

Primary school teachers' perceptions of adequacy and quality of physical facilities in public primary schools under Free Primary Education

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Abstract

The Free Primary Education (FPE) programme was commissioned in Kenya in January 2003 to provide basic education to all children of school going age and to ease the burden of cost sharing from the parents. However, even though the public primary school class teachers were to shoulder the greatest responsibility in the implementation of this programme the assessment of the success of this programme has not involved the class teachers who are main stakeholders. The study aimed at determining the primary school teachers' perceptions of adequacy and quality of physical facilities in public primary schools under FPE. The study revealed that the overall quality of the physical facilities provided by the FPE programme to the primary schools in Ndaragwa division on Nyandarua County was found to be moderately adequate, while the adequacy was found to be adequate. In addition, the quality of teachers and pupil's sanitary facilities were found to be Inadequate. Chalks, desks, staffroom, and playing fields were found to be adequate, while that of ICT facilities were found to be Inadequate. The study recommends that the stakeholders should harmonize the physical facilities within the schools to avoid overcrowding in particular schools. These physical facilities should be proportional to the enrolment of the school.

Key words: Primary school teachers, perception, adequacy, quality, physical facilities, Free Primary Education

1. The background and Literature Review

Universal primary Education (UPE) is one of international development goal targeted by all countries by the year 2015 under the Millennium Development Goals The importance of basic education was recognized during The World Conference on Education for all held in Jomtien Thailand in 1990. Article 1 of the World Declaration on EFA adopted at the conference clearly states that every child shall benefit from education opportunities designed to meet their learning needs (Sifuna, 2008). It is on this basis that the Kenyan government introduced the free primary education policy (Mukudi, 2004). After independence, primary education in Kenya was expected to ensure the provision of functional and practical education that meets the needs of the majority of pupils at the end of standard eight (Sifuna, 1990). The main objective of primary education was to prepare all children aged 6 to 14 years to participate more fully in social, political and spiritual wellbeing of the nation in line with the millennium development goals (Government of Kenya, 2005). In order to achieve universal primary education, the country reintroduced FPE in 2003 which had been proposed by previous educational commissions and which subsequently saw enrolments increase dramatically. Prior to the advent of free primary education, Kenya's education enrollment and completion rate was wanting. In provinces such as north eastern and eastern, only 20% of the population showed signs of education (Somerset, 2007).

The main objective of FPE programme was to provide more school opportunity especially to the poor communities (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Kenya, 2002). The free primary education was also to ensure that each school going age child in school receives the basic education. Despite the fact that the government has invested 27 billion by 2010 towards FPE not all children had reaped the benefits from FPE due

too inadequate physical facilities, inadequate teaching and learning materials, lack of sanitary facilities for girls and irrelevant curriculum; high poverty levels, HIV/AIDS scourge among others. The policy on FPE has not satisfactorily improved the education provided in terms of adequacy and quality (Sawamura & Sifuna, 2008, Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, & Ezeh, 2010) especially due to limited facilities. The ideal situation for sanitary facilities for girls is 1:25 and for boys is 1:30 while desks should be 1:3. The facilities could be provided through use of low cost school construction methods such as open air classrooms, use of local materials and hiring labour from the local communities for the construction of schools (Ayako, 2006).

2. Research Methodology

i. Study area

The study was carried out in Ndaragwa Division, Nyandarua County, Kenya. Geographically the division covers approximately 592.2km². Climatically the division has moderate temperatures and rainfall in the area averaging 500 mm per annum, which is suitable for agricultural production. Agriculture is the main occupation practised by 85 % of the population. The primary school going children provide the labour used agricultural activities, a situation that causes the farmers not to take their children to school (Government of Kenya, 2008) despite the government's effort to provide FPE in the Division.

ii. Research Design

The research used a cross-sectional survey design that used a structured questionnaire to collect data using a 5 point Likert scale.

iii. Study Population

The study population included all the public primary school head teachers and the class teachers of standard 1 up to standard 8 in the 23 schools located in Ndaragwa division. The population amounted to a teaching force of 298 Teachers with 176 female teachers and 122 male teachers (Government of Kenya, 2008). The schools are mainly single streamed, 18 of them located in the rural areas and 5 located in the towns. Purposive sampling was used to select 130 class teachers and all the 23 head teachers in public primary schools in the Division. All the head teachers and the class teachers were working under the FPE programme and therefore they were the most appropriate to provide the required information for this study.

3. Data analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analyses. A computer programme called Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS version 22) was used for these analyses in which means and frequency distributions were captured. Data on the head and class teacher's perceptions of adequacy and quality of physical facilities in public primary schools under the free primary education programme in Ndaragwa division. The respondents assessed the adequacy and quality of physical facilities in public primary schools using a five (5) point Likert scale (1=very inadequate to indicate physical facilities, 2=inadequate, 3=neither adequate nor inadequate, 4=adequate and 5=very adequate, to indicate satisfactory levels of the physical facilities). The respondents assessed eight different physical facilities, which included the following: adequacy of classrooms, adequacy of sanitary facilities, teachers sharing sanitary facilities with pupils; adequacy of the staffroom for teachers; adequacy of desks in the classrooms; quality of the physical facilities availed in the schools through FPE and adequacy of playing ground and land for expansion.

4. Summary of findings

The results of the study revealed that the quality of physical facilities was found to be Moderately Adequate, while the adequacy of physical facilities was found to be Moderately Adequate.

5. Conclusions

The overall quality of the physical facilities provided by the FPE programme to the primary schools in Ndaragwa division was found to be moderately adequate. The quality of teachers and pupil's sanitary facilities is inadequate. Chalks, desks, staffroom, and playing fields were adequate but ICT facilities were inadequate.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends that the stakeholders should harmonize the physical facilities within the schools to avoid overcrowding in particular schools. These physical facilities should be proportional to the enrolment of the school. The SMCs should also organize team building activities for teachers to enable them plan how to handle the increased number of pupils.

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