Influence of Learner Capitation Grants on Retention Rates of Pupils in Public Primary Schools in Kenya A Case Study of Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties

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ABSTRACT

Primary education is the foundation for secondary and tertiary education. Quality of education is critical to socio-economic growth and productivity of a country. Countries all over the world have invested heavily in Education. The Kenyan government through its commitment in education introduced Free Primary Education in the year 2003 to help provide quality, relevant, accessible and inclusive education for all children of school going age with an aim of improving retention rates, completion rates and pupil academic performance in schools. Despite the heavy investment, completion rates, retention rates and pupil's academic performance in schools was still a challenge. The objective of the study was to determine the influence of capitation grant on retention rates of Pupils in Public Primary Schools in Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties. The study was guided by the Resource Dependency Theory by Salancik (1978) which postulate that human organizations are not self-sufficient and must acquire essential resources from external bodies to achieve the set objectives. In this case, the resource is learner capitation grant; and liberal Classical theory of equal opportunity by Rousseau which postulates that the natural statesmen are born equal and personal qualities should not jeopardize social equality so long as society rewards people according to their status. The study established that government capitation grant had high influence on retention rates of pupils in the school with overall mean rating of 4.00 and accounted for 13.5% of retention rates with an adjusted R square coefficient 0.135. The study recommended that learner capitation grants should be increased to enhance retention rates further. The Findings of this study are useful to stakeholders in education for policy formulation with regards to retention rates.

Keywords: Influence, Learner Capitation Grants, Retention Rates, Pupils, Public Primary Schools, Kenya. Case study Suba West, Mbita Sub-Counties

INTRODUCTION

Donors, namely World Bank (WB), United Nations (UN) and USAID had always supported the provision of education for all, and in this respect, they boosted investment in fundamentals of education to help in learner retention to completion and to do better in their academic performance in learning institutions (Montiel, Cuervo-Cazurra, Park, Antolín-López, and Husted, 2021). It is important to note that statistics presented at the Amman Mid-Decade Review of the Jomtien Conference by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) revealed that retention and completion rates were still an issue and big challenge for many countries of the world despite of the good progress made in some developed countries of the world with better funding models. This is despite the serious commitments made by various governments, United Nations Children's fund (UNICEF) and other donor organizations do aim at meeting basic learning needs to overcome educational inequalities and to realize Education for All demands (UNESCO, 2022).

Studies conducted by the Ministry of Education, Singapore (2025) reveal that government funding of education lead to an increase in retention and completion rates of learners in various schools. Singapore's education system demonstrates exceptionally high pupil retention rates across all levels. At the primary level, more than 95–97% of learners remain enrolled until completion, supported by the Compulsory Education Act which mandates six years of primary schooling. Secondary school retention is similarly strong, with over 90%

of learners continuing through to completion, and dropout rates consistently below 2%. These outcomes are reinforced by extensive financial assistance schemes, targeted support for learners with special educational needs, and multiple post-secondary pathways (junior colleges, polytechnics, ITE, and arts institutions) that reduce attrition by accommodating diverse talents (Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2025). According to the World Bank (2005), the achievement of a high rate of retention and completion in the developed countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Germany, Great Britain and others has been greatly embraced through a subsidized education system that was introduced to adequately fund the poor children in their education to ensure their retention, completion and better academic performance. Germany also records strong retention outcomes, reflecting its well-established dual vocational and academic system. OECD data shows that over 90% of German learners remain in education through upper secondary, while primary retention is nearly universal at 95% or higher. The apprenticeship model, which combines classroom learning with workplace training, ensures that students who might otherwise leave school remain engaged in structured learning. This system reduces dropout rates and provides a clear pathway for learners into the labour market, contributing to Germany's consistently high retention rates (OECD, 2024).

In Canada, when school fees were integrated into education system, the government found that there were some parents who were unable to afford school fees (UNICEF, 2018). This inability made the government intervene in the provision of subsidized education, which ensured learners were retained in schools to achieve their educational desires. This led to high retention rates and completion rates in many schools (Khamati &Nyongesa, 2013). Studies conducted by Sharma (2019) in India indicate that no society can prosper and advance if the majority of its people lack basic education. The study emphasizes the need to ensure learners of school going age are given the necessary support to ensure they are retained in schools to achieve their various educational aspirations. The idea of supporting learners in their education has greatly been supported by Datzberger (2022), who also emphasizes on the need for learners' better education for a more productive society. This is the reason behind the huge budgetary allocation of India's funding to the education sector as compared to other sectors in the country. Globally, OECD systems retain most learners through upper secondary and achieve comparatively strong completion and proficiency, while African systems-especially low- and lower-middle-income contexts-struggle to sustain continuity beyond primary and to secure minimum competency in literacy and numeracy. In retention, high-performing OECD countries typically keep over 85–90% of a cohort engaged through upper secondary, with the USA's high school continuity consistent with graduation rates around 86–88%, Ireland and Israel above 90%, Sweden near 80–85%, and Mexico markedly lower at about 60–70%. Completion follows a similar pattern: upper secondary completion commonly exceeds 90% in Ireland and Israel, is roughly 80–85% in Sweden, around 86–88% in the USA, and closer to 60–70% in Mexico.

Synthesis Of Literature On Influence Of Learner Capitation Grant On Retention Rates Of Pupils In Public Primary Schools

Across the world, many children of school going age are unable to be retained in schools to acquire the basic knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for survival in life (UNESCO, 2018). The majority of learners about 57 million worldwide most of whom reside in Africa do not complete their basic education (Ampiah et al, 2019). This calls for world governments to come up with well-designed systems of allocating funds since money for funding comes from public budgets. In Countries such as the United States of America, Great Britain and Canada, education has been subsidized and a well-established funding models put in place; doing away with gender disparities in education and ensuring equity in learning institutions. According to Barro et al, (2015). The Canadian Government found out that some parents were unable to afford school fees when school fees were integrated in education system. Rueckert (2019) also posited that while basic education is theoretically free in many countries, illegal fees charged on compulsory items like uniforms, assessments, lunch programmes, extra lessons, payment of board teachers or funds to support school buildings among other school activities see parents forced to pay fees indirectly against the laid down government policies. This has made both primary and secondary education in most countries expensive, forcing children from poor and vulnerable backgrounds to have very low school attendance hence low retention rates in schools. This inability to meet extra educational demands has made many governments both in developing and developed nations, to intervene in the provision of subsidized education, which has, largely enhanced retention rates in schools (Khamati &Njoroge, 2013).

In the Netherlands, retention rates are generally stronger. The OECD's Education at a Glance 2025 shows that 85% of learners complete upper secondary education, placing the Netherlands above the OECD average (OECD, 2025b). The Dutch education system is characterized by multiple pathways-general secondary, vocational (MBO), and pre-university tracks-which helps accommodate diverse learners needs. However, dropout rates are higher in vocational education compared to general secondary, and debates continue around international student retention, particularly at the tertiary level. Recent government policies aimed at limiting foreign student enrolment have raised concerns about long-term retention and workforce supply (ICEF Monitor, 2025).Overall, while both countries record retention rates close to or above the OECD average, the UK struggles more with socioeconomic inequality and teacher shortages, whereas the Netherlands faces challenges in vocational pathways and international student retention. Both systems highlight the importance of equity-focused policies to ensure that all learners complete their education.

In Germany and Mexico, high retention rates were noted among those learners whose mothers were not highly educated. However, a number of single parents had challenges paying extra levies in schools, and this negatively affected their retention rates in schools (Forde, Martin, Horgan & Parkers, 2018). The studies looked at factors that influence retention of learners in school but did not compute retention rates which could have added value to the study. The current study looked at influence of learner capitation grant on retention rates in public primary schools; a gap the current study has addressed. Globally, retention rates are shaped not only by policy but also by the availability and quality of school infrastructure. In OECD countries such as Ireland, Sweden, Israel, and the USA, classrooms are generally well-equipped, averaging 20–25 pupils per class, with adequate ventilation, lighting, and furniture. This is contrary to many schools in developing countries. Libraries are standard features, offering access to textbooks, reference materials, and ICT resources that support independent learning. Playgrounds and sports facilities are common, encouraging attendance and holistic development. Washrooms are gender-segregated and hygienic, with sanitation materials readily available, reducing absenteeism among girls.

In Australia, a study by Hsieh and Urguilola (2003) revealed that the Australian government's decision to provide subsidized education had positively influenced retention rates of learners in the Australian public primary schools. In Pakistan, study by Shahinsha (2010) noted that shortage of teachers, and lack of community involvement was the main reasons for low retention rates of pupils at primary school levels. In Australia, the provision of subsidized education had positive influence on retention rates of learners in schools. The study used secondary data and questionnaires only to collect data. The use of primary data and interview schedule could have added more value to the study. The current study used primary data through Questionnaires, interview schedules, and document analysis to collect information on influence of learner capitation grant on retention rates of pupils in public primary schools with Suba West and Mbita as study areas, which enabled the researcher to get first-hand information from the respondents. Retention in Australia's schools has shown steady improvement over the past decade, though challenges remain in ensuring equitable outcomes across different student groups. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in 2024 there were 4,132,006 students enrolled across 9,653 schools, with the full-time apparent retention rate from Year 7/8 to Year 12 recorded at 79.9% (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2025). This figure indicates that while a majority of students complete secondary schooling, approximately one in five does not reach Year 12. The Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services (2025) emphasizes that retention is a key performance indicator for school education, linking it to broader social and economic outcomes such as literacy, numeracy, and workforce readiness (Productivity Commission, 2025). Despite national progress, disparities persist. Retention rates are lower among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, reflecting systemic inequities in access to quality education and support services. Geographic isolation also plays a role, with rural and remote communities facing shortages of teachers, limited subject offerings, and fewer resources, which reduce student engagement and increase dropout risks (ABS, 2025). Socioeconomic disadvantage further compounds these issues, as students from low-income households are more likely to leave school early due to financial pressures and limited support structures.

Retention rates in Ghana's primary schools remain a critical issue for educational development, with recent studies showing that while access has improved; sustaining learners through the full cycle of primary education is still a challenge. Evidence from the Ghana Statistical Service (2025) indicates that disparities in retention are strongly linked to socioeconomic and regional differences, with rural and poverty-stricken

communities experiencing higher low retention rates. Household poverty and economic shocks often force children to leave school early, as families struggle with indirect costs such as uniforms, writing materials, transportation, and supplies despite government interventions. Distance to school and inadequate infrastructure, including poor classroom conditions and limited water and sanitation facilities, also contribute to low retention, particularly among younger learners. Furthermore, challenges in teaching quality-such as overcrowded classrooms and teacher shortages-reduce learner engagement and motivation, leading to discontinuity in schooling (Associates for Change, 2022). On the other hand, policies such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education, capitation grants, and school feeding programs have been shown to improve retention by reducing financial burdens and encouraging consistent attendance. Social protection measures, combined with investments in infrastructure and teacher support, have created more favorable conditions for learners to remain in school. The emphasis on evidence-based planning, highlighted in the 2025 education statistics launch, underscores the importance of using data to identify gaps and target interventions effectively (Education Ghana, 2025). Overall, retention in Ghana's primary schools is shaped by a complex interplay of economic, social, and institutional factors, and sustained progress depend on strengthening both household support systems and school-level resources.

Infrastructure challenges further exacerbate retention problems. Many learners face long distances to school, poor road conditions during rainy seasons, and inadequate classroom facilities, which discourage regular attendance and increase dropout risks (NSO, 2024). Additionally, overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, and limited learning materials weaken the quality of instruction, reducing learner engagement and motivation to persist through the primary cycle. These challenges are compounded by regional inequalities, with rural areas experiencing higher dropout rates compared to urban centres. Despite these difficulties, several measures have shown promise in improving retention. School health and nutrition programs, such as feeding initiatives, encourage learners to remain in school by addressing hunger and improving concentration (UNICEF, 2025). Community participation and NGO support have also strengthened school management and created more favourable learning environments. Policy frameworks such as the National Education Sector Investment Plan provide a roadmap for reducing dropout rates and expanding access to quality education, though effective implementation remains critical (Nation Online, 2025). To address retention challenges, Malawi must expand social protection programs-including school feeding, free uniforms, and conditional cash transfers-to reduce the economic burden on households. Investment in infrastructure, particularly classrooms and sanitation facilities, is essential to improve accessibility and learning conditions. Strengthening teacher recruitment and training will help reduce class sizes and improve instructional quality, while gender-sensitive policies and campaigns against child marriage can ensure that girls remain in school. Finally, leveraging data from EMIS for evidence-based planning and accountability will enable targeted interventions in regions most affected by dropout. Together, these measures can create a more equitable and supportive environment for learners, helping Malawi achieve its retention targets.

Regionally, Kenya reports primary retention of 80–85% and secondary completion of 70–75%, supported by bursaries and free primary education. However, classrooms average 45–50 pupils, libraries are limited, and textbook ratios are 1:2-1:3. Washroom facilities remain uneven, especially in rural schools, affecting girls' attendance. Rwanda has achieved primary retention above 80% and improved lower secondary transition, but upper secondary completion remains below OECD levels, with quality varying across districts. Tanzania and Uganda record primary retention between 60–75% and secondary completion around 40–60%, constrained by teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate sanitation. Ethiopia faces the steepest challenges, with primary retention below 70% and secondary completion below 50%, compounded by poverty, rural isolation, and conflict, alongside classrooms hosting more than 60 pupils and widespread shortages of textbooks and sanitation facilities. Academic performance across East Africa remains low, particularly in mathematics, with national assessments showing large shares of pupils failing to reach minimum proficiency.

The way forward requires synchronized investment in infrastructure, teaching, and student support. Countries must reduce pupil–classroom ratios to below 40 in Africa and maintain 20-25 in OECD systems, provide 1:1 textbook ratios in core subjects, and ensure every school has functioning libraries or mini-libraries. Washrooms must be gender-segregated, hygienic, and equipped with menstrual hygiene facilities to reduce absenteeism among girls, while playgrounds and sports areas should be standard to support holistic development. Teacher recruitment and continuous professional development are critical, especially in

mathematics and science, with incentives to place teachers in rural areas. Competency-based reforms must be supported with clear assessment frameworks, manageable workloads, and adequate materials. Financial supports such as bursaries, transport stipends, and school feeding programs should be scaled to reduce dropout, while EMIS systems must track infrastructure, attendance, and learning outcomes in real time to hold schools accountable. In OECD countries, the focus should be on sustaining high completion while closing subgroup gaps in mathematics and immigrant student progression. In Mexico, Morocco, and other middle-income systems, priority should be given to classroom decongestion, textbook provision, and vocational pathways. In West and East Africa, targeted investments in sanitation, libraries, and teacher deployment are essential to raise retention and completion, while Kenya must strengthen bursary administration, expand WASH facilities, and provide math-focused teacher coaching to convert high primary retention into stronger secondary completion and improved academic performance.

Capitation grants here have enabled schools to acquire teaching aids and maintain infrastructure, but gaps remain in sanitation and inclusive supports. When non-salary allocations lag, vulnerable learners face higher risks of dropout despite overall strong national retention (World Bank, 2022). Burundi increased its education budget in 2025/26 to BIF 731.1 billion, yet dropout rates remain high due to poverty and insufficient school-level capitation for meals, sanitation, and security (Burundi Ministry of Finance, 2025). Earlier UNICEF briefs (2023, 2024) highlighted that without predictable resources for school feeding and sanitation, retention gaps widen, especially in rural communes. This illustrates how budget growth alone does not guarantee improved retention unless capitation grants are structured to meet learners' daily needs. Uganda's capitation grants are modest and often delayed, limiting schools' ability to repair infrastructure, maintain sanitation, and provide teaching materials. The 2022 financing notes and the 2025/26 education sector budget brief both noted declining allocations relative to growing needs, with schools struggling to finance attendance monitoring and learner support (World Bank, 2022; UNICEF Uganda, 2025; Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group, 2025). These gaps directly affect retention, as pupils in poorly resourced schools face overcrowding and unsafe environments. Research confirms that institutional quality-teacher availability and infrastructure-strongly influences completion, underscoring that predictable capitation is essential for sustained attendance (Nabukeera, 2023).

Tanzania's 2025/26–2029/30 Education Sector Development Plan emphasizes progression and learning outcomes, but capitation grants remain heavily weighted toward salaries. District-level evidence shows boy-child retention below 70 percent in some areas, reflecting uneven survival where sanitation, security, and teaching materials are underfunded (Ministry of Education Tanzania, 2025; UNICEF, 2024). The 2023 sector updates and the 2025 budget allocation of TZS 2.44 trillion illustrate strong national commitment, yet without ring-fenced funds for school-level operations, attendance gaps persist (World Bank, 2023; The Respondent Online, 2025). Kenya, which allocated Ksh 702.7 billion to education in the 2025/26 budget, continues to face retention challenges tied to capitation grant execution (The Lower Eastern Times, 2025; The National Treasury Kenya, 2025). While schools rely on these grants to acquire textbooks, improve sanitation, and ensure security, delays and inequities in disbursement undermine attendance. In arid and semi-arid counties, where poverty and mobility already threaten retention, weak capitation flows exacerbate dropout risks. Earlier sector updates (World Bank, 2023) and census frameworks (Kenya Ministry of Education, 2024) confirm that despite Kenya's strong policy framework under the Competency-Based Curriculum, the effectiveness of capitation grants in reaching schools on time and in sufficient amounts remains the critical determinant of whether pupils persist through the primary cycle.

A study by Odumbe, Simatwa and Ayodo (2015) further revealed that absenteeism of students from school, low family income, long distance travelled by students to school and back, entry behaviour and attitude of students towards the school resulted to poor retention rates of students in schools. In Gatanga district, study conducted by Mathu (2016) on influence of FPE funding on pupils retention rates established that provision of physical facilities contributed to higher levels of retention rates in schools. 57.1% of respondents agreed that availability of latrines and adequate learning facilities influenced pupils retention rates in schools. 70% of respondents strongly agreed that availability of adequate classrooms and play grounds affected pupil's retention rates in schools. In addition, 59% of respondents agreed that availability of textbooks contributed to higher levels of retention rates of learners in schools. Marwa (2015) also established that absence of school fees, uneven distribution and limited school spaces affected student retention rates in Kuria West sub-county,

Migori County. The current study found out that though learner capitation grant has influence on retention rate, completion rate and pupils academic performance, factors such as low family income, parental level of education, physical facilities in school and other social amenities influence educational attainments in schools in Suba west and Mbita Sub-Counties as far as retention rate of learners in schools is concerned.

A study conducted by Achieng,' Nduku, and Njui, (2022) revealed that government capitation grants contributed to improvement of learner retention in Homa Bay County over the last four years. The study recommended that government should review the amounts allocated for free primary education and consider investment in education as a key priority in the country. The gap in this study is that it was conducted throughout the whole Homa-Bay County which would have not given very accurate information given the duration and the diversity of the area. The current study was conducted in only two sub-counties, which gave very adequate data to draw deductions. The study noted that government regulations should be enhanced to ensure prudent utilization of government funds by the school administrators. Lack of proper implementation of educational policies affect the way learners are retained in schools (Olenja, 2022).The study recommended that funds should be sent to schools in time to avoid learners being sent home a case that may affect retention rates in schools. This can be enhanced by school administrators giving timely accurate data on school enrolment to inform government budgeting and spending in education.

Children cannot be expected to devote their entire energies to learning if they are housed in classrooms where there is a constant fear of falling debris, cracked walls, dusty floors, uncomfortable draughts and resulting chills, poor lighting and accompanying eyestrain. Pupils should be accommodated properly in their various classrooms, and adequate facilities and equipment should be provided for their effective learning and high retention rates. From the studies reviewed very little has been done in addressing the influence of learner capitation grant on retention of learners in public primary schools; a gap the current study addressed using Suba-Central and Mbita Sub-Counties as site for the study. The study has revealed that poor learning environment affects learners' retention rates in schools. Retention in Nyanza's island schools remains a persistent challenge, with communities such as Mbita, Mfangano, Rusinga, and Ngodhe facing unique geographical and socioeconomic barriers. Studies show that fishing-based livelihoods often draw children into labor, reducing school attendance and continuity (National Treasury & Economic Planning, 2024). Seasonal fishing cycles and household dependence on child labor contribute to irregular attendance, while transport difficulties-unsafe boat crossings and long distances—further hinder retention (Primaryschool.co.ke, n.d.).

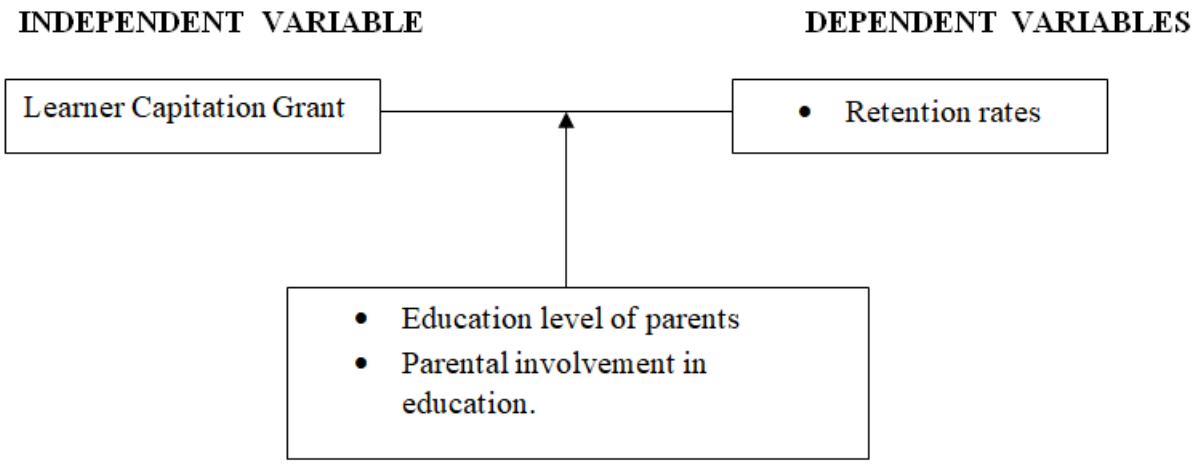
Infrastructure deficits compound these challenges. Many schools on the islands operate with limited classrooms, inadequate sanitation facilities, and scarce learning materials, which directly affect learner engagement and safety. For example, Ngodhe SDA Primary School in Rusinga East has only eight classrooms and three toilets each for boys and girls, illustrating the resource constraints that undermine retention when enrolment fluctuates (Primary school.co.ke, n.d.). Gender disparities also play a significant role: girls are more likely to drop out due to early marriage, pregnancy, and caregiving responsibilities, while boys face pressure to join fishing activities that appear more immediately rewarding than schooling (National Treasury & Economic Planning, 2024). Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions. Expanding social protection programs such as school feeding and uniform support can reduce household economic burdens and stabilize attendance. Investment in island-specific infrastructure-safe boats, classrooms, and sanitation facilities-would improve accessibility and learning conditions. Teacher deployment and training for multi-grade teaching are also critical to improving instructional quality. Finally, community partnerships with Beach Management Units and local leaders can help enforce child labour safeguards and support re-entry policies for girls, ensuring that learners remain in school despite socioeconomic pressures (National Treasury & Economic Planning, 2024). In summary, there is inadequate information on influence of learner capitation grant on retention rate of pupils in public primary schools in Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties, a literature gap that the present study sought to fill.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was based on two theories namely; Resource Dependency Theory (RDT), by Salancik (1978) which postulate that human organizations are not self-sufficient and must acquire essential resources from external bodies to achieve the set objectives. In this case, the resource is learner capitation

grant; and liberal Classical theory of equal opportunity by Rousseau (1712-1778) which postulates that the natural statesmen are born equal and personal qualities should not jeopardize social equality so long as society rewards people according to their status.

Figure 1: Influence of learner Capitation Grants on Retention rates of Pupils in Primary Schools



Intervening Variable

Rousseau (1712-1778) states that all people are created equal, born with the same moral and political rights. Social institutions such as schools should in some sense attempt to treat learners equally as they strive to achieve their educational goals and aspirations. The main concern of this theory is the provision of equal opportunity for all individuals since they are born with abilities, talents and given amount of capacity, which largely is inherited and cannot be substantially changed. Education is the greatest equalizer. The theory support provision of basic rights to all and seek to avoid discrimination. This enables individuals to pursue their own vision of life within the framework of the state law. The theories are relevant because the government has made a choice to invest in education for all learners in order to improve retention rates, completion rates and academic performance. The conceptual framework helped the researcher to focus on the variables of the study for optimal results. Provision of learner capitation grants is aimed at improving retention rates, completion rates and pupils academic performance. However, retention rates, completion rates and pupils academic performance are affected by educational level of parents, human and physical school resources, parents economic ability and other factors. Free Primary Education policy was looked at in terms of the money the government sends to schools for the cohorts 2017 to 2024. The conceptual framework helped the researcher to conceptualize the various variables involved in the study.

Research Objective

The research objective was to determine the influence of learner capitation grants on retention rate of pupils in public primary schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey and correlation research designs were used. Study population comprised of 110 Headteachers, 110 Deputy Headteachers, 1500 Assistant teachers, 2 Sub-County Directors, 2 Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer and 5 Curriculum Support Officers. Taro Yamane's formula was used to get the sample sizes. Purposive sampling was used to select Sub-County Directors, Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer and Curriculum Support Officers. Questionnaires, Interview Schedules, Observation Guides and document analysis were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was collected using closed items of questionnaires and document analysis guide and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, means and regression analysis. Grade retention rates were calculated using Grade retention rates (GRR) were calculated using the formula adopted from UNESCO guideline (2009b) as follows:

$$GRR = \frac{(N_{t+1}^{k+1} - R_{T+1}^{K+1}) + R_{T+1}^{K}}{N_t^{k}}$$

N_{t+1}^{k+1} **Number of learners in grades k+1 in school year t+1.**

R_{t+1}^{k+1} **Number of learners repeating in grades k+1 in school year t+1.**

R^{K}_{t+1} **Number of learners repeating in grades k in school year t+1.**

N_t^{k} **Number of learners in grades k in school year.**

Qualitative data was transcribed and analyzed into emergent themes and sub-themes. Validity of the instruments was determined through the help of research experts in the school of education. Reliability was established through test retest method using 11 schools. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine reliability of the instruments. A split half-correlation test was used whereby a coefficient of 0.79 was realized.

RESULTS

Demographic Information of Respondents

This section provides the characteristics of respondents in relation to gender, highest academic qualifications, years served as a teacher, time taken at the current workstation, years served as Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or teacher, professional qualifications, whether or not teachers, Deputy Head Teacher or Head Teacher have undertaken professional fresher courses.

Head Teachers

The Headteacher's demographic information was based on gender, highest academic qualifications, years served as a teacher, time taken at the current workstation, years served as Head Teacher, professional qualifications, whether or not the Head teacher has undertaken professional fresher courses. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Headteachers

Demographics	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender		
Male	57	68.7
Female	26	31.3
Trans gender	0	0.00
Total	**83**	**100.00**
Highest Academic Qualification		
P1	0	0.00
S1	0	0.00
Diploma	27	32.5
Degree	48	57.8
Masters	6	7.2
Others (PhD)	2	2.4
Totals	**83**	**100.00**
Highest Professional Qualification		
B5	0	0.00
C1	0	0.00
C2	0	0.00
C3	0	0.00
C4	35	42.2

C5	45	54.2
D1	3	3.6
Others	0	0.00
Totals	**83**	**100.0**
Head Teacher's Work Experience		
6-10 Years	3	3.6
11-15 Years	16	19.3
16-20 Years	46	55.4
21-25 Years	15	18.1
26-30 Years	2	2.4
Totals	**82**	**98.8**
Refresher Course		
Yes	83	100.0
No	0	0.00
Total	**83**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, 2024

Key: P1 (Primary teacher 1), S1 (Secondary Teacher 1),

B5-D1 (Professional Job groups equivalent to professional qualifications)

Table 1 shows that out of 83 Headteachers, 57(68.7%) were males while 26(31.3%) were females. This implies that more male teachers are promoted to headship positions as compared to females in Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties. Considering highest academic qualifications of Headteachers, there was no Head teacher with either P1 or S1. However, 27 HTs (32.5%) had Diploma, 48(57.8%) had Degrees, 6(7.2%) had Masters while only 2 (2.4%) had PhDs. This shows that nearly all Headteachers have requisite academic trainings and hence are competent in undertaking their mandates as Headteachers of Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties. Regarding highest professional qualifications, none of them were in job groups B5, C1, C2 or C3. However, 35 (42.2%) were in C4, 45 (54.2%) were in C5, 3 (3.6%) were in D1 while no Head teacher represented other categories of job groups. Therefore, headteachers have the necessary experiences in the field of education. They have requisite skills to manage the primary schools within Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties. Head Teachers' work experience indicated that 3 Head teacher had 6-10 years (3.6%), 16 Headteachers had 11-15 years (19.3%), 46 Headteachers had 16-20 years (55.4%), 15 Headteachers had 21-25 years (18.1%). However, 2 Headteachers (2.4%) had worked for a period between 26-30 years.

Head Teachers had attended refresher courses to improve their management and professional developments. The professional developments help Headteachers to improve on efficiency. Out of 84 Headteachers, all had attended fresher trainings. This again implies that Headteachers had necessary qualifications and updates in professional development issues and the current educational trends and demands as far as learner capitation are concerned.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Deputy Headteachers

Demographics	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender		
Male	52	69.3
Female	23	30.7
Trans gender	0	0.00
Total	**75**	**100.00**
Highest Academic Qualification		
P1	0	0.00
S1	0	0.00
Diploma	32	42.7

Degree	35	46.7
Masters	8	10.7
Others (PhD)	0	0.00
Totals	**75**	**100.00**
Highest Professional Qualification		
B5	0	0.00
C1	11	14.7
C2	16	21.3
C3	12	16.0
C4	33	44.0
C5	3	4.0
D1	0	0.00
Others	0	0.00
Totals	**75**	**100.0**
Deputy Head Teacher's Work Experience		
6-10 Years	11	14.7
11-15 Years	23	30.7
16-20 Years	14	18.7
21-25 Years	23	30.7
26-30 Years	4	5.3
Totals	**75**	**100.0**
Refresher Course		
Yes	75	100.0
No	0	0.00
Total	**75**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, 2024

Key: P1 (Primary teacher 1), S1 (Secondary Teacher 1),

B5-D1 (Professional Job groups equivalent to professional qualifications)

Table 2 shows that out of 75 Deputy Head teachers, 52 (69.3%) were males while 23 (30.7%) were females. However, there was no trans-gender. This implies that more male teachers are promoted to deputy headship positions as compared to males in Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties. Considering highest academic qualifications of Deputy headteachers, there was no Deputy head teacher with either P1 or S1. However, 32 Deputy headteachers (42.7%) had Diploma, 35 (46.7%) had Degrees, 8 (10.7%) had Masters while none had PhD. This shows that nearly all Deputy Headteachers have requisite academic trainings and hence are competent in undertaking their mandates as Deputy headteachers of Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties. Regarding highest professional qualifications, none of the DHTs was in job group B5, 11 (14.7%) were in C1, 16 (21.3%) were in C2, 12 (16.0%) were in C3, 33 (44.0%) were in C4, 3 (4.0%) were in C5, none was in D1 and other categories of job groups. Therefore, Headteachers have the necessary experiences in the field of education. They have requisite skills to manage the primary schools within Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties. Deputy Head Teachers' work experience indicated that 11 Deputy headteachers (14.7%) had worked for a period between 6-10 years, 23 Deputy headteachers (30.7%) had worked for 11-15 years, 14 Deputy headteachers (18.7%) had worked for 16-20 years, 23 Deputy headteachers (30.7%) had worked for 21-25 years while only 4 Deputy headteachers (5.3%) had worked for 26-30 years.

Teachers

The demographic information was based on gender, highest academic qualifications, years served as a teacher, time taken at the current workstation, years served as teacher, professional qualifications, whether or not the teacher has undertaken professional fresher courses. Teachers' demographics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic Information of Teachers

Demographics	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender		
Male	123	54.4
Female	103	45.6
Trans gender	0	0.00
Total	**226**	**100.00**
Highest Academic Qualification		
O level	1	0.4
P1	135	59.7
S1	1	0.4
Diploma	36	15.9
Degree	40	17.7
Masters	13	5.8
Others (PhD)	0	0.00
Totals	**226**	**100.00**
Highest Professional Qualification		
B5	87	38.5
C1	92	40.7
C2	42	18.6
C3	5	2.2
C4	0	0.00
C5	0	0,00
D1	0	0.00
Others	0	0.00
Totals	**226**	**100.0**
Teacher's Work Experience		
0-5 Years	54	23.9
6-10 Years	64	28.3
11-15 Years	86	38.1
16-20Years	20	8.8
21-25 Years	2	9
Totals	**226**	**100.0**
Refresher Course		
Yes	209	92.5
No	17	7.5
Total	**226**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, 2024

Key: P1 (Primary teacher 1), S1 (Secondary Teacher 1),

B5-D1 (Professional Job groups equivalent to professional qualifications)

Table 3 shows that out of 226 teachers, 123(54.4%) were males while 103 (45.6%) were females. However, there was no trans-gender. This implies that more female teachers are employed as primary school teachers as compared to males in Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties. Considering highest academic qualifications of teachers, 1 teacher (0.4%) was O-level graduate, 135 teachers (59.7%) had P1, 1 teacher (0.4%) had S1 qualifications, 36 (15.9%) had diploma, 40 teachers (17.7%) had Degrees, 13 (5.8%) had Masters while none had PhD.Teachers' work experience indicated that there were 54 teachers (23.9) with 0-5 years, 64 teachers (28.3%) with 6-10 years of work experience, 86 teachers (38.1%) had worked for a period between 11-15 years, 20 teachers (8.8%) had worked for a period of 16-20 years, while 2 teachers (0.9%) had worked for 21-25 years.

Regarding highest professional qualifications, 87 teachers (38.5%) were in job group B5, 92 (40.7%) were in C1, 42 (18.6%) were in C2, 5 (2.2%) were in C3, none were in C4 and above. The professional developments help teachers to improve on efficiency. However, 17 teachers (7.5%) had not attended fresher courses.

Research objective

Determine the influence of learner capitation grant on retention rate of pupils in public primary schools.

In order to achieve this, respondents were probed to rate the influence of learner capitation grants on pupils' retention rates using a scale of 1 to 5 where No Influence (1), Low Influence (2), Moderate Influence (3), High Influence (4), Very High Influence (5). The results were then descriptively analysed into Frequencies, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations and further inferentially analysed using ANOVA to establish the influences between the variables. Table 4 shows results from the respondents.

Table 4: Influence of Learner Capitation Grants on Pupils' Retention Rates

Capitation Grants	**RESPONDENTS**		**RATINGS**						**MR**	**OMR**
			NI 1	**LI 2**	**MI 3**	**HI 4**	**VHI 5**	**NR T**		
Constituency Development Funds	HT	F	0	0	5	48	300	83	4.52	4.10
		%	0.0	0.0	6.0	57.8	36.10.0	100		
	DHT	F	0	0	14	55	6 0	75	3.89	
		%	0.0	0.0	18.7	73.3	8.00.0	100		
	T	F	1	31	64	29	1010	226	3.90	
		%	4.0	13.7	28.3	12.8	44.70.0	100		
Free Primary Education Grant	H	F	0	0	1	58	24 0	83	4.28	4.28
		%	0.0	0.0	1.2	69.9	28.90.0	100		
	DHT	F	0	0	10	62	3 0	75	3.91	
		%	0.0	0.0	13.3	82.7	4.00.0	100		
	T	F	2	0	1	66	1561	225	4.66	
		%	0.9	0.0	0.4	29.2	69.00.4	99.6		
School income generating activities	HT	F	0	1	1	52	290	83	4.31	3.91
		%	0.0	1.2	1.2	62.7	34.90.0	100		
	DHT	F	0	0	13	57	50	75	3.89	
		%	0.0	0.0	17.3	76.0	6.70.0	100		
	T	F	1	44	78	37	66 0	226	3.54	
		%	0.4	19.5	34.5	16.4	29.20.0	100		
Donations	HT	F	0	0	2	53	280	83	4.65	3.91
		%	0.0	0.0	2.4	63.9	33.70.0	100		
	DHT	F	1	0	11	55	7 1	74	3.91	
		%	1.3	0.0	14.7	73.3	9.31.3	98.7		
	T	F	35	60	32	29	700	226	3.17	
		%	15.5	26.5	14.2	12.8	31.00.0	100		
Overall Ratings	**HT**								**4.30**	
	DHT								**3.90**	**4.00**
	T								**3.81**	

Source: Field data, 2025

Key: HT- Head Teacher,

DHT- Deputy Head Teacher,

T- Teacher, NR- Nil Response,

T-Total. MR-Mean Rating, OMR-Overall Mean Rating

Interpretation of Mean Ratings

1.00-1.44	*No influence (NI)*
1.45-2.44	Low influence (LI)
2.45-3.44	Moderate influence (MI)
3.45-4.44	High influence (HI)
4.45-5.00	Very high influence (VHI)

Table 4 shows the ratings of Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and Teachers on the influence of Learner Capitation Grants on pupils' retention rates as was signified by Overall Mean Rating of 4.00. This means learner capitation grant has high influence on pupils' retention rates. In details Headteachers (HTs) had the highest overall mean rating of 4.30 (out of the possible mean of 5.00) followed by deputy Headteachers (DHTs) (3.90), whereas Teachers had the lowest overall mean rating of 3.81.The capitation policy in Kenyan primary schools provides a per-pupil annual grant to schools under the Free Primary Education (FPE) initiative. The government allocates a specific amount (currently Sh1, 420) to each primary school student annually, with a higher amount (Sh15, 042) for junior school students. This capitation is typically released in three phases, with 50% in term one, 30% in term two, and 20% in term three. The policy has relieved off parents the burden of fully soldering the cost of basic education. When Headteachers were asked whether there is need to increase capitation grant per learner, 100% of them saw the need. Their preferred possible range for the increase differed from Headteacher to Headteacher; 7.2% wanted the increase to be between Ksh. (1000-2000), 13.3% wanted the increase to be between ksh. (2001-3000), 1.2% wanted the increase to be between ksh. (4001-5000). However, the majority (78.3%) wanted the increase in capitation to be between ksh. (3001-4000). Therefore, a little more increase in capitation will help in improvement of school functions and hence higher learner retention rates as was noted by both HTs, DHTs and teachers.

Based on the data in Table 4, "Constituency Development Funds," majority of the Headteachers (HTs) (57.8%), Deputy headteachers (73.3%) and Teachers (12.8%) rated that Constituency Development Funds have High Influence on pupils' retention rates. However, 36.1% of the Headteachers, 8% of the Deputy headteachers and 44.7% of Teachers noted that Constituency Development Funds have Very High Influence on pupils' retention rates. Rating of teachers was generally low since some teachers felt they knew very little about Constituency Development Fund fundings. Cumulatively, 93.9% of Headteachers, 81.3% of Deputy headteachers and 57.5% of Teachers confirmed that Constituency Development Funds have High Influence on pupils' retention rates. Overall, mean rating of the construct is 4.10 (out of the possible mean of 5.00). Majority of the Headteachers (HTs) (69.9%), Deputy Headteachers (DHTs) (82.7%) and Teachers (29.2%) rated that Free Primary Education Grant have High Influence on pupils' retention rates. However, 28.9% of the Headteachers (HTs), 4.0% of the Deputy Headteachers (DHTs) and 69.0% of Teachers noted that Free Primary Education Grant have Very High Influence on pupils' retention rates. Cumulatively, 98.8% of Headteachers (HTs), 86.7% of Deputy Headteachers (DHTs) and 98.2% of Teachers confirmed that Free Primary Education Grant have High Influence on pupils' retention rates. Overall, mean rating of the construct is 4.28 (out of the possible mean of 5.00).

In Table 4, majority of the Headteachers (HTs) (62.7%), Deputy headteachers (DHTs) (76%) and Teachers (16.4%) rated that School Levies had High Influence on pupils' retention rates. However, 34.9% of the HTs, 6.6% of the Deputy headteachers (DHTs) and 22.9% of teachers noted that School Levies have Very High Influence on pupils' retention rates. Cumulatively, 97.6% of headteachers (HTs), 82.7% of Deputy headteachers (DHTs) and 45.6% of Teachers confirmed that School Levies have High Influence on pupils' retention rates. Overall mean rating of the construct is 3.91 (out of the possible mean of 5.00). Majority of the Headteachers (HTs) (63.9%), Deputy headteachers (DHTs) (73.3%) and Teachers (12.8%) rated that Donations have High Influence on pupils' retention rates. However, 33.7% of the Headteachers (HTs), 9.3% of the Deputy headteachers (DHTs) and 31.0% of Teachers noted that Donations have Very High Influence on pupils' retention rates. Cumulatively, 97.6% of Headteachers (HTs), 82.6% of Deputy headteachers (DHTs) and 43.8% of Teachers confirmed that Donations have High Influence on pupils' retention rates. Overall, mean rating of the data is 3.91 (out of the possible mean of 5.00).

The study sought to establish the learner capitation grants received by schools and the retention rates of pupils in the respective public primary schools in Suba West and Mbita Sub Counties for purposes of determining the influence of learner capitation grant on retention rates of pupils. The computed learner capitation grants and retention rates for the years 2019-2024 were as shown in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Learner Capitation Grants Received in Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties for the years 2019-2024

Amount (Thousands Ksh.)	***Public primary schools***	
	f	**%**
200-299	4	3.64
300-399	18	16.36
400-499	58	52.73
500-599	23	20.91
600-699	7	6.36
Total	**110**	**100.00**

From Table 5, it can be noted that schools received learner capitation grants that varied from Ksh. 200,000 to 699, 000 depending on learner population in the school.

Table 6: Retention Rates in Public Primary Schools in Suba West and Mbita Sub-Counties for the years 2019-2024

Retention Rates (%)	***Public primary schools***	
	f	**%**
50.00-59.99	2	1.82
60.00-69.99	12	10.91
70.00-79.99	48	43.64
80.00-89.99	41	37.27
90.00-99.99	7	6.36
Total	**110**	**100.00**

From Table 6, it can be observed that retention rates varied from 50 to 99.9% school wise.

To determine the influence of learner capitation grants on retention rates of pupils in public primary schools, regression analysis was computed using data on learner capitation grants received by schools and retention rates of pupils in the respective schools (Tables 5 and 6). The results of regression analysis were as shown in Tables 7, 8 and 9.

Table 7: Regression Analysis of influence of learner capitation grants on retention rates of pupils in public primary schools

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.396[a]	.157	.135	13.92219	.157	7.075	1	86	.011

a. Predictors: (Constant), Learner Capitation Grants

b. Dependent Variable: Retention Rates

From Table **7** it can be noted that learner capitation grant accounted for 13.5% of retention rates of pupils in public primary schools. The other 86.5% was due to other factors that were not subject of this study. This was signified by the p-value of 0.011 that was less than the set p-value of 0.05.

To confirm as to whether learner capitation grants were significant predictors of learner retention rates, Analysis of Variance was computed (Table 8).

Table 8: Analysis of Variance of learner capitation grants and retention rates of pupils

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1371.330	1	1371.330	7.075	.011[b]
	Residual	7365.445	86	193.827		
	Total	8736.775	87			

a. Dependent Variable: Retention Rates

b. Predictors: (Constant), Learner Capitation Grants

From Table 8, it can be observed that learner capitation grants were significant predictors of retention rates of pupils in public primary schools as signified by [F (1, 86) = 7.075, p = 0.05]. This means that learner capitation grants can be relied upon to explain the retention rates.

To confirm the influence of learner capitation grants on pupil retention rates in public primary schools, linear regression analysis was computed and generate a model the results were as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Linear Regression Analysis on the influence of Learner Capitation Grants on Retention Rates of pupils in Public Primary Schools

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	91.228	5.860		15.567	.000
	Learner Capitation Grants	.025	.010	.396	2.660	.011

a. Dependent Variable: Retention rates Regression Equation $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 - \varepsilon$

From Table 9, can be observed that for every one unit increase in learner capitation grants, retention rates improved by 0.025 units as signified by the coefficient 0.025. The Regression Equation is Y = 91.228 +0.025X. The regression equation can used to predict retention rates of pupils in public primary schools.

DISCUSSION

Learner capitation grants provided by the government positively impacted on retention rates in public primary school. Thus, most learners progressed from one grade to the next without hindrances. The challenges like school uniforms, modes of transport had little influence as parents managed as their burden had been reduced by the learner capitation grants. These capitation grants were used in providing the required teaching learning resources, physical facilities and infrastructure. The learners who benefited much from learner capitation grants were from those of low income households. This therefore explains how crucial the learner capitation grants is in dressing the needs of learners in acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude that enhance learners retention in schools as they are viewed as the avenue for better life in future. In this respect, the learner capitation grants not only support the needs of learners but also the needs of the schools which ultimately promote learner retention rates.

These findings are supported by Muli (2017) who reported that Universal Primary Education made retention rates to improve in which capitation like Constituency Development Funds (CDF) has greatly impacted learning in public primary schools since they make primary school education relatively free. Curriculum Support Officer from one of the sub-counties said: Constituency Development Funds (CDFs), through bursaries and other programs, can significantly impact pupil retention rates. Studies have shown that CDF funds can reduce the risk of students dropping out due to financial constraints. However, challenges like insufficient funds and outstanding fee balances can also hinder the positive effects of CDF on retention. The sentiments of the Curriculum Support Officer explain the underlying importance of CDF when it comes to the provision of necessary resources that learners need for them to stay in school. On the same note, Sub County Director of Education commented: CDFs often provide bursaries that help students cover school fees,

reducing the financial burden and making it easier for them to stay in school. This can lead to increased retention rates, especially among students from low-income households. The provision of bursaries through CDFs plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of students who struggle to afford education. From the comments of the Sub County Director of Education, it can be deduced that CDF not only support the needs of the schools but also the needs of learners.

The quantitative findings support that of Hsieh and Urguilola (2003) who revealed that the Australian government decision to provide subsidized education had positively influenced retention rates of learners in schools. Therefore, the need for Free Primary Education as was envisioned by the Kenyan government has brought sanity in education sector. All children regardless of family background can acquire basic education. This was echoed by Sub County Director of Education that Free Primary Education (FPE) could significantly impact pupil retention rates, generally leading to an increase in enrollment and potentially improving retention, although challenges in implementation and quality can sometimes negate these effects. By removing financial barriers, can increase school enrollment and attendance, especially for disadvantaged students. This can lead to more pupils staying in school longer and completing their primary education.

In another interview with Curriculum Support Officer, his statements concurred with that of the Sub County Director of Education by reiterating. Poor implementation of FPE, inadequate funding, and a lack of resources can lead to overcrowded classrooms, high teacher-student ratios, and a decline in the quality of education. These factors can negatively impact student engagement and retention, potentially leading to increased dropout rates. The views of both respondents indicate that with proper implementation, FPE funds can keep learners in school focused on their studies. Learners are able to acquire necessary resources they need for their stay in school. Another Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer had this to comment: To maximize the positive impact of FPE and ensure high retention rates, governments should focus on quality assurance, teacher training, resource allocation, and addressing issues of school infrastructure and learning materials. This will reduce extra levies charged by school administrators for operational costs in schools. The comments of the Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer summed it all by indicating that areas of focus by the government as far as FPE capitation is concerned should be on quality assurance. Quality assurance will ensure proper utilization of such funds.

The quantitative findings agree with that of Chabar (2010) who posited that while basic education is theoretically free in many African countries, illegal fees charged on compulsory items like uniforms, assessments, lunch programs, extra lessons or funds to support school buildings among other school activities see parents forced to pay fees. This has made both primary and secondary education in most African countries expensive, forcing children from poor and vulnerable backgrounds to drop out of school; hence low retention rate in schools. In an interview with Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, this is what he had to say: Levies can negatively influence pupil retention rates, particularly in developing countries, by increasing the financial burden on families, leading to reduced participation and potentially hindering students' ability to continue their education. Extra costs, including school uniforms, materials, and fees, can make it difficult for families to afford schooling, even with subsidized education programs. Many schools still charge parents levies to meet the cost of paying teachers employed by parents, assessment levies and even extra costs for co-curricular activities not only in my sub county but also in the neighboring sub counties. This the heads of institutions say assist them due to delays in submitting government funding to schools. The levies are due to the harsh economic climate and rising costs of operations hence growing financial pressure in schools.

The sentiments of the Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer explain the dangers of charging parents extra levies when primary education is supposed to be free. Learners being sent home for fees can reduce their interest in learning thereby facilitating drop out. The quantitative findings support that of Pak and Yeltayeva (2021) who concluded that the Ministry of Education set a goal of 1420 shillings per student to meet the national intended goals and objectives of education in order to combat disease, poverty, and ignorance but due to its insufficiency, schools resort to asking for donations as was also noted by a Curriculum Support Officer. Donations, particularly those supporting school feeding programs, can significantly influence pupil retention rates by addressing hunger, a leading cause of school dropout, and improving overall learning outcomes. By providing nutritious meals, donations help ensure students are focused on their studies and

remain in school. Furthermore, donations provide resources like desks and other school equipments, which can also positively influence retention. UNICEF has always provided revision books, shoes for the vulnerable learners, school bags, pens and pencils to many schools in this region. In some cases, they have given uniforms to vulnerable learners in schools to help them remain in school. However much the government support high retention rates, FPE alone is not enough. That is the reasons for many school managers seeking for donations as a supplementary measure. The quantitative findings support that of Hsieh and Urguilola (2003) who found that government's decision to provide subsidized education had positively influenced retention rates of learners in the Australian public primary schools. It is also supported by the findings of the ministry of education in Singapore, which informed that extensive financial assistance system in schools demonstrates exceptionally high learner retention rates across all levels. (Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2025). According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2024), In Africa learner retention rates averages 65-70 % with many learners dropping out of school before completion due to poverty, child labour, early marriages, and infrastructural gaps. Gender disparities remain pronounced with girls more likely to leave school early due to socio-cultural factors such as earl marriage and domestic responsibilities (UNESCO Institute for statistics, 2024).

Generally, majority of the learners were able to sit their Kenya Primary School Education Assessment examinations in grade six in the schools they were enrolled in grade one. This was due to availability of the funds to support infrastructure, teaching/learning resources and other resources. The findings support that of Muli (2017) that introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1994 made retention rates to improve.

Most schools had retention rates between 70% and 79.99% thus implying that most pupils were retained in schools due to increasing availability of funds. Even pupils who otherwise could remain home due to lack of school fees enjoyed free education courtesy to multi-agency approach to capitation. This is supported by the statistics from Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2024) which indicates that due to government funding in education, retention rates of learners in schools has greatly improved with around 60-70 % completion rates in schools. This is also supported by UNESCO (2024) though according to UNESCO, across East Africa, dropout rates are still significantly higher than in Singapore and Greece, often ranging from 10-30%, reflecting socioeconomic constraints, teacher shortages, and infrastructural gaps. The quantitative findings support that of Kiplagat (2012) who established that government funding to learners in secondary institutions in Kuresoi influenced retention rates of students positively. Majority of the schools received average amount of funds that supported their quest for instructional development, acquisition of teaching/learning resources and other resources. The quantitative findings support that of Jeptanui, Ogeta and Nderitu (2022) that direct costs of education affect students' retention rates. It recommends the government to: review and increase student capitation so as to cover all areas of expenditure, diversify funding sources to fully cushion the needy students and fully fund school projects and programmes in order to relieve parents/guardians of the cost burden and thus increase student participation in Public primary schools.

From the analysis, capitation for amount between Ksh. 300,000 to 600,000 and above has steadily increased from cohort 2017-2022 to 2019-2024. This was after the government of Kenya and other agencies realized that capitation has an influence on pupil's retention rates. However, for the amount of below Ksh. 299, 000 capitation has steadily reduced. This implies that the multi-agency approach to funding public primary schools shifted from low to high findings. Thus contributing towards the development of school infrastructure like classrooms, library, washrooms, play fields, staffroom, school fence among others. More funds also help schools to acquire more teaching/ learning resources like textbooks, teacher reference books and stationery. The funds are also significant in ensuring that other resources in schools like teachers and school feeding programs are maintained. These collectively results into pupils' retention in schools. The findings agree with that of Achieng,' Nduku, and Njui, (2022) that government capitation grants contributed to improvement of learner retention in Homa Bay County over the last four years.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that learner capitation grant influenced retention rates of pupils in public primary schools in Suba West and Mbita Sub Counties positively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) Ministry of Education should allocate more learner capitation grants to enhance further pupil retention rates.

(ii) Learners and parents should be encouraged to prioritize education in view of the fact that the government invest heavily in education.

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