

In-Service Training of Headteachers in Resource Management and the Implementation of Free Primary Education in Public Primary Schools in Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract

The role played by in-service training in resource management by head teachers in Free Primary Education (FPE) in public primary schools is critical. Through the FPE policy, the government pays teachers, support staff and caters for utilities and the required basic teaching and learning resources. This study sought to establish the influence of in-service training of head teachers in resource management on their implementation of free primary education (FPE) in public primary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. Theoretical foundation of the study was the Social Demand Approach to Education which is a model of educational planning aiming at aligning the educational investments according to the social demand for education but including economic use of the available resources. The study used an ex-post facto research design. A sample size of 50 head teachers was selected using simple random sampling from a population of 500 head teachers working in public primary schools in Kiambu County. The study used semi-structured questionnaires to collect primary data from the head teachers while secondary data was collected from official records. The study findings show that lack of resource management skills among Head teachers affected implementation of FPE. The study recommends that Government should avail sufficient resources for more frequent in-service training courses based on current education management issues.

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I. Background

In-service training is a key determinant of educational quality and is a necessary element in improving both personnel and school (ILO, 2009). Governments worldwide have been providing quality education to all children through funding primary education. Free Primary Education (FPE) is a programme in which primary school pupils are offered free quality education funded by government in Kenya. The funds are used to pay for amenities, learning resources and also teachers and among other uses (ILO, 2009). As a result, there was a clear need for implementing FPE by management of resources in a prudent manner by effectively trained head teachers.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, some countries had introduced FPE for example, Malawi (1994), Uganda (1997), Tanzania and Lesotho (2000), Burundi, Rwanda, Ghana, Cameroon and Kenya (2003) (Grogan, 2008). These countries reached various levels of success attributed to implementation of the policy. However, in other countries in which FPE was implemented like in Malawi, India, Uganda, the USA, Lesotho and Kenya, the head teachers faced issues due to children who came from varied backgrounds. The challenges headteachers faced included limited time for planning, overcrowded classrooms. Others were inadequate teachers, classrooms, textbooks, teaching materials and poor satisfaction of teachers in their job (World Bank, 2004). In many schools in rural areas in Kenya, there were no basic amenities including toilets, running water and electricity.

Application of FPE was not new in Kenya. In the year 1965, Kenya begun placing plans of attaining FPE as was initially stated in the 1965 Sessional Paper No. 10 on African Socialism in order to eradicate ignorance, disease and poverty (Republic of Kenya, 2004). This process of providing primary schooling could lead to social benefits such as reduced population growth, improved health care and reduced child mortality rate (Republic of Kenya, 2004). This is why Kenya and many other countries globally made primary education a priority.

From history, the first step taken to implement Universal Primary Education in 1974 was removal of every type of fee, user charges and levies which had barred many children and youth from attending school for decades (Abuya *et al.*, 2015). In the 2003 FPE initiative, government planned to directly give funds to schools and the head teacher was held accountable of all finances (Wango, 2009). However, the head teacher had no

prior training in management of finances to gain skills to perform this delicate role. The head teacher also required management expertise for successful FPE in other areas of training including curriculum and instruction, students, school plant, staff personnel and school community relations (Wango, 2009).

In 2003, after Government's declaration of FPE (Republic of Kenya, 2003), there was a large influx of children in public primary schools. As a result, the public made growing demands on the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) to provide teaching and learning equipment and materials, more physical facilities and teachers (Republic of Kenya, 2003). The skills required by heads in implementing FPE would however be obtained mainly from head teachers' in-service training which is work related training on resource management, strategic planning, project management and curriculum management (Republic of Kenya, 2003).

In Kenya's Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on training and education (Republic of Kenya, 2004), the Kenya Government presents its commitment to the improvement of training and education by allocating resources continuously. Due to government efforts through FPE, Kenya's gross enrolment ratio for primary education currently stood at 114 percent which was satisfactory (UNICEF, 2014). Without prudent management skills, resources are usually misused and schools fail to achieve success. With the 100% transition rate policy, the need was even greater. These skills were to be acquired mainly through head teachers' in - service training for professional development.

The purpose of this study was therefore to establish if in-service training of head teachers by Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) between 2011 and 2012 influenced their implementation of FPE in public primary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Keywords: In-Service Training, Implementation of Free Primary Education, Public Primary Schools.

Statement of the Problem

There is lack of clarity whether in-service training for head teachers by KEMI from 2011 to 2012 had a subsequent influence on FPE implementation. No official reports have been made or studies have been done to show the performance of heads in implementation of FPE after the training by KEMI in 2011-2012 and other subsequent in-service training in Kiambu County. Despite government efforts to build head teachers' capacity, it has not been established whether in-service training for head teachers influences the implementation of FPE. The duty of Head teachers in implementation of FPE has been an issue of interest since they are directly in charge of all school funds and also manage school physical facilities, staff personnel, curriculum and instruction, students and the school-community relations.

To support efforts in implementation of FPE, the government commenced compulsory training for Heads and principals in a diploma course in Educational management at KEMI in 2011 (KEMI, 2011). The course offered resource management skills including human resources, financial and procurement management. The course also offered strategic planning or leadership including good governance, team building, results - based management and public relations. Other areas covered by the course were project planning and management including Information Communication Technology (ICT) integration in education. The course also covered curriculum management including conflict resolution and disaster management (KEMI, 2011).

The government disburses FPE funds to schools and Head teachers are responsible for managing all school finances and for the implementation of FPE. It is usually in the interest of the government and schools that scarce resources like FPE funds and other resources are well managed for successful implementation of FPE. The government, public and other stakeholders in the education sector are also interested to see that FPE benefits all Kenya's children. The in-service training for head teachers also incurs the government financial costs and absence of critical human resource in schools during the head teachers' training. Different studies have been done on in-service training and implementation of FPE in Kenya but none has been done in Kiambu County. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine if in-service training in resource management of Head teachers influenced their implementation of FPE in public primary schools in Kiambu County of Kenya.

Objectives and Limitations of the Study

The study sought to establish how in-service training of head teachers in resource management influences their implementation of Free Primary Education. The main source of primary data was head teachers and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QUASOs). Head teachers alone might not have given reliable responses since they are tasked with implementation of FPE while QUASO officers might not have adequate information on in-service training for Head teachers and their implementation of FPE. However, opinions by head teachers and QUASO officers were considered to be adequate. This study focused only on one sub-County which may have been considered as not providing adequate data to give the actual representation of the study.

The Study Theoretical Basis

The theoretical basis of this study was the Social Demand Theory for Education which is one of the four approaches to educational planning (Brown, 2011). The main objective of this approach is to provide education to as many people as possible guided by effective use of the available resources. The approach views education as a public social service; a necessity and inalienable right of all citizens who desire it (Brown, 2011). The Social Demand Approach guides this study by explaining how the limited resources provided by the government for FPE need to be utilized prudently. In this way, the funds are used to provide education to as many pupils as possible guided by cautious use of the available resources.

Reviewed literature showed that in-service training in education enhances teacher performance with ultimate aim of promoting self-effectiveness (Wanzare & Ward, 2000). The potential for in-service education to secure improvement in the relevance and quality of education has been recognized since the 1960s (Wanzare & Ward, 2000). Uysal (2012) states that in-service training is seen as a key determinant of educational quality and career development and has to be clearly marked as a necessary element in improving both personnel and school. There is therefore need for in-service training for teachers and head teachers (Uysal, 2012).

Dobbius, Higgins, Pierce, Tandy and Tincani (2011) reveal that because the improvement of education depends mainly on the improvement of teacher competency, there is need for systematic upgrading and training programs through long term and short-term courses and for upgrading the management skills of the school heads through in-service training. This is especially necessary in implementing FPE. In-service training is important for professional growth of teachers and head teachers. The studies by Uysal (2012), Dobbius *et al.* (2011) and Wanzare and Ward (2000) did not look into the impact of head teachers in service training in implementing FPE which is an important issue which is now the concern of this study.

Free Primary Education in Kenya

The Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility to manage all aspects of education and training with the assistance of semi-autonomous government agencies at the provincial and the district level. At the school level, the Board of Management is responsible for the management of human and other resources so as to facilitate smooth operations, structure development and provision of teaching and learning materials. Management of people in the school context involves the skillful control and guidance of pupils, teachers and other stakeholders in order to achieve the schools desired outcomes. The Head teacher plays an important role in all aspects of school management.

The School Management Guide asserts that the nature and quality of leadership and management that the principal provides will determine the effectiveness of the school (MOE, 2008). Schools do not have clearly defined customers like in the organization world. Their customers include students, communities, religious organizations and other government institutions, development partners and the private sector. In today's primary schools, the Head teacher or school principal is the most immediate human resource manager and is accountable to the Board of Management who are the Teachers Service Commission's agent (MOE, 2008).

Due to management challenges faced by Head teachers, they were required to undergo training between 2011 and 2012. The course was sponsored by the government and aimed at equipping head teachers with various skills to enable them implement FPE. All head teachers and principals were sponsored by government to attend the compulsory diploma course on Educational management by KEMI. The course offered skills in resource management, project planning and curriculum management among others (KEMI, 2011).

Ongoto, Ogola and Malusu (2019) studied efficacies of the KEMI induction course in the management of public primary schools in Nairobi County. The study found that there was a strong positive perception of the Induction Course in Educational Management (ICEM) by head teachers since the training had influenced their management practices to a great extent. However, challenges were faced in measurement of the effectiveness of the trainings. Mang'eng'e (2018) also studied the adequacy of Kenya Education Management Institute training of secondary school principals in attaining teacher motivation in Makueni County, Kenya. The study concluded that the training by KEMI was inadequate and failed to give teacher motivation principles to principals.

Resource Management and Implementation of FPE

Resource management is one of the components of in-service training that head teachers undertake and implement in order to implement FPE effectively (KEMI, 2011). Resource management refers to the means through which educational goals are achieved (KEMI, 2011). Examples of resources are time, school funds, facilities and human resources. Management acquires and utilizes resources to achieve organizational goals. Effective resource management by head teachers lead to effective and efficient acquisition and utilization of resources to avoid mismanagement (Bloom, Genokos, Sadun & Van Reenen, 2012).

Effective management of resources in education is important since resources are limited and have to be used prudently to achieve set objectives and also ensure schools implement plans (KEMI, 2011). Effective management of resources is also important because it ensures that programs do not stall before completion and

that resources are used for the purpose they were meant for. Effective resource management also ensures accountability and it is also part and parcel of good governance. Before embarking on effective resource management, a head teacher needs to carry out a cost / benefit analysis, determine if they are getting value for money or resources and also do a budget control. In addition, a head teacher is required to do resource control and adapt the existing resources to fit the need (KEMI, 2011).

II. Methodology

An ex-post facto research design was used in the study conducted in Kiambu County in 500 public primary schools that had implemented FPE. The target population for this study were head teachers of public primary schools within Kiambu County and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QUASOs) drawn from the administrative educational zones.

A total of 50 Head teachers were selected randomly using a random number generator while all the four zonal inspectors were purposively selected to give a total of 54 respondents. A semi-structured questionnaire and an interview schedule were used to collect primary data from head teachers and QUASOs respectively in Kiambu County. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS was used as a tool to aid in the analysis process.

III. Research Findings and Discussions

A total of 50 questionnaires were distributed to respondents drawn from head teachers who had undergone the KEMI in-service training. The study sought to establish how in-service training of head teachers in resource management influences their implementation of Free Primary Education.

Table 1: Head teachers are conversant with Resource Management

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly agree | 15 | 30 |
| Agree | 3 | 6 |
| Neutral | 3 | 6 |
| Disagree | 27 | 54 |
| Strongly disagree | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Table I indicates that the majority of the head teachers 27 (54%) disagreed that head teachers are conversant with resource management. This indicates that ineffective and inefficient utilization of resources such as time, school funds, facilities and human resources negatively affects achievement of set objectives and implementation of school plans. The reasons given by the head teachers for failure to achieve optimum management of resources included inadequate funds, inability to follow policy and not conducting cost / benefit analysis and budget control. Other reasons given were insufficient numbers of employees, lack of staff training and poor procurement practices.

The findings agree with Njeri (2015) who found that despite usefulness of organizational skills gained from KEMI in supervising teachers, there was poor financial management leading to increased administrative costs. However, the finding disagrees with Mang'eng'e (2018) who found that principals acquired resource management skills to a great extent through the KEMI training. Ongoto *et al* (2019) also found that majority of head teachers who have undergone KEMI training have gained knowledge and skills in budget preparation, budget control, keeping inventories and sourcing for funds.

Increment of children after the reintroduction of FPE in public primary schools led to a corresponding increase in the number of teachers. Reintroduction of FPE placed increased demands on the government to provide teaching and learning materials and equipment, additional teachers and physical facilities (Kamunde, 2017). Table 2 indicates that most of the Head Teachers (21 or 42%) indicated that the number of additional teachers employed in their schools increased by between 6-10%. Other Head Teachers (13 or 26% each) indicated that their schools had increased the number of teachers employed by between 0-5% and between 11-15% respectively after introduction of FPE.

The head teachers were able to manage and cope with increased numbers of teachers and pupils due to the in-service training which provided skills in resource management.

Head Teachers were able to manage the increased number of teachers, school funds and facilities, and time.

Table 2: Increased Number of teachers after Introduction of FPE

| Increment | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| 0 - 5% | 13 | 26 |
| 6 - 10% | 21 | 42 |
| 11-15% | 13 | 26 |
| 16 - 20% | 3 | 6 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Benefits of In-Service Training to Implementing FPE

All of the head teachers (50 or 100%) indicated that they had participated in the teachers' management course namely, the compulsory diploma course on educational management offered by the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI).

All the respondents (50 or 100%) also indicated that in service training has helped them to acquire necessary skills for implementing FPE in public primary schools with the aim of improving school standards. This included management of funds, following procurement procedures and timely completion of projects which had been a challenge. Competence in providing the pedagogy skills or techniques especially in lower classes, strategic planning, curriculum development, improvising locally available materials are the other benefits achieved from in service training. A majority of respondents indicated that in service training has helped them in coping with the increased number of pupils.

In conclusion the study revealed that lack of resource management skills among head teachers made acquisition and utilization of resources in an effective and efficient way to be a challenge. There is low influence of in-service training of head teachers on implementation of FPE policy in public primary schools in Kiambu County. Lack of resource management skills among Head teachers led to poor decisions in the acquisition and utilization of resources which affected implementation of free primary education.

The study recommends that in service training courses based on current education management issues that strengthen skills in resource management should be a continuous process for teacher professional development. The Ministry of Education should ensure that in-service courses such as KEMI are restructured to address school management skills more in addition to the general roles of a teacher in resource management. The study also recommended that schools should consider leadership experience as a criteria for promotion of staff as head teachers and encourage personal initiative and good role modeling for management of resources, achievement of the school's goals and focus on performance in KCPE.

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