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INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL INPUT IN FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION ON THE INTERNAL EFFICIENCY OF THE PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BOMET SUB-COUNTY, KENYA.

Langat, Peter Kibet¹ Prof. Maureen Olel², Dr.M. Kawasonga³*Department of Educational Foundations and Management, Maseno University, Kenya**Department of Educational Foundations and Management, Maseno University, Kenya**Department of Educational Foundations and Management, Maseno University, Kenya*

ABSTRACT: *The two key stakeholders in provision of public primary education in Kenya are parents and the government. The government has done its part by provision of Free Primary Education (FPE) since January 2003, a move which enabled more than 1.5 million children join public primary schools. The aim of the provision of FPE was to eliminate wastage and it targeted 100% completion rates by 2015. However, in Kenya from 2012-2015 completion rates remain slightly above 84%. Wastages are still being experienced in form of drop-outs and repeaters. FPE policy in Kenya came as a political pledge thus parents as stakeholders in education were not involved. Most of them take FPE to mean the government has taken over everything and thus they have no input to give in schools. This occurs as parents are not well oriented on how the FPE policy works. The government does not specifically spell out the input of parents and the extent of that input thus leaving school administrations to deal with issues of parental input at their own discretion. This makes the level of parental input in FPE obscure and thus a subject of assessment by the researcher. The purpose of this study is thus to assess the level of parental input in FPE policy and the influence it has on dropout and repetition of learners in public primary schools in Bomet Sub-County. The findings indicate a low parental input. The findings further indicate that, if parental input is reinforced in schools it can translate to low repetition rate, and dropout rate thus a possibility of achieving 100% completion rates. The findings of this study are useful to stakeholders in education as it informs them on the need of participatory approach in implementing FPE so as to curb wastage in schools.*

Key words: *Dropout, repetition, parental input*

I. INTRODUCTION

FPE (Free Primary Education) has, since 2000, been a goal for most countries worldwide. It was noted that when fees were abolished in Malawi in 1994, enrolments went up by 51% and in Uganda they went up by 70% in 1996. Cameroon in 1999 saw an increase from 88% to 105% while in Tanzania in 2001 rates soared from 57% to 85%. In Kenya, the rates went up by 90% after the FPE policy was re-introduced in 2003 [1]. The implementation of the FPE programme in Kenya and other developing countries was without prior consultation of teachers and parents. In Kenya for example, it is a top-bottom policy which came in form of political pledge. There was also lack of regular communication to sensitize the various stakeholders especially parents on their role in FPE programme [1]. Parents have withdrawn from school affairs as they are under misconception that FPE meant government provided funding for all facilities [2]. The input of parents in FPE programmes in developing countries remains obscure due to poor policy framework in implementation of educational programs [1]. Wastage in public primary schools in form of repetition and drop-out are still being experienced despite introduction of FPE. A worrying trend though is the rise in drop-out rates and unsatisfactory progression levels. Although the primary school completion rate increased from 77.6 percent in 2005 to 83.2 percent in 2009 it dropped to 80.3 percent in 2011. The decline can be attributed to among other factors the level of parental input [3]. The purpose of this study is thus to assess the level of parental input in FPE policy and the influence it has on dropout and repetition of learners in public primary schools in Bomet Sub-County. The findings of this study are useful to government and school administrators as they inform them on the need of participatory approach in implementing FPE so as to curb repetition and dropout in schools.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The two key stake holders who provide primary education in Kenya are Parents and government. The government has done its provision by re-enacting the FPE policy in 2003 with the aim of enhancing access and boosting completion rates. It targets 100% completion rates by 2015, however from 2012-2015 completion rates remain slightly above 84% meaning repetition and wastage still exist in school. On the other hand, the level of parental input in primary education with the onset of FPE remains obscure and this study seeks to assess it and determines its influence on repetition and dropout rate. The study is confined to Bomet Sub-county because the cumulative drop out and repetition rate in 2012 was approximated at 19.5% which was higher compared to other neighboring Sub-Counties of Sotik with 18%, Chepalungu with 17.5%, Konoin with 18% and Bomet East with 20%. It was also higher than the one for the whole nation which was approximated at 15%.

1.2. The purpose and objective of the study.

The purpose of this study is to assess the level of parental input in FPE policy and the influence it has on dropout and repetition of learners in public primary schools in Bomet Sub-County. The specific objective of the study was to assess the level of parental input in public primary schools with the introduction of FPE in 2003 and determines the influence it has on wastage rate in terms of repetition and dropout.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Status of Parental input in public Primary Schools after introduction of FPE.

Since the abolition of cost-sharing policy in Kenya, the input of parents in schools has been a subject under scrutiny. The notion that parents have been exempted from paying any levies to school arose throwing the administration of public primary schools into confusion. Though FPE policy stipulates the roles of parents, parents in most schools were not privy to the details in FPE policy thus school administration finds it hard to convince them on their input in schools. There are several arguments for school fees and sharing the cost of education with parents. First, cost sharing can help improve the quality of service and make up for limitations in what the government can provide [1].

A study on Parent involvement in teacher education in South Africa indicated that, some of the major difficulties for teachers following fee abolition are weakened support from parents and other FPE stakeholders. On discussions with parents and teachers across South Africa, lack of information regarding roles and responsibilities for FPE was cited as a major weakness of the policy. Parents often subscribed to the view that because education was now 'free', it meant that they should no longer participate in school activities [4].

In Tanzania 'Free' primary education was announced in 2001, and Gross Enrolment Rate in public Primary schools rose to 100.4% and the net enrolment ratio to 80.7%. However this achievement was eroded by lack of teaching-learning equipments. Examinations were hardly given as there was no money to make them or time to correct them. Parents refused to contribute and felt exams should be free as well. Parents also refused to pay for extra tuition on weekends and holidays and felt it should be free [5].

A Comparative Analysis of Universal Primary Education Policy in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda shows that Parents have become passive in every form of participation in school activities and decision making under FPE policy. A common attitude illustrated by parents and communities is that, as the government is responsible for everything, they have no stake in school governance [6]. Under such an environment, dropout of pupils has risen due to poor school environment. Schools suffer from lack of funds, while not being able to ask parents for fees. After the introduction of FPE in 2003, the education sub-sector faces challenges like overstretched facilities, shortage of teachers and diminished community support following the misconstrued role of government vis-à-vis that of parents [1].

A Kenyan survey found that most teachers and principals attributed the lack of parental involvement to the parents themselves. Parents' role should include buying of school uniforms, provision of revision textbooks, monitoring learners' performance and contributing towards physical development of the school. However, most parents are not aware of their responsibilities and are not concern about the quality of education provided to their children. Teachers in one school complained that the government should clarify the role of parents as they are not taking anything the teachers tell them seriously [7].

The government of Kenya recognized FPE as a joint responsibility. The Government and development partners meet the cost of basic teaching and learning materials, teachers' salaries and co-curricular activities [8]. On the other hand, parents or guardians are required to meet the following costs provision of schools infrastructure for their children, to be involved in Planning, budgeting and school expenditure through the school committee, to approve the schools financial report at the end of the year, provide school uniform for their children, food and health care. In addition, they should monitor school daily attendance of their children. However, many parents are not aware of their roles and they need to be informed by the government through civic education [9].

2.2. Influence of Parental Input on Internal Efficiency of Education.

The two key measures of internal efficiency of education are repetition rates and dropout rates amongst other measures. The aim of the FPE was to enhance access to education by removing levies which acted as hindrance for children to go school. According to the Ministry of Education's Management Information System (EMIS), the Kenya government has continually revised the fpe policy in a bid to get good returns, but achieving 100% completion in public primary has proved an uphill task. In 2003, with the onset of FPE, the Ministry of Education embarked on a series of reforms geared towards attaining the education related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). The targets which were set included the following:

- (i) A primary school net enrolment (NER) of 100 % by 2015,
- (ii) A completion rate of 100 % by 2010.

However by 2015 both enrolment rate and completion was slightly above 70% [10].

The completion rates are presently at 76.8% (79.2% boys and 74.4% girls). Moreover, learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills remain poor. The primary sub-sector is reported as continuing to experience many challenges, including high levels of pupil absenteeism and ultimate drop-out [11].

It is argued that for any shared enterprise, among the things that has to be clearly discussed and agreed upon are the specific roles each partner would play, when and to what level if the partnership is to succeed. Education can never claim to be exempted from this notion. In the case of provision of free primary education, which is a joint partnership between parents and the government, the researcher feels that there was need for clarification of who plays what specific role right from the onset of the programme. In the view of the researcher, the information on the role of each stakeholder in FPE need to go out in circulars to all schools for record and reference whenever necessary [12].

Despite the introduction of Free Primary, 1.9 million primary school age children were still out of school. This was mainly because school managers in both public primary and Secondary school levels re-introduced levies. These levies comprise of PTA charges, extra tuition charges, examination fees, sports fees and boarding fees, among others [13].

A study in South Africa on: *Parent involvement in early childhood development in Kwa-Zulu*, reported that a strong parental involvement is necessary for educational progress and success of a child. It has the potential to lessen the gap in achievement between children from high and low-income families [14]. A study findings on parental input in teacher education in South Africa reported a strong correlation between parental support and achievement of learners in school [4]. In view of this, the researcher was interested in determining the extent to which parents play their roles in schools, and whether their input can reduce wastage by ensuring 100% completion rates. The findings of the study concur with both Bridgemohan and Lemmer's findings. There is a positive correlation between parental input and internal efficiency of education.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted ex-post facto and descriptive survey designs. The study population comprised of 4,083 2018 class eight pupils in 201 public primary schools. It also included 201 head teachers and 201 teachers in charge of class eight. Moreover, 201 class eight PA members and one DQASO participated in the study. Sampling is the process of selecting a few units from a bigger group to become the basis for estimating or predicting a fact, situation or outcome regarding the bigger group [15]. To determine the sample size for small population, normal approximation to the hyper geometric distribution is used [16]. This was used by the researcher to arrive at the sample size of 50 schools from 201 schools in Bomet Sub-county.

The researcher used simple random sampling to select the schools for the study and thereafter used saturated sampling to select 50 class eight teachers, 50 head teachers and 50 parents representing class eight from the selected schools. Class eight learners from the 50 simple randomly selected public primary schools were selected for the study. The number of pupils in these 50 schools established by the researcher through records at DEO's office was 1,205. For this study, out of 1,205 pupils in 50 public primary schools, 362 were randomly selected for the study for this represented 30% of their total population. This was in line with Cohen and Manion as quoted by Borland [17] who noted that in population of more than 1000, a sample size of 30% is conventionally acceptable as the minimum percentage to use in research if some statistical analysis of the data is intended.

The instruments that were used to collect data included document analysis guide, interview schedules and questionnaires. The advantage of using several instruments is that the weakness of one instrument is taken care of by another [18]. The instruments for this study were validated through application of content validity determined by experts' judgment. On the other hand, reliability of the questionnaires was determined by test-retest method. A pilot study was conducted in 10% of the sampled populations which were excluded in the actual

data collection The reliability coefficients for questionnaires were 0.78, 0.72, 0.75 and 0.72 for head teachers, class teachers, pupils and parents association representatives respectively.

Qualitative data from interview schedule was analyzed qualitatively. This entailed thematic analysis and content analysis. Thematic analysis (categorization of related themes) involved analyzing the main themes as found in the study. Whereas quantitative analysis was subjected to descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. When using descriptive statistics to analyze data, frequencies, percentages and mean rates were calculated and subjected to analysis and interpretation. Correlation analysis produces a correlation coefficient which represents the relationship between independent and the dependent variable. The researcher used the correlation coefficient to determine the influence of parental input in both repetition and dropout rate.

IV. STUDY FINDINGS.

The researcher first sought to assess the level of parental input in public primary schools in Bomet Sub-County. Study respondents were presented with 3 items on a 5-point likert scale. The scale ranged from 1 to 5 with 1.00 to 3.44 showing low input and 3.45 to 5.00 showing high input. The parental input in this study was confined to three aspects namely: financing PTA teachers, monitoring learners' performance and provision of revision textbooks. The overall mean of parental input in Bomet Sub-County was found to be 2.93. Table 1 indicates analysis of responses.

Table 1: Level of parental input

Statements	R		ET	AET	O	AN	N	T	M	OVM
Parents finance PTA teachers	H	f	2	5	37	6	-	50		
		sc	10	20	111	12	-	153		
	CT	f	6	9	30	2	3	50		
		sc	12	36	90	4	3	145		
	P	f	12	15	17	4	2	50		3.02
		sc	60	60	51	8	2	181		
Parents monitor learners' performance	H	f	3	9	2	28	8	50		
		sc	15	36	6	56	8	121		
	CT	f	2	3	12	29	4	50		
		sc	10	12	36	58	4	120		
	P	f	8	14	16	7	5	50		2.58
		sc	40	56	48	14	5	163		
Parents provide revision textbooks	H	f	7	5	29	6	3	50		
		sc	35	20	87	12	3	157		
	CT	f	-	2	31	14	3	50		
		sc	-	8	93	28	3	132		
	P	f	8	19	15	8	-	50		3.18
		sc	40	76	45	16	-	177		

	LR	f	30	204	42	47	39	362		
		%	8.3%	56.4%	11.6%	13%	10.8%	100%	3.38	
		sc	150	816	126	94	39	1225		

Overall mean: 2.93.

The overall mean of parental input in Bomet Sub-County as shown in Table 1 is rated at 2.93. This indicates low input. The input is low in the three roles the parents play. In financing PTA teachers the input is low at a mean rate of 3.06, and in monitoring learners’ performance it is low at 2.58 while in provision of revision textbooks it is low at a mean rate of 3.18.

Secondly the researcher sought to find out both repeater and dropout rate in public primary school in Bomet Sub-County based on 2011 class eight cohort.

Table 2: Wastage rates in Bomet Sub-County

Repeater rate	Dropout rate
15.48%	6.1%

Finally the researcher found out the correlation between the wastage rates and parental input.

Table 3: Influence of parental input on repetition rates

		Repetition rate	Parental rate
Repetition rate	Pearson Correlation	1	.328*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.020
	N	50	50
Parental rate	Pearson Correlation	.328*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	
	N	50	50

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Form the results it is noted that the influence of parental input on repetition rate stands at a positive correlation of 0.328(10.8%).The results in Table 3 shows that, the parental input reduces repetition rates.

Table 4: Influence of parental input on drop-out rates

		Dropout rate	Parental Input
Dropout rate	Pearson Correlation	1	.303*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.032
	N	50	50
Parental Input	Pearson Correlation	.303*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	
	N	50	50

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the results, it is noted that there is a positive correlation of 0.303 (9.2%) between parental input and drop-out rate. Parental input as shown in Table 4 can reduce dropout rate in public primary schools. The extent of parental input in academic performance in Malawi was investigated using randomized cluster sampling of 100 schools from eight of ten regions. The results show that majority of parents, 83% assisted their children in school and recorded improved results while 12% who never assisted reported poor results of their children [19].

Effective parental involvement would be a particularly suitable means for improving education in a developing country like Kenya. The study finding in South Africa showed a positive correlation of 0.69 between parental support and achievement of learners in school [4]. Parental input in primary schools boost learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills [20]. This is also supported by Admassu who highlighted several benefits of parental input which include boosting completion rates and enhancing literacy and numeracy skills [11].

V. CONCLUSION

The study established that parental input in public primary school is low at a mean rate of 2.93. This implies most parents don't give any input to support FPE programmes, and thus the education administrators should adopt participatory approach in both policy making and implementation. There are still repeaters and dropouts in public primary school though the rate is lower than before the introduction of FPE. This wastage rate is attributed to parents who play very minimal role to support the government in eradicating it. Arising from the study, the public primary schools in Bomet Sub-County should actively involve parents in monitoring learners both in and out of schools and address challenges which they may be experiencing and which act as hindrance to 100% completion rate. The findings from the study imply that if parental input is improved, it will translate to more reduction of wastage in public primary schools. With the aim of achieving 100% completions, the role of other stakeholders like churches and Non-governmental organizations should be assessed and their contribution towards boosting internal efficiency of education determined.

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