Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online)
Vol.6, No.9, 2015

Constraints of Implementing Free Secondary Education in Mandera West Sub-County, Mandera County, Kenya

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Abstract
This study sought to find out the constraints of implementing free secondary education (FSE) in secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-County, Mandera County, Kenya. The study is based on the theory of constraints as the researcher examines the factors constraining the achievement of FSE objectives. The study used the survey design. The main research instrument was the questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was determined before being used for data collection. The main findings of the study were that the management capacity of the principals, time of funds disbursement to schools and parental support affect the implementation of FSE. In addition, while members of Board of Management had a positive influence, the socioeconomic variables impacted negatively on the implementation process. It was concluded the FPE policy was not fully realizing its noble objectives of facilitating access to, and quality education. It was recommended that the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of education should increase the capitation and expedite the process of cash disbursement to the schools. In addition, the principals should not only be subjected to compulsory training in resource management but also the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards should increase the frequency of school supervision.

Introduction

Background to the Study

Education is widely valued across the world as a central factor in economic, political, and social development of any country (Republic of Kenya, 2012a) . The Constitution of Kenya (2010) articles 43.1f, 53.1b and 55a makes education a right of every Kenyan while the Kenya Vision 2030 underscores the importance of education in ensuring relevant human and social capital for sustainable development. In particular, the Constitution guarantees every child to free and compulsory basic education. It further provides for access to affordable tertiary education, training and skills development. According to the Bill of Rights, basic education is a fundamental human right. This implies that citizens can hold the state accountable for ensuring that every child aged 4 to 17 years is in school and receiving quality education. This is consistent with the international education commitments and other international conventions to which Kenya is a signatory. For example, the African Charter on the Human and Peoples" Rights, Article 17, provides that every individual shall have a right to education; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Article 11, articulates detailed provisions on the right to free and compulsory basic education for the child and, state's obligation towards that right; while the United Nations International Convention on Social and Economic Rights, Article 13, declares the recognition of the right of all to education and the objectives thereof. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 28, 29 and 30, secure the rights of a child to free and compulsory basic education. Kenya is also a signatory to the Jomtien Protocols (1990) and the Accra Accord (2002), which established the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and modalities for assessing progress thereof.

The expenditure by the public on education has been on increase because of the vital role it plays in economic growth of a country. According to UNESCO (2000), illiteracy imposes both relative and absolute burden on the economic well being any nation. Many countries like Britain, USA, Canada, Egypt and Sweden, among others, began long ago in the 1950s to offer free secondary education. This could partially be responsible for the advancement in these nations. Sub-Saharan countries such as Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya are also trying to wake up to this reality. In 2000, all the United Nations (U.N) member states adopted the Millennium Declaration, which aimed at creating a global corporative approach to solving challenges facing future world developments in the education sector (UNESCO, 2002). The millennium declaration created a framework of goals, targets and indicators, known as the Millennium Development Goals shortened as the MDGs. One of the key MDG is Education for All (EFA).Through the EFA goal, the Dakar Framework for Action World Education forum was held in Dakar (Senegal) in 2000. EFA was regarded as a basic right, national and international priority that requires a strong and sustained political commitment, enhanced financial allocations as well as the participation of all EFA partners in the process of policy designing, planning and implementation of the goals (UNESCO, 2002). All participating countries committed themselves to the achievement of this goal and meeting set targets.

In 2003, following the ascending of the NARC party to power, EFA became one of their flagship objectives, probably to sustain popularity. The NARC government declared its intent to design a system which ensures all citizens the right to quality education and a competitive edge in the job market (NARC Manifesto, 2002). Free Primary Education (FPE) was started in the beginning of 2013. It was hastily done, and it had a host of hiccups. The government of Kenya (GOK) developed Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005: A Policy Framework on Education Training and Research for the 21st Century to streamline things. To bolster the gains achieved so far, the government of Kenya developed the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP). It was a five year plan (2005 -2010) which was to make the Sessional paper operational using the Sector Wide Approach to Planning (SWAP). The KESSP has 23 sectors including Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) Primary School materials as well as Secondary Education among others. KESSP is funded by the GoK, Development partners, civil society communities and the private sector (Ngaca, 2009).Through this program, selected secondary schools started to receive funds from the government under KESSP for infrastructure development.

Overwhelmed by the popularity and success of the FPE, albeit the teething problems, and with the support of KESSP, political parties chose Free Secondary Education (FSE) as their enticing campaign platform in the 2007 General Elections and Free Secondary Education was born. In a circular released in January 2008 by the Ministry of Education science and technology (MoEST) gave the guidelines on FSE implementation were spelt out to Provincial Directors of Education, District Education Officers (DEOs) and the Head teachers or principals of Public Secondary Schools, although on interim basis. It included how the Kshs. 10,265 per student by the government was to be distributed against the various covered vote heads in school. Others include opening of special school accounts specifically for the free education funds and how parents were to meet the remainder of the needs like feeding the students in school. With this the first tranche of the funds were released into the new accounts in the midway of term one of the year 2008. Kenya joined the few countries in Africa giving 12 years universal basic education following the launch of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and the FSE in 2008, in line with the International protocols signed in Jomtien, Thailand and also in 2000 at Dakar Senegal.

The state provision of both FPE and FSE is desirable and the right thing as well as one demanded by the International Community. These gains from a mere rhetoric perspective with this basic learning far outweigh the sacrifice and investment that have been put in it. Although like in any change in management, it is marred with hiccups right from the implementation of this noble project as ascertained by Mr. Cleophas Tirop, the Chairman of the Kenya Secondary school heads Association (KESSHA), he urged the government to solve the challenges facing them in the implementation process (Oyaro, 2008). It is against this background that this study the is concerned with highlighting the main constraints to the implementation of the FSE in Mandera west sub-county, Mandera County, Kenya was premised.

State of the Art Review

The growing body of literature from the international, regional and national levels seems to concur that illiteracy seriously hampers both industrial and economic growth (Downes, 1998; Walmer & Palfreyman, 1996; Willis, 2009; Zahir, 2006; Oyaro, 2008; Ibrahim & Orodho, 2014) . According to UNESCO (2000), the realization of the importance of educational development in many of these countries has led to many of them putting a lot of investment in the provision of free secondary education. Illiteracy imposes both relative and absolute burden on the economic well being of the country.

From the international perspective, the United Kingdom introduced a Cheque book scheme in 1950 in Hertfordshire, giving heads of schools their own general account with responsibility for stationery, textbooks, materials, and library books, purchase of small apparatus, cleaning materials, and repairs of furniture and equipment, and first aid materials (Downes; 1988). In this scheme, unspent balances could be carried forward. This scheme was very successful and was copied by London in 1970s and quickly followed by many other regions of the United Kingdom.

The higher institutions of education were sizeable and quite complex organization they required a strong professional financial support services for successful management (Warner & Palfrey man, 1996). In view of this, criteria for assessing local management of the schools were established. These included; Efficiency in the use of resources, Improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, and responsiveness to clients. According to Levacic (1995), head teachers were trained in: management and cost accounting to be able to understand costing and allocation of resources and activities; financial accounting so that they can understand management control and accountability and Budget monitoring. In the period 1989-1996, the British schools were bombarded by a succession of initiatives, reforms and regulations. Those managing and leading schools have all the time benefited from useful help from the Times Educational Supplement (TES) (Archimedes; 1996).

From this United Kingdom experience, Kenya and Mandera County in general can learn a lot including the fact that the head teachers and their management capacity are very key to the successful implementation of the free secondary education. Therefore training of head teachers and continuous checking on their management is very important. This means that head teachers will require some form of assistance in managing the intricate procedures in free secondary education anywhere else in the world, Mandera included. Similarly, we see that secondary schools are complex institutions to manage in their own right making it necessary to continue upgrading the skills of the head teachers.

In the United States of America, education is mainly provided by the public sector with funding from the three levels of government namely; the federal government, state and local governments. Funding of education varies regionally because of the disparities in the economies of states and local authorities. Even within the same state, local authorities vary in their investment in education. This is aggravated by the fact that of the total input in education, 46% is supposed to be provided by the local governments' budget. For instance, according to Wikipedia (2014), the state of New Jersey has the highest investment per child and yet in this same state, one district spends 8,000 dollars (being the highest) while another spends 4,000 dollars (being the lowest). Child education in the United States of America is however compulsory. This shows that to achieve some parity in education, especially in developing countries such as Kenya with some areas being marginalized, funds should be equally distributed from a central pool. However, just like in New Jersey, regions and schools in Kenya are at different levels of development making equal distribution of funds per se unfair to some regions and schools. For education to achieve high levels of enrolment, Kenya can learn from USA and make secondary education compulsory for all. This will curb situations where enrolment remains low in spite of the government funding.

According to Willis (2009), in the Swedish education system, all children who join secondary schools learn for free. All in all, a child is allocated funding for education from the pre-school to secondary school level. Whereas this type of funding is the most desirable for most countries such as Kenya, it is likely to happen and flourish in countries such as Sweden which are highly developed. However, Kenya can learn to increase funding as the economy grows.

Education in Canada is a government run programme public education which is provided, funded and overseen by the federal government, provincial as well as local governments. Education is also compulsory up to 16 or 18 years depending on the local administration. It is the provincial administration which runs education (Wikipedia, 2014). One good lesson here is to make secondary education compulsory in Kenya to increase enrolment and therefore literacy levels in marginalized places like Mandera County.

Regionally, selected studies from Nigeria, Egypt and Uganda also provide useful lessons for Kenya. Secondary education in Nigeria is divided into cycles; junior, 3 years and senior, 3 years. Junior education is free but senior secondary students are required to purchase textbooks and uniforms costing them an equivalent of Ksh 16,000 (200 US Dollars) (Wikipedia, 2014). In Nigeria, the federal government has two secondary schools in each of the 36 states. These schools are funded by the federal government while the rest of the public schools are run and funded by the local state governments. The Nigerian funding is similar to Kenya whereby some cost has been left for the parents. Where parents may not be able to meet these costs, it may mean no secondary education for children in spite of the government funds.

The historical development of education in Egypt since the 1950s shows that the Egyptian government has taken up the responsibility of supervising and financing education to achieve the principles of justice, equality and equal opportunity. Though the government had ambitions to finance all aspects of education, the finances became unattainable and this adversely affected the implementation having embraced the concept of free education for all in which the state was solely responsible for financing education. According to Zahir (2006), the Egyptian Ministry of Education released a document in 1952 directing that those spending on private education in the primary stage should not benefit from free education during secondary education. This was to try and reduce the expenditure on free secondary education. This implies that financing of education, especially for developing countries like Kenya, is costly and governments must prepare well in advance. Another lesson is that these finances must be managed effectively for the education sector to achieve the set goals

Uganda was among the first countries in sub-Sahara Africa to start Universal Secondary Education (USE) in February 2007 (Oketch & Ngware,, 2012). The USE was aimed at doubling the number of those joining secondary school or continuing with learning. The Acting Ugandan Education Commissioner in the year 2007 argued that the programme was envisaged to help rural communities to produce people who actively participate in economic activities. The program was a success story as enrolment in secondary schools skyrocketed from 150,000 to 380,000 taking up almost 90% of all primary school grandaunts, that is, 90% transition. Some of the limitations of the program according to Oyaro (2008) were that principal's input was not sought in planning and the principals were not trained sufficiently in knowledge and skills on implementation. It is clear that in developing nations such as Kenya, free schooling is a big relief to many people and therefore such a program registers immediate success. However, poor planning and limited enhancement of the head teacher's capacity to manage the programs negatively influences the achievements of the desired goals. Therefore, this incapacity limits the possible level of success of the programme.

In 2008, the Kenyan government launched Vision 2030. This was a blue print for the development of the country aimed at transforming Kenya into a newly industrializing middle income country by the year 2030. To realize this, several areas with several flagship projects were identified. One such area was Human resource

Development and the Ministry of education was given the responsibility to strive to make Kenyans literate and ready for the job market. The ministry was to reduce illiteracy by increasing access to education, retention and improving the transition rate from primary school to secondary school. In partnership with the private sector, Kenya was to increase funding to support the schools by increasing their enrolment and retaining learners (Vision 2030). According to Sarah Cameron, Chief Communications officer of UNICEF's Nairobi office, few countries have made a breakthrough into middle income status without the majority of their citizens having access to secondary education (Oyaro, 2008).

In launching Free secondary Education in Kenya, the Ministry of Education acknowledged the fact that fees paying was responsible for the low transition rate from primary to secondary schools. With this recognition, the Government made a commitment through Sessional paper number 1 of 2005 to increase transition to 70% by providing free basic education (Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 and MoE Circular NO. MOE/G1/9/1/44). The first step in implementation of the policy was a stakeholders' forum which led to the formation of the National Taskforce on Affordable Secondary Education. Their key mandate was to examine the costs of secondary education as indicated in form one joining instructions and thereafter identify modalities for the implementation of FSE. The guidelines on FSE issued by the Ministry were based on the recommendations of this taskforce (MOE/G1/9/1/44).

Allocation of funds to public secondary schools was based on the formula of budgeting, which is, allocated based on the number of learners in the school at the rate of Kshs 10,265 per a learner. According to Downes (1988), this is one of the formulas used in local school financial management in the United Kingdom government funding of education. This gross numbers method advantages the schools which are already well established as they get more funds and develop faster Economies of scale. For instance; if each child is allocated ksh.200 for laboratory equipment, in a single stream school with an average of 40 learners per class, it translates to ksh.8, 000 only. In a school of 5 streams it comes to ksh.40, 000, giving a range of ksh.32, 000. Given that the 5 stream school is likely to have most of the basic facilities such as laboratories, microscopes etc, they are likely to advance more than the one stream school. This system perpetuates the prevalent inequalities between schools.

Soon after the launch of free secondary education in term one of 2008, head teachers meeting in Mombasa during their Annual General Meeting, praised the program and promised to fully support and implement it. They noted that enrolment had already increased by 300,000 learners in the first term of FSE. From the onset they noted that delay in the release of funds and failure to fund all activities by the Government would pose challenges to the efficient implementation (Jibril, 2008).

According to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), one of the most immediate challenges was classrooms to accommodate the extra learners attracted by FSE. Professor Karega Mutahi, the then Permanent Secretary in the ministry of Education said that the Country needed 250 new schools or 4,000 new classrooms in existing ones to cater for this increase (Oyaro, 2008). As a stop gap measure, the MOE raised the class capacity from 40 to 45 learners and pegged funding for schools on this threshold. Another challenge would definitely be teacher student ratio, already stretched by freezing of teacher employment in 1998.

According to Knight (1993), there are three key concepts in effective financial management of schools. They include economy or the careful use of resources, efficiency or the fullest possible attainment of set goals, objectives or standards and lastly effectiveness or the cost incurred versus what it attains. These are called the three Es. He goes on to say that money coming into schools from sources such as the government is treated as 'their money and spent with a light heart free from the tedious concerns'(Knight, 1993). This attitude definitely limits the attainment of set goals as it means principals are likely to use FSE funds in Kenya with such 'a light heart'. A research carried by Kilonzo (2007) found out that 92.5% of the parents felt that they should not contribute anything to the free primary education in Kenya since it was 'free'. Since the same are parents in secondary schools, the chances of full and committed parental support to free secondary education cannot be guaranteed.

According to the Republic of Kenya (2013) the BoMs as spelled out in the Basic Education Act (2013) are the custodians of school funds and property . They are mandated to audit and regulate expenditure by the school principals to ensure income received is applied for the intended purpose to achieve desired goals. According to Wanderi (2011), this presumes that BoMs and principals are knowledgeable in matters such as law, human resource management, supplies and procurement, contracting, accounting and project management. A casual survey of the quality, caliber and appointment procedure of both BoMs and Principals reveals alarming limitations in meeting the standards above. Most of them are usually politically motivated appointment with scant reference to credentials. The politics vary from the village to the clan, constituency and tribe. Usually the clarion call is that 'we want one of our own' or a councilor or Member of Parliament rewards a confidant with an appointment. The MoE officials will usually be bullied into sanctioning such appointments. According to Kilonzo (2007), most of the head teachers are picked from the classroom and therefore face an uphill task in management.

Kilonzo (2007) further found out that 97% to 100% of primary head teachers said that they needed training on management in general and financial management in particular respectively. The same situation obtains in secondary schools pointing to incapacity in management of the FSE funds. Chepkonga (2006) found out that 80.9% of the principals said that they needed training in accountancy procedures, 63.8% in auditing, 57% in management and 93% in preparing budgets. Cheruiyot (2006) in his research found out that only 50% of the principals served as deputy principals before appointment as principals. Even so, they did not gain the requisite knowledge and experience. Chepkonga (2006) further found out that 72% had no interview before appointment and 72% had no induction course before starting to serve as principals. This will definitely negatively impact on the efficient and effective implementation of FSE. Cheruiyot (2006) recommends that attendance of education management conferences, workshops and seminars be made compulsory and closely monitored by the ministry of education's inspectorate division.

According to Kuria & Onyango (2006), BoMs are not giving necessary leadership that would promote Total Quality Management practices necessary for schools continuous improvement. Wangatho (2007) asserts that most of the BOM members have inadequate education, training and commitment to manage schools properly. Implementation of FSE is also likely to be affected by disharmony between the B.O.Ms and the principals. According to Kilemi & Osita (1999), principals of schools can overrule decisions by the BOGs and vice versa. This will definitely end up in a haphazard and unsystematic implementation of any projects or utilization of the school funds sent by the FSE program for that matter. In some cases, principals of schools dominate BOMs if BOMs are lacking in capacity and vice versa. This in the final analysis creates a disconnect in this implementing arm of the school.

As noted, most potential and actual secondary school learners were kept home by lack of school fees. A casual look at what a learner needs to stay in school reveals that Ksh 10,265.00 is inadequate. According to the daily Nation newspaper editorial on 12th February 2008, determining that extra costs charged to parents are manageable and within certain guidelines is definitely one more challenge. Therefore Chances that a child paid for by the Government subsidy could for example fail to raise funds for their lunch in school and stay home are real. A survey done by Undugu Society of Kenya (USK) in March 2010 shows that more than half a million children are out of school simply because they cannot afford school uniform. According to this survey, a full set of uniform costs approximately Ksh 2000 and 6000 for primary and secondary schools respectively.

Secondary school requiring a blazer will see the student incur another ksh2500 to 3000 (Otieno, 2010). The uniform requirement is basically a colonial relic as many countries do without it. Most schools will insist on the uniform being purchased from particular shops giving parents no room for other options especially on pricing. Such outlets will usually be run by persons allied to the school managers. Although the ministry's stated position is that no child should be sent away from school for lack of uniform, this has never been implemented. Looking at various fees structures, on average, low cost schools charge roughly Ksh. 10,000 annually for day scholars excluding uniform. This will definitely keep many learners at home as most parents may not afford these fees hampering the effective achievement of FSE goals of increasing transition and retention rates.

According to Kilonzo (2007), 94% of primary school head teachers who implement the FPE program found the cash to be inadequate and coupled with delayed disbursement hampering the effective implementation of the program. According to Musalia (2005), even the areas funded by the government have inadequate funds. She cites the example of Quality Assurance, whose funds were found to be very minimal in meeting set requirements (Musalia, 2005). This happens yet there are no guidelines on how to bridge the gap or deficit in under funded areas by the government leaving the head teachers in a dilemma.

FSE implementation in Kenya was without proper research and planning. According to Chesswaso (1969), planning involves obtaining and analyzing statistics and using them to make projections of future development and in particular, estimates of human, physical and financial resources needed to achieve proposed development. This views gain more ground given that a report in the Daily Nation newspaper on 12th February 2008 says that in Kenya the Inspectorate Department has always had insufficient evaluation capacity. With poor planning and inept follow up on expenditure and projects by the Inspectorate, chances of efficient implementation of FSE are limited. According to Barasa (2007), ministry of education auditors may not be available to conduct auditing exercises regularly or appointed auditors have been often corrupted to conceal the truth in cases of funds misappropriation. Also audited reports are rarely acted upon by higher authorities even in cases of very clear misuse of funds. This means that budgeted facilities and materials may not be acquired limiting the effectiveness of FSE.

According to Ngaca (2009), Kenya was praised for making good progress towards education by the introduction of FPE and FSE. This was during the United Nations 'High level Event' on MDGs held in Washington in the USA in September 2008. Ngaca goes on to say that Capacity challenges are being addressed through demand driven training programs for education managers at all levels. This training is co-coordinated by the Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) and so far 17,000 managers had already undergone training. This is a clear admission that those to implement both FPE and FSE were lacking in management knowledge and thus limiting the attainment of set goals. So although Kenya was praised for introducing FPE and FSE, its success in achieving set goals could have been limited this factor of management incapacity. Wanyonyi (2004) found out that usually, many of these planned trainings fail to take off. Ministry of education officials conceded that only 50% of planned workshops actually took place in the year. That means therefore that chances of eliminating management incapacity are very limited.

Factors Influencing the Implementation of Free Secondary Education

The cabinet secretary of education has the mandate to manage schools under the Education Act (CAP 211) and the Teachers service Commission Act (CAP 212). The minister delegates mandate at the school level to the boards and principals. The successful implementation of any programme in the school therefore depends on their managerial capacity. However, this capacity may be inadequate in them. Chepkonga (2006) found out that the principals needed training in very key management areas such as accountancy (80.9%), preparing budgets (93%) and general management (57%). While Kilonzo (2007) found out that 100% of the primary head teachers needed training in management. On their part, Kuria & Onyango (2006) say that the boards are not giving the necessary leadership that would promote quality management in schools.

The Government funding left out some key areas that make learning to go smoothly in the schools. Such areas include infrastructure development that include classrooms, libraries and laboratories among others, provision of meals to the students while they are in school and buying school uniforms. However, the feeling that the government provides free education has led to unwillingness by many parents to make any payments to the schools. According to Kilonzo (2007), 92.5% of the parents were not ready to pay levies to schools since education was ‘free’. Since they are the same parents with children in secondary schools, the same thinking is likely to prevail.

Even with good and timely funding, enrolment and retention may be limited by socio-economic factors in the environment. Wanyonyi (2004) found out that school drop outs were still there despite the introduction of free primary education. According to that study, some of the factors causing school drop outs include early marriages, pregnancies, domestic duties, negligence by parents (discipline) and peer pressure (lack of interest in school).

As soon as students report to school for the start of the term, learning begins. This means that the materials for learning and teaching to be acquired by free secondary education funds must be in school already. If the government delays in making the funds available, learning is definitely affected both in the short and long term. According to a study done by Musalia (2005) and that done by Kilonzo (2007), persistent delays by the government in sending the money to schools was hampering the effective implementation of free secondary education.

Statement of the problem

In a paper presented at Tom Mboya labour college, Kisumu (2008) during a KESI course for Deputy head teachers, Aboka, the then Nyanza Deputy PDE identified various challenges facing FSE implementation; late disbursement of funds, the struggle to divorce the FSE from politics, confusion on who should benefit from FSE funding, and inadequate capacities by implementing personnel. However, the school managers are better placed to bring out the constraints that they face on a daily basis. This study sought to find out the constraints of implementing Free Secondary Education in Mandera County. The performance of schools in the ASAL has been dwindling even after the introduction of FSE. The FSE is meant to improve the access and retention of learners although that is not the case in Mandera west sub-county. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the constraints of Implementing FSE in Kenya.

Purpose and Objectives of the study

The purpose of the study was to find out the constraints of implementation of free secondary education in Kenya using the case of Mandera west sub-county in Mandera County. The objectives of the study were threefold:

(i) To establish whether the principals’ management capacity hinders the implementation of free secondary education programme.

(ii) To examine the extent the schools’ Board of Management has an influence on the implementation of free secondary education.

(iii) To assess the effects socio-economic and time taken by the government to provide the funds on the implementation of free secondary education.

Research Methods

Research Design

The survey research design was used in this study. A Survey is an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of the population in respect to one or more variables (Orodho, 2009a). Survey was therefore an appropriate design for this study as it enabled the researcher to obtain information that describes the current situation in FSE implementation by asking the respondents questions. It's a kind of self report (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In applying the survey design, the researcher aimed at collecting information from respondents about constraints of implementation of FSE in order to know the current status of the programme.

Target Population

The target respondents for the study were the secondary school principals and BOMs in Mandera West sub county. These principals are the people charged with the responsibility of ensuring that FSE is fully operational on the ground in their respective schools. There are 5 secondary schools in the district and therefore my target population was the 5 principals and 50 BOMs.

Sampling Procedure

According to Nassiuma (2000), simple random sampling represents the most basic statistical sampling technique. Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) say that random sampling is the key to obtaining a representative sample. Ghauri & Gronhaug (2005) and Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) say that sample size is influenced by such factors as the number of variables in the study, the type of research design, the method of data analysis and the size of the accessible population. Most experts suggest sample sizes of between 10-30 % (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Taking the upper limit of 30 % against my accessible population of 55 gives a sample of 17 cases.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was the preferred instrument because it guaranteed the uniformity of data. It was an appropriate instrument because all the respondents were literate and capable of answering the items written in simple English language. The questionnaire had 5 sections in total. These include biographic data of respondents and 4 sections covering the 4 research objectives and questions. The questionnaire had standardized questions and required both standard answers and free answers. An understanding of some of the questionnaire responses was gained through unstructured observation.

Validity of Research Instrument

A pre-test where 3-5 cases of respondents were used to test understanding, difficulty of questions and willingness to respond was done to increase validity of this tool (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005 Orodho,2012). Pre-testing made terms or language clear and tested the accuracy and sustainability of the instrument. This therefore generated adequate data. It also got rid of irrelevant and sensitive items in tool. Respondents in the pre-test survey were randomly selected from the target population. To avoid problems brought about by test and retest, these respondents were not be used in the final survey. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was given to both a research and an education expert to check whether all the major factors in free education have been captured. Their corrections together with those from the pre-test were incorporated in the final questionnaire.

Reliability of Research Instrument

Best (1981) defines reliability as the quality of consistency that an instrument demonstrates over time. Use of questionnaire is reliable as it brings with it uniformity of questions to respondents both in their number and language construction. Orodho (2009a) documents that a questionnaire is in most cases a reliable tool to collect data since there is uniformity in the questions. A split-half method was applied to test for reliability. This is where the items in the instrument are divided into two sub groups of even and odd numbered items. These are given to a few respondents and the results correlated. In this case, Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied. A strong correlation of 0.86 was obtained. The split half is a better method of testing reliability because test-retest brings with it errors due to intervening factors and time. Also split-half enabled the researcher to administer the questionnaire once reducing costs and time spent. The quantitative data were analyzed using the statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 computer programme to generate the statistics relevant to this study (Orodho, 2009b).

The Findings and Discussions

Principals' Management Capacity and Implementation of FPE

The management capacity of the principals is very important in the implementation of free secondary education. Warner & Palfreyman (2006) said that to manage secondary schools, the head teachers (principals) require strong professional financial knowledge and support services for their successful management. This came out clearly in the study. Although 56% of the respondents felt that they were adequately prepared to manage schools during their college training, all of them felt they needed more training in order to work well.

In this study, 60% of the respondents needed training in financial management (budgeting, journal entries, and accounting), 30% in human resource management, and 20% in information technology (I.T) as main areas. Although the percentages are lower, they still reflect the need for training as established by Wanyonyi (2004) and Chepkonga (2006). Wanyonyi found out that 85% of the respondents had only attended a two day seminar dealing with management of finances. This is definitely inadequate training. According to Chepkonga, 80.9% of the respondents needed training in accounting and 93% in budget preparation. All these are in line with the assertion by Levacic (1995) that head teachers need training in management and cost accounting, financial accounting and budgeting.

There is therefore a clear indication that the school principals require capacity building in management in general and financial management in particular. Their limited capacity currently limits their ability to achieve a greater percentage in the set goals of free secondary education. In the sample, 50% of the schools take two years or more before inspection by the ministry of education and this could jeopardize their effective management irrespective of the qualifications and abilities of the principals. This is similar to what Barasa (2007) said that the ministry may not be available to conduct audits and even where they do, they are corrupted to conceal cases of mismanagement.

Very long delays in giving schools money for the term (as late as the third month of the term) are common. This was found to have a negative effect on learning as the schools reach levels where crucial learning materials lack in the schools. According to the ministry of education, circular number MOE/ G1 / 1 / 44, the money is supposed to be in the schools in December, April and August. That means the preceding months before opening of the school terms respectively. Another negative effect is the fact that students have to be sent home more regularly for the school levies so that the principals could use these funds to run the schools. This resulted in many learners missing lessons and some eventually dropping out of school. This has a negative influence on the implementation of free secondary education.

Role of Board of Management in Implementation of FPE

In general, about 89% of the respondents had confidence in the management ability of their Boards of Management (BOM). At the same time, 95% of the BOMs were found to be making positive contributions to the growth of the schools in general and increasing enrolment in particular. Among their contributions include sensitization of the local communities on enrolling the children in the schools, coming up with sound management policies, making financial contributions(both personal and outsourced), staff motivation and setting standards of achievement and admission in the schools. The study established that 99%of the BOMs were having either a good or very good working relationship with both the principals and the Parents Teachers' associations (PTA).The principals viewed these positive relationships as having made their work of administration as well as of FSE implementation easier. The BOMs can be said to have a positive contribution to implementation of the free secondary education. This contrasts with what Wangatho (2007) found out. In his study, a majority of the BOMs were not making positive contribution to the growth of the schools. It can be assumed that this boils down to how to the constitution of membership. It also contrasts both Kuria & Onyango (2006) and Kilemi & Osita(1999). The former found out that BOMs are not giving necessary leadership that would promote quality management in the schools while the later said that there exists a disharmony between the principals and BOMs that leads to haphazard running of schools.

Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Implementation of FPE

The study found out that a number of socioeconomic factors were leading to school drop outs and therefore reversing the gains made by FSE towards increasing enrolment, retention and completion rates. A lot of the girls are still dropping out of school due to pregnancies with no proper mechanisms on their follow up after delivering. Other students are dropping out due to their poor discipline and others because of failure to pay school levies. Whereas these were the major causes, drug abuse was also cited as minor cause of drop outs. In his study Wanyonyi (2004) found out that despite the freeness of education, there were still many school dropouts. These were due to parental negligence, lack of interest in education and early marriages including and pregnancies.

This means that there is need for some compulsion so that enrolments are retained. Such compulsion will also ensure that money is not wasted on the learners who finally drop out. However other socio-economic factors such as school income projects as well as donor funds help many learners to stay in school. These therefore have a positive impact towards the achievement of FSE goals of increasing enrolment and retention in secondary schools. At an average of 41.5% fees payment parents are failing in meeting their obligations. This leads to some of the students dropping out of school. This reflects the findings of Kilonzo (2007) that 92.5% of the parents were unwilling to pay any money to the schools because education was 'free'. This negates the goals of FSE implementation. Moreover, nonpayment by most parents limits the putting up of infrastructure such libraries and laboratories. Interestingly, the coming of FSE has led to increased enrolment thereby overstretching available facilities. Inadequate libraries and laboratories have led to damage and loss of materials. This has limited the attainment of set target. For example no school had attained the year 2009 textbook ratio of 1:1 despite the study being done in mid 2014.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The major thrust of this study was to examine the main constraints of implementing free secondary education in Mandera West Sub-County, Mandera County, Kenya. From the results and reviewed literature thus far, it is evident that FSE experiences myriad problems some related to financial constraints. Hence, PFE needs further allocation of funds. Only funds for exercise books from the tuition vote head were unanimously seen to be very sufficient. The study found out that FSE had led to increased enrolment and retention in secondary schools. All the respondents had recorded a steady increase in the period 2008-2013. Out of these, 99% assigned the increase to FSE with only 1% saying it was due to the good KCSE results posted by their schools. However, all sampled schools were recording improving performance which they assigned to the fact that students were staying in school more and had better learning materials as a result of FSE. The funds have also ensured the prompt payment of the non teaching staff resulting in a cordial working relationship that gives the principal ease of management.

It is thus recommended that the Government OF Kenya , through the Ministry of Education needs to strive to ensure that:

1. The FSE funds are in school accounts well before the term starts to enable proper planning and procurement processes. FSE has led to increased enrolment resulting in the overstretching of facilities and inadequacy of the teaching staff. This may compromise the quality of learning for the students in the schools. It has also forced principals to use money for school development on wages for the teachers hired by the school. Parents are unwilling to pay any levies to meet their obligations. This has running of the schools very difficult for the principals.

2. The Ministry of Education should constitute members of the Board of Management on merit. Well constituted BOMs can play a very significant role in the management and growth of schools.

3. The Government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Education should ensure that the fee guidelines reflect the existing needs of the local community. As much as the government has reduced the burden of fees payment for parents and therefore led to increased enrolment, retention is still threatened by many socio-economic factors that lead to dropping out of school.

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