



Institute of
Economic Affairs

Enhancing Accountability in the Provision of Free Primary Education

1.0 Introduction

Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenyan public schools was implemented in 2003. The country has so far witnessed increased enrolment rates in public primary schools as a result of this policy.

The Government of Kenya by introducing Free Primary Education aimed at: increasing equity in access to primary school education, eliminate illiteracy, improve living standards and eradicate poverty, and ensure that children from poor families and orphans access primary education.

The Free Primary Education (FPE) policy has led to a significant increase in primary school enrollment in the country, from 8.6 million children in 2008 to 9.9 million in 2012 (Government of Kenya, 2015). Though a noble idea, the introduction of Free Primary School education has witnessed a number of challenges.

Concerns have been raised regarding the quality of education provided in public primary schools. More notable is the poor teacher to pupil ration in schools. Though FPE gave more pupils from poor backgrounds an opportunity to access primary education, the resulting pupil-teacher ratio has some drawbacks on academic performance (Mwendwa, 2011).

Of concern also is the outright disregard by some managers of public primary schools of government policies and legislation, notably the Basic Education Act, 2012, that aims at ensuring access to free and compulsory education in public primary schools as espoused in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and other international agreements including the *African Charter on the Human and Peoples' Rights*; the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*; the *United Nations International Convention on Social and Economic Rights*; and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* secures the rights of a child to free and compulsory basic education.

2.0 Relevance of Citizen Report Card

This policy brief derives from a Citizen Report Card (CRC) on the status of service delivery in public primary schools in the counties of Busia, Baringo, Kajiado, Kilifi, Mombasa, Taita -Taveta and Nairobi, and discussions during forums with stakeholders in the sub-sector.

Assessing public service providers enables the service providers to evaluate their own services. Service consumers and beneficiary communities themselves undertake the assessment since they talk from the real context and give authentic information about their own satisfaction.

The Citizen Report Card Survey provides important feedback to the service provider on the adequacy, efficiency and quality of services from actual users of public services. One of the primary purposes of the survey is to motivate service providers to engage with service consumers on services delivered.

Summary findings

Findings of the survey undertaken by Institute of Economic Affairs Kenya (IEA Kenya) and Action Aid International Kenya (AAIK) County based Civil Society Organizations, the target counties of Baringo, Busia, Kajiado, Kilifi, Mombasa, Nairobi and Taita-Taveta highlights that some public schools are not only charging illegal fees and levies such as teacher motivation fee that is not provided for in the Basic Education Act 2013, and that parents and/or guardians in some public schools are not being provided with receipts after the payment of fees or levies charged as required by the Basic Education Act.

Other challenges highlighted by the consumers of Free Primary School Education services in the target counties included:

- Inadequate supply of water and inadequate water facilities in schools
- Lack of trained teachers
- Poor security around the school
- Inadequate learning materials in school especially text books
- Inadequate furniture in schools including desks and chairs
- Teacher absenteeism
- Long distance that pupils have to cover to get to school
- Lack of commitment by some teachers as witnessed in cases of teachers not marking homework and irregular attendance of school and classes by some teachers
- Inadequate number of teachers and lack of teachers for certain subjects
- Lack of completion of syllabus
- Poor academic performance
- Inadequate classroom facilities
- Continuation of corporal punishment in some schools
- Poor handling of pupils by teachers and cases of pupil abuse by teachers
- Chasing away of pupils from school for lack of payment of levies or fees

Challenges identified by both pupils and parents/guardians surveyed in the study point out to the need by school managers to fully implement existing policies and legislation, and the need of concerned authorities to put in place measures that will streamline the sub-sector. There is also need for increased monitoring of the adherence to sector policies and adherence to regulations through increased oversight.

3.0 Policy recommendations

The government through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology should put in place deliberate measures that aim at ensuring that FPE is actually free and accessible to the poor.

Streamlining service delivery

The National Government through the Ministry of Education should strengthen oversight in the provision of education in public primary school as the current structure is not supportive enough in ensuring the provision of quality education in the schools. It is only then that Kenya will be able to realise Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number four on education.

Government policy should make the Sub-County Education Boards more active in monitoring public service delivery in public schools for quality education as was during the period of the Provincial and District Education Boards.

The requirement that school heads report directly to their respective County Director of Education in the new dispensation is not supportive in ensuring quality education in public schools. Of concern also is that zonal inspection is no longer there and this is making oversight in service delivery a challenge.

There is also need for clarity on the role of the County Education Boards especially in regard to their mandate. The County Education Boards should delegate some oversight functions to the Sub-County Education Boards as the latter have easier access to the schools and the school heads. This can ensure constant and more cost effective oversight of schools.

The creation of several centers of power in the education sector is also posing challenges in the sector and this needs to be addressed urgently. The Government therefore needs to streamline what should be happening in the sector. Regulation is not provided in regard to the mandates of the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET), the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT).

The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should continue with the management of personnel in the education sector as opposed to the Public Service Commission (PSC) that is currently responsible for employing personnel in the sector. This is of concern especially in regard to the ability of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology to train personnel in the country's education sector. Of concern also is that the Public Service Commission does not monitor or oversee public officers including teachers. Capacity building by PSC is usually at the senior level.

Existing gaps in relation to legislation relating to the country's education sector, and the lack of resources for implementing officers at the county level is partly contributing to lack of accountability in the provision of services in public primary schools. Officers are required to implement and enforce the implementation of the law yet they lack adequate resources. The government should ensure that adequate resources are allocated in the budget if officers are to be effective in their oversight roles. This can be attained by ensuring that relevant education officers at the county level are given opportunities to contribute to the sector budget.

Capacity building of stakeholders

There is need to build the capacity of county based Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and also to mobilise and sensitise citizens including parents so that they may effectively play their oversight role in the provision of Free Primary Education. This includes sensitization on provisions on policies and provisions in legislations such as the Basic Education Act, 2012.

Parents and guardians also need to be sensitised of their role in ensuring that FPE is a success. This includes their role in providing pupils with school uniforms and sending pupils to school.

Synergy in infrastructure development

There is need for synergy among different players towards ensuring success of FPE specifically in regard to the development of infrastructure in public primary schools. The county government through devolved resources, the Members of Parliament through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) can jointly contribute to the building of classrooms, provision of water, purchase and repair of desks and chairs and the provision of electricity to schools. Resources can also be set aside towards the construction of boarding schools in remote areas such as in the counties of Kajiado, Turkana and Taita -Taveta.

At the school level, relevant players and authorities should increase water facilities and provide clean water as a measure against water borne diseases among pupils. Efforts should also be made towards improving sanitation and toilet facilities by increasing the number of facilities and ensuring that the facilities are clean by hiring support staff as cleaners.

Timely release of FPE funds

The National Government through the National Treasury should ensure timely release of funds meant for the provision of FPE services as delay in the release of funds is affecting opening dates for schools. Delayed release of funds has in some instances forced parents to cushion the school as the schools wait for money from government.

Transparency and accountability

The government should ensure that there are clear accountability mechanisms for the providers of Free Primary School education services and the consumers of these services. What has however not been addressed is what happens to the extra available funds that arise whenever parents cushion the schools as they await FPE monies.

School authorities should enhance accountability and transparency by ensuring that receipts are provided for all payments made by parents and/or guardians. School authorities should ensure that all pupils are provided with the right amount of writing materials as per the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST).

Schools have received monies directly from the County Education officers sometimes receiving information on the allocations long after schools have put these resources in use therefore making oversight on the use of these resources a challenge. The government should take deliberate efforts in informing relevant officers well in advance before resources are released.

Agency presence at the County level

The Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should have field officers in the counties. The same should apply for all semi-autonomous agencies of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST).

Intensify school inspection

Relevant authorities should ensure that inspection of schools is on course and that teachers are adhering to the public servants code of regulation and that they are attending school and lessons.

School authorities and relevant authorities should ensure that corporal punishment is banned from schools and that punishment administered to pupils does not interfere with their learning.



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Policy Brief

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