



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPLICATIONS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS MANAGEMENT AS CHANGE AGENTS IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY IN KENYA:
A CASE OF KEIYO DISTRICT

Lydia Cheruto Kipkoech

Examinations Department, Moi University, P.O. Box 3900-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 6th June 2011
Received in revised form
30th July, 2011
Accepted 13th August, 2011
Published online 17th September, 2011

Key words:

Free Primary Education,
All public schools,
Stakeholders,
Education officers.

ABSTRACT

In January 2003 the Kenyan government declared Free Primary Education (FPE) in all public schools in the country as a fulfillment of the Education for All (EFA) global commitment and strategy to give children universal primary education. The study established that FPE was hastily implemented hence there was no time to prepare the school management as well as sensitize stakeholders on the requirements and expectations of FPE. Most of the head teachers have difficulties in planning and managing the schools funds among other managerial challenges. This study examined implications of the implementation of free primary education policy on the management of primary schools in Keiyo District, Kenya. This was a descriptive survey study where questionnaires, interview schedule and an observation were used to collect data from the head teachers, teachers and Education Officers. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the education officers and the head teachers while random sampling technique was used to select the zones, teachers and the primary schools that participated in the study. A total of 260 respondents participated in the study. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics; percentages and frequencies. The findings showed that the school management is not effective as change agents; they have difficulty in planning; and are plagued with inadequacy in financial management as well as in other administrative skills. It is imperative that training of head teachers and teachers be a continuous process; and the public should be sensitized further to support the government efforts in the provision of FPE if this noble initiative is to succeed.

©Copy Right, IJCR, 2011, Academic Journals. All rights reserved

INTRODUCTION

At independence, Kenya inherited an education system that was characterized by racial segregation and, different types of curricula for the various races namely Europeans, Asians, Arabs and Africans. The colonial schools had a different curriculum from that of the African independent and the missionary schools. According to Bogonko (1992:25) "before 1960, free and universal primary education had not been extended to African children in any of the East African British colonies, racial discrimination in primary and secondary education was still intact." The situation did not radically change with the achievement of independence in 1963. Sifuna (1980:150) reports that, the achievement of independence heightened pressure to increase the school population and a rapid move towards universal primary education. The first step towards free primary education was in 1971 (Bogonko; 1992:115); this was when President Jomo Kenyatta abrogated tuition fees for the economically marginal districts in the country. By July 1973 districts such as Marsabit, Mandera, West-pokot, Wajir, Tana River, Turkana, Samburu, Garissa and Lamu had free primary education. Sifuna (1980:159) observes that the presidential decree was one of the most

dramatic political pronouncements since it took the planners and the public unaware. The immediate result was increase in enrollments in primary schools from 1.8 million in 1973 to 2.8 million in January, 1974. In 1976 the Gachathi Report recommended an extension of the waiver of fees to the full seven years of primary education. Despite the existence of free primary education by 1980, the schools witnessed many challenges that eventually contributed to its failure and the introduction of levies in primary schools. It was not until 2003 that the idea of free primary education was reintroduced. The declaration of free primary education in 2003 brought about many changes in the management of primary schools in Kenya. Parents no longer pay levies towards tuition yet, they still influence the running of the schools. Furthermore, provision of necessities such as lunch programme, joint examination, essential physical facilities to effect the realization of free primary education has remained a daunting task for school managers. People are driven by fear of unknown and uncertainty of the effects of change hence some want to cling to that which they know best. In a learning institution, a head teacher need to develop a good interpersonal relationship with teachers, support staff and committee(s) in order to avoid resistance to changes introduced. According to Kreither (2000:6); a derailed

*Corresponding author: cherulk@yahoo.com

manager experience a number of interpersonal problems; among other things they are perceived as manipulative, abusive, untrustworthy, demeaning, overly critical, not team players and poor communicator. As Koontz (2000) puts it, 'the structure of the organization, the technology which is applied and the people working in it are highly interdependent and all the three have to be involved in the change process'. The task of managers is to direct energy away from feelings of powerlessness and looking backwards into seeing opportunities for the future. An effective and efficient manager must possess the technical, human, and conceptual skills in order to be a good organizer. The implementation of free primary education policy in Kenya however, found school managers off guard; they had not been prepared for the change and so they found it challenging. Many schools had an overwhelming increase in enrollment while others witnessed mass exodus. Average class sizes rose from 40 to 70 while the facilities remained the same. Mutua *et al*, (1992:63) reports that in Kenya today, approximately 50% of all the country's primary schools are housed in temporary and/or semi-permanent buildings; others are on split sites. The declaration of free primary education witnessed the rise in student enrollment which in turn led to strain in the existing physical resources.

These changes required changes in the managerial skills of school managers. Orora (1997:121) points out that a change agent is a person who attempts to influence proposed change and its adoption decision in a direction which beneficiaries have indicated desirable. An advisory committee on the supply and education of teachers observed that the education service has been operating in a climate of rapid change, which is likely to continue to the foreseeable future (Glatter, 1988). Such a rapid change requires a continuous process of adjustment on the part of all those involved in the education system. This view is supported by Wideen (1987) who pointed out that teachers need continuous professional growth and development in order to enhance their competencies in handling changes. School managers are supposed to act as change agents; they are supposed to interpret educational policies to the parents and other stakeholders as well as direct utilization of resources available towards successful implementation of changes.

Objectives

The objective of the study was to; investigate implications of school management as change agents, find out type of training that school managers received, and how management of resources has been carried out since the implementation of free primary education policy.

Theoretical Framework

The study was based on two theories namely the human capital theory and the systems theory. The human capital theory was formulated by Adam Smith. Slavin (1996; 731) defines human capital as "the acquired skills of an individual education, training, and work habits." Human capital theory is the most influential economic theory of western education; setting the framework of government policies since the early 1960's. It is seen increasingly as a key determinant of economic performance. The system theory was developed by

biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy. LittleJohn (1983:29) defines a system as a set of objects or entities that interrelate with one another to form a whole. Systems theory is basically concerned with problems of relationships, of structures, and of interdependence, rather than with the constant attributes of object. The systems theory views an organization as a social system consisting of individuals who cooperate within a formal framework, drawing resources, people, finance from their environment and putting back into that environment the products they produce or the services they offer. This theory is based on the view that managers should focus on the role played by each part of an organization; rather than dealing separately with the parts (Hannagan; 2002:10).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed descriptive survey research. The target population comprised primary school teachers, head teachers and education officers who are involved in the management of schools in Keiyo District. Education officers selected included District Education Officers (D.E.O), Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (Q.U.A.S.O), the Area Educational Officers (A.E.O) and Teachers Advisory Centre (T.A.C) tutors. A total number of 260 respondents were involved in the study. The study used questionnaires, interviews and observation to collect the relevant data. Questionnaires were designed to obtain details on attitudes, views and issues related to management of Free Primary Education (FPE). Interviews were used to collect data from the Education officers, and inspectors to enrich information provided in the questionnaires. Interview was used to collect administrative details and views of education officers over the FPE as well as future plans and suggestions for improvement. Observation was developed to gather information on facilities available in the schools.

RESULT

Preparedness of School Management as Change Agents

The study sought to find out if teachers, head teachers and education officers were prepared in terms of training for the implementation of FPE program. Their responses showed that even though 60.8% of the teachers had prior knowledge of the implementation of the policy they had not been adequately prepared as change agents in the process. Among education officers 57.1% acknowledged that they had not anticipated most of the challenges they encountered during implementation of FPE.

Training

The study established that 95.0% of the head teachers have received training while 5 % have not. 67.5% of the head teachers attended training organized by the Ministry of Education; 13.8% were trained by Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA) while 12.5% trained through facilitation of the D.E.O's office. The results also showed that 48.8% of the head teachers were trained on management of change; 21.1% received training on communication while 18.8% were trained on leadership and only a mere 6.3% trained on financial management. 35.8% of education officers reported training on financial management, 28.6% trained on

management of change, while 7.1% trained on communication and staff motivation.

Extent to Which Management Functions Have Been Carried Out in Schools

Objective two of the study sought to explore extend to which managerial functions have been carried out in schools since the implementation of FPE. The results showed that majority of the teachers (80.7%) viewed their schools as effectively managed while 19.3% view them as satisfactorily managed; poor management was not reported however. Among education officers, 78.5% reported that schools are effectively managed while the remaining 21.5% indicated satisfactory management.

Involvement of Parents Committees in School Management

The head teachers' responses on involvement of parent committees in the management of schools, showed that majority of the head teachers (98.8%) involved the parents committees in management of schools while a mere 1.2% did not. The parents were mainly involved in provision of physical facilities (88.8%). 70.0 % of the head teachers noted that the parents were source of finances while 41.3% involved parents in the management of discipline especially after the ban on corporal punishment. Further 37.5% of the head teachers involved parents in monitoring school finances while 22.5% reported parents' involvement in the management of teachers.

Human Resources

The study indicated that the shortage of staff existed before introduction of FPE but the situation was exacerbated by the introduction of FPE in 2003; this evident from the teachers' (95.8%) and the head teachers' (52.5 %) responses. The shortage of staff was probably occasioned by frequent transfers of teachers without replacement, freezing of employment of teachers by the government and loses of teachers due to natural causes. The same trend seems to apply for support staff.

Management of Physical Facilities

Among the head teachers interviewed, 41.3% indicated that the office rooms and classrooms were fairly sufficient before the implementation of FPE. The study found out that, according to 62% of the teachers and 43.8 % of head teachers, desks and chairs were insufficient generally, from these responses it was concluded that those physical facilities in schools were insufficient and the situation deteriorated with the introduction of free primary education.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study showed that most of the teachers, head teachers and education officers were aware of the introduction of FPE before the program took off in January 2003. Some of them also indicated that they were aware of the trends in the world especially after the enactment of the Children's Act in 2002 which declared basic education as a right of every child. Despite this awareness, majority of them

were not adequately trained to handle the challenges associated with the implementation of the program. Most of them reported having been trained on management of change but very few trained on financial management and communication which is core to the success of a school manager. School managers are expected to communicate to the parents and stakeholders expectation of government policies in school and influence them to support. A school manager is also the chief accounting officer in the school and is expected to handle public finances in a transparent and accountable manner. These expectations require adequate preparation in terms of training. Most of the challenges experience in primary schools at the moment relates to financial management. Shortage of physical facilities and human resources occasioned by influx of pupils is another challenge that the school managers might not have been prepared for. Before declaration of free education in 2003, there was little strain on the existing facilities. Parents provided most of the physical facilities as well as instructional materials such as text books, exercise books, chalks among others. After the declaration of free education parents were no longer willing to support schools in provision of these facilities. This was possibly because of misconception of "free education" arising from inadequate communication and sensitization of the public on the implication of the FPE policy.

Efforts to reform education policies have often revolved around choosing the "right" programs or providing "sufficient funds" to school. However, too little attention has been paid to the managerial skills of school head teachers as well as other education officers involved in the implementation of the educational policies. For one to be effective in implementation and generation of substantive change; there should be awareness of the changes and relevant training to empower one and sharpen competence. As an agent of change, the school management has to attempt to influence the proposed changes and its adoption as well as decisions in a direction which beneficiaries have indicated desirable (Orora: 1997). The findings of the present study showed that even though majority of the head teachers have trained, their training was not comprehensive enough to cover some of the vital and sensitive areas in the management of FPE program. This especially applies to financial management, communication as well as management of the limited physical and human resources. These management challenges associated with the FPE policy, if not addressed urgently might undermine the gains made so far.

Conclusions and Implication of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to establish the effect of free primary education policy on the primary schools management in Keiyo District, Kenya. The study established that FPE was hastily implemented hence there was no time to prepare the school management as well as sensitize stakeholders on the requirements and expectations of FPE. Most of the head teachers have difficulties in planning and managing the schools funds among other managerial challenges; parents are not willing to supplement government efforts in provision of FPE; all is a prove that the school management has not been effective as change agent. Training and in-servicing programs for head teachers and teachers on managerial skills are thus imperative to improve on these

managerial deficiencies. These challenges show that the Ministry of Education did not carry out situation analysis prior to implementation of FPE. The implementation of FPE was more of a political expediency rather than well planned out reform in education policy. It is important that these issues are addressed if the government noble idea is to succeed.

REFERENCES

- Bogonko, N.S. 1992. Reflections on Education in East Africa. Nairobi: Oxford University Press Nairobi
- Bogonko, N.S. 1992. A History of Modern Education in Kenya; 1895-1991. Nairobi: Evans Brothers Limited
- Eshiwani, G.S. 1993. Education in Kenya since Independence. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Glatter, R. 1988. Understanding School Management. Milton Keynes Open University Press.
- Hannagan, T. 2002. Management; Concepts and Practices. Harlow: Prentice Hall
- Littlejohn, S.W. 1983. Theories of Human Communication. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Koontz, H. and Wehrich, H. 2003. Essentials of Management. New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited.
- Kreitner, R. 2000. Management. New Delhi: A.I.T.B.S. Publishers.
- Mutua, R.W. and Namaswa, G. 1992. Educational Planning Nairobi: Educational Research and Publication.
- Orora, J.H.O. 1997. Beyond Letter of Appointment: Essays on Management. Nairobi: Kerabu Services Limited.
- Plomp, T. and Pelgrum, J. 1993. Implementation of Innovation in 21 Educations Systems the Study of Computers in Education. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Sifuna, D.N. 1980. Short Essays on Education in Kenya. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- Wideen, M.F. 1987. Perspectives of Staff Development for School Improvement. London: Imago Publishing.
