

Abstract

Adequate funding of the education sector is crucial to the provision of quality education for all (OECD, 2016). Financing of education is the greatest enabler of learners to participate in education and flow through education system from entry to exit. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) on participation rates in public secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The targeted respondents included School Principals and their Deputies from 196 secondary schools in Makueni County as well as 9 Sub County Directors of Education from Makueni County. Data collection instruments included questionnaires for Principals, Deputy Principals and interview schedule for Sub-county Directors of Education. The instruments were ascertained through piloting and by research experts to ascertain content validity while reliability was achieved through piloting and testing reliability. Data collection registered a response rate of 91.8%. The data was analyzed by use of SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically through content analysis and the responses were presented in narratives. Tables and figures were used to present the analyzed data. The results revealed that there was statistically significant relationship between FDSE capitation grants and participation rates in public secondary schools in Makueni County. This was at R values of 0.67 which was positive and significant with values of 0.014. From this result the study concludes that Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) capitation grants influence students' participation rates in public secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. The qualitative results also confirmed that education subsidies influence students' participation rates in public secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. The study recommends that government should sustain and increase capitation grants to schools and also partner with other stakeholders in financing education to enhance students' participation rates in education.