

## ABSTRACT

In pursuance of provision of Education for All, Free Secondary Education (FSE) policy was adopted in 2008 to enhance access, improve quality, equity, relevance and Gender Parity in the provision of secondary school education in Kenya. The first cycle of students who benefitted from FSE policy graduated in 2011. The national mean Gender Parity Index (GPI) for 2004 to 2007 was 0.88 while in Kericho County it was 0.69 lower than national. The form to form transition fluctuated as between 9,103 and 9,333 in Kericho County while Students' mean scores in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education on average was 5.39. This means that GPI, repetition, dropout, wastage and students academic achievements were concerns that were to be addressed by FSE policy, however, its influence was unknown. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to establish influence of FSE Policy on GPI, repetition, dropout, wastage and students academic achievement in Kericho County. Objectives of the study were to; determine the influence of FSE policy on GPI; repeaters rate, dropout rate, wastage rate and students academic achievement in Kericho County. The study was based on the concept of investment choices and consequently a conceptual framework was formulated. The independent variable was FSE policy and dependent variables were GPI, repeater rate, dropout rates, wastage rates and students academic achievement. Descriptive, *ex-post factos* and correlational research designs were adopted. The study population was 4,457 Principals, Sub County Quality Assurance and Standard Officers, Directors of Studies and form IV students of 2011. The sample size was 485. Snowball and saturated sampling techniques were used to select respondents. Questionnaire, interview schedules, Focus Group Discussion guide and document analysis guide were used to collect data. Supervisors validated the instruments. Reliability coefficient of the principals' questionnaire was 0.80 at set p-value of 0.05. Quantitative data was analyzed using cohort analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was transcribed and analyzed in emergent themes and sub themes. The study established that there was a moderate negative relationship between FSE policy and GPI with a coefficient of -0.44 at a p-value of 0.05, meaning it accounted for 19% of the variation. There was a weak positive relationship between FSE policy and repeater rate GPI with a coefficient of 0.0016 at a p-value of 0.05, meaning it accounted for 0.16% of the variation. There was a moderate negative relationship between FSE policy and dropout as signified by a coefficient of -0.31 at a p-value of 0.05, meaning it accounted for 10% of the variation. There was a weak negative relationship between FSE policy and wastage rate with a coefficient of -0.22 at a p-value of 0.05, meaning it accounted for 5% of the variation. There was a moderate positive relationship between FSE policy and students' academic achievement with a coefficient of 0.69 at a p-value of 0.05, meaning it accounted for 48% of the variation. The study concluded that FSE policy reduced GPI, drop out and wastage rates; and enhanced students' academic achievement but had very low influence on repetition rates. The study recommended that FSE fund should be reviewed upward to increase GPI, improve further on Students academic achievement and reduce educational wastage rates. The findings of this study are significant to stakeholders in education as it informs them on the need to review the policy with a view to improving secondary school education so as to achieve the objectives of FSE policy.