

Factors Influencing Household Decisions on Access to Primary School Education in Kenya: Case Study of Uasin Gishu West District

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Abstract

The world today is aiming at achieving universal primary school education and has stated this endeavor through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Dakar Framework. Nations have been compelled to provide free and compulsory education to all and ensure that gender parity is attained by 2015. This target seems not to be achieved as anticipated by the world leaders and policy makers. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa face an uphill task towards access to primary school education as envisaged by the MDGs (UNESCO (2011)). The main objective of this study was to establish the factors that influence household decisions on access to primary school education in Kenya. The target population of this study comprised of 120 head teachers of public primary schools in Uasin Gishu west district in Kenya. The study sample comprised of 50 head teachers of public primary schools in Uasin Gishu west district. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented using percentages so as to enable the researcher to interpret the findings. The study established that household related factors can deter many households not to have their children in schooling and school related factors can encourage positively households to send their children and have them continuously in school. The study recommended that the government should develop policies geared towards poverty eradication to enable households to be economically empowered and be able to have children in school. Further the study recommended the improvement of quality in public primary

schools to make households make decisions of having their children in school especially within the context of free primary education.

Keywords: Household decisions, access to primary school education.

1.0 Introduction

The second Millennium Development Goal of the United Nations aims at achieving universal primary education by 2015 (Abhirop and Sohan, 2012) and the Dakar framework, 2000 compelled nations to provide free and compulsory education to all and ensure gender parity is achieved (UNESCO, 2005). This situation indicates the world commitment to access to primary school education and countries are supposed to develop policies that are geared towards achieving this endeavor. But despite these attempts and changes in enrollment in many countries, recent findings indicate that the target is unlikely to be achieved (Abhirop and Sohan, 2012) as a result of high dropout rates which is a critical issue currently. The Sub-Saharan countries are facing an uphill task of attaining the goal two of the MDGs for there is uneven access among regions and may not attain the goal by 2015 (UNESCO, 2011).

Following the attainment of independence in 1963, the government of Kenya and the people has been committed to expanding access to primary school education. These have been through policy formulation, policy implementation, policy evaluation and recommendations of various education commissions (Vandermortele, 2002). The Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 is perceived by many scholars to be the cornerstone of Kenya's policy on education. The policy document articulated the eradication of illiteracy, disease and poverty which were an impediment to access to primary school education. The Ominde report of 1964 was a catalyst to expansion of primary school education in Kenya. The report did recommend the end of racial segregation and other forms of discrimination in education. This opened the way for the country to provide education to all and became a signatory to various International Conventions and charters on education (UNESCO, 2000, Republic of Kenya, 2005).

The enrolment in primary schools as a result of policy implementation rose from 891,533 in 1963 to 7,632,199 in 2006 (Republic of Kenya, 2006, Wambua and Ingubu, 2011). The government re-introduced Free Primary school education in 2003 to enable those who had been excluded to join schooling. An estimated 5-6% of children who are enrolled in schools are not able to complete a grade, and 15-16% repeats grades annually in Kenya though the FPE policy is in place (Yungungu and Wambua, 2007). This situation is creating a worrying trend in the access to primary school education and might result in the country not attaining the EFA goals by 2015 has anticipated (Kipngetch, 2012). Ndege and Ngesu, (2007) noted that the decision by the government to provide FPE is not a solution to access to primary school education as children of school age are still out of school or drop out. The decision to enroll, participate fully in learning and complete a grade and level should be sought from the household decisions.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Since the attainment of independence in 1963, the government of Kenya has committed to expand education system with the purpose of ensuring that all eligible children have access to education. Free primary education was introduced in 1974 from standard 1-4 and later to all classes in primary schools in 1978 and this resulted in high enrolments which were short-lived. The structural Adjustment Programme introduced in the 1980's and 1990's made parents to pay for the education of their children. The cost-sharing policy had a negative impact on access to primary school education leading to enrollment dropping to 5.8 million in 2002 (Bunyi, 2006, Too, 2007). The government re-introduced free primary education in January 2003, enrollment rose by 20.58%, which is from 6,314,726 to 7,614,326 and about 1.5 million children who were out of school were able to enroll in primary school education. Still about 3 million children were not enrolled in school though there is free primary education (UNESCO, 2005).

The government decision to abolish fees in primary school education does not seem to be the panacea to the problem of access to primary school education in Kenya. Ndege and Ngesu (2007), notes that the abolition of fees may not be a solution to low access in primary school education. Patrinos (2007), there is no evidence that spending more money by the state or parents improves enrollment. Parents decision to enroll, have their children continue learning and graduate from schooling seems to be determined by other factors that are related to household decisions.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Meaning of Access to Education

Access to primary school education has to deal with the government having the ability to know how many children are supposed to be enrolled, learning, repeat, drop-out and complete schooling annually (UNESCO, 2005). The government should have proper statistics so as to determine if all eligible children of primary school age have the opportunities to enroll, learn, progress and transit to secondary school level. This understanding will seek explanations has to why children do not enroll, participate in learning, progress through grades and transit to secondary school education. Kgobe (2007), Otero and McCoshan (2005), access has to deal with the initial entry, transition through grades and eventual graduation. This emphasizes on the entry of every eligible children to school, learning of quality, and continued learning resulting into transition or graduation. No child should repeat any grade and be able to acquire knowledge and skills compared to the returns associated with the grade. This situation of access to primary school education determines how efficient the education system is in ensuring that full access is achieved.

Access to primary school education is a result of the interaction of both the demand and supply factors (Lewin, 2007). The supply side factors remains important to those who were initially excluded and for those enrolled in learning under conditions which affect their successful completions. Colchough, Samer and Rose (2003), the critical supply side factors include school location (i.e. Distance to school), teachers training and deployment, availability of textbooks

and physical facilities. The patterns of demand side factors shape the entry, progression, completion, transition and are often gendered. The critical demand side factors are related to decisions to participate in schooling. Lewin (2007) concludes that how demand has been changing and how supply interacts with demand are central issues in exploring access to primary school education. The nature of the relationship between the household characteristics and schooling decisions is not well understood and needs further research (Ngware, Aketch and Ezeh, 2008). They further point out that proper understanding of this interaction can well be understood within the implementation of the FPE in Kenya and other countries that have the project in place. Government preference is seen within the FPE policy for it aims at keeping all or most the children in school for equity purpose.

2.2 School Related Factors

Countries that want to achieve the goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) must understand and provide policy guidelines on the issue of access. Policies have to be formulated that accelerates the enrolment of children and improve the ability to retain them in school (Birdsal, Levine and Amina, 2005). There are factors that make children not to enroll and continue to learn so as to improve access to primary school education. These factors are related to government policies, school factors and household/family factors (Wikan, 2008). In Africa, however, a few countries have developed and implemented policies that are geared towards promoting access to primary school education. Kenya, Malawi and Uganda have introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) where all children of primary school age are eligible to attend school without payment of fees (UNESCO, 2005). Despite the introduction of FPE in Kenya, the country still faces the problem of access to primary school education. The ministry of education notes the challenges that face the government in her efforts to improving access to primary School education (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

Household decisions to send their children to school are determined by several factors to include the cost of school participation, school quality and physical facilities and they are gender biased (Colchough, Samer and Rose, 2003). They argue that these factors are interlinked and must be taken into consideration to explain why children do not have access to primary school education. Besides market factors, one's schooling decisions are closely associated with household resources and decisions (Berhman and Knowles, 1999). The school quality in terms of academic achievement, physical facilities and the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) determine how households make decisions to enroll and withdraw their children. Glewwe and Zhao (2008) suggest that improving the quality of education may be a necessary pre-condition of enhancing and achieving the EFA goals. Low quality is partially attributed to absence and low Pupil-Teacher ratio. Poor PTR have an implication on the quality of teaching and the coverage of the curriculum (Kelly, 2000). The scarce resources in schools affect access to primary school education among many children from households that are poor (Nilson, 2003). In their observations, Barbara, Mingat and Malala (2003) observe that an additional one classroom of forty and one teacher per classroom will assist in the projected attainment of universal primary education by 2015 in many countries. An additional one kilometer between home and school implies a 20% and 40% decline in the probability of access of girls and boys respectively in Ivory

Coast. The household related factors play an important role in the demand for schooling and are determined at times by factors beyond the family.

2.3 Household Related Factors

The level of schooling that parents choose for their children is determined by private and marginal costs and benefits (Deololakar, 1997). A troubled household economic situation may be a deterrent to enrolment than lack of access to primary school education (Glewwe and Zhao, 2005). There are a number of direct and indirect costs faced by households which is often compared to the future benefits accrued as a result of education and places demand levels on household on education. Poverty significantly reduces the likelihood of school participation (Craig, Kelly and Jemison, 2004). The number of children a household has affects the distribution of resources and the presence of children less than five years old tend to be associated with lower enrolment rates than the older siblings. The age and gender of the child is likely to be relevant in school enrolment decisions. Child labor must not stand in the way of education (UNESCO, 2005). And families have their children labor to earn extra income and do domestic work even at the age of 5-6 years (Wikan, 1982). In most Sub-Saharan African countries, girls are hard hit by lack of access compared to boys. They are involved in both domestic and labor market jobs and the household decisions to enroll favor boys than girls (Wikan, 1982). Household decisions are influenced by cultural/religious factors, making girls to have fewer opportunities compared to boys (Asian Development Bank, 2001). Girls who enroll in grade one, only 34% complete primary schooling compared to 70% boys (Cohen, Bloom and Malin, 2006). The repetition and drop-out rates disadvantages both genders, but the worst affected are girls.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Target Population

The researcher used descriptive research design. Descriptive design discusses the state of the problem as it exists at the present and the researcher has no control over the variables of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The researcher reports the findings about what happened and is able to discuss the course of the problem (Kothari, 2003). The data was collected to give incidences, distribution and relationships between the study variables so as to explain the problem of the study, for the independent variable had already exerted the effect on the dependent variable.

The researcher used closed questionnaire so as to gain insight on the household decisions on access to primary school education in Uasin Gishu west district in Kenya. The questionnaire was used after it had been tested through piloting in another district in Kenya with similar characteristics to the study area and to solicit for responses related to the research variables. The study adopted simple random sampling techniques for the study involved a homogeneous sample consisting of head teachers of primary schools. Neumann (2000) points out that the main factor to consider in determining the sample size is the need to keep it manageable enough, so as to enable the researcher to get detailed data from it. The study targeted all

public primary schools in Uasin Gishu west district. There are 151 primary schools in the district of which 120 are public and 31 are private. The target population was the 120 public primary school head teachers and the sample population was 50 head teachers.

A quantitative method of research was used to get the study data where the respondents answered a questionnaire. Many studies which deals with access to schooling draws on a range of approaches. Many studies use quantitative approach and derive data based on factors related to the household and the school characteristics (Aketch and Sommerset). Data collected was edited to eliminate errors and omissions in order to ensure accuracy, completeness and clarity. The data was tabulated to the relevant variables of the study using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The data was analyzed percentages. The researcher had to keep to the research ethics; the respondents were informed of the nature and rational of the study and respect to individual rights and personal integrity and assurance to anonymity, confidentiality and ability to withdraw from the study any time they wish to do so.

4.0 The Findings Of The study And Discussion

The analyzes of study revealed that household decisions on access to primary school education is influenced by household and school related factors and both act to encourage or discourage children access to schooling. The research questionnaire was used to identify household related factors. Table 4.1 shows the household related factors that are likely to influence household decisions on access to primary school education. The results shows that majority of the households face many challenges that are related to having their children enroll, learn, and progress through the grades without repetition or dropping out of schooling. One or several of these factors can act to be a deterrent to many households in ensuring that their children are able to enroll and eventually graduate in each grade and level of schooling years.

Figure 4.1 Household related factors

Variables	frequency	Percentage
Parental income	14	28
Number of school going children	11	22
Parental income	8	16
Parental level of education	6	12
Cultural factors	6	12
Gender of child	5	10

The study found that 28% of the study sample pointed to parental income as the main factor influencing household decisions on access to primary school education. The number of school going children in the family/household 22%, parental income was 16%, parental level of education was 12%, cultural factors 12% and gender of child 10%. This clearly shows that the household related factors have an influence on household decisions on access to primary school education. The feelings that these factors act as deterrents to access to education are

consistent with others like Glewwe and Zhao, (2008) who noted that a troubled household, economic situation may be a deterrent to enrollment. School enrollment and participation decisions are determined solely by the current income of the family. The income received by a family influences the child participation at different levels (Glewwe, et al, 2008). The income affects how much cost a family is able to incur to have the child in school. The household decision to enroll one in school is based on the cost which is determined by income (World Bank, 2004). Poverty which is an indicator of low income is a hindrance to primary school education (Bunyi, 2006). Deololakar (1997) argues that boys from rich background are advantaged unlike the poor who have lower enrollment potentials. Family allocation of the available resources affects girls than boys for they prefer to have boys attend school than girls. Poor families view children as an additional source of income by involving them in both domestic work and labor, thus making them not to enroll or participate in schooling. Parents send boys to school and girls to work, thus disadvantaging their access to primary school education (Wikan, 2008).

The number of school going children and the rank of siblings affects the distribution of family resources to education. Children who are less than 5 years tend to be associated with lower enrollment rates than older siblings (Cynthia and Hewett, 1999). Household resources will be strained in an attempt to have children in school and many families will incur higher costs to have their children in school. The more children a family have, the less likely to enroll them in school. Household factors relating to access to primary school education include the status of the girl and women in society, age of the girl, labor and initiation rites. Cultural practices and the existence of gendered division of labor within the family can lead to higher opportunity costs being associated with schooling of the girls relative to that of boys. Early domestic responsibilities among girls are in conflict with the pursuit of education (Deololakar, 1997). The status of women and the perception of them being potential mothers and not breadwinners have seen girls to be married early instead of attending school (World Bank, 2005). Many boys and girls undergo initiation rites that prepare them for marriage instead of schooling. There are always changes of attitudes towards education immediately they undergo the rite (World Bank, 2005). Cultural norms, traditional beliefs and practices have a strong influence on girl's enrollment, participation and performance in school (Deololakar, 1997).

4.2 School Related Factors

The study findings indicate that factors outside the household are vital in influencing decisions by households to have their children in schooling. The school related factors are of necessity when it comes to decisions by households to have their children in school. Table 4.2 shows the school related factors that influence household decisions on access to primary school education.

Table 4.2 school related factors

Variables	frequency	percentage
Pupil-teacher ratio	12	24
Academic Performance	11	22
School facilities	10	20
Distance to school	7	14
Teaching - learning resources	6	12
Cost of schooling	4	8

As shown from the table, among the school related factors identified were pupil-teacher ratio 24%, teaching and learning resources 12% and academic performance 22% which are inter-related to each other. This will act to make many households to get their children in school. This finding is in line with the views of Hanushek and Hoffman, (2007) that the quality of learning is highly dependent on how the content is designed and carried out. Any school positive impact is based on the human resource which implements the curriculum (Craig, Kelly and Jemison, 2004). Learning is achieved when teachers are able to interact with pupils and are qualified. Quality is determined by the ability of the learners to complete their assignments, pass in tests and ability to comprehend the subjects taught. Poor teacher-pupil ratio has an impact on the quality of teaching and coverage of the curriculum. Regular attendance in school will influence the performance in tests that are also used by schools to make decisions of pupils' entry to next class (Levin, 2007). The study found that the cost of schooling was 8% indicating that most of the costs of schooling in Kenya are associated with uniform and transport. Household decisions to send their children to school are determined by several factors to include the cost of school participation, school quality and physical facilities and they are gender biased (Colchough, Samer and Rose, 2003). They argue that these factors are interlinked and must be taken into consideration to explain why children do not have access to primary school education. Besides market factors, one's schooling decisions are closely associated with household resources and decisions (Berhman and Knowles, 1999). The school quality in terms of academic achievement, physical facilities and the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) determine how households make decisions to enroll and withdraw their children. Poor PTR have an implication on the quality of teaching and the coverage of the curriculum (Kelly, 2000). The availability of physical facilities and teaching and learning resources in schools encourage household to send their children to school and these have also an impact on curriculum implementation. The scarce resources in schools affect access to primary school education among many children from households that are poor (Nilson, 2003). In their observations, Barbara, Mingat and Malala (2003) observe that an additional one classroom of forty and one teacher per classroom will assist in the projected attainment of universal primary education by 2015 in many countries. The study found that distance to school was 14% which play a role in having children in school and schools within reach for households will be encouraging them to have children continue schooling as research indicates that an additional one kilometer between home and school implies a 20% and 40% decline in the probability of access of girls and boys respectively

in Ivory Coast. The household related factors play an important role in the demand for schooling and are determined at times by factors beyond the family.

5.0 Summary, Conclusions And Recommendations

5.1 Summary

The world today is committed to ensuring that all children of school age are enrolled in school and complete the Basic education. Through the MDGs, the United Nations has made nations to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015 (Abhiroop and Sohan, 2012). Access to universal primary school education is a global agenda and country has to put in place policies that will encourage households to have their children enrolled, learn and complete schooling and statistical data is vital in this endeavor (UNESCO, 2011). This understanding will enable governments to seek explanation as to why and how children of school age are not able to enroll, enroll and drop out of school (Kgobe, 2007); within context, it is imperative for a country to understand why households are not able to have their children in school yet there is free primary education. Kenya currently has a policy of free primary school education, but children still are not enrolling, some enroll and drop out of school. The study sought to establish the influence of household decisions on access to primary school education. Household decisions therefore are influenced by factors within and without it such that the enrollment of children is affected by these factors. This study was carried out in Uasin Gishu west district of Kenya and involved fifty head teachers of public primary schools

The study findings found out those household related factors contribute immensely to household decision on access to primary school education and this can act to deter many households not to enroll or have their children drop out of school before completion. The school related factors can have positive impact on household decisions on access to primary school education. The school related factors are important on encouraging households to enroll their children and retention rates can rise as a result of the positive impact of school quality. The school internal efficiency will have many households being encouraged to send their children to school and having them continue schooling till completion.

6.0 Conclusions

The study sought to establish the influence of household decisions on access to primary school education in Kenya, case study of Uasin Gishu west District. The research found out that factors related to the household influences household decisions on access to primary school education. The household decision to have children enroll, learn and graduate is basically determined by factors within it and can negatively influence their decisions to have children enroll and remain in school till completion time. The school related factors can positively encourage households to enroll and continuously have their children remain in school till completion of the level.

7.0 Recommendations

Access to primary school education is a global agenda and a noble cause that each state and household should endeavor to accomplish and countries need to understand why children are not in school. This study thus, recommends that Kenya has to put in place poverty eradication policies. This situation will improve the livelihood of many households, thus being able to have their children continue schooling. There is need for government to improve the quality in public primary schools so as to attract children who are supposed to benefit from its free primary education policy.

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