

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

Patrick Mbui^{*}, Alexander K. Ronoh and ^{**} Florence Kisirkoi^{**}

^{*}M.Ed Student, Department of Curriculum and Educational Management. Maasai Mara University

^{**}Senior Lecturer, Department of Curriculum and Educational Management. Maasai Mara University

Corresponding Author: Patrick Mbui

Abstract

This study sought to establish the influence of in-service training of head teachers in curriculum 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 role played by in-service training in curriculum management by head teachers in 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. 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 by enabling Head teachers to role model and train staff on new developments, curriculum management enhanced implementation of free primary education in the schools. The study recommends that schools should consider leadership experience as criteria for promotion of staff as head teachers and encourage personal initiative and good role modeling.

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

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I. Introduction

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-service training is a key determinant of educational quality and is a necessary element in improving both personnel and school (ILO, 2009).

Some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa reached various levels of success attributed to implementation of the policy by introducing FPE. These include Malawi (1994), Uganda (1997), Tanzania and Lesotho (2000), Burundi, Rwanda, Ghana, Cameroon and Kenya (2003) (Grogan, 2008). 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, teaching materials and poor satisfaction of teachers in their job (World Bank, 2004).

In the year 1965, Kenya made plans of attaining FPE as was initially stated in the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 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.

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. 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).

The large influx of children in public primary schools in 2003 was a result of Government's declaration of FPE (Republic of Kenya, 2003), Consequently, 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 head teachers 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).

The Kenya Government presented its commitment to the improvement of training and education by allocating resources continuously through Kenya's Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on training and education (Republic of Kenya, 2004). 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.

II. 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 Head teachers and principals in a diploma course in Educational management at KEMI in 2011 (KEMI, 2011a). The course covered curriculum management including conflict resolution and disaster management (KEMI, 2011a). The course also offered strategic planning or leadership including good governance, team building, results - based management and public relations. The course also offered resource management skills including human resources, financial and procurement management. Other areas covered by the course were project planning and management including Information Communication Technology (ICT) integration in education.

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 disburses FPE funds to schools and Head teachers are responsible for managing all school finances and for the implementation of FPE. The government, public and other stakeholders in the education sector are also interested to see that FPE benefits all Kenyan 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.

III. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to establish how in-service training of head teachers in curriculum management influences their implementation of Free Primary Education. Most of the primary data was obtained from 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.

IV. Social Demand Theory for Education

The Social Demand Theory for Education formed the theoretical basis of this study as it 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.

Wanzare and Ward (2000) presented that in-service training in education enhances teacher performance with ultimate aim of promoting self-effectiveness. 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).

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 (Dobbius, Higgins, Pierce, Tandy & Tincani, 2011). 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.

V. The Concept of Free Primary Education

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. However, 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. 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.

According to the School Management Guide, 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).

Head teachers were required to undergo training between 2011 and 2012 due to management challenges they faced. 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, 2011b).

A study by Ongoto, Ogola and Malusu (2019) was on 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.

VI. Curriculum Management and Implementation of FPE

Curriculum management is one of the components of in-service training that head teachers undertake and implement in order to implement FPE effectively (KEMI, 2011b). Curriculum management refers to the experiences provided by a school to educate the learners. Curriculum is all planned learning for which the school is responsible. It is also the totality of learning experiences provided to students in schools so that they can attain general skills and knowledge at a variety of learning skills (Marsh, 2009). They include resources which are intellectual, scientific, cognitive, linguistic and textbooks all of which may be official or unofficial (Luke *et al.*, 2013).

Owen (2012) asserts that, good education is a product of good curriculum management which entails initiating and stimulating. This means creating and developing incentive for curriculum implementation, creates an atmosphere in which teachers can freely interact professionally, develop team work and encourage potential leaders among the staff member. A curriculum should not only provide the teaching and learning facilities but should also provide education of character, behavior, organization, experience, self-realization, and self-

expression (Tomar, 2010). Gongera *et al.* (2013) observe that inadequate internal and external curriculum supervision and quality advice is one of the major constraints in academic achievement.

Cases of laxity in curriculum delivery in schools have impacted negatively on learning outcomes in schools (Gongera *et al.*, 2013). Curriculum supervision is achieved through proper formulation and implementation of schemes of work and through evaluation by head teachers of the instructional program and making effective and necessary modifications (KEMI, 2011b). Curriculum supervision is also achieved through delivery of instructional resources and through head teachers assisting and advising teachers involved in instructional programs. Curriculum implementation presents teachers, schools and boards of management with a unique opportunity to engage in professional development improve learning outcomes and prepare children for the challenges and opportunities of the future (KEMI, 2011b).

VII. Methodology

The study used an ex-post facto research design in 500 public primary schools in Kiambu County 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.

All the four zonal inspectors were purposively selected to give a total of 54 respondents while a total of 50 Head teachers were selected randomly using a random number generator. 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.

VIII. Results

Table 8.1 illustrates the views on the extent that head teachers are conversant with curriculum management.

Table 8.1: In-Service Training and Curriculum Management

Head teachers are conversant with Curriculum Management	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	25	50
Agree	2	4
Neutral	3	6
Disagree	18	36
Strongly disagree	2	4
Total	50	100

The results show that a large number of respondents (51%) strongly agreed that head teachers are conversant with curriculum management than those who strongly disagreed (4%). It can be deduced that most of the head teachers were found to be conversant with curriculum management which led to attainment of knowledge in general and learning skills. Other reasons that led the head teachers to be successful in curriculum delivery are supervision of teachers and implementation of a syllabus.

These results are corroborated by Marsh (2009) who reveals that in-service training enables head teachers to acquire basic skills which would consequently facilitate the implementation of the curriculum. Better curriculum management practices assists head teachers in developing continuous assessment techniques, arrange co-curricular activities and help teachers to develop learning objectives for themselves.

The degree to which KEMI had helped obtain skills of management is as presented in table 8.2.

Table 8.2: KEMI and Acquisition of Skills

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very high extent	7	14
High extent	25	50
Moderate extent	14	28
Low extent	4	8
Total	50	100

The respondents reported that in-service training had helped head teachers to acquire new skills in management of FPE to a high extent (25 or 50%) followed by to a moderate extent (14 or 28%). These results show that the KEMI in-service training is beneficial to head teachers as they use it to manage and administer

their schools effectively. This includes training of departmental heads in management skills. The knowledge enables head teachers to be better administrators and managers especially in overcoming challenges and implementing government policies. The overall effect is in improving the learning process, performance of pupils and achievement of success by schools.

IX. Conclusion

Despite low influence of in-service training of head teachers on implementation of FPE policy, majority of the Head teachers are conversant with curriculum management skills which they acquired from in-service training. Curriculum management skills enabled Head teachers to role model and train staff on new developments in curriculum management. Thus, curriculum management influenced implementation of free primary education by Head teachers in the schools. The study recommends that in service training courses based on current education management issues that strengthen skills in curriculum 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.

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