

Abstract:

This was a study that investigated the gender factor in relation to the participation of girls in high school education. The study was limited to understanding girls' participation in high school education in selected secondary schools within Chuluni division in Kitui district. It examined the challenges facing girls in the course of their studies. It also sought the community members' views on girls' education as compared to the boys'. Moreover the study sought to establish the intervention efforts currently in place to addressing girls' education. Finally, it sought what could be done to ensure girls remain at school until they complete the highest level of education. The students in school and those who dropped out were the main respondents. The demographic data helped to establish background of the respondents. The sample was drawn from form two, form three and forms four secondary students. Data was generated from both secondary and primary sources. Purposive sampling was applied to get the division and the district in which units of observation have the required characteristics. The three schools in Chuluni division purposively selected were Kaluva Mixed day and boarding secondary school, Mbitini mixed day secondary school and Mbitini girls' secondary school. Snow ball sampling was used to reach girls out of school. The tool for data collection was a set of questionnaires specifically designed for the students in and out of school. A key approach adopted by the study was Focus Group Discussion (FGD) supplemented by indepth interviews and also the study made use of direct observations that were guided by observation guide or checklist. Furthermore the inferential and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. Data was coded and entered into the computer for analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings were useful in establishing the gender factor in girls' education and its relation to their participation in high education. Most of the respondents cited that they faced many challenges in the course of their studies and this really affected their participation in high school education. More than 95 % of the respondents concurred that they had witnessed their classmates drop out of school due to lack of school fees, early marriage and long distances to schools. Over 90% said prompt payment of school fees was their greatest challenge. The study also revealed that 56 % of girls in school lacked fees while 61.2 % respectively of girls who dropped out said that fee was the greatest challenge. 51% of the parents strongly on gender based equality in education. On the community members' views on the secondary education, the study revealed that many parents (51.2%) aspired equally the same to their sons' education but were not paying fees promptly for their daughters as compared to the sons. On the intervention efforts being made, 29% of the respondents had gotten bursary allocation while 32% had not gotten any assistance at all. However principals responded that they offered employment to the very needy parents at school and deducted part of the fees from their salary as an effort to retain the girls in school. The study indicated that the majority of girls (98%) wanted to participate to the highest level of education but there were many hindrances they faced. Over 33% of the respondents needed boarding facilities since distance and security to school posed great challenge. Recommendations sought to put in place measures that would ensure retention of girls in school and improve participation of the girl child in education. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made. That there was a compelling need to enhance girls' education and promote equity in education through development of sound educational policies. There was need to inculcate awareness in stakeholders namely the community and the parents /guardians, teachers and girls the importance of girls education and ways of ensuring retention of girls at school until completion of school.

The Ministry of Education to finance adequate funding of education especially in the marginalized areas.