

Although the Kenyan government is providing direct grants to secondary schools through Free Secondary Education (FSE) financing scheme, internal efficiency challenges in form of low access and retention continue to be pervasive. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting access and retention of the boy-child in public secondary schools of Mathioya District. The objectives were to assess the situation of enrolment and dropout in Mathioya District Secondary schools in the period 2005- 2011, to determine the economic, school related and household/community related factors affecting access and retention of the boy-child in the study district. The study also sought to establish measures that could be put in place to improve access and retention in public secondary schools in the district. The researcher was guided by the Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunity. A descriptive survey design was used to collect data from all the respondents. The researcher used stratified random sampling to get a sample of 9 schools and all the 9 principals of the sampled schools were included in the study. The researcher used random sampling to obtain 20 students from each school from form 1 to 4; 6 teachers from each school and 4 parents from sampled school. Then the District Education Officer (D.E.O) and District Quality and Assurance Officer were included in the sample. These made a sample size of 281 respondents. The study used questionnaires for principals and teachers, interviews were conducted for parents /guardians and the key informants. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used to collect information from students. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequency counts and percentages, and presented using frequency tables and bar graphs. Qualitative data were analyzed by arranging responses according to research questions and objectives. The study found that since the district has fewer boys' boarding schools than for girls, the enrolment of boys was higher in mixed day school than that of girls. The study found that the enrolment was higher in single sex schools than co-education schools. It also found that even with Free Secondary Education (FSE), boys continued to drop out of schools. The most prominent causes of low access and retention of boys in public secondary schools in the district were: low family financial status; high cost of education; child labour; poor performance; love relationship; understaffing; influence of Mungiki sect; peer influence, drug and substance abuse. The findings showed that there are economic, schools related and household/community related factors that pose a threat to achievement of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the district. This calls for attention from all stakeholders. The study recommends that the government should unite with other stakeholders to conduct aggressive campaigns to sensitize community on importance of educating all children: establish more single sex boarding schools; formulate policies for readmitting dropouts to reduce wastage and explore alternative sources of income to reduce vulnerability of poor parents in pockets of poverty areas. Most important the government through county administration should unsparingly deal with the militia groups like Mungiki. The research findings would help to add knowledge of the boy-child education that currently has limited literature. This would guide the education policy makers to formulate new policies or improve the existing ones for a more effective implementation of secondary education program in the country.