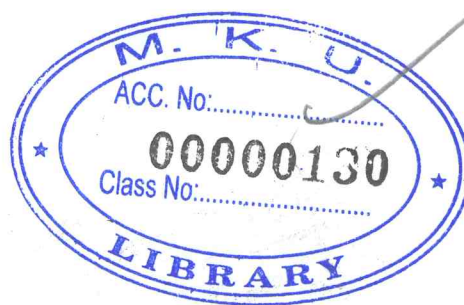


**EFFECTIVENESS OF FREE EDUCATION IN CURBING STUDENTS' DROP
OUT IN PUBLIC DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IMENTI SOUTH
DISTRICT, MERU COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Education forms the basis upon which economic, social and political development of any nation is founded. Investment in education can help to foster economic growth, enhance productivity, contribute to national and social development, and reduce social inequality. The launch of Free Secondary Education (FSE) in 2008 was meant to address low levels of transition, access, and completion rates at the secondary level. Despite the effort put by the government in provision of FSE, drop out is still prevalent in Imenti South District. The purpose of this study therefore, was to investigate the effectiveness of FSE in curbing drop out of students' in public day secondary schools in Imenti South District. The study was guided by specific objectives which included adequacy of tuition funding, availability of learning infrastructure and management of student discipline. The literature reviewed was also guided by the study objectives. The study adopted descriptive survey design using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The target population was 221 teachers, 40 principals in the 40 public secondary schools and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer in Imenti South District. Validity and reliability of the research instruments were established by conducting a pilot study to establish their suitability. Data obtained from all the research questions was coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16) computer software. The quantitative data was analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistics and presented in frequency distribution tables, charts and graphs. The qualitative data was analyzed by examining relationships and making authentic conclusions. Based on the study findings, it was established that students were still dropping out from day secondary schools despite the provisions of FSE. The study established that the tuition fund provided by the government was not adequate and the principals were requiring parents to pay tuition levies. Further, the learning infrastructure in the schools was found to be either inadequate or unavailable. On management of student discipline, it was established that the methods used to handle student issues caused them to drop out of school and at the same time there were discipline issues caused by factors beyond the control of the school. There is therefore need, to address adequately the factors that contribute to dropout in order for free day secondary schools to be effective in provision of quality education. Based on the findings the study made recommendations and suggested areas for further research. The study findings will benefit the education stakeholders in coming up with strategies to address the factors that contribute to drop outs in public day secondary schools in Kenya.

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