

Teachers and Students Attitudes on Free Primary Education Utilization of Learning Resources in Bungoma County, Kenya

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Abstract- In January 2003 the Kenyan government implemented Free Primary Education (FPE). FPE was received with a lot of enthusiasm by stakeholders in education. The FPE policy envisaged that the government would provide teaching and learning materials to all public primary schools. This paper therefore discusses the attitudes of teachers and learners towards utilization of learning resources in Bungoma County in Kenya. A descriptive survey design was used in this study. The target population was head teachers, teachers, the school management committee chair persons and the students. Since there are both rural and urban schools, stratified sampling was done to get a more representative sample. Instruments for data collection were questionnaires, interview schedule, and document analysis and observation schedules. The research revealed that the FPE is popular. The research found that students, teachers, and chair persons of schools felt more funds are required to create a positive impact of FPE. Pupils had high expectations from the government than provided towards creating an enabling learning environment. The teachers felt that FPE was burdensome due to heavy teaching workloads and overcrowded class. The findings will inform the policy makers to make more informed decisions towards implementation of the free primary education in order to achieve Universal Education.

Index Terms- Free Primary education, learning resources, students attitudes, Teachers attitudes.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background to the study

At independence, education was seen as a key weapon in fighting poverty, ignorance and disease which were seen as the major enemies that faced the newly independent nation ([1]). One of the major goals of the Kenyan government is the attainment of universal primary education (UPE) as articulated in the sessional paper No. 10 of 1965 [2] on African socialism. Education was seen as a means of producing manpower for economic growth and development. All the KANU manifestos

issued between 1963 and 1979 committed the country to attaining the goal of a seven year free universal primary education ([3]).

On 10th January 2003, a task force to work on the implementation of free primary education held a conference. It constituted stakeholders in education to identify the immediate needs for the implementation of the Free Primary Education (FPE). Six sub committees were formed which comprised of: - curriculum implementation, human resource, physical facilities, needs of disadvantaged groups, public information, media relations and advocacy and financial and other resource implications. The emphasis was on the need for clear policies, strategic planning and strict prioritization of activities at all levels. FPE is a reform geared towards the overall goals of the national economic recovery strategy (ERS), poverty alleviation and national development. It is also one way of contributing to the achievement of millennium goals (MDGS) as discussed at the millennium summit in 2000.

The launch of FPE was received with euphoria. It was like a new dawn to many people who had been burdened by the cost sharing programme established in 1988. Many parents were able to send their children to school including those who had dropped out. Many parents who had their children in private schools withdrew them and send them to public schools. All this had implication on the resources available and their utilisation. This study therefore sought to give an insight on the implications of FPE policy on the utilisation of learning resources. Learning resources have an impact on the quality of education offered. The FPE programme purposed to offer quality education and hence the need to ascertain the utilisation of resources. This will provide a measure of whether FPE is provide quality education.

The government undertook funding of all public primary schools. Since then, books and other learning equipment and school infrastructure are provided by the Government. Since the introduction of FPE in 2003, enrolment has been on the upward trend in most areas as shown in table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Primary Schools Net Enrolment rates by province 2003-2007 (%)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
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Province	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Coast	66.9	60.1	66.9	63.5	72.8	67.7	75.1	73.3	74.2	72.3	71.2	71.8	84.6	77.0	80.0
Central	83.6	84.2	83.6	83.9	81.4	81.8	87.9	87.0	87.4	83.0	83.0	83.0	84.4	80.7	82.5
Eastern	90.4	90.3	90.4	91.4	91.5	94.9	93.8	94.3	97.4	97.5	97.5	98.7	97.8	97.8	98.3
Nairobi	35.5	40.3	35.5	37.7	35.9	41.1	39.2	40.9	40.1	31.2	34.7	32.9	28.6	29.3	29.0
Rift Valley	84.1	82.0	84.1	83.1	87.8	85.4	87.9	85.3	86.6	91.8	89.8	90.8	98.3	94.0	97.8
Western	97.5	93.2	97.5	95.3	99.3	97.2	99.1	94.6	96.8	98.9	98.5	98.6	99.1	98.9	99.0
Nyanza	96.2	95.4	96.2	95.8	96.9	96.2	98.4	97.2	97.8	99.5	99.2	99.4	98.4	98.2	98.3
North Eastern	26.1	16.2	26.1	21.6	23.6	14.9	26.6	18.8	23.0	24.3	16.5	20.8	33.1	20.8	27.5
Total	80.8	80.0	80.4	80.4	82.2	82.1	83.8	82.6	83.2	86.5	86.5	86.5	94.1	89.0	91.6

In the FPE there were policies to guide curriculum implementation. For instance policy recommended affordable curriculum that does not compromise quality assurance of education. The policy also laid down the requirements in terms of text book ratios of one book between three pupils in each subject in lower classes and one book per two pupils in upper primary. The school committees were to strictly buy one text book as course book in each subject per class from a list of titles given by the ministry of education. The books bought were to be in use in the particular class for three years. Communities were expected to provide storage facilities for books and all other teaching and learning materials. Teachers were also to be given guides in every subject to last for three years at a specified cost ([4]).

B. Statement of the problem

The Kenya governments aim since independence has been to provide every Kenyan child with basic rights such as education. It is in this respect that the government provided Free primary education (F.P.E) in 2003. FPE was received with a lot of enthusiasm by stakeholders in education. However, the massive enrolment put pressure on the resources that were in place. According to the 2005 MDGs status report for Kenya an Extra 1.5 million children were accessing primary education by 2004. For effective learning to take place there must be quality teaching and learning resources which are relevant and well utilized. At the same time all the stakeholders should be aware of the policy guidelines on resource utilization. Some learning resources especially books have been found on what is called the “black market.” Other books are in tatters which indicate the absence of proper storage and utilization. The main concern of this study was to find out the attitude of teachers and students towards use of learning resources as a result of FPE policy.

C. Free Primary Education in Kenya

Provision of quality basic education to all children is a challenge many a country are grasping with ([5]). Reports and studies show that FPE is currently faced by a number of challenges that undermine the quality of education ([6]; [7]; [2]). To better understand the challenges of free primary education, a trace of the history of its implementation is worth discussing.

Since the achievement of independence in 1963, the government and the people of Kenya have been committed to expanding the education system to enable greater participation. This has been in response to a number of concerns. Among the main concerns have been the desire to combat ignorance, disease and poverty; provide every Kenyan child has the right of access to basic welfare provisions, including education, and that the

government has the obligation to provide its citizens with the opportunity to take part fully in the socio-economic and political development of the country and to attain a decent standard of living. Education has also been seen as a fundamental factor for human capital development. The effort to expand educational opportunities has been reflected in the various policy documents and development plans.

The Kenya government policy to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) has to been seen within developments in the wider international context. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, declared that “everyone has a right to education.” The World Conference on Education for All (EFA), held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, sparked off a new impetus towards basic education especially with its so-called vision and renewed commitment. It noted, “that to serve the basic needs for all requires more than a recommitment to basic education as now exists. What is needed is an expanded vision that surpasses resource levels, institutional structures, curricula and conventional delivery systems, while building on the best in the practices.”

The Amman Mid-Decade Review of Education for All (1996) reaffirmed the commitment to the Jomtien resolutions. It observed that the provision of basic education, especially for girls, has remained elusive in many less industrialised countries. This was said to be particularly so in Africa, where ethnic tensions and conflicts have displaced many households, thus denying children opportunities of going to school. The Dakar Conference of 2000 reviewed developments in achieving UPE in the African continent. It set as one of the EFA goals “Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015” This was further endorsed by the so-called Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Among other things they set targets “to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.”

Within this broad policy framework, since independence in 1963, the expansion of learning institutions has been one of the greatest achievements in the education sector. Kenya has achieved an impressive increase in adult literacy. The achievements in literacy has reflected the country’s impressive progress in expanding access to education during the last four decades largely by establishing a comprehensive network of schools throughout the country. The substantial expansion of education has generally resulted in an increased participation by groups that previously had little or no access to schooling. Enrolment of a greater percentage of girls and indeed the

attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) has been the long-term objective in the primary education sub-sector.

In this section an attempt is made to briefly discuss the free primary education interventions of the 1970s and that of the year 2003, focusing on key logistical issues of implementation. The policy sounds commendable as a means of cushioning children from poor socio-economic backgrounds from dropping out of school, as well as being determinative of efforts to achieve UPE and EFA ([8]). However, it is argued that the numerous problems that have bedevilled the implementation of the interventions, and the fact that the cost of it is beyond the current education budget allocation, casts very serious doubts on the viability of the current FPE experiment. This is all the more so as a similar experiment in the 1970s seems to have achieved very little in terms of expanding educational opportunities for the marginalized groups.

D. Attitudes of education stakeholders

The government of Kenya has made substantial gains into increased enrolment through FPE initiative towards achieving education for all by 2015. Whether or not expanded education opportunities translate into meaningful development depends ultimately on whether people actually learn.

Free primary education was received with great joy and much expectation by stakeholders in education. It was seen as a way of cushioning children from poor socio-economic background from failing to participate in education or dropping out altogether ([8]). The enthusiasm with which FPE was received can be captured in a number of newspapers articles such as the Daily Nation of 13th January 2003 that carried an article of about a private school that closed up when parents withdrew all pupils to take advantage of the FPE. The World Bank president James Wolfenjohn hailed president Kibaki’s initiative towards FPE as a bold move. The World Bank even promised its readiness to fund this programme in Kibaki’s reforms. Another article by Wycliffe Malavu categorically showed that free and compulsory schooling was the best thing that happened in Kenya in the recent years.

On Tuesday 7th January 2003, a day after schools opened following the decree on FPE a newspaper article carried a “Big rush as children grab free school slot” reported that confusion had marked the first day of FPE because of the rush. Parents rushed to the public primary schools in order to secure a chance for their children. These are just but a few that exposes the enthusiasm of stakeholders with the advent of FPE 2003. With the influx of the pupils, the Ministry Of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) came up with the booklet to guide the implementers of FPE. In this booklet, it was indicated that FPE does not stop community initiatives such as provision of facilities and services to pupils. Clear guidance on the stakeholders’ role was given. FPE also emphasized its inclusive nature of keeping all children including those with special needs in school.

On 9th December 2004, there was a press statement from state house in reaction to a big story in the Daily Nation which had implied that president Kibaki had made an about turn on free schools deal. According to the press statement the government reinstated its support for FPE through provision of instructional materials, teachers, and maintenance and quality assurance services. The government also expressed its appreciation to development partners in supporting the programme. Parents were

called upon to encourage their children to learn and provide them with food, uniform and build and maintain school facilities among other things. Parents were also to be involved in school management to ensure accountability and transparency in resource management.

II. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study used descriptive survey design. The purpose of this design in the study was to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon like the attitude of the people ([9]). Descriptive survey design is flexible and versatile. According to Mugenda and Mugenda, 2012 [10], descriptive survey lets meaning of the research problem emerge from the respondents hence giving voice to those who are being studied as a way of empowering them.

The proposed study was carried out in Bungoma East district in Western Province. The district is divided into two administrative divisions of Webuye and Ndivisi. It is located between latitude 0025’ North and 0053’ North and latitude 340 east and 350 east. It lies at a height of approximately 2000 meters above sea level. The “Great North road” passes through the district making it fairly accessible.

The study population consisted of all public primary schools in Bungoma East district. The district had ninety nine public primary schools as at March 2010, all of which were mixed primary schools. The sample population was drawn from 20 public schools. All the schools were mixed schools. Four schools were boarding whereas sixteen schools were day schools. Eight schools were urban whereas twelve were rural schools. The study population Consisted of the school head teachers, deputy head teachers, teachers, committee chair-persons from public primary schools and the District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer in the district.

The study employed stratified simple random sampling technique to select twenty schools for the purpose of gathering data. These were both rural schools and urban schools. Another grouping was based on boarding schools and day schools. Purposive sampling was used in the case of selecting the class of pupils to participate in the study. The methods were chosen because every category of the population had to be represented. The head teachers, deputy head teachers, school committee chair-persons of selected schools also formed part of the study population. The DQASO was also selected to participate in the study.

Table 2: Table showing stratification of schools selected within each division

Division	Total No. of schools	Total No. to be Sampled	% of schools
Ndivisi	39	8	20%
Webuye	60	12	20%

According to Kerlinger, 1983 [11], 10% to 30% is a good representative sample from which findings can be drawn about a given population. For the purpose of this study a sample of 20% was taken. Therefore out of the total 99 schools in the district 20 schools were selected for the study. The accessible study population and sampled population are shown on table 3

Table 3: Table showing the sample size in each category

Group	Population (N)	Total No. to be Sampled (Population (n))	Sampling Techniques	% of sampled
Head teachers	99	20	Random	20%
D/head teachers	99	20	Random	20%
School committee chair persons	99	20	Random	20%
Teachers	400	112	Simple random	20%
DQASO	1	1	Purposive	100%
Total	698	153		21.9%

This study employed four instruments of data collection namely; questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study of the study sought to establish the perceptions / attitudes of teachers and students towards use of learning resources as a result of FPE policy. The study did this through items in the questionnaire and interview schedule that dealt with pupils and teachers perception of FPEs contribution towards resources improvement, teachers opinion on parents contribution towards resources, teachers perception on the quality of FPE, teachers perception of the burden of FPE, teachers and pupils perception on adequacy of FPE funding, teachers and pupils perception on the extend to which they believe FPE has room for improvement or not, and teachers and pupils perception on whether to do away with or retain FPE. This was done through seeking opinion on a five scale response ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree with the neutral being at the centre.

The students' view of FPEs contribution towards resources was obtained as illustrated in figure 1.

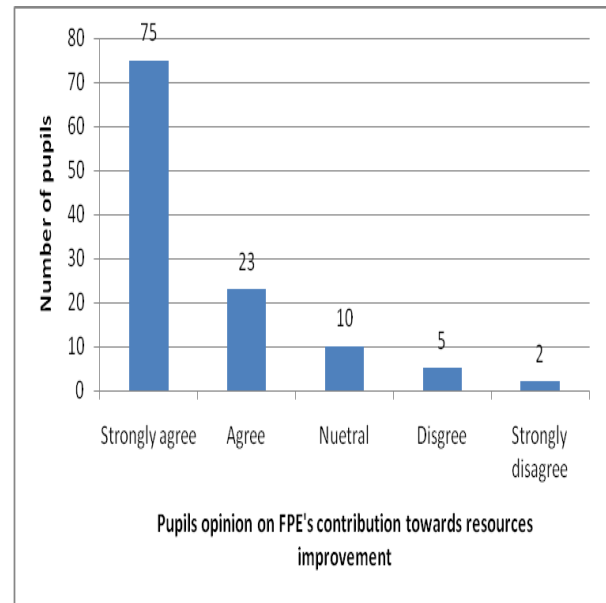


Figure 1: FPE has improved resources provision and utilisation: Students

Most of the students (97) are of the view that FPE has contributed towards resources improvement. 84 %, with 74 strongly agreeing and 23 agreeing thus 97 out of 115, students to the fact that FPE has contributed towards resources improvement. Only a small number of 7 pupils were of the view that the FPE has not contributed to the improvement of resources at all. This is a strong indicator that pupils do view FPE to be of great assistance to the provision and improvement of the learning resources. In general the same feeling seems to be reflected by the teachers perception as can be seen from figure 2.

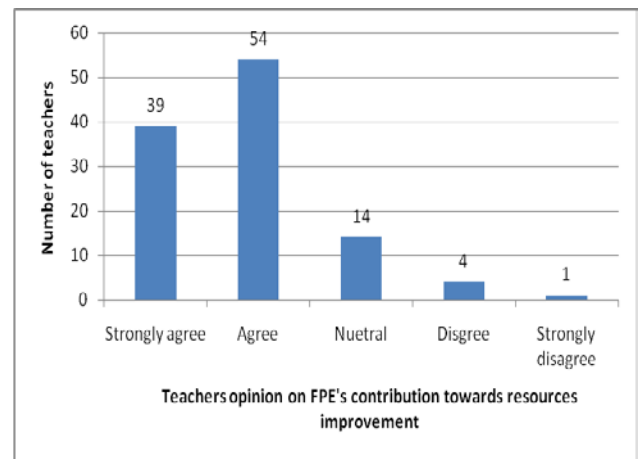


Figure 2: FPE has improved resources provision and utilisation: Teachers

Out of 112 teachers only 5 are of the opinion that FPE has not led to improvement of resources with 14 indicating a neutral stand. 5 neither agreed nor disagreed. 19 out 112 teachers or 12 % is a fairly low percentage to be significant on the view. The teachers and the pupils are in agreement the FPE has contributed to improving resources. The same is very strongly reflected in the interview response with the head teachers, deputy head teachers and the chair persons of the schools studied. Apart from

one chairperson all others affirmed to the view of teachers and pupils.

Since provision of resources was to be co-shared with parents, the study sought to find out the views of teachers in line with the parents commitment and contribution to resource provision. The findings of the teachers' perception were as given in figure 3.

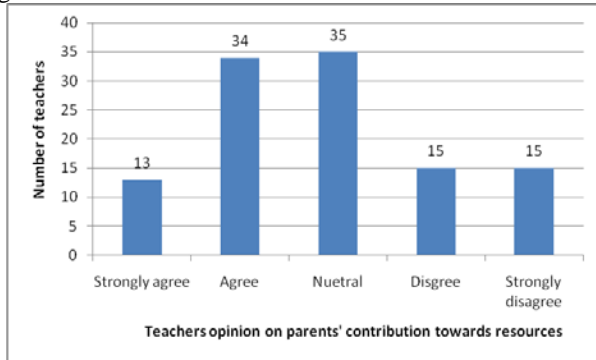


Figure 3: Teachers believe on parents' contribution towards resources

The teachers were of divided opinion in line with the parents commitment to contribution towards resources. They were split almost at the centre with 35 being of neutral opinion, 30 disagreeing and 47 agreeing to the fact the parents were commitment to contribution towards resources. Most head teachers and deputy head teachers were of the feeling that parents were not very committed towards provision of resources. They cited cases such as most parents having bought their children only one pair of uniform which is also in line with the pupils response to questions of how many uniforms they had whose findings were given in figure 4.23 where out of 115 students, 87 had only one pair of uniform. The teachers' perception of the parents involvement reflect the findings from another study, where it was found that parents are not willing to supplement government efforts in provision of FPE ([12]). However, the chair persons responses in the interview tended to slightly conflict with the perception of teachers. In their opinion, the parents were very committed. They argued irrespective of poverty levels of most of the parents the provision of at least one pair of uniform was a good indicator of commitment on their part. In the opinion of chair persons providing for all needs may be fairly a burden to some of the parents.

Teachers were also asked about their feelings towards the burden they thought FPE put on them. The findings obtained are as presented in figure 4.

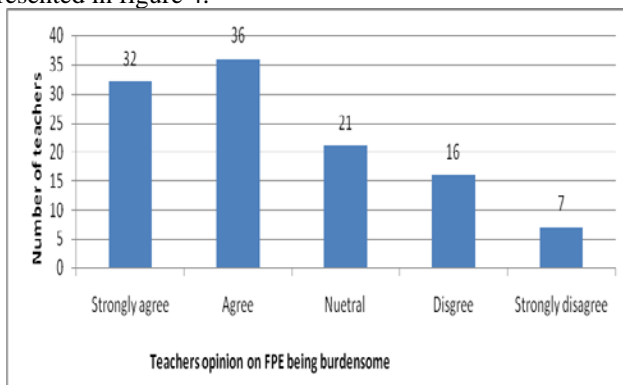


Figure 4: Teachers believe on FPE being very burdensome

From figure 4 it is clear that teachers feel FPE is burdensome with 68 accepting that it is burdensome and only 23 feeling that it is not out of a total of 112 teachers. The teachers may feel so due to having heavy teaching workloads with overcrowded classes as most classes had over 60 pupils. For FPE to be realise its goals, then it requires that the more the students are the more the funds to be provided for it.

The figure 5 gives the pupils feeling on the adequacy of the funding for the FPE programme.

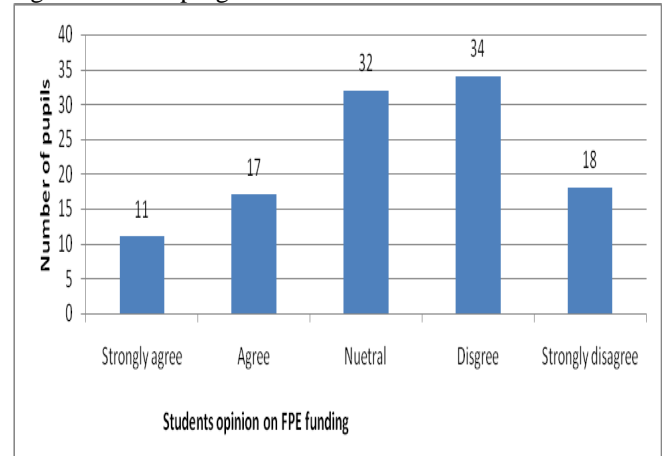


Figure 5: FPE adequacy in funding for learning resources: Students

Most of the pupils (52) feel that the funding of resources by FPE is not adequate with only 28 feeling that FPE adequately funds for the resources. Those who are on neither side are 32 pupils. This implies that pupils expect FPE funding to provide for more than what it is doing now in terms of learning resources. The students' general perception on FPE funding seems to be shared by the teachers as well.

The teachers perception towards FPE funding for learning resources was as given in figure 6.

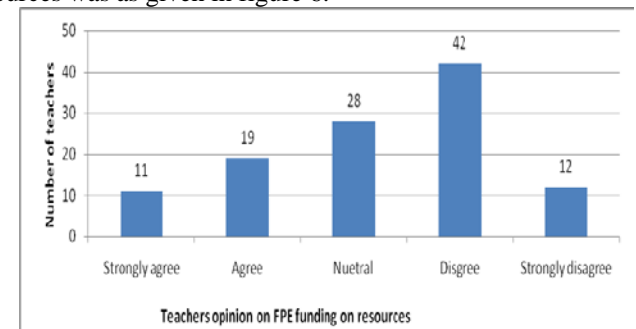


Figure 6: FPE adequacy in funding for learning resources: Teachers

Out of the 112 teachers, 54 are of the opinion that the funding is not adequate while only 30 are of the opinion that the funding is adequate. The perception of inadequate funding by teachers can be a de-motivating in their duty performance.

Another factor that was examined by this study towards attitudes towards FPE and learning resources was the view in respect to possibilities of FPE and learning resources being improved further. The findings in this regard are presented in figure 7 for pupils view and figure 8 for teachers view.

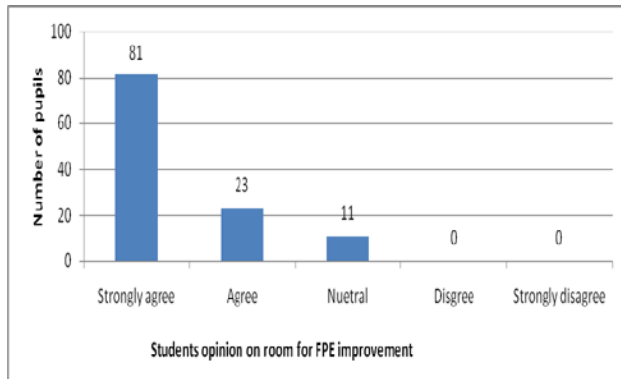


Figure 7: FPE has room for improvement: Students

Not even a single student thought that there was no room for improvement on the FPE program. Of the 115 pupils 104 are of the opinion that FPE has room for improvement, while the remaining 11 being in the neutral position. The students' perception is equally reflected by the teachers' perception too as can be seen in figure 8.

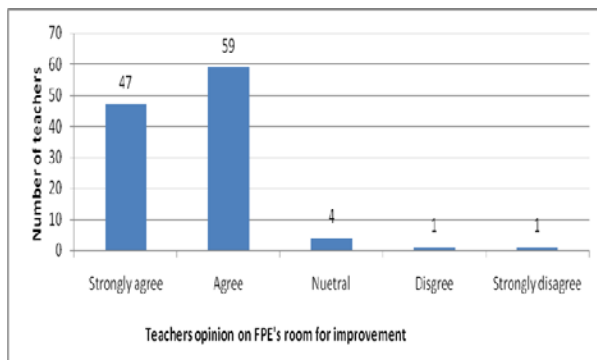


Figure 8: FPE has room for improvement: Teachers

106 teachers out of 112 hold the opinion that FPE has room for improvement. Only two teachers think that it does not have any room for improvement.

With the perception discussed above, it was not surprising that most of the teachers and pupils felt that FPE should not be done away with. Figure 9 shows the pupils' perception in terms of whether FPE should or should not be done away with.

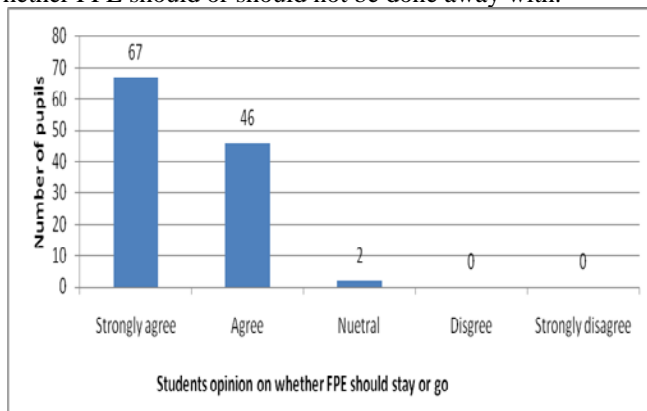


Figure 9: FPE should stay: Students

None of the pupils felt that FPE should be done away with. Of the 115 pupil respondents 113 stated they FPE should

stay on. On the general view the same is reflected in the teachers view as can be seen from figure 10.

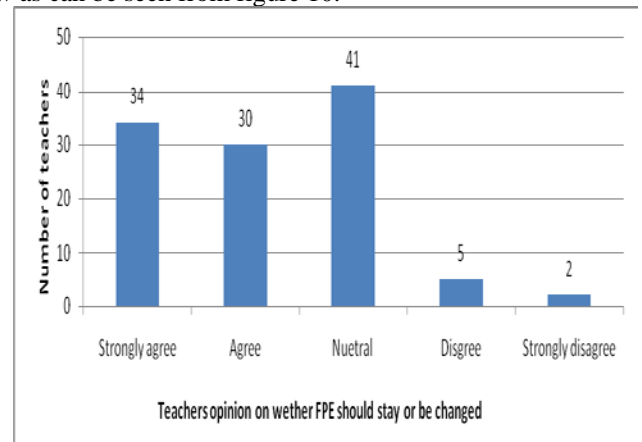


Figure 10: FPE should stay: Teachers

64 teachers feel that FPE should not be done away with while 7 teachers think it should be done away with. It is however surprising that a fairly big number of teachers, 41, were undecided as to whether it should be done away with or not.

According to the information given by the pupils and teachers interviewed, it may be taken that most respondents viewed FPE as a good programme that has enabled children to learn under normal circumstances. This is affirmed by the findings of figure 9 seen earlier. According to questionnaire given to teachers 60 (54%) of them felt the programme is good, 46 (41%) had an opinion that more teachers should be provided to make the programme a success while 6 (5%) felt the programme is poor.

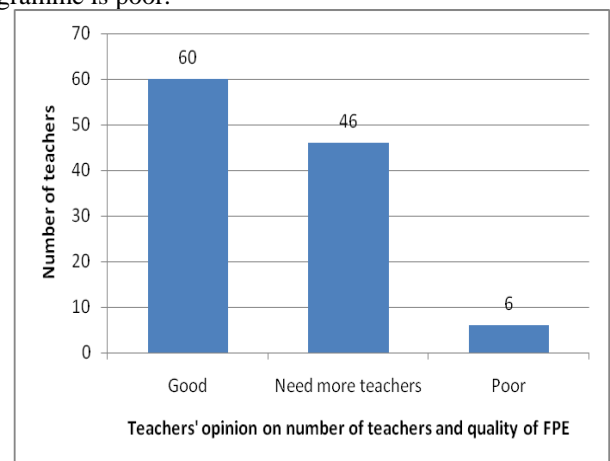


Figure 11: Teachers view of quality of FPE

Teachers whose opinion was sort felt that the funding of FPE is not enough and there is need to provide more funding. Out of the 92 (100%) teachers of school going children, 78 (85%) preferred public schools because of FPE and the fact that, children will learn under normal circumstances. Only 14 (15%) of teachers preferred private schools because of a high teacher/pupil ratio in contrast to public schools which experience congestion which is a response to meager resources. An interview with the head teachers, deputy head teachers and information from the questionnaires given to teachers revealed that the high demand for textbooks is due to the ever increasing

enrolment and the fact that most textbooks do wear or get lost before the proposed time as contained in the FPE policy.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. SUMMARY

The study sought to find out the attitude of parents, teachers and students towards use of learning resources as a result of FPE policy. The research in Bungoma East District reveal that the FPE is popular and all respondents in the survey feel the programme should be improved and not abandoned. The research found that students, teachers, and chair persons of schools felt more funds were required to create a positive impact of FPE. However, a survey on physical facilities shows some improvement compared to when the FPE programme began in 2003. Pupils have high expectations from the government especially in provision of other facilities such as uniforms, medicine, shoes and lunch which will create an enabling environment for learning to take place effectively.

The teachers felt that FPE was burdensome as a result of the having teaching workloads combined with the burden of handling overcrowded class. They fear this would easily compromise the quality of FPE. However, teachers viewed FPE as a good programme that has enabled children to access basic education.

B. Conclusions

FPE has been perceived to be a good program that has allowed many children to access basic education despite the fact those teachers believe the programme to be burdensome. Both teachers and pupils believe there is need to provide more funding towards the FPE programme especially in line with provision of resources. It is believed that FPE has room for being improved and enhanced to cover more areas and items for learners, teachers and school resources as well. However in the view of teachers, some parents have not contributed accordingly and played their role well towards supporting the education.

C. Recommendations

There is need to educated the parent community to understand that the FPE programs covers for just part of resources provision and hence are expected to also contribute to the same. The government should work with all stakeholders to at <http://www.journalcra.com>

seek for ways to provide other facilities such as sanitary towels for girls, shoes, uniform, medicine, and lunch programme to make FPE more meaningful. There government needs also to improve on the timing of the release of funds to school to ensure that schools put the funds to use at the appropriate time.

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