

# Administrative Strategies for Implementing 100% Transition in Nyandarua County Secondary Schools, Kenya

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## Abstract

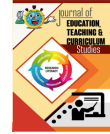
While progress has been made in achieving 100% transition across all levels of education in Kenya, schools have experienced an influx of students. Various challenges have been encountered, including infrastructure gaps, teachers shortage, and congestion. The purpose of the study was to assess the administrative strategies for implementing 100% transition in Nyandarua County secondary schools, Kenya. The study's objectives were to examine the level of expansion space and determine administrative coping mechanisms for handling large enrollment. Open system theory was employed. A descriptive research design was used to guide this research. Target population was 150 principals and seven Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs). Simple random sampling using 30% of the target population was used to get a sample size of 45 principals. Seven CSOs were purposively sampled. A structured questionnaire and interview guide were collected data from principals and CSOs, respectively. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Results revealed that 50.3% of respondents disagreed, 44.5% agreed, and 5.2% were unsure if they had adopted viable strategies. One notable tactic was that the majority of respondents, at 71% agreed that they had increased staff workload. The study concluded that coping mechanisms were temporary fixes meant to mitigate the effects of overcapacity, which could lower educational standards in crowded classrooms. The study recommended the use of lecture chairs that occupy less space and the adoption of collaborative leadership. Findings would be helpful to education stakeholders at present and in the future.

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## Introduction

The 100 per cent transition policy is part of a global campaign to give all children access to 12 years of learning. Additionally, it demonstrates the government's commitment to upholding the constitutional imperative of the right to education. The policy dictates that education should be free and accessible for all children (UNICEF, 2023). Free Primary and secondary education in Kenya has significantly boosted enrollment rates, promoting education as a fundamental human right (Schmitt, 2020). Schools have experienced an influx of students since the implementation of the 100% transition initiative, which has made education more accessible and affordable for all. However, the implementation of free primary and secondary education has faced challenges associated with the initiative, including budget constraints by



the government, dependence on external funding, and quality issues in education, where schools lack adequate resources, such as teachers, textbooks, and physical facilities (Al-Samarrai & Lewis, 2021).

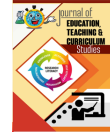
Notwithstanding these difficulties, moving to secondary school fosters active citizenship. It enhances social cohesion by fostering tolerance and trust among learners, which benefits not only economic, social, and cognitive development (Schleicher, 2021), but also broader societal well-being. It is generally accepted that secondary education provides the best environment for preparing young people, primarily adolescents, for active, healthy adult lives that involve participation in politics, society, and the economy (World Development Report, 2018). Furthermore, for nations to compete in the global economy, a sizeable portion of their populations must complete secondary school to develop the specific abilities and skills required for a market that is becoming increasingly technologically advanced (Kala, 2023). The introduction of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) has led to an influx of students still in the 8-4-4 curriculum enrolling in secondary schools, driven by a fear of missing out (Alutaybi et al., 2020). Furthermore, Daily Nation (February 2020) reported that the expansion had caused overcrowding and a severe lack of facilities for instruction. To systematically overcome these challenges, schools need to employ effective administrative strategies; thus, there is a need to research and examine the level of expansion space and determine the measures put in place for handling large enrollments in implementing a 100% transition in secondary schools in Nyandarua County, Kenya.

### **Literature Review**

Education is seen as a fundamental pillar of economic and social development. Recently, education has become even more critical to the development process as accelerated technological change and new production organisations transform the world economy (World Bank, 2019). According to UNESCO (2020), education is a torch that can help guide and illuminate children's lives. This explains why nations worldwide plan for and increase budgetary allocations to support a range of educational initiatives each fiscal year. On the other hand, World Bank (2019) notes that education forms the basis upon which any nation's economic, social and political development is founded. Investment in education can help promote economic growth, increase productivity, support national and social development, and lessen social inequality. UNESCO (2020) asserts that a country's level of education is one of the key indicators of its level of development. The move towards education for all has rapidly increased the demand for secondary education in Africa.

World Bank (2018) affirms that pressure on governments in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to expand secondary education is growing. Governments in SSA will inevitably focus on extending and enhancing secondary education due to the growing number of pupils leaving expanded primary education and the necessity to raise labour force educational levels to capitalise on a globalising economy. According to Otieno & Ochieng (2020) a genuine discussion about greater access to secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa must first address the current state of education systems in terms of their capacity to sustain the growth and improvement of primary education, as well as their existing limitations in terms of capacity and financial resources to expand and improve secondary education at the same time. Sub-Saharan African governments and their funding partners are working harder to improve the quality, relevance, and accessibility of secondary education (Republic of Kenya, 2021).

Industrialised nations in North America and Western Europe achieved 100% secondary school enrollment through free education programmes. These nations aimed to educate every child, regardless of their



circumstances (OECD, 2021). Across Asian countries, the importance of achieving 100% transition has been emphasised. Malaysia has successfully implemented transition policies, while China has established mandatory frameworks, where education is compulsory, with set laws and policies that ensure a near-universal transition from primary to junior secondary school. The Chinese have experienced setbacks, primarily due to gender differences, in implementing the 100% transition policy (McCoy et al., 2020). Li et al. (2021) aver that student transition brings about overcrowding, as facilities become limited due to strained resources.

In its quest for a 100% transition, Ghana equated the increase in learners' enrollment with the increase in teachers, as it significantly added to their workload (Hansen, 2021). Ghana introduced a free senior high school policy to aid the transition from primary to secondary schools (Adarkwah, 2022). Free education lures learners with the ease of transition, ensuring that no child is left behind due to poverty or a lack of funds. In Tanzania, high transition rates from primary to secondary have been experienced nationwide through the Tanzania Free Education policy (Lyanga & Chen, 2020). Similarly, Uganda has a Universal Secondary Education and Universal Primary Education policy, which has significantly boosted enrollment from primary through secondary to tertiary levels by abolishing fees (Ekimwere & Adipala, 2023).

Recognising education as the primary means of sustainable economic development, social mobility, national cohesion and social development, the Government of Kenya has implemented programmes that rapidly expand the education sector (Otieno & Ochieng, 2020). It has demonstrated her commitment to providing quality education and training as a human right for all. This was achieved through the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and Subsidised Free Day Secondary Education (SFDSE) in 2008, aimed at enhancing learner retention in schools. The launch of SFDSE in 2008 addressed illiteracy, low-quality education, low secondary-level completion rates, high education costs, and poor community participation (Ministry of Education, 2019). These efforts were a positive move towards realising the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) (Fonseca et al., 2020). According to the Subsidised Free Day Secondary Education policy, the government was expected to cover the tuition fees for each student (Otieno & Ochieng, 2020). At the same time, parents were required to meet other expenses, such as lunch, transport, and boarding fees for those attending boarding schools, in addition to the development project, in a concerted effort to achieve 100% transition and address the low transition rates from Primary School, the government of Kenya introduced Free Day Secondary Education (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

The Public Policy and Basic Education Act of 2013 rendered basic education in Kenya compulsory and a right. However, the secondary school net enrollment rate (NER) remained at only 53.2% by 2018 (Ministry of Education, 2019). Subsequently, in January 2020, the government decreed that it would enforce 100% transition from primary school to secondary school with immediate effect, without exemption, requiring government officials to comply and threatening to penalise parents who did not. With this policy, the government was newly determined to ensure that every child received 12 years of basic education (Republic of Kenya, 2021). This policy ensured all learners transitioned from their eight-year stint in primary school to secondary school. In 2020, the Kenyan government immediately declared that secondary school would be mandatory for all. In response to pushback about the impracticality of immediate 100% transition, the Cabinet Secretary for Education defiantly proclaimed: "It is better to have a child in school under a tree than have him or her loitering at home" (Wharton, 2022). In this fictional scenario, three school leaders debate the ethics of the policy and decide how to respond, aware that they will not receive the



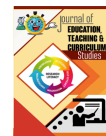
increased funding needed to accommodate the surge of new students. A remarkable and overwhelming flow of children who were out of school due to financial constraints rejoined, and school heads found themselves with more students than their schools could accommodate (Republic of Kenya, 2021).

The overaged children were not left out either, contributing to overcrowding and school congestion. Despite the challenge, the government succeeded in promoting universal enrollment and completion of primary schooling, improving children's literacy and numerical skills. Fonseca et al. (2020) posit that promoting education as a Sustainable Development Goal, particularly SDG 4, aims to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all. Nevertheless, the provision of secondary education is inhibited by various factors, including a shortage of teaching staff, inadequate and dilapidated infrastructure facilities, inequitable distribution of teachers, and unequal distribution of teaching and learning resources among national, extra-county, and sub-county categories of secondary schools (Republic of Kenya, 2021). However, government funding is allocated to tuition, whereas parents are expected to cover other expenses, such as school feeding programmes, transportation, boarding fees, and approved school projects. This has seen some students from an economically disadvantaged background being sent home now and then. Moreover, inadequate resources raise concerns about safety, security and quality of education for learners. This has necessitated the researcher to conduct the study to explore worthwhile measures for sustaining large enrollments both currently and in the future.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by open system theory. Many organisational diagnostic models rely upon the abstract notion of open systems theory as a basic assumption, thus warranting a brief discussion of open systems theory. The theory's premise is that organisations are social systems dependent upon the environment in which they exist for inputs (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Open systems theory allows for repeated input cycles, transformation, that is, throughput, output, and renewed input within organisations (Yuha & Neville, 2019). A feedback loop connects organisational outputs with renewed inputs. This assumes that ideal conditions can be created to realise the vision of equal opportunity, where everyone has access to a type of education that meets their innate capacity by reducing economic barriers, expanding secondary education options, and improving school attendance. A financial aid system should be in place that promotes intense social mobility by enabling open competition where the capable would have access to the occupations they deserve.

Open systems compel administrators to view their organisations as part of and vulnerable to the legal/regulatory, technological, social, economic, and competitive forces in their environment (Williams, 2010). Given the intricacy and challenge of attempting to create synergies among various organisational components, the systems view advises administrators to concentrate on improving internal communication and collaboration. It makes managers acutely aware that survival may depend on more than just effective internal management of the organisation (Mullins, 2010). As a result, the principal in different circumstances is unable to separate himself from events and elements in the organisational environment, the workplace, or even outside factors. Two of the tools a leader uses to instil a vision in followers and inspire them to carry out the organisation's objectives are communication and cooperation. If the team accomplishes the goal for which he was given leadership, or if he takes the initiative himself, the leader is successful. People both inside and outside the organisation, such as the Board of Management (BOM), Ministry of Education, or outside parties with an interest in the school, typically define the parameters of success rather than the leader.



## **Methods**

### ***Research Design***

A research design serves as an organised framework that directs and regulates the steps involved in carrying out research (Kothari, 2014). A descriptive research design, specifically a survey method, was employed to conduct the study. Descriptive research involves describing the situation as it actually exists. A survey is a method that involves asking a large group of people questions about a particular issue (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012). The survey was used to establish the school principals' opinions, attitudes, and knowledge regarding the implementation of a 100% transition in public secondary schools.

### ***Location of the study and target population***

The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Nyandarua County. Nyandarua County is in Central Kenya and borders the Great Rift Valley to the East. The most spectacular feature is the Aberdare Ranges. The region is productive, with dairy and potato farming being the major economic activities. The county has 150 public secondary schools with 150 principals and seven CSOs in the sub-counties who were the target population. According to Kumar (2019), the target population identifies each component from which data is collected for specialised studies.

### ***Justification of the study***

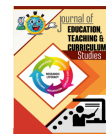
Nyandarua County was an ideal location for this research because several schools have undergone upgrades, including some that have been converted to extra-county and county schools. With the 100% transition policy, these schools have experienced an increase in student enrollment, leading to congestion. Hence, the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the 100% policy implementation arises, identifying challenges and suggesting administrative coping mechanisms to ensure effective delivery. This process also highlights inadequacies in teaching and learning infrastructure and their impact on the learning environment.

### ***Sampling technique and sample size***

Simple random sampling was used to get the sample. Every member of a population has an equal chance of being selected as a response when simple random sampling is used (Rahman et al., 2022). Furthermore, this approach enables the researcher to create a list of the population for the planned study by generating a numerical list of all sample sizes and using a computer programme to produce random numbers, particularly when working with large sample sizes (Rahi, 2017). The researcher used 30% of the accessible population (150) to get a sample of 45 school principals. Purposive sampling was used to get seven Curriculum Support Officers CSOs who were rich in information required.

### ***Data Collection Instruments***

A closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data, while an interview guide was used to collect qualitative data. A questionnaire is a useful tool for polling a large number of respondents on particular subjects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A questionnaire was administered directly to school principals, who were given sufficient time to complete their responses. An interview is a two-way method that permits an exchange of ideas and information (Monday, 2020). An interview was used to collect detailed information from CSOs.



**Reliability and validity**

Reliability describes how reproducible or replicable a study is. Generally, the instrument is considered reliable if a study can be repeated and the same results are found (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). Questionnaires were administered to a sample of school administrators not included in the study. The responses are numbered. The split-half method was used to determine the degree to which the same results could be obtained with a repeated measure of the accuracy of the same concept. The Spearman correlation coefficient was used to test the association between the two sets of responses, yielding a value of 0.78. According to Orodho (2008), reliability of 0.7 and above is generally considered good.

**Validity**

When developing the content, a careful selection of items was made. To test content validity in the instruments, a panel of experts, including supervisors, was used to re-examine the specifications and item selection (Zarouali et al., 2021). Based on the experts’ review, the content validity of the instruments was improved.

**Data Analysis**

Quantitative data collected through closed-ended questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive analysis, involving the computation of means, frequency distributions, standard deviations, and percentages, was carried out to determine frequencies and percentage distributions (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Data presentation was through textual, tabular, and graphical forms. Content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data (Creswell, 2012). This approach entailed methodically identifying new themes, trends, and revelations pertinent to coping mechanisms for handling high enrollments. The researcher read through the response text and recorded recurring and interesting phrases and words. It was then presented in the form of narrations.

**Ethical Considerations**

Permission to collect data was sought from relevant authorities. The researcher assured the respondents of confidentiality. To ensure they were well-informed, the respondents were provided with information about the study objectives. Ethical clearance was sought, and consent was obtained.

**Results and discussion**

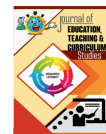
Results were presented based on the study objective on space availability for expansion.

Table 1: Availability of expansion space in the school

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7	15.6%
Agree	21	46.7%
Not sure	2	4.4%
Disagree	3	6.6%
Strongly disagree	12	26.7%

Source: Author 2025

Table 1 presents the principals' responses regarding whether their schools had room for expansion. Specifically, 46.7% of respondents agreed, 26.7% strongly disagreed, 15.6% strongly agreed, 6.6% disagreed, and 4.4% were unsure. The result implies that a significant number of schools at 33.3% lack space for expansion. The availability of physical expansion space is essential for a 100% transition, as



secondary schools receive more students, requiring equally more facilities. Schools with expansion space can alleviate overcrowding by comfortably accommodating additional classes, dining halls, toilets, and dormitories, among other facilities. Besides, facilities such as common areas, gathering spaces, and outdoor regions promote social interaction, teamwork, and a sense of community (Mireles & Elliott, 2022). These spaces encourage learners to collaborate, engage in group discussions, and develop essential social skills. Secondary schools have been directed to build an additional 15,000 new classrooms to accommodate junior schools. This implies that schools without expansion space are at a disadvantage and may not create sufficient room for the current 8-4-4 students and senior schools in the future.

Thus, such schools continue to experience congestion. Daily Nation (February 2020) quoted the Cabinet Secretary of Education as saying that having a child in school learning under a tree was preferable to having them loitering around the house. This statement implied that it was better to have learners in school despite poor infrastructure than to have them not attend school at all; staying at home was not an option. Nevertheless, it is also critical to invest in adequate resources to ensure a safe and quality education that achieves national education goals, rather than producing Form Four (4) leavers who may not be economically engaged.

#### Adequacy of the infrastructure in secondary schools

Results were presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Adequacy of the infrastructure

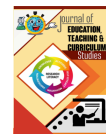
	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	18	40
Not Sure	3	6.7
Disagree	24	53.3
		100%

Source: Author 2025

Principals were the respondents to the question on how adequate the infrastructure was for implementing 100% transition. The majority, at 53.3%, disagreed, 40% agreed, and 6.7% were unsure if the infrastructure was adequate for implementing a 100% transition. This implied that most schools have insufficient infrastructure. Sufficient resources are vital in implementing a 100% transition (Ministry of Education, 2019), enabling schools to accommodate more students. The majority of CSOs who were interviewed agreed that:

*Some schools have modified a shift programme and restructured their curriculum by changing the school schedule to guarantee orderly movement during meals. Moreover, because dining halls are being used for instruction, students eat outside and sit beneath trees. Many students have necessitated that some schools step up surveillance by installing Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) along the main facilities. This is to assist in controlling discipline to some extent among students.*

*Resource mobilisation has been encouraged to boost the resources acquired from the government. Some schools have reached out to sponsors, well-wishers, and political leaders, who have given the less fortunate learners material and financial support. Some schools have established endowment funds to help cover the increasing number of fees for students in need. This has helped keep some needy students in class without interruption.*



A conducive learning atmosphere may be necessary for students’ motivation and inspiration. Otherwise, adverse weather conditions, such as cold, rain, or hot weather, may affect students when they are served food from outside or when eating under trees. Their attitude toward education may be positively or negatively affected, depending on the environment in which they have been exposed. This calls for a priority in establishing and building infrastructure that guarantees some comfort to students, whether they are indoors or outside. When students and teachers are physically comfortable, they are more likely to focus and engage in their studies and work (Anokam & Ipem, 2022). Inadequate resources may also cause conflict amongst learners who try to compete for services and space. When conflicts are recurrent, students may become demoralised, and others may fight for services, which may lead to emotional exhaustion. All these factors culminate in a low concentration on academic work, ultimately leading to poor performance.

### Administrative coping mechanisms for handling large enrollment

Table 3: Administrative coping mechanisms

Measures put in place	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Not sure %	Agree %	Strongly agree %
Managed to expand classrooms and dormitories successfully	18	31.7	8	29	13.3
Managed to build semi-permanent dining halls and sanitation facilities	15	41.7	6.3	27	10
Managed to expand laboratories and libraries successfully	13	35	5.3	40	6.7
Managed to expand teaching and learning materials successfully	9	57.1	3	23.1	7.8
Increased staff workload	3.5	21	4.5	62	9
I successfully recruited BOM teachers and interns	8	35	8.3	32	16.7
Managed to get support from the community and well-wishers	18	44.5	4.5	22	11
Managed to establish a strong support programme for the needy students	12.1	36.7	2.9	42	6.3
Urged parents to increase the fee to supplement government funding	8.3	25	4.7	50	12
Increased the number of departments	7	56	2.6	20.4	14
Optimal resource utilisation, like sharing teachers for elective subjects	10	39.7	7	30.3	13
Merging classes with few students in a stream	10.5	48	5	24	12.5
	<b>11</b>	<b>39.3</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>33.5</b>	<b>11</b>
		<b>50.3%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>44.5%</b>	

Source: Author 2025

On measures put in place, 50.3% of the respondents disagreed, 44.5% agreed, and 5.2% were unsure that they had adopted viable and appropriate measures for handling high admissions. Some noticeable strategies employed by principals at 71% included increased staff workload and pressure on parents to increase fees to supplement government funding, at 62%. This overburdens teachers and parents, who



are already facing financial constraints and stress due to the economic downturn. According to Otieno and Ochieng (2020), several issues hinder the delivery of secondary education, including inadequate teachers, infrastructure, and teaching and learning resources. Therefore, school principals should develop effective mechanisms to address these challenges. According to an interview report from Curriculum Support Officers CSOs, principals have adopted several measures to mitigate the effects of congestion. Some of CSOs had this to say;

*"To accommodate the large number of students, most schools have turned some of their existing facilities, such as dining halls, stores, libraries, and abandoned buildings, into classrooms and dormitories. The double-decker has been turned into a triple-decker, and every space in the dormitory has been occupied. Some schools have built improvised structures out of timber and iron sheets."*

*"Moreover, schools have employed teachers through the Board of Management (BOM) to help offset the shortage. While some schools engage alumni who had performed well in KCSE, others look for interns and those who have finished their training but have not found work."*

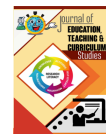
The above coping mechanisms imply that the aspect of quality education for learners is at stake. The current outcry from parents and education stakeholders regarding the majority of students scoring grade D+ and below in the KCSE remains unaddressed, despite increased teachers' workload and overcrowded classrooms.

The expectation was that the impoverished would have access to secondary schools through the government's programme of subsidising secondary education to sustain a 100% transition rate. However, given the prevalence of poverty in the nation and the fees that secondary schools charge, many parents may struggle to afford sending their children to secondary school. Furthermore, inadequate resources may create an unfavourable learning environment. This argument was deemed pertinent to the study, as school levies disproportionately affect low-income families who cannot afford to keep their children in school and must therefore withdraw them early. This significantly impacts access to and retention of education.

### **Conclusion**

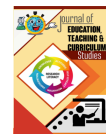
The study concluded that coping methods were only provisional solutions intended to mitigate the effects of the large enrollments, which could diminish educational standards in overcrowded classrooms. A conducive environment that is typically all-around, ranging from physical structures in place to leadership tactics employed to manage the influx of students, is a necessity.

The study recommended using lecture chairs in congested classrooms instead of lockers. Lecture chairs occupy less space and allow teachers to move freely in class, unlike lockers. Furthermore, principals should adopt a collaborative leadership approach that encourages open communication, shared responsibility, and active participation by team members in decision-making. By emphasising collaboration, respect, and teamwork, this strategy encourages team members to feel invested and involved. Collaborative style allows teachers to develop genuine ideas and plans for resolving the organisation's common issues when brought together positively with accurate information.



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