as that function is preserve of TSC. Ministry of Education officials can only recommend to TSC to take disciplinary action against a head. As long as cabinet secretary in charge of education continue to lack control over heads, then fees charged to heads will continue to be high.

3.2 Unregulated Levies by Education Officials

Contained in the basic education regulations 2015, is the clause "no institution shall cause any parent or guardian to contribute any funds for co-curricular activities without written approval from the cabinet secretary on advice

of the respective county director of education.” The cabinet secretary ministry of Education, Science and Technology released new fees guidelines as illustrated in Table 2 on 4th March, 2015. National and County boarding schools are required to charge a maximum of 53,553 shillings per year, while schools with special needs 32,600 shillings per year, and day schools 9,374 shillings per year. This will be spread over three terms in the ratio of 50:30:20. Government pays the full cost of Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination. Most of the established national boarding schools charge between Sh100, 000 and 150,000. The government pays Sh12, 870 per student as a subsidy.

Table 2. Approved Fees Structure for Public Secondary Schools

Vote heads	Boarding Schools of all categories(KES)			Day Schools (KES)			Special Needs Schools (KES)		
	Government	Parent	Total	Government	Parent	Total	Government	Parent	Total
Teaching Learning Materials	4,792	0.00	4,792	4792	0.00	4792	4792	0.00	7492
Boarding Equipment Stores & Meals	0.00	32,385	32,385	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	26,790	26790
Repairs, Maintenance & Improvement	800	2,392	3,192	800	1,036	1,886	800	800	1,600
Local Travel & Transport	800	1,621	2,421	800	1033	1,833	800	800	1,600
Administration Costs	800	2,516	3,316	800	772	1,572	800	600	1,400
Electricity Water & Conservancy	1,500	6,302	7,802	1,500	1,651	3,151	1,500	1000	2,500
Medical	278	508	786	278	411	689	278	860	1,133
Activity Fees	600	798	1,398	600	656	1,256	600	500	1,100
Personal Emolument	2,700	5,972	8,672	2,700	3,055	5,755	2,700	5,000	7,700
Approved PTA Development Projects	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Insurance (Medical & Property)	600	1,620	1,660	600	710	1,310	600	860	1460
Top up	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	19,730	0.00	19,730
Total School Fees	12,870	53,554	66,424	12,870	9,374	22,244	32,600	37,210	69,810

The Kilemi Mwiria-led task force that was expected to review unit cost of education in public schools to guide the government on appropriate fees that should be charged in public schools proposed that day schools charge a maximum of 11,105 shillings, boarding 38,969 shillings and special schools 22,830 shillings as shown in Table 3 below. Contrary to a popular believe with prudent financial management these are practical figures that would fast track achievement of vision 2030, Kenya’s development blueprint.

Table 3. Suggested Fees Structure for Public Schools by Task force on School Fees

	Day Schools (KES)	Boarding Schools of all categories(KES)	Special Needs Schools (KES)
Teaching Learning Materials	4,792.00	4792.00	9,067.00
Boarding Equipment Stores & Meals	5861.00	24,721.00	24,721.00
Repairs, Maintenance & Improvement	1,440.00	2,437.00	1,849.00
Local Travel & Transport	1,399.00	1,848.00	1,637.00
Administration Costs	1,200.00	2,2531.00	1,450.00
Electricity Water & Conservancy	2,405.00	5,956.00	3,089.00
Medical	526.00	600.00	1,232.00
Activity Fees	959.00	1,067.00	1,116.00
Personal Emolument	4,393.00	6,620.00	10,042.00
Approved PTA Development Projects	0.00	0.00	0.00
Insurance (Medical & Property)	1,000.00	1,267.00	1,232.00
Total Costs	23,975.00	51,839.00	55,535.00
Less government Subsidy	12870.00	12,870.00	32,605.00
Total Fees	11,105.00	38,969.00	22,830.00

Frequent circulars are released by county education boards demanding remittances of various levies per student attending various secondary schools. For example in circular dated 15th January, 2015 Murang’a County schools were required to pay the following levies shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Various Levies Charged by County Education Boards

Levy	Amount (KES)
County Education Board Fund	100
Sub County Education Board	160
County Secondary School Heads Association Fund	470
Sub County Activity Fund	274
Sub County Schools Heads Association Fund	336
SMASSE Fund	206
Total	1546

Most of these funds end up as allowances for the County education boards' members. According to RoK (2012), the members of the County Education Boards are supposed to be paid such allowances and disbursements for expenses as may be approved by the Cabinet Secretary in consultation with the Salaries and Remuneration Commission.

SMASSE stands for strengthening Mathematics and Sciences in Secondary schools, a project started by joint efforts of JICA and Kenyan government to improve on teaching methods of science and Mathematics. There is no statistical evidence that this undertaking has had any significant impact on improvement of science and mathematics in the over 15 years of its existence. There has been steady rise in performance of all subjects since 8-4-4 system of education was started in 1985.

3.3 Heads Associations

Professional associations and alliances play a significant role in articulating and designing policies that promote not just interest of members but also economic growth of any nation. Each year in Kenya heads hold countless meetings ostensibly to unravel secrets of success in replicated gatherings of district, county that in June culminate into national conference at wild waters Mombasa. Religious sponsors also organize 'retreat' meetings in some distant costly hotels making the heads be away from work stations for at least 4 weeks in a term of 13 weeks.

There are 7,325 public secondary schools in Kenya and this means parents of each school pat with around Sh200, 000 bringing the total budget for the meetings alone to about 1.5 billion shillings annually, an amount that can educate 156,283 students in day secondary school going by stipulated fees of Sh9, 374 per student. It is high time all education stakeholders including the cabinet secretary started holding one common meeting simultaneously through teleconferencing without heads having to leave their counties. This will not only save parents hundreds of millions of shillings but will enable heads to teach and monitor curriculum delivery in their respective schools.

Until mid-2015, Teachers Service Commission positions for headship used to be filled through direct appointments a procedure that was prone to corruption. Nowadays however this is done through competitive recruitment. Initially this is covering tertiary institutions and national schools. The recruitment format will be gradually rolled out to cover schools and institutions as part of a wider programme to boost performance and merit through appraisals (Othiambo, 2015). Perhaps this will help stem excesses among school heads.

3.4 Corruption in Education Ministry

According to Hallak and Poisson Corruption in the education sector can be defined as "the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of educational goods and services, and, as a consequence on access, quality or equity in education" (Hallak and Poisson, 2002). This definition combines three elements:

- (i) It is based on the usual definition of corruption in the public sector, that is 'the use of public office for private gains';
- (ii) (ii) it limits the scope of behaviours under scrutiny to those observed regularly, resulting directly from dysfunctions in the system – thus excluding individual behaviours observed only episodically and resulting primarily from the attitude of a given person;
- (iii) (iii) it establishes a link between these behaviours and their effects on the system, i.e. a reduction in the resources available, decrease in their quality, and their unequal distribution.

The ministry lacks prudent audit system due low number of staff and the few who exist are easily compromised to give clean bill of health to the school's principals. One reason why government is pushing for direct supervision of school heads by cabinet secretary is to ensure accountability of public funds.

3.5 National Order of Merit List

Table 2.5 below shows the number of candidates by mean grade attained in KCSE from 2010 to 2014. The number of KCSE candidates grew by 8.2 per cent from 445,520 in 2013 to 482,133 in 2014. The number of

candidates who scored a minimum university entry score of C+ and above increased by 21.4 per cent from 123,374 in 2013 to 149,717 in 2014 with the number of female candidates increasing by 25.1 per cent compared to that of male candidates at 19.0 per cent. The number of candidates who scored “A” plain increased by 12.9 per cent from 2,722 in 2013 to 3,073 in 2014 with the number of male candidates increasing by 15.0 per cent compared to an increase of 8.4 per cent for female candidates. This is well illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 5. KCSE performance by Gender, 2010-2014

KCSE Grade	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
A	934	632	1,315	615	1,277	698	1,855	867	2,133	940
A-	4,425	2,140	6,322	2,741	5,947	3,288	6,276	3,492	7,644	4,124
B+	8,620	4,117	11,150	5,240	11,753	5,977	10,776	6,237	12,606	7,208
B	11,616	6,557	14,793	8,151	15,962	9,221	15,315	9,341	17,941	11,378
B-	15,103	9,624	18,344	11,171	18,936	12,174	18,216	12,648	21,997	16,318
C+	19,502	13,864	22,474	16,742	22,180	16,291	21,836	16,515	25,978	21,450
C	24,329	19,440	27,631	22,334	27,134	21,771	26,492	22,079	30,669	27,989
C-	28,178	24,232	31,955	26,890	31,582	27,166	32,385	28,378	36,015	34,662
D+	30,497	26,265	34,093	29,760	35,655	31,548	37,703	34,100	38,749	37,449
D	29,532	27,329	32,995	31,397	37,694	35,872	39,672	38,505	37,365	36,136
D-	20,245	20,962	23,741	23,532	26,436	25,997	28,542	27,251	24,542	23,174
E	3,227	2,971	3,684	2,916	4,263	3,621	3,913	3,126	3,227	2,409
Total	196,288	158,133	228,497	182,089	238,819	193,624	242,981	202,539	258,896	223,237
Grand Total	354,341		410,586		432,443		445,520		482,133	

Source : Kenya National Examination Council

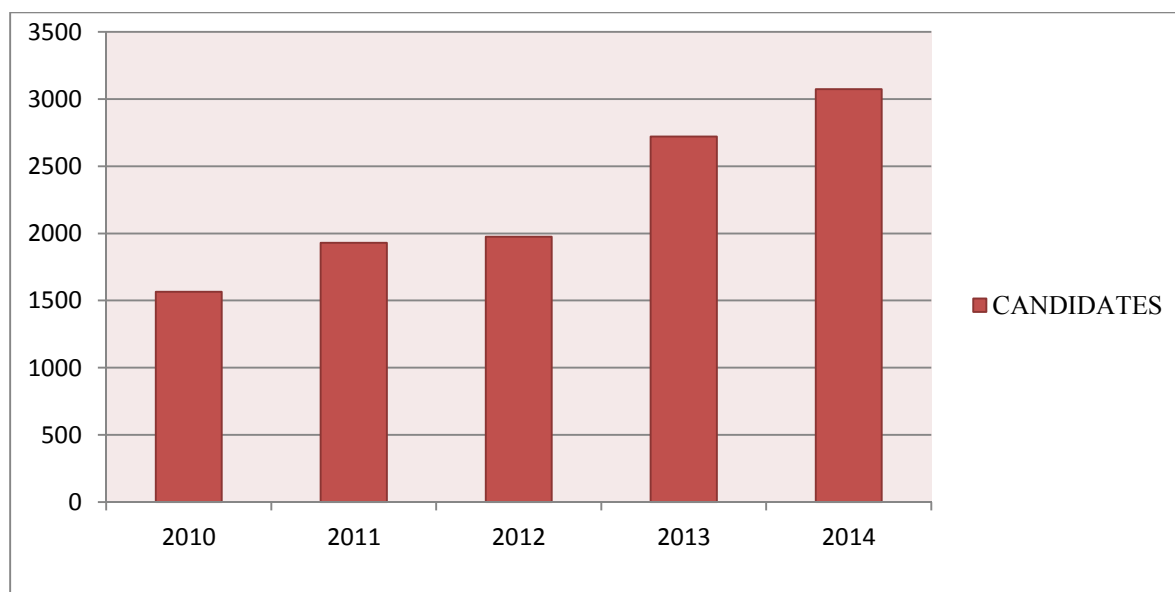


Figure 1. Candidates who scored grade ‘A’ in 2010-2014

The number of candidates who scored grade “D” plain and below declined by 10.0 per cent from 141,009 in 2013 to 126,853 in 2014. This is well illustrated in Table 3 and Figure 2.

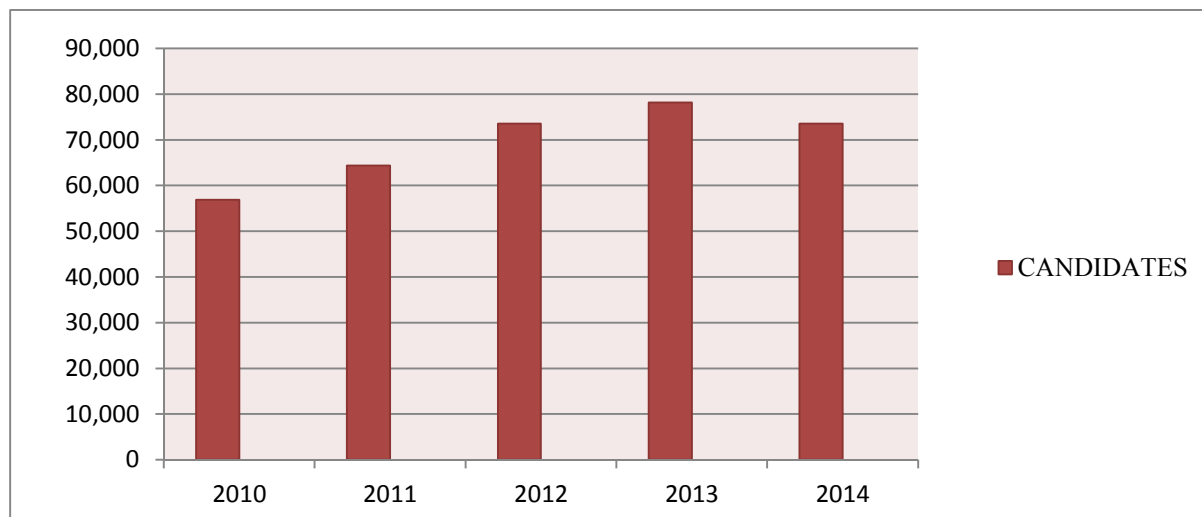


Figure 2: Candidates who scored grade 'D' in 2010-2014

Starting from November 2014, the ministry of Education abolished ranking of students and candidates in national examinations. The ranking of schools had been over glorified and resulted to some unethical practices that some schools encouraged. This included increasing costs of education and making weak students to repeat or register them in other examination centers for fear that they would pull down the school mean. Schools also down played Co-curricular activities in developing the skills and other aptitudes learners had, but were not examined in national examinations. Students with talents like sports and arts have always being disadvantaged because they cannot join better schools without making the grades (Wafula, 2014). Using mean scores alone does not give conclusive evidence of the effects of other variables such as physical resources, teacher-pupil ratio, teacher quality, teaching learning materials and school management which impact on performance. Learners are often overworked as teachers drill them for purpose of examination passing.

Examination-based system has led to an examination-based society, which does not take into account conceptualization of ideas. Ranking has led to rote learning which stresses memorization of facts while ignoring concept development of manipulative skills and attitudes. Thus teaching is geared towards performance of examination. Some schools also deliberately maintain small classes thereby making them uneconomical for the government to run. This 'rat race' is characterized by further competition amongst pupils; not only to be admitted into university, but to enter the best institutions and to get the most highly valued degrees or diplomas.

Ranking negatively affects the morale of teachers and students in poor performing schools who are criticized for not working hard. The pressure to perform, forced schools to turn students into 'machines', to memorize answers and regurgitate them in the examination room without understanding the content. The expansion of higher education and the increased number of students being admitted to universities have generated a 'rat race'.

3.6 Failure of Implementation of Cost Saving Measures

According to Onsomu, (2006) there are several options for reducing education costs at the secondary school level. Such options include increasing resource utilisation, expansion and construction of more day schools, increasing class size and improving school management systems. Ways in which schools would save on fees charged to parents include use of Biogas or Solar, use of workable Strategic Plans and Service Charters, income generating projects and introduction of School fees Vouchers.

Public secondary schools borrow huge loans that attract heavy interest to buy busses when most cooperates including government prefer to hire. The schools normally borrow seven to ten million shillings which is repayable within six years. Government no longer caters for insurance and this further increases cost of education. This has made many students have dropped out of school (Okewo and Luvega, 2015).

3.7 Failure by Sponsors to Play Their Oversight Role

According to RoK, (2012), the roles of the Sponsor include;

- (a) To participate and make recommendations of review of syllabus, curriculum, books and other teaching aids;
- (b) Representation in the School Management Committees and Board of Management;
- (c) To provide supervisory and advisory services in matters regarding spiritual development in schools including the appointment of chaplains at their own expense;
- (d) Maintenance of spiritual development while safeguarding the denomination

Although sponsors role may not include oversight in financial management the fact that they sit in boards of management and play a key role in nomination process misuse of public funds should not be witnessed as it is currently. The lack of financial muscle and dependent of cash handouts on those in attendance makes them not to have an independent mind.

3.8 Failure of Schools to Become Effective

For schools to be effective they must integrate education management information management (EMIS), which provides the planners, administrators, and managers with reliable and timely data and information necessary for decision making. In the very well performing schools, learner's progress over the essential objectives are measured, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances, as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole (UNESCO, 1991).

The effective schools like other cooperate bodies should treat parents (clients) as a fundamental pillar. A school is only as good as the parents consider it to be. If the parents constantly complain about the school, its teachers, and its decisions, children too will lose trust in the school and all what it stands for. Indeed at times it can take one a whole day to get a simple service like collection of a certificate from a public school.

3.9 Redial Teaching

Teachers continue making a kill by occupying learners almost 18 hours in a day of 24 hours subsequently channeling out 'A' class Zombies who make easy prey for second generation beer manufacturers. We lack technicians but we have engineers looking for employment and PhD holders picking tea in the era of mechanized farming. According to RoK, (2012), no pupil is supposed to be subjected to holiday tuition. Any person who gives remedial classes to students commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand shillings or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or to both. The basic Education Regulations, 2015, states very clearly the official operating hours for day and boarding schools. Day schools whether public or private shall be from Monday to Friday in following periods,

- 8.00am to 3.30pm for class hours and
- 3.30pm to 4.45 pm for co-curricular activities

The learners are required to report to school no earlier than 7.15am. The boarding schools are required to operate all through the term within the following time schedules;

- 8.00am to 3.30am for class hours from Monday to Friday.
- 3.30pm to 4.45 pm for co-curricular activities from Monday to Friday.
- 5.00pm to 7.30pm for self directed activities from Monday to Friday
- 7.30pm to 9.30 pm for preps from Monday to Friday
- 9.30 pm to 6.00am for bedtime from Monday to Friday
- 6.00am to 8.00 am for supervised routine activities

The just gazetted regulations if implemented will restore sanity in our institutions and make them effective. An effective school is one that channels out a holistic person after 4 year course. In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can obtain mastery of the school's essential curriculum. They also believe that they, the staff, have the capability to help all students obtain that mastery. In high performing schools, students are given challenging curricula and demanding tasks, and they are expected to succeed. High performing schools regard every child as an asset. Moreover, each child is considered to possess a unique gift to offer to society (Bauer, 1997). Recently there has been an acceleration of the trend of private tutoring worldwide, resulting not only in growing adverse effects on mainstream education, but also on the development of unethical behaviour and corrupt practices. In addition, remedial teaching adversely affects the teacher, learner, and curricula content.

The adverse effects of remedial teaching on teachers include; firstly, there is teacher fatigue and inefficiency when they work for several extra hours each evening. Secondly, teachers make less effort in class to ensure that every pupil is adequately prepared for examinations. Thirdly, teachers prefer to concentrate not on conducting remedial classes under their charge, but rather on earning extra income through remedial teaching.

The adversative of remedial teaching on learners include; firstly, there is heavy workload due to cumulative effort of mainstream and private tutoring that lead to learner fatigue. Secondly, there is development of a 'culture of dependency'. Learners tend to rely on private tutors for everything including homework and exam tips. Thirdly, there is lack of interest of learner at schools as well as rise in the number of absentees in the regular system of schooling.

The educational content is also affected by remedial teaching; firstly, there is narrowed scope and goals of the curriculum. While schools are expected to achieve a wide range of goals, private tutoring tends to cut topics not directly related to exams – such as academic interest, civic awareness and universal values. Secondly, there is cramming-style curriculum, which involves pupils working mechanically. Learners who simultaneously

face two different approaches may be very confused. Thirdly, creativity is stifled, which can damage the bases of economic gains. Fourthly, private tutoring becomes more important than the synergistic classroom experience, and fifthly, the dynamics of the teaching learning process in mainstream classes affected. In addition, learners tend to work mechanically, without any effort to grasp the underlying meaning. Finally, the mainstream teachers face greater disparities within their classrooms. But when private tutoring is imposed by teachers as a requirement for access to all the topics included in the curriculum, it can undermine both secondary and higher schooling.

4. Recommendations

- One option is to ensure that the students who are not likely to benefit from formal secondary schooling are provided with options to access secondary education, even through alternative methods such as distance learning and skills training.
- Kenya Certificate of Primary Education should be scrapped. In UK for instance, there is no national primary school leaving examinations. Their equivalent of the Kenya Certificate of Primary Examinations, which was called 'Eleven plus' and taken at the eleven years was scrapped. This was after public outcry sighting similar reasons facing Kenya, where rich parents will pay what it costs to have their children pass the tests and those who fail end up depressed (Wafula, 2014).
- With scrapping of Kenya Certificate of Primary Education there would be no reason to have boarding schools except among the nomadic communities. The government subsidy should only be channeled to day schools.
- Government after necessary legislation is put in place should hire private auditors to ensure prudent use of public resources.

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