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Free Primary Education Policy: Coping Strategies in Public Primary Schools in Kakamega South District, Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract
This study examined the challenges of implementing free primary education and copping strategies in public primary schools in Kakamega South District, Kakamega County, Kenya. The study was premised on the demand and supply theory. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The sample comprised 23 headteachers, 92 teachers and one Ministry of education officer working in the study locale, yielding a sample size of 117. The main research instruments were questionnaires and interview guidelines. The main findings of the study were that whereas the free primary education policy had led to an exponential increase in the numbers of children enrolling in primary schools, this had over stretched the available human and physical resource base to cope with these numbers. This had led in poor teaching strategies resulting into poor academic performance at the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) Examinations. The major copping strategies included hiring of extra teachers paid by parents through school management committees to supplement those posted by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) as well as providing material and financial incentives to teachers to enable them go an extra mile and teach longer hour outside the recommended workload. It was recommended that that the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education should rationalize and equally distribute the few available teachers to all schools in the country. The SMC should also be accorded legal and logistical means of engaging in viable income generating activities that could boost the resource base of various primary schools in the study locale of Kakamega South District, Kakamega County, Kenya. [258 words]
Key Words: Free Primary Education Policy, Coping Strategies, Public Primary Schools, Kakamega South District, Kakamega County, Kenya.

Introduction

Background to the Study

The introduction of free primary education policy in Kenya in 2003 was in tandem with the efforts of the international community who had adopted the six Educations for All (EFA) goals at the World Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, as well as the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 that call for increased access to quality basic education and training which have been domesticated in Kenya (World Education Forum, 2000; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). This broad Vision of education and the holistic approach to sector development was fully embraced by Kenya as a critical vehicle for realizing Vision 2030, the road map for development (Odhiambo, 2010; Gikondi et.al, 2010a; Republic of Keya/UNESCO, 2012). The Constitution of Kenya 2010 unequivocally promises all Kenyans unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on the progress made thus far in order to exploit the full potential of education for each and every child, youth and adult in the nation (Republic of Kenya, 2010b, 2012).

In addition, the Basic Education Act 2013 reiterates the fact that basic education which has been made free and compulsory in Kenya should be operationalized through the legal framework enshrined in the Act (Republic of Kenya, 2012a). Both the Constitution 2010 and Basic Education Act 2013 guarantees and provides legal mechanisms of ensuring that every Kenyan citizen gets access to basic education and other economic and social rights that hinge upon the citizens access to, and performance in, education, as much as on the application of knowledge , attitude and skills gained through the educational experience(Republic of Kenya, 2010a 2010b, Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; UNESCO, 2012 ; World Banks, 2012; Republic of Kenya,2013).

As the post-2015 goal-setting process continues, education has increasingly been discussed as not only a development goal in its own right, but also as a key way of reaching other development goals (United Nations, 2013). And for good reason: a country that provides free access to quality education for all its citizens is far more likely to reduce poverty, promote economic growth , lower child and maternal mortality and achieve social inclusion(Rose, 2013; United Nations, 2013). The importance of education and learning is adroitly highlighted in the Recent Draft Executive Summary for the United Nations World We Want Post-2015 Global Consultation on Education positions education as both a human right and the foundation for development (United Nations,

2013).It is against this background that this study finds the justification to examine some of the challenges and coping strategies in implementing free education policy in public primary schools in Kakamega South District, Kakamega County, Kenya.

State of the Art Review

Free Primary Education (FPE) was introduced in Kenya in January 2003 by the NARC government, which was elected in December 2002.This was the second attempt to introduce the policy in the post- colonial Kenya, after the first attempt back in 1970s failed to achieve much. The renewed efforts were an intentional strategy by the government to comply with UN recommendation on the children's right for education, which was reinforced by the recommendations of the UNESCO Addis Ababa conference of 1961. Section 7(2) of the Children's Act 2001 reinforces this point by asserting that, "Every child shall be entitled to free basic education which shall be compulsory in accordance with article 28 of the United Nations' convention on the rights of the child."It was in view of this clause and the realization of the fact that education contributes directly to the growth of the national income and improvement of human welfare that the new government of Kenya initiated the FPE policy (Psacharopoulos& Woodhall,1985) . Furthermore, this was the government's bid to fulfill its pledge of offering FPE in its campaign manifesto (UNESCO, 2005).

Like many other developing countries, it has not been an easy road for Kenya in its bid to implement the FPE policy, let alone the universal education (Bogonko, 1992). Some of the hindrances include an outburst in enrolments visa-avis a stagnant teacher supply and lack of finances to expand the physical facilities. The problem of teacher shortage especially, has been there since the missionary era when formal education was introduced (Eshiwani, 1993). Eshiwani further asserts that at independence, Kenya inherited an education system with an under developed teaching profession. It was lacking in both quality and quantity. In 1971, when President Kenyatta abrogated tuition fees for the economically marginal districts of Marsabit, Isiolo, Samburu Turkana, Garissa, West Pokot, Mandera, Wajir, Tana-River and Lamu the enrolment in Samburu went up by 31 %; Wajir 72 %; Isiolo 23%; Marsabit 29% and Tana-River 26% (Bogonko, 1992).

An almost similar trend was witnessed when the GOK re-introduced the FPE policy in the country in January 2003.According to the report by the Society for International Development (SID), 2004), the country's total enrolment in primary schools currently stands at 7.5 million pupils up from 5.9 million in the year 2002, just before the inception of FPE policy .Republic of Kenya (2006) puts the current enrolment at 7.6 million. This implies an increase of over 29 %. Studies by GOK from nine sample districts show that there was a tremendous increase in enrolment in public primary schools immediately after the introduction of FPE in 2003 from 768,296 in 2002 to 916,355 in 2003, an increase of 19.3 per cent (UNESCO, 2005).

Table 1 : Number of Teachers, Pupil Enrolment and PTR in Sample Districts in 2004

District	Number of Teachers	Pupil Enrolment	Pupil Teacher Ratio
Kajiado	199	11,715	1:58
Nairobi	427	18,071	1:42
Mwingi	187	6,966	1:38
Gucha	197	6,732	1:38
Kisumu	183	8,113	1:44
Kwale	288	12,220	1:42
TaitaTaveta	192	7,962	1:41
Embu	298	8,913	1:29
Kericho	180	7,664	1:42
Total	**2,146**	**88,356**	**1:41**

Source: Republic of Kenya (2005:24)

Table 1 illustrates how FPE policy has affected teacher adequacy in selected districts in Kenya. Teacher adequacy is normally measured in terms of a ratio, which according to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) should be 35:1 (Mulama, 2003). With the total enrolment at around 7.6 million pupils in our public primary schools, and the teaching force at around 180,000, the current PTR stands at 43:1, which is above the recommended 35:1 and it is likely to affect teacher effectiveness. This study was meant to focus on rural schools in so far as the PTR and FPE is concerned, and attempted to find out whether there are efforts being made by the school managers and other stakeholders to balance the two variables; FPE and the number of teachers, for effective teaching-learning process, consequently suggesting possible solutions.

Teacher Demand in Public Primary Schools in Kenya

Throughout the independence era, there was a strong believe that to improve the quality of secondary education, that of primary schools had to be improved first and teachers are rightly regarded as the hub in that process (Bogonko, 1992).Basically, the teaching force can be represented as the product of two factors which are; (a) the number of learners to be enrolled and, (b) the teaching technology in use, resulting in PTR. According to Williams (1979), the choice of the determining factor will depend on economic factors- the cost of educational inputs, particularly teachers' salaries; share of the total cost of education that the government is to meet from the public resources and the size of the private sector in education; the overall availability for educational purposes and the assessment made of the contribution that education will make to economic growth.

On the side of learners' enrolment, the best possible projections are indispensable for teacher forecasting, though it is desirable to provide for the greatest possible flexibility in the arrangements of teacher supply. On the other side, the educational technology in use is the key to the output- labour ratio in education (PTR) and enables one to calculate teacher requirements from pupil enrolments. There are three key components; average class size, average number of teacher contact periods required by a class over a complete teaching cycle and the average teaching load per teacher (Williams, 1979). The PTR used for teacher requirements forecasting should be based on some teaching and learning strategy which specifies among other things the average size of classes, the total number of teacher –contact time required by a class over a week, and average teaching loads per teacher per school week.

In Kenya, the issue of teacher demand is of grave concern to all the key stakeholders in the education sector. It is usually concerned with the number of teaching force that is required by the government at a certain point in time. Teacher demand directly depends on the gross enrolment of the learners and the ability of the government to sustain a given number of this work force. There is a decline of teachers by 1.8 per cent and 2.9 per cent in primary and secondary schools in the face of a rising number of pupils at both levels (KIPPRA, 2009). The Minister for Planning, Wycliffe Oparanya, while releasing the Economic Survey 2009 Report, called for recruitment of new teachers after it emerged the teacher numbers fell unexpectedly in 2008.

Teacher Supply in Primary Schools in Kenya

Williams (1979) posits that supply of teachers should be considered under stock and flow. The stock of teachers (teaching force) at any moment in time consists of the teachers serving in schools, plus those who are on the payroll but on temporary release for in- service training or approved leave. Teacher flow is concerned with the outflows and inflows. The number of trained teachers in Kenya naturally increased in the course of time from 32,929 in 1970 to 52,132 in 1974 and further to 62,729 in 1978 and 82,983 in 1983. By 1990, the figure had risen to 121,461(Bogonko, 1992). Bogonko further posits that to maintain this kind of trend, the government enforced the regular teacher training, and mounting of in-service courses for untrained teachers in the service. This led to a steady increase in the number of trained teachers allover the country since independence. There was a big mismatch between the percentage increases in the number of learners and the number of qualified teachers available in the country. For instance looking at the year 1963 and 1964 when there was a percentage increase in enrolment of 13.8, the percentage increase in the number of available teachers was -0.08. A similar trend was also witnessed between 1969 and 1970. This is the kind of scenario that has been prevalent in Kenya to date, making teaching – learning process so difficult.

Quality and the Role of the Teacher

Quality in education must include a change in the teachers. Teachers, next to students are the largest most crucial inputs of an educational system. There is need for enough and qualified teachers if education standards are to be maintained .Education is a lifelong process through which people acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to improve their well being (Njiru et al, 1997). Performance of pupils is critical in evaluating the quality of education. The performance of pupils in primary schools has been attributed to the fact that enrolment has far exceeded the school's resources. Since schools are unable to charge levies and offer teachers incentives to teach overtime, which have also been banned, there has been little extra coaching to address the needs of slow learners (Kigotho, 2009:31). However, it is important to ensure that academic standards are maintained and that schools produce quality graduates.

The most relevant measure of educational effectiveness is not the number of enrolled pupils as is often used in evaluating educational progress in developing countries. Rather, it is the number of completers that have achieved a required level of training (World Bank, 1980).The main objective of Basic Education for All (BEFA) is to impart literacy, numeracy and manipulative skills. If the education system were to be judged solely by the size of the student enrolments, the question of a crisis in the content and quality of education would not arise. However, the education system exists to teach students, not to produce statistics (Coombs, 1996). Questions must be asked as to what the students have learned, how much and how well they have learnt.

The Finance and Development (2005) observes that without significant contingent commitments from donors, those countries that undertake a major expansion of access to education can suffer serious declines in quality- the student-teacher ratio may zoom to 100:1 from 50:1 in ill-equipped classrooms. While millions of poor children have clearly benefited from the elimination of these financial barriers to schooling, such dramatic expansions without an equivalent boost in resources to compensate for lost fees and support the increased numbers of students can create a quality dilemma. In Uganda, for example, while more students gained access, the explosion in class sizes- without more external assistance- caused a significant drop in the percentage of students receiving satisfactory scores in Mathematics and English. The answer to this dilemma is neither to forego such admirable efforts to eliminate fees nor to discourage such leaders from seizing critical political moments to push their nations towards universal basic education. Instead, what is needed is substantial continent donor funding to encourage well-planned expansions (The Finance and Development, 2005).

EFA can only succeed if teachers are treated as participants and not just as employees. Educators need to develop greater self- awareness of both strengths and weaknesses, and how they may influence students and the learning process. Emotionally secure, competent and committed teachers are one of the most important assets for qualitative education in the future (UNESCO, 2000).

Dramatic expansions of primary school completion can only be accomplished with a comparable expansion in the number of teachers. Yet teacher salaries constitute the largest component of an expansion- usually averaging over 80 per cent of education budgets in major developing nations- and they are recurrent costs. As a result, countries hesitate to hire the extra teachers necessary to expand quality education because of lack of resources and a lack of certainty about the durability of those resources (UNESCO, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of Free Primary Education policy in Kenya in January 2003 prompted the enrollment of about two million new pupils into the primary school system. This increased the gross enrolment from 5.9 million to 7.6 million pupils (SID, 2004) .This was an increase of over 29%. On the other hand, teacher population in the whole country has stuck around 180,000 (Republic of Kenya, 2002). This implies a very high PTR of 43:1, considering that the recommended pupil-teacher ratio is 35:1(Mulama, 2003). However, despite the rationale for attaining universal FPE, some districts in Kenya still have a low teacher population, a phenomenon that is likely to adversely affect the effectiveness of the teaching – learning process. As a result, many pupils are likely to fail to benefit from primary school education. This study was to investigate whether there is teacher adequacy and effectiveness in Kakamega South District, before and after the introduction of FPE programme. The study was further to assess the strategies being employed by school managers in coping with the problem of balancing the number of teachers and that of pupils for effective teaching-learning process.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study This study examined the challenges of implementing free primary education and copping strategies in public primary schools in Kakamega South District, Kakamega County, Kenya. Objectives of the study were:

i. To determine teacher effectiveness four years before and six years after the introduction of Free Primary Education (1999-2008) in Kakamega South District.
ii. To find out the strategies employed by the school managers in attempt to achieve teacher adequacy and effectiveness in public primary schools after the introduction of Free Primary Education policy in Kakamega South District.

Theoretical Framework

The study was premised on the theory of demand and supply as advanced by Hicks (1986). Hicks presented the indifference curve approach to the theory of demand and supply and gave logic ordering to the demand theory in 1986. The law of demand states that, as the price of a good or service fall, a larger quantity will be bought, and as the price of a good or service rises, a smaller quantity will be bought. Demand for education is always likely to be affected by the costs involved, amount of school desired and the prospects of earning higher income (Todaro, 1994). With the implementation of FPE programme in Kenya, it was therefore likely that the demand for education will rise, as a response to the relatively lower cost of schooling. This law states that at higher prices, a larger quantity of a good or service will be supplied than at lower price, and at lower prices, a smaller quantity will be supplied than at higher prices. In this study, supply means the quantity of school places at primary school level. To understand how the law of demand and supply functions when there is a shift in demand; consider the case in which there is a shift in demand.

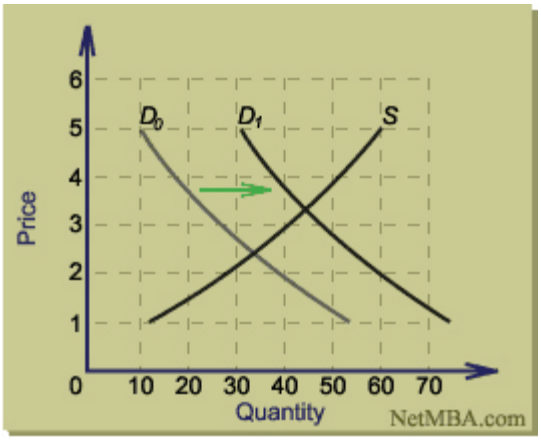


Figure 1 Shifts in Demand
Source: Marshall, A. **(1920:11)** Principles of Economics,**8th ed. London: Oxford University Press**

In this example, the positive shift in demand results in new supply-demand equilibrium point that is higher in both quantity and price (Marshall, 1920). Introduction of FPE led to a positive shift in the demand for basic education. This means, the government should provide more places or put up more schools. It also means hiring more qualified teachers. Unfortunately for most nations, the public supply of these places has been fixed by the level of government educational expenditures (Todaro, 1994). The highest percentages of government expenditure in education, about 70% goes to payment of teachers' salaries (Republic of Kenya, 2005). This is likely to impact negatively on the population of teachers and by extension the PTR, since the government may not be able to sustain a higher number of teaching staff in schools, which equally requires other resources. In this case then, the sufficient supply of education to a big number of enrolled learners is likely to be hampered. This is because demand and supply conditions always affect the success of any new product on the market (Hyman, 1989).

Research Methodology

Design and Locale of the Study

This study utilized descriptive survey design. This design was found appropriate since it is used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researcher gather, summarize, present, and interpret the data for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2009a). The study was conducted in public primary schools in Kakamega South District, in Kakamega County of the Republic of Kenya. The district comprises one constituency; Ikolomani and is made up of two divisions. The location was chosen due to its rural setup and being mentioned among those with the highest poverty index (UNDP, 2006). It therefore implied that the introduction of FPE could have had an impact on school enrolment, more so in primary schools. It was interesting to find out the exact position on the ground and probably find out its impact on teacher adequacy and teacher effectiveness.

Target Population and Sampling Procedures

The study population was 68 public primary schools in Kakamega South District, 68 head teachers in the public primary schools in Kakamega South District and the District Education Officer (DEO). Head teachers were targeted because they have a direct role to play, as executive officers of the management committees of schools and government agents, in provision of all the necessary resources including teachers, in an attempt to ensure the smooth teaching – learning process. The DEO was targeted so as toaugment information gathered from head teachers. The district has 68 public primary schools. It is from this population that the sample schools were drawn. Twenty three (23) schools are a third of the total number of those schools and therefore a representative sample (Orodho, 2009a; 2012). For each of these schools, the school's head teachers were used for this study. The DEO was therefore sampled to augment some of the information gathered from head teachers. The sample comprised 23 headteachers, 92 teachers and one Ministry of education officer working in the study locale, yielding a sample size of 117.

Research Instruments: Reliability and validity

A questionnaire developed by the researcher was issued to head teachers .The researcher conducted a pilot study prior to the administration of the research instruments. This enabled the researcher to refine the research instruments by making corrections based on observations made. Reliability is the degree to which a particular measuring procedure gives similar results over a number of repeated trials (Orodho, 2009a). The internal consistency of data was worked out using Cronbach's coefficient Alpha (α). It is a widely used technique for calculating a correlation coefficient. It requires only a single administration of the test. Cronbach's coefficient

Alpha (α) is a general form of the K-R $_{20}$ formula that can be used when items are not scored dichotomously (Borg & Gall,1989). The use of K-R $_{20}$ in assessing internal consistency of an instrument is based on the split – halves of the instrument. Its use reduces the time required to compute a reliability coefficient in other methods. A high coefficient implies that items correlate highly among themselves; i.e., there is consistency among the items in measuring the concept of interest. Frankfort et al (1996) recommend 0.700 as the lowest reliability coefficient level at which items should be considered reliable. A reliability coefficient of 0.830 was established and hence the adoption of the questionnaire for the study. To determine the validity of the instruments, the researcher solicited views of his supervisors and other research experts. They assessed the relevance of the content used in the questionnaire, individual interview schedule and the observation schedule developed. They examined the instruments individually and provided feed back to the researcher. Their recommendations were incorporated.

Data Collection and Analysis

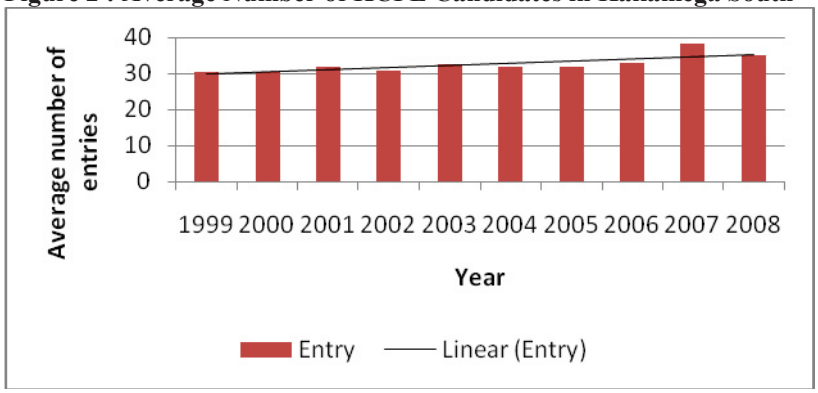
The researcher obtained a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) , authorizing collect data. Written permission was also sought from the District Education Officer (DEO) of the respective district, before visiting all the sampled schools to establish rapport and make appointments with head teachers. On the actual day of collecting data, the researcher distributed the questionnaires and gave respondents one week to respond to them. He interviewed the DEO .He conducted spot checks in sampled public primary schools using a structured observation sheet. The data obtained in this study was organized and then analyzed descriptively. The analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).The data was described using means, ratios, tables, percentages and graphs.

Findings and Discussion

Teacher effectiveness in Kakamega South District

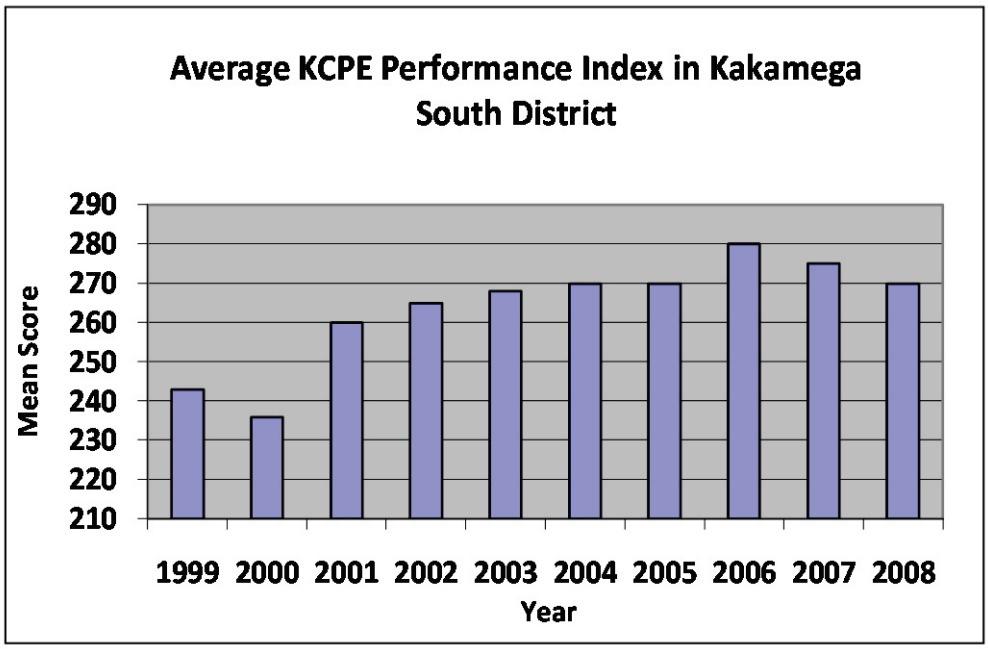
The first objective was to examine the level of teacher effectiveness in Kakamega South District during the period 1999-2008 was measured by eliciting information on pupils' performance. The specific areas investigated were the number of candidates enrolled for KCPE per school and their performance. The researcher was interested in establishing the average number of candidates enrolled for the national examination, KCPE, per school for the period under study. Figure 2 gives the average entry of pupils for the examination class (standard eight) for the period 1999-2008.

Figure 2 : Average Number of KCPE Candidates in Kakamega South District from 1999-2008



From this figure, it is clear that the average number of candidates per school enrolled for KCPE in Kakamega South District was lower in the years preceding the introduction of FPE. They were 31 in 1999, 30 in 2000, 32 in 2001 and 30 in 2002.However; the number steadily increased five years after FPE had taken effect. For instance, they were 32 in 2003, 30 in 2004 and 2005, 33 in 2006 and 38 in 2007 .A drop was however recorded in 2008 with only 35 candidates being registered. This increase means that the introduction of FPE had a direct positive impact on enrolment in public primary schools. Performance by pupils in KCPE for the sampled schools for the period under study was sought. Figure 3 depicts a summary of this performance.

Figure 3 : Average KCPE Performance Index in Kakamega South District



The figure on the previous page shows the mean scores in KCPE in Kakamega South District four years before and six years after FPE was introduced in Kenya. The mean score for the first two years (1999 and 2000) was calculated out of a possible total of 700 marks, while for the subsequent years it was calculated out of a possible 500 marks due to reduction in the number of examinable subjects. However, for the sake uniformity in presenting the findings and analysis of this study, the mean score for 1999 and 2000 was converted from 700 to 500.

In 1999 and 2000, the performance was below average thus 243 and 236 respectively. The mean score improved in the following next two years preceding the introduction of FPE, thus 260 and 265 out of a possible mark of 500. It is of paramount importance to note that although there was reduction in the number of teachers and increase in the number of KCPE candidates in Kakamega South District in 2001 and 2002, a positive improvement in the mean score was recorded during this period. This means that so many other factors come into play in determining the performance of candidates in national examinations, the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) not withstanding. They include the level of teacher education, teacher experience, remuneration of teachers and financial expenditure per pupil (UNESCO, 2000). This study, for instance, has revealed that 72% of the teachers' age in Kakamega South District range from 31-60 and therefore experienced. Again, in an educational organization, there may be no enough material and human resources necessary for achievement of their goals. However, its effectiveness will still be judged by the extend to which the organization achieves its goals, acquires the necessary material and human resources, provides congenial organizational climate and meets the expectations of the society within which it is established (Okumbe, 1998:9)

The performance in KCPE in Kakamega South District for the period after the introduction of FPE took a fluctuating trend. Kakamega South District had a positive mean score improvement of 268 in 2003 from 265 in the preceding year. It is reasonable to conclude that an improvement in number of teachers from 224 in 2002 to 239 in 2003 was one of the reasons that contributed to KCPE improvement. In 2004, the district mean score slightly improved to 270 although the teacher population slightly reduced. This performance can be attributed to a reduction in the candidature from 32 to 30. The district maintained her KCPE mean score in 2005 as well as the number of teachers and the number of candidates. In 2006, the mean score improved to 280. This is the time that witnessed an improvement in the number of teachers and candidates sitting KCPE. The performance dropped in 2007 and 2008 respectively when there was a reduction in the number of teachers and an increase in the number of KCPE candidates in 2007.

Comparatively, it is noticeable that the general KCPE performance in Kakamega South District was dismal before but improved after the introduction of FPE .The study has again revealed that it is not obvious that an increase in the number of candidates and a higher PTR negatively affects KCPE performance. This appears to contradict conventional opinion that an increase in pupil enrolment and maintenance of the same number of teachers always impacts negatively on the performance of pupils in national examinations. Although the general KCPE performance improved in Kakamega South District after the introduction of FPE, it dropped in 2007 and

2008. One reason making teachers less effective in Kakamega South District is the high number of lessons. Thirty one point seven (31.7%) per cent of the respondents had a workload of between 36-45 lessons per week while 2.3% had a workload of more than 46 lessons. Only 52.5% of the teachers had between 26-35 lessons while 13.6% had less than 25 lessons.

These results reveal that quite a number of teachers are overloaded in terms of the number of lessons since the appropriate number of lessons is 36 per week (Koech, 1999). Such overloads can not provide teachers with adequate time to give personalized attention to each pupil, to supervise class work and mark books and examinations, neither can they lesson plan and execute their plans more efficiently (Akala, 2002).It is again clear that there is an imbalance in the distribution of teachers and that is why teachers have uneven number of lessons across the district.

UNESCO (2005) states that the quality of education in the country has drastically gone down due to inadequate teachers, lack of sufficient textbooks and reduced continuous assessment tests. The writer further asserts that teachers were neither prepared for the FPE nor the increased workload, and that even before the introduction of FPE the number of teachers was insufficient. With the introduction of FPE, teachers now have even a bigger workload as they have a large number of pupils to attend to. This has made it difficult for the teachers to give individualized attention to the pupils.

Schmidt (2006) adds that elimination of fees has resulted in perceptions of reduced educational quality, limiting the benefits of primary schooling and therefore restricting economic growth. This compromises teachers' performance and quality of education (UNESCO, 2005). If a decrease in school fees is complimented by a decrease in the quality of education then positive incentive of reduced cost was mitigated by the negative incentive of reduced quality. In other words, if less money means poorer quality, then the benefits of dropping user fees could be negligible (Schmidt, 2006).The solution to this challenge according to UNESCO (2000) lies in the facilitation of in-servicing of teachers to improve their service to the pupils. The writer also recommends that local education officers should visit schools more frequently and organize seminars to enlighten teachers, pupils and parents on the benefits of FPE.

The Coping Strategies

About the strategies that were being adopted by school managers to achieve teacher adequacy and teacher effectiveness in the wake of increased pupil enrolment, Table 1 that follows provides a summary of the responses.

Table 1 : Strategies Employed in Coping with Increase in Pupil Enrolment

Strategies Employed in Coping with Increase in Pupil Enrolment	Percentages
Employment of more teachers	34.0
Inviting voluntary trained teachers	32.0
Gathering all pupils in a available classrooms	15.0
Improving available physical facilities	7.0
Fund raising to put up learning facilities	5.0
Subdividing existing classrooms	5.0
Inviting untrained volunteer teachers	2.0

Following massive increase in pupil enrolment in public primary schools, there was the challenge of having adequate teachers. Different school managers employed different strategies in an attempt to cope with the pupil influx. Thirty four(34%) per cent of the respondents opted for employment of more teachers while 32% invited voluntary trained teachers in trying to cope with the upsurge in the number of learners. Furthermore, 15% gathered all pupils in the available classrooms, 7% improved available facilities, 5% fund-raised in order to put up more teaching and learning facilities, another 5% sub-divided existing classrooms and 2% invited untrained volunteer teachers.

These results point towards a bigger problem of inadequate physical and human resources. It is a clear indicator of lack of prior preparation for the FPE programme, especially in terms of provision of physical facilities and teachers. An attempt by tone of the headteachers had the following to say:

> Hiring more teachers using the Parents' Teachers Association (PTA) had been conducted as a way of improving results. The headteacher pointed at in-servicing of teachers for improved results while one other principal attributed it to regular testing of pupils. The other headteacher sited provision of material incentives for teachers as well as supervision of curriculum implementation. On the whole most interviewed headteachers also indicated that the provision of lunch at school could lead to improved KCPE performance (Headteachers 3,6.9& 15).

From the citations from various headteachers of primary schools in the study locale, it is evident that the most sought for practice by head teachers is in tandem with the Planning Minister Wycliffe Oparanya's assertion that new teachers have to be recruited in primary and secondary schools in the wake of the rising number of pupils at both levels (Siringi, 2009:3). These suggestions concur with those made by UNESCO. In fact, UNESCO (2005) suggested that in-servicing of teachers with an aim of equipping them with skills to handle large classes should be done, more teachers should be hired to improve the PTR and teaching-learning facilities in schools to be improved. This will enhance the quality of education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, a number of conclusions were drawn:

1. Free Primary Education had a positive effect on the number of pupils enrolled in public primary schools in Kakamega South District. The policy led to an influx in the number of learners, especially during the very first year of its implementation.
2. That FPE has negatively affected the adequacy of teachers and the Pupil- Teacher Ratio. This was as a result of an ever growing number of learners against a fluctuating teacher population during the period 1999- 2008. The PTR of the district rose from 32:1 in 1999 to 45:1 in 2009. The scenario has negatively affected the teaching- learning process in the district, making the performance index in the national examinations to be only slightly above average.
3. That the teacher effectiveness has been to some extend compromised with the introduction of FPE. Some learners are failing in their national examinations(KCPE) , and therefore being denied chance to enhance their studies in secondary schools, hence are being subjected to abject poverty forever.
4. That the strategies being employed by school managers to deal with the issue of high pupil enrolment and inadequate numbers of teachers have not been very effective. This is because the PTR in Kakamega South District took an upward trend from 1999- 2008.

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. In order to address the challenge posed by high PTR, the government of Kenya should hire more teachers to add up to the existing numbers. This implies reversing her current policy of freezing teacher employment and dwelling on replacing those who leave the service through natural attrition.
2. Teachers should be equitably distributed across the country. The government of Kenya, through Teachers Service Commission (TSC), should give equal chances to all schools irrespective of their settings.
3. School Management Committees (SMCs) should be financially and legally empowered through an act of parliament to hire teachers more regularly as soon as need arises. This is because they are on the ground and they can easily and quickly assess and determine the most appropriate measures needed within the shortest time possible to enhance teaching- learning process for quality education.
4. There is need to improve on the physical facilities in our public primary schools since the teaching and learning facilities available on inception of FPE were overstretched. The government in conjunction with other stakeholders should take decisive measures to alleviate the situation through refurbishment and establishment of more physical facilities.

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