

## **IMPACT OF FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION ON MANAGEMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN EMBU WEST DISTRICT IN KENYA**

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### **Abstract**

*Establishment of Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya in January 2003 sought to do away with tuition fees and other levies in public primary schools. This led to high enrolments of pupils in schools. The study aimed at investigating on the impact of high enrolment on the management of pupils, teachers, physical resources and curriculum implementation. The sample comprised of sixteen head teacher, forty six teachers and two education officers. Data was collected using two questionnaires and an interview schedule. Results obtained indicated that access to education had improved and provision of text books. However FPE has negatively impacted in the management of pupils, staff and physical resources. Pupils discipline went down, available resources were not enough, teachers gave few assignments due to large numbers of pupils and lacked individualized attention. These findings are expected to stimulate Government concern in provision of a successful free primary education where education goals and objectives are achieved.*

**Keywords:** Impact, Free Education & Management

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education concerns itself with the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes which are relevant to the survival of human beings. Education can make a positive contribution to the economic and social development of communities. UNESCO (2002) contended that up to 20% of income growth could be traced to education. Education helps enlighten people concerning the value of culture (MOEST, 2006). Among other concerns the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (Sifuna, 2003). Fees and levies for tuition in primary education were abolished as the government and development partners were to meet the cost of basic teaching and learning materials as well as wages for critical non-teaching staff and co-curricular activities (MEST, 2003). This led to a rise in enrolment in public primary schools, in January 2003, it was estimated that enrolment in primary schools rose from around 6,314,726 to 7,614,326 by the end of the year, representing a 22.3% increase nationally (MoEST, 2003). Embu West District in Kenya is densely populated; hence the impact of FPE on high enrolment is felt.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The declaration of Free Primary Education in Kenya led to a rise in pupils' enrolment which has an implication on management. Management of schools is key to realizing the educational goals. Hence, the need to determine the impact of Free Primary Education on management of primary schools; a case of Embu West District in Kenya.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

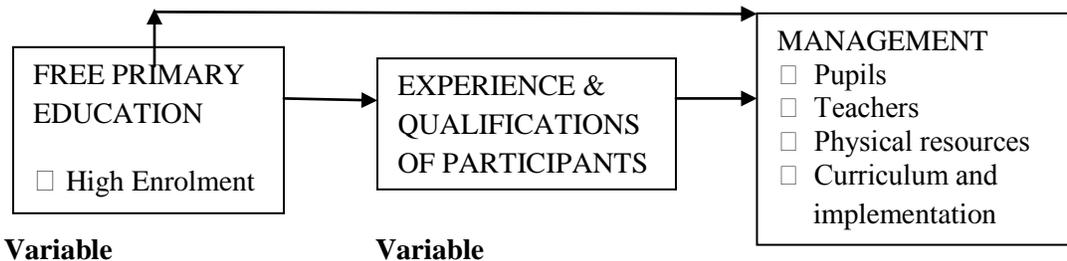
The objectives of the study were to;

- i). find out the impact of FPE on the management of the pupils.
- ii). determine the impact of FPE on the management of the staff personnel.
- iii). assess the impact of FPE on the management of physical resources
- iv). investigate the impact of FPE on the management of the implementation of curriculum and instruction in primary schools in Embu West District.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study employed descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003).

The target Population was all the head teachers, teachers and education officers in Embu District; the District has thirty seven public primary schools with a population of thirty seven head teachers and four hundred and eighty eight teachers (Embu District Education Officer, 2011). Multi-stage sampling techniques were used to come up with the sample of sixteen head teacher, forty six teachers and two education officers. A head teacher's and teacher's questionnaires and an interview schedule for education officers were used to provide the needed data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The independent variable for the study was impact of free primary education while the dependent variable was management of schools as demonstrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Impact of FPE on the Management of Primary Schools**

The head teachers and teachers experience and their academic qualifications are considered to be the intervening variable in management of high enrolment of pupils in primary schools.

### **FINDINGS**

The following results were realized after analyzing the collected data;

#### **a) Background of the Participants**

Majority of the head teachers participants were males (75%) and the rest were female (25%). On the other hand female teachers were more (64%) than the male teachers (36%). According to Zhang, Postletwaite and Grisay (2008) more female teachers are expect at the primary school level, in many countries female teachers (perhaps because of their motherly connection with young children) are often reported to produce better pupils' educational outcomes. Also data from SACMEQ III Project (2007) have shown that there are large variations in the percentages of female school heads across the SACMEQ countries; in Malawi and Kenya less than 15% of the school heads are female. The Kenya constitution (2010) requires no gender should more than two thirds of the total in any organization.

The findings of the study indicate that all the head teachers are trained. The head teachers who hold a masters degree are 12.5%, 31.3% of them have a bachelor's degree while 43.8% are diploma holders and 12.4% are P1 certificate holders. Qualification of primary school teachers is P1 certificate. The academic and professional qualifications of head teachers are expected to influence quality of service delivery at the school they head, and in implementation of reforms (MOE, 1999).

Information obtained indicated that 31.3% of head teachers have been in leadership for less than 5 years, 37.5% have been in leadership for a period 6-10 years, 31.3% of the head teachers have been in leadership for a period 11-15 years. The number of years in school headship is assumed to be linked with the experience and skill in school management matters (Miskel, 1991). Also the findings indicate that all teachers are trained where 19.6% have a bachelors degree, 28% are diploma holders, 50% are P1 certificate holders. The qualification required for entry into the teaching profession is often used as a proxy for the quality of educational inputs (MOEST, 2006).

#### **b) Impact of FPE on Management of Pupils**

The first objective sought to find out the impact of FPE on the management of pupils in public schools. One indicator of Free Primary Education is high enrolment in schools. It is expected that managing a smaller number of pupils is easier in terms of discipline and other areas that pertains to the management of pupils.

**Table 1: Average Number of Pupils per Stream**

Average No. of pupils	Std 1 %	Std 2 %	Std 3 %	Std4 %	Std 5 %	Std 6 %	Std 7 %	Std 8 %
0-20	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.2
21-30	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	12.5	12.5	6.2	31.3
31-40	25.0	25.0	31.3	37.5	18.8	6.2	25.0	31.3
41-50	31.3	31.3	31.3	31.3	43.8	53.3	37.5	12.5
51-60	25.3	25.0	18.8	12.5	12.5	18.8	25.0	18.3
61 and above	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	6.2	6.2	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>							

Information on Table 1 shows that majority of classes had more than forty pupils. The Government requirement is a class size of thirty five pupils. This is an indication that as a result of provision of free primary education more pupils enrolled. This implies that there were many pupils out there who could not afford education due to lack of fees. Chuck (2009) carried out a similar study in Nairobi and come up with the same findings. However, it was noted that some parents withdrew their children for fear that with large number of pupils per class the quality of education may go down.

Large class size affects class management by teachers in terms of maintaining discipline and on effective teaching and learning. Data on Table 2 indicate that more than 46% of the respondents agree that there were many cases of discipline emanating from overcrowded classes. This is an indication of the negative impact on free primary education in Kenya. It is difficult to maintain discipline in class as many children are unruly and noisy (Alubisia 2005). The findings also reveal that the Government did not prepare for the large turnout of pupils in terms of expansion of the number of schools, classrooms and other requirements.

**Table 2 Status of Discipline after FPE by Teachers and Head teachers**

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Very few cases	21	33.9
Average	12	19.4
Many cases	29	46.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Caning as a form of punishment had earlier been abolished prior to abolition fess payment in primary schools in Kenya. Guidance and counseling is encouraged as an alternative to manage pupils who misbehave (Mutua, Kipchirchir, Kemboi, & Chesire, 2010). However, with large classes teachers felt that the tactic was unfeasible, and their lack of training (teachers) in counseling exacerbated the techniques ineffectiveness. Mutua et al (2010) established that due to large class sizes, teachers could not discipline pupils promptly as this would mean taking a lot of the teaching time trying to handle discipline cases. Difficulties in management of classes were compounded by large variation of ages of pupils in one class, the age varied in some classes from six years to sixty years. This implies having classes with pupils who have different needs; this affected negatively discipline, teaching and learning. Whereas enrolment increased with FPE, the rate of drop out also increased as indicated by 62.5% of the respondents (Table 3). Unfortunately there were no records indicating whether those who dropped out from school went to another one. Information as to why they dropped out was not available. According to Wasanga, Ambia and Mwai (2010) at primary school level there is no systematic monitoring of who drops out and why. Elimu Yetu (2004) show that teachers were of the view that FPE has positively impacted on the dropout rates. Arenstrop (2004) on the experience in Malawi, Uganda and Lesotho pupils dropped out of school because they could not cope.

**Table 3: Rate of Dropout after FPE by Head teachers**

Status	Frequency	Percentage
High	10	62.5
Low	6	37.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The Most difficult areas of pupils management were identified by the head teachers as overcrowding (25%), absenteeism (12%), discipline (25%), and 38% indicated that there some pupils with special needs which were not easy to meet since the schools are not prepared or facilitated to handle such needs. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) Article 43(1) (f) and Article 54(1) (b) disallow discrimination and or denying individuals access to education based on their unique features.

### c) Impact of FPE on Management of Staff

The second objective of the study sought to find out the impact of FPE on the management of teachers. Teaching resources are one of the most important inputs into the education system (MOE, 1999). The teacher is the locus of classroom instructional activity and curriculum delivery. Teachers are the front-line service providers in education (MOE, 1999). Delivery of quality education is hence, critically dependent on having a sufficient supply of appropriately trained and motivated teachers.

**Table 4 Adequacy of Teachers in Schools**

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Adequate	7	43.8
Inadequate	9	56.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Results in Table 4 indicate that 56.3% schools do not have adequate number of teachers as required. In the Kenya vision 2030 document, it is proposed that an additional 28,000 teachers be recruited under its flagship project by 2012 to address the shortage. The teacher shortage currently stands at 40,223 in primary schools (Republic of Kenya, 2009). The recruitment policy guidelines require that those who graduated earliest from teacher training colleges should be given priority during recruitment. This means that the recruited teachers may be older and may not stay long in the service (Pianta, Belsky, Houts & Morrison, 2007). A much larger teacher workforce is needed to respond to the burgeoning class sizes, this demand is rarely met. For example, UNESCO's 2005 nationally representative study of the implementation of FPE in Kenya revealed that the average school visited was short of two to three teachers. This is in agreement with the findings of this study.

Information on the impact of FPE on teacher motivation reveals that 59.7% of teachers are not motivated. Motivation is the driving force to achieve something (Arnold, 1991), lack of it results to poor teaching and maintenance of discipline. Poor motivation of teachers is due to handling large classes, average pupils and pupils with varied needs. The head teachers have difficulties in management or dealing with teachers who have given up or who are overwhelmed (fatigue) with work or unable to control large classes. Alubisia (2005) maintains that the workload of teachers has doubled since FPE and when compounded with negative attitude towards the profession, many teachers have become disinterested in teaching and have turned to other income generating activities.

### d) Impact of FPE on Management of Physical Resources

The third objective of the study sought to find out the impact of FPE on management of physical resources in primary schools. The learning environment including classrooms and other school facilities has an impact on the learning outcomes. Spacious classes are required for easy movement and interaction during the teaching / learning process. Sitting facilities ensure learners' comfort in the classrooms for smooth learning. Learning is hampered if the facilities are inadequate or inappropriate. Sanitary units help in the physiological well-being of the learners.

**Table 5: Adequacy of Physical Resources by Head teachers**

Status	Classrooms		Sanitary Units	
	F	%	F	%
Adequate	11	68.8	11	68.8
Inadequate	5	31.2	5	31.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Majority of the respondents (68.8%) reported that the classrooms and the sanitary units are adequate whereas 31.2% reported that they were not enough.

This reveals that schools are lacking about a third of classrooms and the same number of sanitary units, hence instead of head teachers concentrating on implementation of the school curriculum they spend most of the time dealing with congestion issues. Lack of classrooms implies lack of furniture such as chairs and desks; this problem is compounded by tear and wear of the same. With the Free Primary Education school managers are finding it difficult to convince parents to fund essential amenities that the government cannot provide. The government issued a directive that FPE does not require parents and communities to build new schools but instead encouraged communities to improve, refurbish and use existing facilities such as community and religious buildings (MEST,2003). As a result of this directive, parents and communities have not been willing or able to put up additional classrooms and facilities such as sanitary units.

#### **e) Impact of FPE on Management of Curriculum and Instruction**

The forth objective of the study sought to find out the impact of FPE on management of curriculum and instruction. Curriculum and instruction is the core of any institution of learning (MOE, 1999). Data obtained indicate that 56.3% have syllabi for various subjects fully covered while 43.7% agreed that the syllabi were not fully covered. Too much work load and large classes were singled out as the reason why the syllabuses were not fully covered. In a bid to have the syllabus covered in time some schools employed and paid their own teachers, this resulted in head teachers deviating their time to look for funds to pay the extra teachers. Due to lack of classrooms some classes were taught in shifts, thus reducing the time allocated to each class, hence making it difficult to cover the syllabus.

Written assignments as opposed to oral tests gives a clearer picture of what is attained by individual learners. Written assignments also help in developing writing skills. Results obtained indicate that 62.9% of teachers gave written assignments on daily basis, 33.9% give on weekly basis, while 3.2% rarely gave written assignments. The 62.9% reported that they were able to give assignments daily due to availability of text books. Pupils were reportedly able to do the assignments away from school when they carry the text books home. The 33.9% who gave written assignments on weekly basis and the 3.2% that rarely give assignments; cited large class sizes (resulting to too many books to mark) and shortage of teachers leading to big workloads as reasons to why they were not in a position to give written assignments daily.

Slow learners are individuals who have average and mentally deficient intelligence and whose social behavior is less than age level standards. Information obtained indicate that 58.7% of teachers are able to provide individualized attention to slow learners, while 41.3% are unable due to large class sizes. Wax (2003) shows that some Kenyan pupils have never had a chance to formally meet their teacher outside classrooms. According to UNESCO (2005) study reported that attention in overcrowded classrooms was mostly given to brighter pupils while weaker pupils were left behind. Within the classroom, teachers had to yell to be heard and some even used megaphones in order to teach the large number of pupils.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

FPE increased access to basic education to all children without discrimination leading to overcrowding of pupils in schools, inadequate number of teachers, insufficient classrooms and teaching and learning resources. Age of pupils varied from six years to sixty years leading to pupils with varied needs. Large numbers of pupils could not allow individualized attention and those who are average or weak were more affected. Teaching by shift reduced time allocated to each class therefore the syllabus could not be covered, then number of assignments reduced due to large numbers of pupils. Discipline in schools went down and guidance and counseling could not cope due to large number of students and teachers are not adequately prepared in this area. Dropout rate increased and schools could not provide data on the reasons or cause of drop out from school. More attention was given to the bright students ignoring the weak ones.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the study that;

- i) There is need for the government to employ more teachers to reduce the pupil teacher ratio.
- ii) The government, community and other stake holders should devise ways of motivating teachers.
- iii) There is need for the head teachers to mobilize the community to pull resources together and help the government in provision of facilities such as classrooms, toilet, chairs and desks.

- iv) The Government could increase funds allocated to FPE so as to enable schools acquire more facilities.
- vi) There is need for the government to restrict admission to primary schools to acceptable age limits of 6-13 years. Those above the age bracket (6-13 years) should be advised to join adult literacy programmes.

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