

**FREE EDUCATION IN KENYA'S
PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS**
Addressing the Challenges

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in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA)**

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Table of Contents

	Acknowledgements	iv
	List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	v
	Abstract	vi
Chapter One	Introduction	1
Chapter Two	Literature Review	5
Chapter Three	Research Methodology	27
Chapter Four	Results and Discussion	33
Chapter Five	Conclusions and Recommendations	83
	References	93

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

DEO	District Education Office
ECDE	Early Childhood Care and Development Education
FPE	Free Primary Education
GoK	Government of Kenya
HT	Head Teacher
IEP	Individualized Education Programme
IMs	Instructional Materials
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KIPRA	Kenya Institute of Policy Research and Analysis
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MU	Maseno University
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
PPS	Public Primary Schools
PSC	Public Service Commission
PTA	Parent Teach Association
ROK	Republic of Kenya
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPA	Universal Primary Education

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine ways of overcoming the obstacles faced by FPE in Kenyan public schools. The study adopted *ex-post facto* research design. The target population of the study were the PPS pupils, teachers, parents, committee members, DEOs and PDEs in Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret, Busia, Bungoma, Rachuonyo, Kisumu, Embu, Kitui,, Mombasa, Kwale, Isiolo, Marsabit, Nyandarua, and Thika districts. This target population represented the entire population in over 18,000 primary schools. Fieldwork research involved a survey of the participants divided into two groups. Data was collected using observations with one group while questionnaires and interview schedule were used with the other group. Piloting was done in Kakamega district to refine the research instruments and to ensure the accuracy of the subsequent data.

There was consensus that the FPE programme was a major milestone in the country's education system as it opened the doors for children who would otherwise have missed a chance to receive education and improve their lives. This is supported by the finding of increased pupil enrolment in PPS since 2003. It also emerged that the FPE programme is popular. Notwithstanding the numerous benefits that have accrued due to FPE, it was noted that the programme had killed community initiatives in education funding and provision. Although the communities were keen to provide physical, material and financial support to schools, they have withdrawn from this in the recent past. They have been made to understand that the government has taken over the full responsibility of providing education. It is hoped that the findings of this study would assist the government in formulating FPE policy that would benefit all the stakeholders by enhancing team work and sustainability of FPE.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Background

In the run-up to the 2002 general elections, the National Rainbow Coalition Party (NARC) made the provision of Free Primary Education (FPE) part of its election manifesto. True to its promise, the NARC government introduced FPE in January 2003. And as was expected in a country where a substantial proportion of children were out of school, the response was overwhelming. In many schools, the head teachers found themselves with more children to enroll than their capacity could hold. Due to the limited space and facilities, the heads turned many children away (RoK 2004b). Of course, many parents were disappointed and they kept on moving from one school to another as they sought places for their children. Since the government had not given an age limit, even those who were 'over-age' were enrolled and this worsened the congestion in schools.

FPE is the provision of primary education to all children of school going age (6-15 years) and adults (above 16 years) who never had the opportunity (ROK 2003b). Note that in Kenya FPE is amorphous, it is not restricted to children of school going age, we have a case of a pupil aged 84 years registered in Kenduiywo primary school in Eldoret.

It is presumed that FPE would guarantee access to education, equity, quality and relevance (ATWS 2004). To realize this, the government is expected to provide the minimum necessary facilities and resources to enable Kenyans to join and remain in school and complete the primary cycle of education. On 6th January 2003, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) launched the FPE to fulfill NARC's election pledge. The main objective of FPE was to recognize education as a basic right of all children as articulated in the Children's Act of 2001 (RoK 2003a). At the onset of FPE in 2003, the major government task was to provide public schools with basic learning/teaching materials like chalk and textbooks, and abolish all kinds of fees levied and charges that have for decades kept a large number of children/ learners out of school.

In the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation Paper (2003-2007), the government acknowledges the fact that the country has high levels of inequality in education. The poor are disproportionately less educated and less skilled than the rich. The introduction of FPE was therefore a positive move towards achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE). The move witnessed a 10% increase in enrolment in primary schools nationally. A record of 1.3 million children registered in various schools across the country, raising the enrolment from 5.9 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in 2003 (RoK 2003b). Given this background, scholars and policy-makers have raised pertinent issues related to the FPE policy. While there is a consensus that this is an appropriate policy addressing the problem of declining primary school enrolment in Kenya, a serious concern has been raised on the way the NARC government has implemented the

policy. For example, after the (political) declaration of the policy, school heads were expected to implement it without prior preparations. On the ground, school heads and education officers were caught unawares. Indeed, the government was itself unprepared for the policy because it was started on a short notice. While Free Education (FE) has increased participation in primary education, it has at the same time created considerable challenges and it faces several obstacles that this study intends to bring to light.

During the period 1999 to 2004, enrolment in both public and private schools increased by 25 per cent from 5,917,162 to 7,394,763 with the most significant increase recorded between 2002 and 2003 as indicated in Table 1. Enrolment in public primary schools increased from 5,874,776 in 2002 to 6,906,355 in 2003, an increase of 17.6 per cent as indicated in table 2. Over the same period enrolment in private primary schools increased by 34.7 per cent from 187,966 to 253,169 as indicated in table 3. Further analysis indicates that in 2004 Rift Valley province of Kenya registered the highest public enrolment of 1,773,881, constituting 24.9 per cent, followed by Eastern Province 1,348,938 (18.9 per cent) and Nyanza Province 1,258,890 (17.6 per cent). North Eastern Province recorded the lowest enrolment of 67,437, that is 0.9 per cent.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Government of Kenya implemented FPE in January 2003. The main objective of this programme was to make primary education accessible to all children irrespective of their economic backgrounds. However, a sudden increase in pupil population is likely to have far-reaching implications in terms of existing physical facilities and human resources. That is, there seems to be a gap between the intents of the Government of Kenya FPE and the unforeseeable obstacles. This study, therefore, was designed to examine ways of overcoming the obstacles faced by FPE in Kenyan public schools.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how to overcome the obstacles/ challenges faced by FPE in public schools in Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- (a) To identify obstacles/challenges faced by FPE in Kenyan public schools;
- (b) To investigate the effect of the obstacles/challenges raised in (a) above to the realization of FPE in Kenyan public schools; and
- (c) To offer suggestions to overcome the obstacles faced by FPE in Kenyan public schools.

1.5 Research Questions

- (a) What are the challenges faced by FPE in Kenyan public schools?

- (b) What are the effects of the challenges raised in (a) above to the realization of FPE in Kenyan public primary schools?
- (c) What are the possible remedies that could be put in place to overcome the obstacles faced by FPE in Kenyan public primary schools?

1.6 Significance of the Study

FPE is a new concept, which is yet to take root to be understood well by the education stakeholders. It is hoped that the findings of this study will help to bring to light the real situation that is experienced in the wake of FPE education in the public schools. The findings are expected to be useful to stakeholders, namely, the policy makers, planners, parents, teachers and learners in their endeavor to enhance the implementation and success of the ideals of FPE.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted in selected public primary schools (lower classes 1 – 4) in Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret, Busia, Kisumu, Mombasa, Embu, Kitui and Thika districts. This is because classes 1 – 4 have the highest enrolment in the public primary schools. The selected districts reflect Kenya's regional diversity.

Kenya has over 18,000 public primary schools and only a few were selected for this study; for this reason the findings may not be generalized to all the public primary schools in the country. However, it will provide an insight into the challenges of FPE in the public primary schools in the country in general.

1.8 Definitions of Terms

Baraza is a Kiswahili word which refers to a gathering of people.

Chokora is a *sheng* or rather a Kiswahili word which refers to street children.

Challenges are also taken to mean obstacles or factors that appear to impede the realization of FPE as per the aim of the NARC government.

Free Education is taken to mean teaching/learning processes in public primary schools, without paying fees.

Harambee is a Kiswahili word which means 'let us pull together'. That is, *harambee* encourages Kenyans to pull resources and effort together with intent of realizing a desired goal.

Obstacles are also taken to mean challenges or factors that appear to impede the realization of FPE as per the expectations of the NARC government.

Overcoming implies a process of getting remedies to factors that appear to impede the realization of FPE as per the dreams of the NARC government.

Public Primary Schools are schools that are sponsored by the government through the Ministry of Education.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter introduces the education objectives in Kenya, the global perspective of FPE, free education in Kenya's PPS and its challenges, and finally a theoretical framework.

2.2 Education Objectives in Kenya

Every society or nation in the world sets up its own educational goals based on its cultural and social needs. In fact, it is the culture of a society that helps to shape the content of education and its aims or goals and the mode of provision. To specify a goal is thus to provide a motive for an action which a person is performing or will perform.

The main educational goals for Kenya since political independence are stated in the Ominde Report Part 1 (1964). Seven years later, these goals were re-emphasized in the Ndegwa Report (1971), as follows:

Education must serve the primary needs of national development;

- (i) Education must assist in fostering and promoting national unity;
- (ii) Education must prepare the youth of the country so that they can play an effective role in the life of the nation whilst ensuring that opportunities are provided for the full development of the individual talents and personality of the nation;
- (iii) Education must assist in the promotion of social equality and train in social obligations and responsibilities, and
- (iv) The education system must respect, foster and develop the rich and varied cultures of Kenya (p. 146).

Twenty-five years later after Kenya's political independence, the Kamunge Report (1988) provides the national educational goals as:

- (i) Education must serve to foster national unity;
- (ii) Education must prepare and equip the youth with knowledge, skills and expertise to enable them to play an effective role in the life of the nation;
- (iii) Education must serve the needs of national development;
- (iv) Education must provide for the full development of talents and personality;
- (v) Education must promote social justice and morality, social obligations and responsibilities, and
- (vi) Education must foster positive attitudes and consciousness towards other nations (p. 11).

The Koech Report (1999) revisited the historical development of education in Kenya and restated the national education goals to reflect the changes that have occurred in response to emerging social, political and economic needs of the nation. This Report states that the Kenyan goals of education embrace tenets, values and attributes geared to:

- i) The articulation of Kenyan identity and its African worldview;
- ii) Personal character formation;
- iii) Respect for authority, human dignity, and equality of individual persons;
- iv) Patriotism for the nation of Kenya and desire for its sustained integration, stability and prosperity;
- v) Enhancement of moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and inter-ethnic relations;
- vi) Appropriation of mutual social responsibility and its corporate ethic for the common good;
- vii) Internalization of a positive and life-long work ethic;
- viii) Conservation and maintenance of a clean environment;
- ix) Promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological health of all citizens;
- x) Cultivation of national unity in the minds of youth at an early age;
- xi) Appreciation of national, regional and global concerns;
- xii) Development of individuals' ability to make rational decisions;
- xiii) Respect and appreciation of abilities and limitations of persons with special needs;
- xiv) Respect for elderly persons and those in difficult circumstances such as those on the streets and AIDS infected and affected individuals, and
- xv) Creation of desire for life-long learning (p. 7).

In regard to the subject of the study, the researcher was concerned with reflecting on the relevance of these goals in light of FPE in providing opportunities to learners to exercise their rights and utilize their potentials to contribute to useful ideas for the benefit of the entire society as captured in most of our education policy documents.

2.3 Global Perspective of FPE

Not all children learn at the same pace or in the same way (Hetherington and Parke 1999). Some learn faster than their classmates but others, some of whom have various mental, emotional and physical handicaps, learn more slowly. Of the more than 5 million United States children classified as disabled (about 11% of all students), a little more than 50% are considered

learning disabled, about 20% have speech or language difficulties, almost 12% are mentally retarded, 9% are emotionally disturbed and another 8% have various other kinds of handicaps (US Department of Education 1997).

A major question in recent years has been whether these "special" children should be placed in separate classes or integrated into regular classrooms. Statistics showed in 1997 that 44% of the United States pupils spend most of their school days in regular classrooms, whereas 56% are generally relegated to "special education" classes (US Department of Education 1997).

Advocates of human rights argue that any practice that restricts a person's equal access to an opportunity is detrimental to equal rights. Arguments cited for the defense of mainstreaming are that the handicapped children (particularly the mentally retarded) are likely to learn from the interaction with classmates who are brighter than they are (Taylor *et al.* 1987). However, skeptics argue that handicapped children who are "mainstreamed" will suffer serious loss of self-esteem (not to mention an undermining of their achievement motivation) should they fail to keep pace with their non-handicapped classmates and post-poor score (*ibid*).

Researchers have found relatively small differences in academic achievements between students who have been included in regular classrooms and pupils in special classes (McMillan *et al.* 1986). Integration of children with mild retardation into regular classrooms can lead to increased rather than decreased social rejection (Taylor *et al.* 1987). Although the causes of this rejection may vary – for example, mildly retarded children are shy and avoid people, whereas others are aggressive and disruptive – the children who are rejected are more lonely and more dissatisfied and anxious about their peer relationship than other children (*ibid*).

2.4 Glance at FE in PPS in Kenya

There is evidence in the history of Kenya's education that the government has had a desire to provide FPE to Kenyan children of school going age soon after political independence in 1963 (ATWS 2004). The implementation of FPE by the NARC government in 2003 could also be seen as part of its wider scheme to meet the goals of Education For All (EFA) ratified at Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 and Dakar, Senegal, in 2002 (EFA News 2003). FPE is also a priority in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (RoK 2003).

As noted above, the Kenya government first expressed its intention to offer free primary education almost four decades ago. Education was declared free for children in standard one to four in 1974 and for the entire primary school cycle in 1978. Following the implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the 1980s, the government reneged on the free education reforms, and parents and communities were from thereon required to contribute to their children's schooling. Cost sharing in

education was introduced in mid 1980s. Parents continued paying tuition, buying books and desks because the government lacked adequate resources.

Although the policy of free primary education has received a lot of praise, its implementation is faced with numerous challenges, which include the unavailability of physical facilities, school furniture, equipment and teachers, among others. This has led to overcrowding in classes and overburdening of teachers, and could have negative effect on the quality of education.

Although about 1.5 million children have joined primary school since the introduction of free primary education, many school going age children are still out of school. Gross primary school enrolment rate was estimated at 77 per cent. The 1999 population projections (RoK 2002) showed that the primary school going age population would be 7.02 million in 2004 and 7.09 in 2005. Therefore, a national rate, enrolment rate of 77 per cent translates to 1.6 million children out of school. A combination of factors, including poverty, social problems, child labor, displacement and lack of schools and teachers may have contributed to the low enrolment rate. The large gap between gross and net enrolment may be explained by enrolment of ten thousand of “over-age” children, including street children, or those who dropped out of school to work and have rejoined school. For instance, in Mukuru slum area of Nairobi, only about 500 of the 5,000 new students (10%) were enrolled in school since the beginning of the year, were of normal school going age (IRIN 2003).

A recent survey (Oxfam 2003) revealed that 37.3 per cent of children in Kibera, in Nairobi, are still out of school and the majority of those in school (70%) are attending non-formal primary schools. This problem has been compounded by the fact that almost no new schools have been built in slum areas for the last 15 years, although a large population of the city lives in slums.

The Kenya government plans to finance most of the core cost of free primary education out of its own resources. According to Oxfam (2003), Kenya needs an additional US\$ 137 million between now and the year 2015 to make education for all a reality. This would enable government to provide extra help to the poorest children, including those in slums and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Abolishing school fees is the first step to achieving universal primary education. However, as experience in Kenya and Uganda has shown, there are other issues such as child labor that need to be addressed. According to the 1998/99 child labor survey, about 30.1 per cent of parents released their children to work in order to help family business while 27.5 per cent indicated that earnings from their children’s work augmented household income. Only 0.3 per cent of parents reported that they released their children for work because they thought their education or training environment was not suitable. Other challenges for the government in

providing universal primary school education include uneven distribution of teachers in Kenyan schools.

With the free compulsory education programme underway, the government intends to meet one of the goals of Education For All (EFA) that world nations ratified at Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 and Dakar, Senegal in 2002 (EFA News 2003). However, the new programme brings to the fore critical challenges. The immediate ones are shortage of teaching and learning materials, facilities, including classroom, desk and workshop. The medium term problem will be quality (EFA News 2003). With classrooms originally meant for 40 children now accommodating up to 80 children, such as in Nairobi slums, there is a real concern that this will impact negatively on the quality of teaching and learning.

The United Nations MDG Goal 2 focuses on the need to realize UPE/FPE (RoK 2003). The target and indicators are:

- **Target:** Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
- **The indicators are:** Net enrolment ratio in primary education; proportion of pupils starting class 1 who reach classes 5 and 8; this is well captured in table 1 below.

Table 1. Net enrolment ratio in primary education

Indicator	Year		
	1990	2000	2015
Net enrolment rate in primary education	80.0	73.7	100
Proportion of pupils starting class 1 and reaching class 5	63 (1986)	81 (2001)	100

SOURCE: RoK (2003)

According to Sifuna (1990), Kenya had attained UPE by 1982 after the presidential decree of FPE in 1971. However, UPE created more problems than ever before for the primary education system in particular and for the Kenyan society in general. Firstly, the declining ratio of trained teachers to pupils had a negative effect on the quality of education in Kenya because teachers were forced to handle much larger classes than before. The second major problem, which faced the implementation of UPE, was classroom space and facilities such as textbooks. In a number of schools, pupils learned under trees. The government then introduced the cost sharing policy where parents were called upon to build classrooms through personal and "harambee" (self-help) contributions. Local communities

were continually required to create and maintain physical facilities in their schools (Bogonko 1992). With such requirements, high drop-out rates of pupils in primary schools education were inevitable. Besides the recruitment of more unqualified teachers, the government played a very minor role in the implementation of FPE (ibid). It was quite satisfied that school committees were successful in implementing the programme with minimal cost on the part of the government.

While FPE has increased participation in primary education, it has at the same time created considerable problems (ROK 2003). For instance, the high influx of new pupils in primary schools has led to congestion in classrooms. There is a high demand for teachers, stationery, equipment and physical facilities in the 18,000 plus primary schools in the country. Classroom teacher-learner ratio has increased from 1:40 pupils per class to 1:60-90 pupils per class (ibid).

An increased pupil population poses serious challenges to classroom interactions. That is, in a situation where there are large class sizes, the teacher may not be able to interact with individual learners and mark the assignments on daily basis. Continuous record keeping forms the basis for initial assessment of pupils' skill levels, thus enabling the teacher to decide on what to teach next. This may not be possible in situations where learning materials are lacking and where teachers are faced with unusually high numbers of pupils in the class.

Classroom management encompasses everything from the allocation of time, space and materials for proper record keeping (Bush and Burnham 1994). Teachers have a responsibility to devote their time to pupil's behavioral problems. It is therefore necessary for the teacher to assert discipline during classroom interaction. This may not be easy in a large class because the teacher may not be able to monitor and modify the behavior of each and every learner.

John Graig, in his study entitled "Comparative Africa experiences in implementing educational policies", observed that designers of educational policies leave themselves and those charged with implementation in the field of education little or no room for maneuver. This makes it difficult to avoid misinterpretation of vague or ambiguous language that may have been used in the educational policies and goals. The implication is that priorities of meaning of concepts occurring in policies and goals are not set. In addition, there is no serious planning for contingencies, and policies and goals in general are often administered in abstruse manner with an air of certainty and authority that is likely to discourage the expression of misgivings. Further, Craig notes that any feedback from those lower in the hierarchy in the field of education is interpreted as criticism, which is negative and hence is neither encouraged nor accepted.

This citation points out that some of the problems that lead to failure in stating and interpreting clearly educational objectives are due to highly centralized educational planning. All decisions are made at the top and no significant input from below. As a result, those lower in the hierarchy do

not receive appropriate meanings of these concepts and statements, and therefore are likely to misinterpret them.

One general observation is that the intended educational policy objectives are well intentioned. However, the problem of misconception, among other logical and practical problems, may make it fallacious. That is, failure to achieve policy objectives is not in itself a fallacy. It is a fallacy when the ideas in the policy objectives are misjudged by those concerned in the field of education because of the vague or ambiguous words contained in them.

Economic values attached to education have made it so popular that the government declared free universal primary school education soon after political independence. It appears that the government interpretation of free education is that nobody is required to pay fees for education. However, R.W. Mutua and G. Namaswa have aptly observed one discrepancy as follows: "Even if it were possible to remove all economic constraints, it still leaves the citizen the option to send or not to send their children to school".

The implication of this citation is that there are loopholes in the policy (free education) that can render it ineffective. This is simply because of lack of clear explanation of policy. For this reason we still have uneducated Kenyans since their parents took the option of not taking their children for formal schooling. In spite of the government interpretation that free education implies non-payment of fees, we find that other alternative ways of collecting money from parents were substituted for "school fees" using different concepts like building fund, activity money among others Sifuna (1990). Therefore it seems that the connotation "free education" has meaning that is not clear to us.

To argue further in regard to unclearness of the policy on free education, let us examine the meaning of the word 'free'. The word 'free' in this policy statement could be interpreted to mean "to act as one wants", "not limited in any way", "without work or not busy", "not kept for or promised to anyone", "ready to give", just to mention a few. From the meaning of the word "free" given above, it goes without saying that the phrase "free education" would also have varying and at times contradicting meaning and practices. As a matter of fact, education in Kenya has never been free as interpreted by the government. Sifuna (1990) has noted that when the policy of free primary education was declared, there was a corresponding increase in taxes by tax-payers. This implies fees were being paid indirectly through taxes to meet the requirement by schools and pay teachers' salaries, among other requirements.

To demonstrate the government's seriousness regarding the promotion of social equality (in spite of low-income status of some parents), bursaries are set aside to be offered to children from poor families (secondary schools, colleges and universities). However, as noted in section 3.5, due to limited resources the bursaries offered are always inadequate. The lucky students who get bursaries prosper academically while the remainder may

not be able to continue learning. The point is, social inequality can be accelerated when the available resources are inadequate.

2.5 PPS in Kenya

The total number of primary schools increased from 17,623 in 1999 to 19,643 in 2004, an increase of 11.4 per cent as shown in table 2. Most of these schools are public, constituting about 90 per cent of the total number of schools. The highest number was recorded in Rift Valley province (5,335) followed by eastern province (4,327) while Nairobi and North Eastern province recorded the least, at 330 and 226, respectively. Details of this data are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Number of public and private primary schools by Province, 1999-2004

PROV	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	PPS	PRS										
N. Eastern	196	5	212	5	212	15	212	14	212	14	215	15
Coast	1,039	131	1,012	143	1,035	120	1,039	138	1,041	139	1,045	140
Eastern	4,104	130	4,100	134	4,104	285	4,112	215	4,115	225	4,120	223
Nairobi	192	178	195	182	195	94	189	141	194	151	200	154
Central	1,787	216	1,779	253	1,766	471	1,774	460	1,787	461	1,794	465
R.Valley	4,687	206	4,799	225	4,807	464	4,889	446	5,000	456	5,009	435
Western	1,943	31	1,976	30	1,976	92	1,985	53	1,995	57	2,005	59
Nyanza	3,596	460	3,610	469	3,602	316	3,604	372	3,614	392	3,625	400
Total	17,544	1,357	17,683	1,441	17,697	1,857	17,804	1,839	17,958	1,895	18,013	1,891
TOTAL	18,901		19,124		19,554		19,643		19,853		19,904	

SOURCE: MoE and TSC Files 2006.

The total number of classes in public primary schools increased by 7.6 per cent from 185,984 in 2002 to 2003 as shown in table 2. There was also a corresponding increase in average class size in almost all PPS. The increase is attributed to the implementation of the FPE programme that resulted in significant increases in enrolment in PPS. Provincial analysis shows that Rift Valley registered the highest number of classes (52,928), followed by Eastern (42,070) and Nyanza (38,456). Further analysis indicates that the average national class size increased from 31.0 in 1999 to 34.7 in 2004. However, there exist wide regional disparities in class sizes ranging from 31.3 in Eastern province to 48.1 in Nairobi province in 2003.

Table 3. Primary completion rate, by gender and province

PROV	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
N. Eastern	24.6	9.0	28.5	11.3	32.7	14.2	39.0	14.8	40.1	15.8	42.0	16.5
Coast	52.6	36.2	54.0	36.6	59.5	40.2	69.2	47.3	72.2	49.1	73.1	49.3
Eastern	62.8	61.4	65.8	65.2	73.2	71.3	83.5	79.1	85.5	79.8	85.6	79.7
Nairobi	35.0	37.3	37.4	40.1	39.3	42.5	43.3	46.9	44.3	47.8	48.3	48.6
Central	74.8	77.3	78.7	80.0	82.5	84.4	91.5	92.1	91.7	92.9	91.9	93.1
R. Valley	65.0	57.5	69.1	64.0	75.1	69.8	84.1	76.6	85.1	77.6	85.8	78.6
Western	63.7	60.5	65.3	60.3	72.2	66.9	84.5	75.5	84.9	76.5	85.5	76.5
Nyanza	69.2	55.7	73.6	59.3	80.2	63.7	88.0	69.8	88.6	69.9	88.7	70.8
Total	62.2	56.8	65.5	60.1	71.3	65.2	80.3	72.1	74.11	63.7	75.1	64.1
TOTAL		59.5		62.8		68.2		76.2		68.9		69.6

SOURCE: MoE and TSC Files, 2006

Table 3 shows an increase in completion rate from 76.2 per cent in 2002 to 90.1 in 2003 to 93.5 per cent in 2006. The increase in completion rate is attributed to FPE.

2.6 Chronology of Obstacles of FPE in Kenya

This study reflected on the meaning of FPE as a goal of education and the factors that inhibit or enhance its achievement among the pupils in public primary schools in Kenya. The extent to which FPE can be responsive to national socio-economic and political aspirations without compromising the needs, interests and abilities of the pupils has been a subject of debate/concern for a long time. According to Sifuna (1990) and Wang (1991), sometimes it occurs that what the Government wishes to implement in our field of education may not always be in the interest of the other stakeholders like the parents, teachers, administrators and pupils.

That is, FPE policy appears to encounter some resistance in its attempt to realize the desired results. Some stakeholders harbor negative/counter-productive aspirations as they discharge duties about the FPE. The majority of them (stakeholders) end up not acting in ways that could enhance realization of the results desired by the Government. For this reason, this study has provided an in-depth understanding of FPE and the factors

affecting its realization as it concerns the pupils in public primary schools in Kenya. That is, this study illuminates the interplay between environmental, socio-economic and administrative imperatives of the public primary schools and the ideals of FPE as it relates to Kenya. To be able to contextualize this study, the subsequent information is necessary about the key challenges in PPS and Intervention Measures. Thus subsections 2.3.1 to 2.3.19 bring to light challenges of FE in PPS in regard to the studies that have been done in Kenya.

2.6.1 Resources for Meeting Education Targets

The new education structure and curriculum introduced in 1985 led to additional education costs for parents, increased the burden of teachers, and set higher demands on qualifications of teachers. The cost sharing system introduced in 1988 further formalized the requirements for parents to provide school uniforms, textbooks and other instruction materials contribute to school construction and maintenance costs. Although such cost sharing already existed informally before 1988, the real change was in the re-introduction of school levies that had been abolished in the previous year. This greatly reduced pupils' enrolments and completion rates (Sifuna 1994).

2.6.2 Cost and Benefits

The second obstacle is the issue of cost and benefits. High-quality FPE is expensive. It requires more varied faculty resource, interactive rather than passive teaching techniques, seminars in place of lectures, and perhaps a longer period spent in school. But the payoff to a high-quality liberal education is not immediate, and it has a large non-pecuniary component that is difficult to measure. Funding is clearly problematic, but the more extensive general education programmes are not meant for all, or even the majority of students. They should be aimed at the brightest and most highly motivated in any cohort, with broader cross-section of students offered less intensive forms of general education. The 1985 Education Task Force attaches great importance to general education, as it is far less expensive and time-consuming than FPE offered to all.

Aiming higher education programs at the brightest and most motivated students should not be objectionable or characterized as elitism in the old sense. First, advantage should accrue to an individual because of intellectual capacities and efforts, and not because of social class or wealth. Second, the task force advocates special programmes for disadvantaged groups at all stages of education so that citizens are increasingly able to take advantage of the best educational opportunities. Third, we recognize the value of some general education in nearly all forms of higher education, with specific programme designed and modified for different types of student and school.

These considerations will not eliminate financial concerns, but they should lessen the problem. However, the problem of different abilities remains. Not all individuals are qualified for the same training since some tasks are

more difficult than others. This implies that inequalities in some areas are a natural outcome. Educating the most able for positions of leadership in all spheres of life has to be in the national interest; it's a major aspect of stratification.

We have already noted that, while the connection between the short-term needs of the labor market and general education may be weak, in the long run, general education is an excellent investment for both individuals and nations. Some scholars believe that general education is at odds with the trend toward increasing specialization within the labor force, especially the upper tiers. On the contrary, high quality general education strengthens disciplinary specialization by providing a solid foundation for advanced learning (Ogola 2004). It also provides a common intellectual currency for interaction among individuals with diverse specialization.

Because general education involves in-depth and open examination of ideas and assumptions of all kinds, it sometimes appears threatening to those who have an interest in preserving the status quo. That desire, however, represents the very opposite of development. Highlighting the value of liberal education for effective leadership may also pose an implicit challenge to the credentials of leaders who themselves received different training, and sometimes very little formal education. Of course, a more educated leadership is one indicator of socioeconomic progress.

Some will ask why market forces have not created a greater supply of general education if it offers so many benefits. The reason relates to disparity between the long-term public interest and short-term needs. General education is not part of the academic tradition in most developing countries. In addition, students are interested in immediate, and perhaps more certain, returns, especially when education loans and scholarships are difficult to obtain. High-quality general education tends to be expensive, deterring its provision in both public and private institutions. However, especially in the long run, societies will do well to serve the public interest even if market forces do not create the necessary incentives. General education is, in this sense, in the same category as basic research or equitable access.

2.6.3 Disability

Many children with disabilities are out of school in Kenya. Although a number of schools exist for the disabled, most of them lack facilities and trained teachers. The other problem is the attitude of the parent. Many parents prefer to educate normal children in the family and ignore the disabled ones. Some parents keep them at home and out of the public reach. Even when a disabled child gets to school, he /she does not enjoy it and often performs poorly. They are expected to follow the same curriculum as the normal children, going through the same teaching methodologies. These and more problems are likely to be compounded as their number swells, due to FPE (EFA News 2002). The government is presently unable to cater adequately for the disabled child. Gethin (2003) quoted Assistant Minister for Education: "Although the government allocated Kshs. 2000 per child to

special care, on top of what the other normal pupil are receiving, the money is not enough to adequately provide for the equipment.” According to Gethin (2003), most Braille and sign language books are imported, making them quite expensive, yet most schools need them to be able to adequately provide quality education. It is observed by Kilemi (2003, cited in Gethin 2003) that most disabled children come from poverty stricken families who cannot afford to buy the books, thereby limiting their chances of getting quality education. In addition, schools that cater for children with special needs are few and not well distributed. Children cannot therefore access them, especially where they need to travel and cannot afford the fare. This area needs to be seriously and urgently looked into.

In 2003, the Government of Kenya declared the FPE programme. However, a study by Every Child Counts (EEC), a Nairobi-based Non-Governmental Organization, indicates that only 22,332 out of 600,000 children with disability had access to education compared to their counterparts without disabilities (*Daily Nation*, November 24, 2004). This meant that out of 6.2 million children in Kenya who resort to education in 2003, only 0.4% of children with disabilities enjoy the free primary education.

In Kenya, the majority of pupils with disabilities still attend separate schools as many primary schools have not adopted the approach of *integration* (also called *mainstreaming* or *inclusion*) in which children of all ability levels, whether learning disabled, physical handicapped or mentally retarded, are included in the same classrooms. Most schools have placed pupils thought to be mentally retarded as well as children with learning disabilities or with special learning needs in separate special education classes. Moreover, there is no specific Act or Law in Kenya relating to education integration of children with special needs.

The integration units established mainly in primary schools with specialist teachers bring together pupils with special needs and their peers in the regular classrooms for part of the day but they are withdrawn into the resource rooms for special help depending on the nature of their educational need (Zindi 1996).

The basic idea of integration or inclusion is found in many international policy documents, i.e., the convention on the rights of the child (1989), the Jomtien world declaration for Education For All (1990), the standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities (1993), the Salamanca statement and framework for action adopted at the world conference on special needs education in 1994. The United State Congress approved Public Law 94-142, the education for all handicapped children act which guaranteed a “free public education” in the “least restrictive environment” to all handicapped children between the ages of 3 and 18 that’s comparable to that provided to non-handicapped children and to give them early intervention. It required public schools to provide education roughly equivalent to that received by normal children to all handicapped youth, regardless of whether they are blind, deaf, mentally retarded or experiencing neurology, and motor impairments (Shaffer 1985).

The provisions of the act include individualized education programme (IEP), least restrictive environment i.e. each state must establish policies and procedure to ensure that child with disability is placed in the least restrictive educational setting that his/her disability will allow so as to function successfully and due process i.e. legal procedures and safeguard procedure intended to protect the rights of pupils. It ensures nondiscrimination in testing and the confidentiality of records and privacy of the individual pupil.

In an effort to provide equal opportunities in education to all learners, several practices have been tried ranging from deinstitutionalization, mainstreaming, integration and inclusion i.e. the education of pupil with disability in neighbourhood schools and in general education or regular classrooms with their normal peers (*Daily Nation*, November 24, 2004).

Inclusion or integration in education involves valuing all pupils and staff equally, increasing the participation of pupils in, and reducing their exclusion from the cultures, curricula, and communities surrounding the schools. This is supposed to enhance the response of the pupils to the diversity in the locality. It also entails reducing barriers to learning and participation for all pupils, not only those with impairments or those who are categorized as “having special educational needs”. The differences in pupil are supposed to support learning rather than be seen as problems to be overcome. Indeed it is supposed to enhance the rights of pupils to an education in their locality (Shea and Bauer 1994).

2.6.4 Regional Disparities and Priorities

The question of whether all school-age children are in school is nagging. There are disparities in access to quality education based on gender, language, disability, special groups, and region. A report in *Daily Nation* May 23, 2006 claimed that Kenya would be wealthier if the majority of its citizens had post-secondary education. Putting more public and community resources on educating people to higher levels would also address the problem of inequalities in the country, it adds.

The study by Aduda (1998) showed that the levels of poverty for individuals decrease with the increase in the level of education. Households headed with members with secondary education have lower poverty level than those who have primary or do not have any education. North Eastern province, for example, recorded a poverty rate of 12.1 per cent among household headed by people with secondary education while Nairobi has highest rate, at 28.9 per cent. The study further notes that there is unequal teacher distribution in primary schools across the country. Among 23 schools studied, Malindi has the highest pupil teacher ratio of 6:1 and Baringo the lowest, at 23:1. The study recommends that the government considers teacher redistribution measure from the districts with high pupil teacher ratio to those with lower ratios. This will help to improve quality of service delivery.

It is instructive that since 2004, the TSC has been conducting teacher redistribution exercise intended to balance the staff within and without district. This study notes that there are serious disparities in primary schools despite government's and civil society's efforts to even them out. "To some extent, customs and circumstances lead to a range of cultural practices, which causes differences in girl-child participation in primary education. In 2004, North Eastern had only 20, 065 girls in primary schools; this represented only 32 per cent of the expected total gross enrolment.

2.6.5 Inadequate Teachers

A long-standing shortage of teachers is one of the serious obstacles to the provision of FPE. The natural deficit is estimated at 31, 000 (EFA News 2003). While schools are already suffering from lack of staff, the government has not been in a hurry to employ any more teachers (*Daily Nation* 2003). The pupil ratio currently stands at 1:40, increasing from 1:33 in 2002 (Saitoti, cited in Mwaniki and Bwire 2003). The ratio varies from province to province. This shortage makes it imperative for the government to recruit additional teachers. Employment of more teachers has heavy financial implications. The government put teacher recruitment on hold until shortfalls were established and funds obtained to pay new teachers (Aduda 2003). However, the Government has now undertaken to hire 4000 primary school teachers in 69 districts.

The government gave unemployed teachers two weeks from July 31 2003 up to August 13 to apply for these jobs (Aduda 2003). However, according to Secretary General of the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), 'the number is too small; it is like a drop in the ocean and the impact will not be felt'. According to him, the government should employ more teachers in order to achieve quality education. Teachers' shortage is compounded by the fact that some teachers have preferences for stations or districts where they would like to be posted. Therefore, besides paying extra for teachers, the government has to persuade them to take up posts in less preferred areas. Teachers have in the past shown reluctance to move to areas where parents cannot afford to "pay" for private tuition after normal working hours. They have also shown refusal to work in slum areas using security as pretext ([http://www. Africanewscast.com](http://www.Africanewscast.com)). This trend is bound to continue despite FPE, unless appropriate incentives are introduced to encourage teachers to choose to work in the less preferred areas.

2.6.6 Inadequate Teaching and Learning Materials

The enrolment after the FPE initiative has occurred at all stages, even at class eight level, hence the rise of the number of KCPE candidates (Saitoti cited in Mwaniki and Bwire 2003). According to the Minister of Education, there is need for the government to expand and improve facilities so as to effectively address need of all pupils. He was quoted saying that, as a matter of urgency, the government must create more space for classrooms to accommodate the large number of students expected in secondary

schools next year. A recent inspection report has confirmed that most of the existing physical facilities are in bad shape and need renovation.

The inspection also revealed an increase in textbook ratio in spite of Government intervention. This frustrates teachers' and pupils' efforts to improve the quality of education. Closely related to this is shortage of desks, chairs, chalk and blackboards. Shortage of classrooms in primary schools because of sudden increase in number of children joining primary schools has resulted in overcrowding in the classrooms. So, in some cases, children learn under trees. Whereas double sessions have been introduced in some areas to address the problem, in other areas, parents and non-governmental organizations have helped in building classrooms and equipping them. However, the question of who teaches the double session or extra classes still remains a serious challenge.

2.6.7 Enrolment

There are cases of over/under-enrolment with the onset of FE in PPS in 2003. In its attempt to educate every Kenyan child, the Government faces the challenge of over-enrolment. This was evident as Kenyans scrambled for places at the beginning of 2003, when President Mwai Kibaki declared FPE.

There was a stampede at school gates as parents could not quite believe their luck, and many rushed to register their children at popular schools such as Olympic Primary School in Nairobi's Kibera slum where more than 3000 new pupils were enrolled. The situation was the same in schools like Ayany, Mwangaza and Dhahabu. This delayed classes at the beginning of the term, leading to clashes between old and new parents guarding when classes should start.

Over-enrolment influences the quality of education. It triggers a chain reaction touching on teacher and facility adequacy, teaching method, sitting arrangement, working space, examination and assessment, sanitation, among other things. The present primary school teacher is trained to handle an average of 40 pupils, not a crowd. Inevitably, this is a challenge that requires attention. According to the Minister for Education, more space needs to be created by constructing over 32,000 extra classrooms and related sanitation facilities. However, this is easier said than done, as some schools do not even have land for expansion, especially in slums areas. Besides, where do 32,000 teachers come from to engage 32,000 extra classes? The other challenge related to enrolment is enrolment of over-age children who dropped out to work and who, with the inception of FPE, wished to continue to complete the primary cycle. Street children have also re-entered the school system.

How does the teacher who is not currently trained to cope with this begin to deal with children of diverse age differences? How does the same teacher deal with children of patchy educational background, short attention span, dysfunctional background and drug addiction in a classroom of 50-60

normal children? This will lower the standard. Street children and over-age children have special needs that require special and urgent attention.

Daily Nation (on 6/6/06) reported that scores of schools risked closure due to teacher distribution crisis, complicated by poor enrolment. The Permanent Secretary Prof. Karega Mutahi noted that PPS with low enrolment would be closed in a new government move to address teacher shortage and improve the quality of learning. Education Permanent Secretary Karega Mutahi asked provincial and The education officials whose areas recorded low enrolment, should not pressurise the government into supplying additional teachers. Some of the schools had an enrolment of seven students, "yet they expect us to supply teachers for all the subjects they offer".

Learners from the affected primary and secondary schools should join those with higher enrolment so that the teacher shortage can be eased, he told 85 provincial and district education officers at a workshop at the Kenya College of Communications Technology, Mbagathi. "It's your responsibility to work out modalities for such mergers and advise the education ministry, with specific recommendations. Unavailable schools, which do not have sustainable catchment areas, can only further complicate the delicate issue of teacher utilization and provision of quality education," he said.

Prof. Mutahi asked the officials to sensitize communities and district education boards against starting new schools before carrying out feasibility surveys. He cited the availability of constituency development funds as one reason why some communities were setting up schools that were not sustainable. Prof Mutahi's remarks were supported by Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Secretary, Mr. Gabriel Lengoiboni, who said the enrolment schools were among those that were exerting undue pressure for more teachers. "Sometime we have been forced to supply them with only the headteacher, leaving their boards to hire other staff," he said.

The tendency to establish more community schools was getting higher as members of parliament seek to solidify their support in constituencies using CDF ahead of next elections, Mr. Lengoiboni added. Prof. Mutahi, who opened the TSC workshop, asked the education officials to consistently keep redeploying teachers to even out shortages in their areas. "Schools that don't have viable enrolment should be made to release teachers who cannot attain any meaningful teaching load so that they are transferred to stations where they can be fully utilized," he said. He ordered that teacher transfers within the year be minimized to avoid interfering with pupil learning in the middle of school terms. Prof. Mutahi further asked the officials to speed up the conclusion of disciplinary cases of teachers to ensure they resume their duties fast. He warned them against engaging in recruitment malpractices.

2.6.8 Financing

The FPE cost the government 7.9 billion Kenya shillings up to June 2003. A further 10.5 billion shillings was spent in the fiscal year 2003 /2004 to put 1.6m children in school (RoK 2003). Table 2 shows the breakdown.

In February 2003, the Government through the ministry of education science and technology (MOEST) released Kshs. 519m to the over 18,000 primary schools, each getting Kshs. 28,000 to buy materials. MOEST also established an education fund and bank account for willing donors. The funding by UNICEF was earmarked for purchase of basic education kits, training of 5,000 teachers and repair and rehabilitation of classrooms (<http://www.unesco.org>).

Although these are based on cost per pupil, the figure is quite unrealistic. It requires revision to take care of disparities in enrolment, region, rural/urban, and grade for school in order to maintain existing facilities. Asking parents to maintain some facilities while still calling the programme FPE does not make sense. Most parents do not understand why they should pay for the uniforms or even food.

2.6.9 Problems of Quality and Relevance

Although there are exceptions, the quality and relevance of teaching and learning have tended to decline in PPS. Many PPS are operating with overcrowded classes and limited or with no library resources, insufficient equipment and instructional materials, and absence of academic rigor and systematic evaluation of performance. Similar conditions can also be found in some private primary schools.

2.6.10 Poverty and Unsteady Economy

In a country like Kenya that's grappling with economic stagnation, intractable unemployment, environmental degradation, fiscal imbalances and massive external debt, the future of FPE is quite bleak. Rapid population growth has dire effect on coverage of the same basic education that can help to contain such growth. In spite of the directive given in January 2003 by the NARC government to provide free and compulsory education to all primary school children, we may be nowhere near providing primary education of satisfactory quality to all Kenyan children. There could be more children out of school than those in school. The impact of financial and economic constraints and of the demographic explosion can be seen, in declining education expenditure, in falling enrolment rates increasing the number of illiterates, and a decline in the quality of teaching and training. Rapid expansion is a distant dream in such a circumstance.

2.6.11 Diseases / HIV/AIDS

There is more HIV infection, more AIDS-related death and orphans in Africa than anywhere else in the world. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for only 10.4 per cent of the world's population; yet it accounted for 73.3 per cent of AIDS-related death in 2001 and 11 million AIDS orphans (78.6 per

cent of the AIDS orphans in the world). The epicentre of the disease in Africa is located in Eastern and Southern Africa (EFA News 2003). That Kenya falls within this region clearly shows the difficulties facing the government in undertaking development efforts. HIV is affecting progress towards FPE, and at all levels from Early Childhood Education (ECE) to higher education. Teachers and educators are dying and they are in need of care and support. There is widespread absenteeism of teachers, which is debilitating the entire education system. In Kenya, AIDS-related teacher deaths rose from 450 in 1990 to 1500 in 1999 (<http://www.unesco.org>).

2.6.12 Tribal Clashes/Civil Conflicts

Regions of Kenya like Northern Rift Valley and North Eastern province are prone to conflicts. This causes instability and displacement of children and therefore poses a challenge to the implementation of the FPE. Death of parents has far reaching consequences directly related to provision of education. Conflicts also bring about poverty.

2.6.13 Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECD)

This sector faces many setbacks, for instance, for provision of facilities and the training of teachers. Although enrolment is still low, most parents cannot afford to pay for pre-primary education, as the levies at this level of education are higher than in public primary schools. Considering that some pre-school charge up to Kshs. 10,000 per month, it will be a wild imagination that a parent who cannot access primary education can afford to pay this much. This is the cohort that one expects to join class one. If the government has to improve provision of FPE, then ECDE has also to be addressed.

2.6.14 Gender

Despite government policies, there is great disparity in access to quality education between girls and boys, and men and women. The largest numbers of the world's illiterates are women and this is a culpable negligence that, if not handled, will affect FPE effort. There is high dropout rate particularly for girls (<http://www.global-ite.org>). Despite the increase enrolment in Kenya, the gross enrolment rate still remains higher for boys at 106 per cent against 104 per cent for girls (Mwaniki and Bwire 2003).

2.6.14 Language

Research findings by Abagi *et al.* (2000) indicate that the most effective early reading instruction is in the mother tongue. Initial literacy in language has shown that an individual's speech facilitates better acquisition of literacy, numeracy, general cognitive development and learning. However, the economic and political reality that led to the instituting of language policy in Kenya has proved difficult to the government in a multilingual situation, to address the feasibility of development and production of several different curricula to take care of the varied languages.

2.6.15 Special Groups

There is lack of rehabilitation for special groups. Special groups in this case include the average (10-20 years or over) and former street children. The problem arising from integrating the average former street children in regular schools was not foreseen. The normal children, the average former street children, children from extremely poor background and the children of the rich should be taught to learn together despite their extreme and varying entry behaviour, although it may be difficult to provide effective learning experiences for all of them at the same time.

Special programs should be developed and executed so as to reduce variations in behaviour among learners. NGO and community based organizations (CBO), with support of CARE-Children, African Canadian Continuing Education Society (ACCESS) and Commonwealth Education Fund in Kakamega, have developed an alternative curriculum, which targets people under special circumstances like the average learners, orphan and street children to equip them with enough skills to enable them to join formal schools as well as cope with life outside school. For the move to be fruitful, the government should spearhead it.

2.6.16 Regional Disparities

Mwaniki and Bwire (2003) have noted that in regions in Kenya where the communities are pastoralists and nomadic, FPE may not be realized quickly because the education strategy is rigid, without flexible programmes that allow for linkage between formal and alternative approaches to basic learning. This is well captured in the rate of enrolment at the onset of FPE in 2003. Nyanza and Western provinces led with gross enrolment rates of 120 per cent, respectively, while Nairobi, with 62 per cent and N. Eastern's 25 per cent trailed (see table 1).

Education problems concerning provision of education to nomadic pastoralists have existed since colonial times. Shortage of learning facilities is worse in arid and semi-arid areas. In the past, the government and NGOs provided boarding and feeding facilities. For the programme to be realistic, the government should provide feeding and boarding facilities in ASAL. There are regional teacher disparities too. The ratio of teacher to pupils is 1:53 in North Eastern, for example, 1:48 in Nairobi, 1:35 in Eastern (Mwaniki and Bwire 2003).

2.6.17 Cultural Values and Drug Abuse

Culture still plays a major role in many rural communities of Kenya. Issues such as early marriages, and female genital mutilation (FGM) still affect families and need to be addressed urgently. Drugs have contributed in the past to indiscipline and school drop out. Government initiative has not been quite successful.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Dewey's theory of value and Mead's Interactionism theory. Dewey's theory of value argues that if a learner develops an interest

to undertake a certain education activity, there must be some value(s) attached to it. To value, according to Dewey, means primarily to prize, to esteem (Taneja 1990, 91). To value is also an act of cherishing something, holding it dear and also the act of passing judgment upon nature and amount of its value as compared to something else. If the act of valuing means liking or desiring, then value is an object of interest. Perry viewed values in terms of interests both negative and positive ones (Taneja 1990, 95). If a value helps in the achievement of a certain end, that value is considered instrumental (extrinsic). For example, for a learner to realize his/her ambition of becoming a doctor, the study of Biology, Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics has the greatest value. In other words, these four subjects are instrumental in achieving the objective of becoming a doctor. On the other hand, we have inherent values lying in the excellence of a thing itself. These are the intrinsic values, which instead of leading to any further consequence, are good in themselves. For example, a worktable has inherent goodness of making readers or learners comfortable while sitting and writing/reading. Therefore, both the extrinsic and intrinsic values play some functions toward the realization of the education policy goal of FPE.

Dewey's thinking is that in most cases, superior authorities at national level formulate education goals (aims). However, these authorities accept aims that are currently determined by the society (Dewey 1944, 108- 9). And that the aims of education must suggest the kind of environment needed to liberate and to organize learners' capacities in order to be able to realize them (aims).

The Interactionism theory developed by George Herbert Mead (1863 – 1931), notes that in a classroom situation the interaction between the teacher and the pupil is determined by their reasons for being involved and the prevailing environment (Ezewu 1983). During interaction, there are negotiations and bargains that enhance the teaching-learning process in order to attain the lesson objectives and consequently the education goals. This is tenable when the environment is conducive, that is when learning resources are adequate, optimum pupil – teacher ratio, appropriate teaching methods among others. These are some of the obstacles faced by FPE that this study addressed.

To successfully operationalize Dewey's theory of value and Mead's Interactionism theory, this study was guided by the conceptual representation in Figure 1.

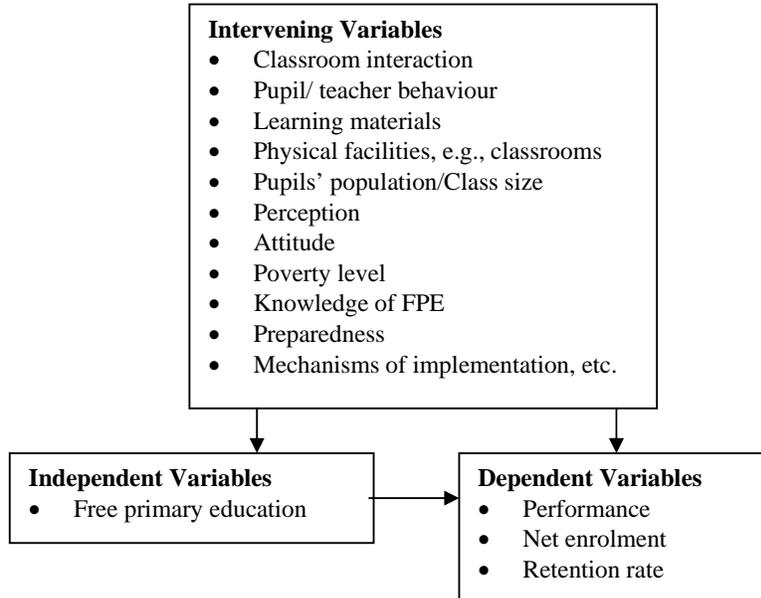


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Figure 1 explains how the variables under examination relate to the research objectives, and the data that was collected. The research methodology described in the next section was applied to realize this.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology covers research design, location of study, sampling technique and sample size. The aim of the study was to examine the environment of the public primary schools in Kenya in an attempt to bring to light how it relates to the attainment or non-attainment of the education policy goal of FPE.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted *ex-post facto* research design. Kerlinger (1975) defines *ex-post facto* research as a systematic inquiry in which the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variables because their manifestation has already occurred or because they cannot be manipulated. In this study, inferences were made without direct intervention of the independent variables such as the ones provided in figure 1 section 2.7. It was designed as a national study and drew a representative sample of Kenyan districts. Using various data collection techniques, the study obtained data from various sources including pupils, teachers, parents, school committees and education officers. Subsections 3.2.1 to 3.2.3 discuss the key components of the methodology and design of the study.

3.2.1 The Purposive Selection of Provinces and Districts

The study was based on a representative sample of the districts and public primary schools. The sampling design was done in stages. In the first stage, the study drew a sample from eight administrative provinces and from each; two districts were selected except for Nairobi, which served both as a province and district. The selection of the districts was based, *inter alia*, on their varied potentials for capturing the national pattern.

In the second stage, the study selected two contrasting schools from each of the selected districts. In addition, the selection of the schools within a district was also guided by their performance in KCPE in 2002. In particular, the purposive selection of the two schools within a district also ensured a contrast in terms of academic performance as measured by the District Mean Scores (DMS) for KCPE results of 2002. In each district, 'good' performing as well as 'poor' performing schools were randomly selected. To control for social economic status and academic performance in Nairobi, schools were selected purposively from different socio-economic zones (that is, Eastland versus Westland).

3.2.2 The Random Selection of Primary Schools

In stage three, the study selected a representative sample of public primary schools in the fifteen selected districts. The study covered two schools per district giving a total sample of 30 schools. This study anticipated that in rural areas, some schools selected randomly would not be easily accessible. In this respect, for each of the two categories of the targeted schools, the

study gave room for replacement of a school selected but which was not easily accessible. By following these procedures, the study ensured that the selection of the schools at the district level was unbiased.

3.2.3 Selection of Respondents within and around the Schools

In the fourth stage of the sampling design, the study targeted to draw a representative sample of stakeholders involved in the implementation of FPE. At the school level, the study targeted to cover the following: pupils, teachers, parents and members of the school committees.

In each of the selected schools, using class registers, two pupils (a male and a female) per class were randomly selected from Classes 4 to 8. This way, a total of 10 pupils were selected in a school. The study did not therefore cover pupils from lower primary, who were considered too young to be subjected to any form of interview. However, observation about their characteristics was made. The selection of teachers was random. In each school selected, two teachers were selected. In this way, a sample of 60 teachers was drawn from the 30 schools covered by the study.

The selection of community members – parents and members of school committee – was done purposively. After the selection of a school, the researcher requested the head teachers to invite members of the school committee and parents for interview in the selected schools. The group that was interviewed comprised of DEOs, PDEs, BoG and PTA members. The group had to be of mixed gender and representative of the community to avoid bias. In some instances, it was not possible to have all the targeted community members interviewed.

3.3 Location of Study

Public primary schools in Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret, Busia, Bungoma, Rachuonyo, Kisumu, Embu, Kitui, Mombasa, Kwale, Isiolo, Marsabit, Nyandarua, and Thika districts were selected for this study as they captured the diverse socio-cultural, economic and political environment that influence FPE in Kenya.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

In an integrated qualitative and quantitative research, a researcher can use 0.05% -10% of the accessible population as the sample size (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999). The sample for schools and pupils/classes were randomly selected from the purposively chosen districts mentioned earlier. Random sampling ensured that all individuals from the defined population had equal and independent chance of being selected as a member of the sample and it provided more precise estimates (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999). Head teacher, teachers, District and Provincial Education Officers were purposively selected and interviewed by the researcher to identify obstacles faced by FPE. According to Kathuri and Pals (1993), in purposive sampling the researcher's judgement was used to select those respondents who best met the purposes of the study.

3.5 Instrumentation

Fieldwork research involved a survey of expected participants divided into two groups. For one group, observations of key issues were made while for the other group the questions provided in the interview schedule in the appendices were administered. The interview survey was an important aspect of qualitative and quantitative approaches adopted for this study since it aimed at enabling those who are being studied to speak for themselves (Sherman and Webb 1988).

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The study commenced after acquisition of a research permit from the government research control office in Nairobi and thereafter other arrangements were made to recruit two research assistants (with background in history, policies, curriculum and education management).

3.7 Pilot Study

Piloting was done in Kakamega District for the purpose of refining the research instruments. This was done to ensure that the subsequent data collected using the research instruments were accurate. Piloting helped in knowing whether there were any ambiguities in any of the items and if the information received could meaningfully be analyzed in relation to stated questions. Rossi *et al.* (1983) suggest that 20 to 50 cases examined before the main study, is usually sufficient to discover flaws in research instruments so as to facilitate its refinement. On the basis of this, the researcher examined 25 cases randomly during piloting in Kakamega district.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data was gathered through interview schedules and observations and the quantitative data was coded and fed into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme for analysis. Data that could not be quantified was qualitatively analysed. Variables and methods of data analyses are summarised in table 4 below.

Table 4. Summary of variables and methods of data analyses

Research Questions	Variables		Methods of Data Analysis
	Independent	Dependent	
What are the obstacles/ challenges faced by FPE in Kenyan public schools?	Free primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance • Retention rates • Net enrolment 	Percentage Frequency
What are the effects of the obstacles/ challenges raised in (a) above to the realization of FPE in Kenyan public schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom interaction • Pupil/ teacher behaviour • Learning materials • Physical facilities e.g. classrooms • Pupils' population/Class size • Perception • Attitude • Poverty level • Knowledge of FPE • Preparedness • Mechanisms of implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance • Net enrolment • Retention rates 	Qualitative Percentage Frequency
What are the possible remedies that could be put in place to overcome the obstacles/ challenges faced by FPE in Kenyan public schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom interaction • Pupil/ teacher behaviour • Learning materials • Physical facilities e.g. classrooms • Pupils' population/ Class size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Recommendation 	Qualitative Percentage Frequency

-
- Perception
 - Attitude
 - Poverty level
 - Knowledge of FPE
 - Preparedness
 - Mechanisms of implementation, etc.
-

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the demographic characteristics and discusses the results based on the research questions:

- a) What are the challenges faced by FPE in Kenyan public schools?
- b) What are the effects of the challenges raised in (a) above to the realization of FPE in Kenyan public primary schools?
- c) What are the possible remedies that could be put in place to overcome the obstacles faced by FPE in Kenyan public primary schools?

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents as captured in subsections 4.2.1 to 4.2.3.

4.2.1 Number of Classes and Average Class Size in PPS by Province, 2001-2006

Table 5 below presents the number of classes and average class size in PPS by province, a phenomenon which is a pre-requisite in understanding the trends and changes that have taken place since the onset of FPE in 2003.

Table 5. Demographic characteristics on bases of Number of Classes (NC) and Average Class Size (ACS) in PPS, by Province, 1999-2004

PROV	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	NC	ACS	NC	ACS								
N.Eastern	1,389	33.1	1,480	32.6	1,743	37.0	1,801	37.4	1,890	38.2	1,945	38.7
Coast	11,136	32.4	11,135	32.8	12,583	36.5	13,852	38.0	13,871	39.3	13,881	40.1
Eastern	38,589	28.5	38,774	29.6	41,178	31.3	42,070	32.1	42,105	34.2	42,211	35.1
Nairobi	3,349	38.1	3,790	38.3	4,008	48.1	4,305	47.2	4,398	47.7	4,458	47.9
Central	25,519	32.3	23,808	33.5	24,043	35.3	23,530	36.2	23,635	36.7	23,675	37.4
Rift Valley	48,159	30.3	47,829	30.9	51,409	33.5	52,928	33.5	53,028	34.5	53,128	35.5
Western	24,729	33.6	24,868	35.4	27,229	38.4	28,873	37.8	28,975	37.9	28,979	38.1
Nyanza	35,457	28.0	34,300	29.6	38,456	33.3	38,184	33.0	38,286	33.2	38,289	33.5
Total	188,327	30.5	185,984	31.6	200,649	34.4	205,543	34.7	177,213	37.7	25821	38.3

Note: NC - Number of Classes; ACS - Average Class Size

4.2.2 *Distribution of Respondents by Sex*

A total of 650 respondents were drawn both randomly and purposively as presented in table 6. The survey covered almost the same number of teachers and pupils on the bases of gender except for the parents.

Table 6. Distribution of all the respondents covered, by sex

Category	<i>Sex</i>		Total
	Male	Female	
Teachers	(55.5%)	(44.5%)	(25.2%)
Pupils	(52.5%)	(47.5%)	38.8%
Parents	(63.9%)	(36.1%)	(35.6%)
Total	(57.3%)	(42.7%)	100%

4.2.3 *Distribution of Respondents by Age*

Table 7 presents data on the age of teachers, which shows whether the schools covered had relatively 'old' or 'young' teachers. The age of teachers ranged from 19 to 55 years (since they retire at the age of 55 years). The schools covered therefore had both young (who are energetic) as well as old (experienced) teachers who can work jointly to help realize the goal of FPE in Kenya. The study found a fair distribution of teachers in all the age categories.

Table 7. Distribution of teachers covered, by age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
19-30	17	28.3%
31-44	23	38.3%
45-50	14	23.4%
51 -55	6	10%
Total	60	100%

Table 8. Distribution of Class 4 pupils, by age

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
8	4	12.5%
9	3	9.4%
10	11	34.4%
11	4	12.5%
12	7	21.9%
13	2	6.3%
15 and above	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%

Data in table 8 shows that the Class 4 pupils who were at their expected age (9 years) at this level of schooling covered only a small percentage of 9.4. There were 12.5 per cent who were under-age, that is, possibly those who had enrolled in Class 1 when they were five years. Surprisingly, the rest of the pupils who constituted about 78 per cent were over-age, since they were more than 9 years. The incidence of over-age could be explained by late enrolment in Class 1 or the resumption of schooling when the FPE was implemented by those who had dropped out earlier. Note also that the mean age for Class 4 is 10.56 years, which is above the expected age (9 years). This finding confirms that the problem of over-age is quite widespread in Class 4.

Table 9. Distribution of Class 5 pupils, by age

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
10	6	16.7%
11	8	22.2%
12	8	22.2%
13	10	27.8%
14	4	11.1%
Total	36	100%

In Kenya, it is expected that Class 5 pupils are aged 10 years, hence, those who are more than this age can be considered over-age.

Table 10. Distribution of Class 6 pupils, by age

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
11	10	26.3%
12	10	26.3%
13	6	15.8%
14	7	18.4%
15	2	5.3%
16	3	7.9%
Total	38	100%

Table 10 presents data on age for pupils covered in Class 6 who are expected to be 11 years of age. In Class 6, slightly more than a quarter (26.3 per cent) of the pupils covered, were of age; the remaining 73.7 per cent were over-age. Note also that the mean age for the class (12.74 years) is above the expected age, thus confirming the incidence of over-age at this grade level.

Table 11. Distribution of Class 7 pupils, by age

Age of years	Frequency	Percentage
11	2	5.6%
12	6	16.7%
13	9	25%
14	9	25%
15	6	16.7%
16	1	2.8%
17	3	8.3%
Total	36	100%

Class 7 pupils are expected to be 12 years old. The findings show that for this class, there were two cases of pupils who were under-age, 16.7 per cent of the pupils were of age while the remaining 77.7 per cent were over-age. The incidence of over-age is further confirmed by the mean age of the grade (3.72) – which is above the expected age of the grade (of 12 years).

Table 12. Distribution of Class 8 pupils, by age

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
12	3	8.3%
13	8	22.2%
14	10	27.8%
15	7	19.4%
16	6	16.7%
17	2	5.6%
Total	38	100%

Table 12 presents data on age for pupils covered in Class 8 – who are expected to be 13 years old. In Class 8, there were 3 cases of under-age, 22.2 per cent of the pupils were of age while the remaining 69.4 per cent were over-age. The mean age for pupils covered in Class 5 was 14.31, which further confirms the incidence of over-age for the grade.

Table 13. Distribution of parents, by age

Age category	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	36	16.9%
31-40	80	48.2%
41-50	33	19.9%
55+	27	15.1%
Total	166	100%

4.3 Challenges Faced By FPE in Kenyan Public Schools

Common challenges faced by FPE in the selected districts of study are covered in subsections 4.3.1 to 4.3.12

4.3.1 Awareness about FE in PPS

There was overwhelming evidence that the public has adequate information about FPE. The government aggressively initiated publicity after the introduction of the FPE in 2003. Circulars were sent to schools and messages passed on through the media enhanced the awareness of the FPE policy and its progress in PPS. Teachers, parents, communities and other stakeholders are operating with clear understanding of FPE framework.

4.3.2 Discipline in PPS

The study established that due to increased enrolment in schools through FPE, discipline was becoming a big challenge. It was noted that with the presence of over-age pupils in schools, some were deviants, and with the large number in the classrooms, it was not possible to maintain discipline in schools. Matters have been compounded by the fact that corporal punishment is outlawed and teachers are required to use counseling to instill discipline in schools. While the general suggestion among teachers was that the ban on corporal punishment should be lifted, the fundamental issue is that the ministry should provide a clear guideline on maintaining discipline. Teachers were hardly prepared to offer counselling and in the absence of corporal punishment, they were handicapped in disciplining errant pupils.

Respondents said indiscipline was becoming common, especially among the over-age pupils. They also said that discipline had seriously deteriorated due to the large number of pupils and teacher shortage. Congestion hindered classroom management and teacher's control over pupils. Some pupils (especially the over-age) were reportedly transmitting negative influences from the world outside the school like smoking cigarettes, chewing Khat or sniffing glue. Some who had been expelled for disciplinary reasons were back in school. Bullying, rowdy behaviour, fighting, rudeness, harassment, defying teachers and refusing to do assignments were reported.

It was observed that "many new-comers are big and bullies and they don't care since there is no caning. Pupils fear reporting such cases because they are never caned." It was also reported that the new-comers were finding it hard to adapt to the learning environment. "Some of these over-age pupils, when told to speak English, say that they were not born in England. They say that even if they were pierced with a very hot nail, they would not speak English. They are noisy and provoke fights."

Since caning was banned in schools, teachers can only holler and shout or try counselling. Yet counselling a pupil in a congested classroom is said to be ineffective. Teachers feel powerless, for example, that they can not cane pupils who refuse to do assignments. Teachers suggested that the government should clearly spell out acceptable modes of meting out discipline.

Teachers said that some pupils have become unmanageable. "An African child can not respect anybody without canning." As for now, few teachers are skilled in guidance and counselling. Hence, teachers and parents said that caning should be re-introduced to contain the increased cases of indiscipline. They observed that 'sparing the rod' was spoiling children and they felt that it was necessary that teachers be allowed to cane pupils to instil discipline: "Some pupils do not respect teachers. They refuse to do what the teacher tells them because they are as 'big' as teachers. Previously, when a pupil made a mistake, the teacher would just cane you instantly. But this is not the case anymore."

Some teachers also felt that lack of restriction on pupil transfers had contributed to the deterioration of the quality of education since it encouraged poor pupils to move to any school and get into any class of their choice irrespective of their ability.

4.3.3 Teachers Recruitment, Deployment and Motivation

There was clear evidence that schools suffer a serious teacher shortage across the board. On average, there was shortfall of two to three teachers in all the schools visited. The teachers have heavy workload, that is, they handle many lessons and many pupils. It is difficult for teachers to give personalized attention to all the learners, give adequate assignments to test what has been taught and take full control of their classes. They were also frustrated by the poor terms of service. In particular, they were unhappy that they had to stay in the same job grades for a long time and they also did not have opportunities for training to improve their skills and performance.

4.3.4 Facilities and Learning Environment

The mass influx of pupils into school due to FPE has stretched facilities to the limit. The classrooms are congested, desks are inadequate and so are textbooks. Toilets are lacking in schools and wherever they exist, they are inadequate and in poor condition. This has badly affected girls and disabled and young children. There were reports of pupils resorting to relieving themselves in the nearby bushes, which is unhealthy. The congestion in classrooms affects teaching and learning activities. Slow learners are not taken care of. The net effect of all these is that the teaching and learning environment is not conducive, especially for the over-age learners and the disabled. Consequently, schools have recorded dropouts and declining enrolment and this does not augur well for the goal of expanding access, retention and completion rates.

The inadequacy of physical facilities in most schools was cited along with the teacher shortage as militating against good teaching/learning processes. Congestion especially in the lower classes is pervasive as the quantitative data collected in this study shows. It is not uncommon to find that the number of pupils has increased but desks and chairs have remained relatively the same. Overstretched facilities and congested classrooms enhance unhealthy and uncomfortable conditions. There are classes that should be divided into three or four streams but that cannot be done due to the lack of teachers and facilities. Teachers felt that if FPE is to succeed, then the government must build more classrooms and recruit more teachers. Teachers, parents and pupils felt that classrooms and desks were inadequate. Pupils in lower classes were forced to sit on the floor or on mats in some schools. Generally, respondents agreed that education standards had deteriorated due to congestion and shortage of facilities mentioned earlier. One pupil noted that "We are given one textbook when we sit three per desk and it is difficult to share. When one puts a textbook on the desk, the others cannot write well. We are forced to write on our laps".

Pupils complained about congested classrooms. In congested classrooms, teachers were unable to teach well and pupils were unable to concentrate. Pupils were so squeezed that it was hard to move freely in the classrooms. Such classrooms were stuffy, dusty and dirty because they could not be swept properly. Some pupils said it was easy to cheat in examination as they were seated so close to each other. Constant close body contact also provoked disputes and petty quarrels. There were increased cases of theft because teachers could not maintain tight control over large classes.

4.3.5 Funding of FPE

Schools reported that the fund disbursement was fairly enough. Despite a few cases of delays due to logistical or technical reasons, they were getting funds so far. The funds are sent to two accounts – *Simba* for buying teaching and learning materials and learning materials, and general purpose for support materials like repairs, transport and recurrent expenditure. However, it was noted that the funds did not reach schools on time and did not allow for flexibility in spending. There were no funds for joint mock exams or the term test, sports and other co-curricular activities.

4.3.6 Capacity Building

After the introduction of FPE, the government organized in-service training for head teachers and school committees on its implementation. They were trained on book-keeping, procurement, textbook selection and accounting systems. However, it was reported that the training was inadequate and did not prepare the head teacher and the school committee members fully for their task. Most importantly, it is noted that the training focused on financial issues but did not incorporate curriculum management. Teachers were never trained on multi-group and double shift teaching methods. Yet, they are required to use them. It was also noted that education officers and inspectors were not effective in their duties. On the contrary, they go out to find faults rather than provide professional support services.

4.3.7 Strategy for Disseminating FE Policy in PPS

It is evident that the success of FPE will largely depend on aggressive sensitization campaigns to enable all the stakeholders to understand their roles in the implementation of the programme. This will dispel the misconception that with FPE, parents and communities can now stay away from school as the government takes full responsibility of providing all the necessary learning and teaching materials.

Although the government is providing both text and exercise books and other teaching and learning material, it is upon the parents, communities, sponsors and other donors to support schools. For example, they should be involved in putting up new classrooms and toilets or repairing classes whose roofs are blown off by wind, and such like concerns. But this is not happening as the burden of supporting schools has been left to the government, whose resources cannot meet all the needs. Even in cases where parents are able to help, they just stay away and push everything to the government. The other side to this, is that the government has not

provided a framework through which parents can support the schools. The ban of levies has been taken to mean that parents contribution are not welcome in schools, which in real is not the case.

4.3.8 Availability of Information on FPE

The study found that the majority of teachers, parents and school committee members were first informed about FPE through the media during the political campaigns for the 2002 General Election. They heard about FPE on the radios, televisions and daily newspapers. The media was the pre-dominant source of information on FPE. In a more limited way, teachers reported learning about FPE from education officials and circulars issued by the Ministry of Education. Some mentioned learning about it from other teachers or parents, local administrative leaders, chiefs' *barazas*, churches, community leaders, children and NGOs. Generally speaking, however, it was the media that played the significant role in informing the education stakeholders on FPE. The information was straightforward and concise ('education is free'). What has been lacking, however, is a sustained and comprehensive communication strategy for FPE by the Ministry of Education.

Though some attempts were made by the Ministry of Education to inform schools through circulars, this did not seem to communicate comprehensive information. There is still confusion over the meaning of FPE and in particular, the roles of stakeholders. At the onset parents and teachers understood FPE as a system whereby children go to school and learn without paying or buying anything. Conversely, they understood that it is the government that provides all facilities and resources required for learning, such as textbooks, chairs and desks, buildings and maintenance.

Teachers and parents noted that information was (and still is) vague on roles and responsibilities. FPE has been much open-ended leaving teachers, schools and parents to figure out the details and its workings. Parents especially have diverse views on FPE and how it should work. Some say that they are only expected to buy school uniforms while others believe that FPE means everything is free, including uniforms.

Many teachers and parents understand FPE as a 'government policy' that has 'relieved parents' of a heavy financial burden. With that burden put aside, parents can now cater for other needs such as school uniforms. More significantly, many believe that the government has taken over full responsibility for primary education and made it free of charge.

4.3.9 Perception of the Respondents about the Goals and Rationale of FPE

Teachers, parents and school committee members are clear about the goals of FPE, which they see as eliminating illiteracy and creating an educated citizenry to participate effectively in the social, economic and political development of the nation. They see FPE as aimed at improving living standards and fighting and eradicating poverty. FPE is seen as a way of bridging the gap between the rich and the poor in terms of access to

education, which is seen as a vehicle for social and economic upward mobility. FPE is a means towards realizing the Children's Act that provides for compulsory and free primary education (UNESCO 2003). Similarly, it is a step toward Education For All (EFA), to which Kenya is a signatory. Indeed FPE aims at catering for the children from poor families and orphans.

Most respondents noted that FPE is meant to reduce school dropouts, reduce the number of street children and child labourers, boost girls' education and increase the quality of education through the provision of learning materials to schools. "FPE was started to provide all children with basic education considering that in the past many did not have a chance because of numerous levies charged in school".

Respondents said FPE has restored the 'right to education' to all children and increased primary school enrolment, especially among the poor. Some remarked that *NARC was aware about the plight of Kenyans, the majority of whom were poor and unable to pay fees for their children. So it started free primary education to ensure that all children got a chance to learn and be assured of a better future*". Further it was observed that "The government realized that there were people who could not afford education. It realized that it had to assist citizens in order to achieve the goal of eradicating illiteracy".

Even then, there are sceptics who believe that FPE is a political venture by the government to fulfill its election promise and comply with international conventions. Implicit in this is the view that the programme was not well thought out and like most political pledges; FE in PPS may not be sustainable.

Teachers and parents recalled how the earlier attempts to provide FE in PPS failed due to lack of funds and other related factors. Thus, the sceptics wonder if the government is prepared this time round to avoid the mistakes of the early 1970s.

The teachers and parents alike felt that the rationale of the policy was to lessen the burden on parents. Parents noted that they could now prepare and save for secondary education. In the past, poor families had to make choices between paying levies for their children in primary and those in secondary schools. Many children had to drop out at the primary level because their parents could not pay for secondary education. With FPE, parents can now plan and save so that by the time the children reach secondary, there are funds to pay their fees. In this context, the provision of FPE is likely to have a positive impact on secondary school enrolment.

One respondent noted, "FPE is beneficial to all. It has improved the quality of our lives. If there is FPE for all, then there would be no need for adult education. Adult education will not be necessary in the future because everyone will have gone to school". The respondents also said that the government had finally recognized that without education, people would not know their rights. If they are educated, they will become self-reliant

and improve their lives. The economy will improve and there will be less cases of thuggery, robbery and idleness.

Pupils said that FPE provided them with a chance to get education, benefited the poor and improved the quality of education. Given that children are no longer sent home for fees, there is consistency in the learning process. Equally, FPE is a way of removing children from the streets and improving their behaviour. Most pupils said that FPE had ensured that all children went to school, even orphans and '*chokoras*': "It is education given to us to enable those who have no resources to educate their children, and will enable those who had dropped out due to school fees to resume learning".

4.3.10 Impact of FPE on School Enrolments

Teachers, parents and pupils in all districts agreed that enrolments had increased tremendously, especially at the beginning of 2003, due to FPE. This was confirmed further from the school enrolment data collected in this study. New enrolments were primarily those who had never been in school before and /or those who had dropped out due to lack of fees. The highest enrolment was recorded in the lower classes, that is, 1, 2 and 3. There were also transfers from private academies to public primary school, a factor that led to closure of several private institutions, mostly in urban areas. However, the majority of transfers into FPE schools were from poorly performing to well-performing public schools. In Nairobi, for example, there was a mass influx of pupils in the slum areas to higher-performing public schools as was the case of Olympic Primary School in Kibera slums, where there were an extra 100 children entering Class 1, which was already full.

With school fees abolished, parents also transferred their children to better-performing public schools closer to home. Some boarding schools experienced decline in enrolment as pupils shifted to public schools. Children were even found crossing from Uganda and Tanzania to join Kenyan schools, particularly along the common borders.

The study established that there was a higher intake of newly-enrolled girls as compared to boys. This meant that FPE brought more girls back to school, some for the first time and others after having dropped out because of poverty or pregnancy. Teachers explained that certain factors forced pupils out of schools before FPE (such as school levies) and these had affected girls more than boys. Consequently, FPE had 'bailed out' more girls than boys as reflected by the enrolment data in PPS. It was also noted that PPS were enrolling pupils who had stayed out of school for three to five years or more because of school fees, early marriages and /or parenting responsibilities. Also enrolled were street children and orphans who had not been able to attend school before due to lack of fees. The high enrolments in urban schools were largely children from streets/market centres and/or slum areas. Some schools received pupils with special needs, whose parents had been keeping them at home.

The study found out that some pupils enrolled in upper classes had already passed their KCPE but decided to 'buy time' in FPE, rather than stay at home because they could not afford to join secondary school. Although the number of new pupils was still going up at the start of 2004, dropout rates were already being experienced. Some parents were moving their children to private boarding primary schools, which are reputed for offering quality education and performing well in KCPE.

4.3.11 FPE and Quality of Education

Views on the impact of FPE on the quality of education were contradictory. On one hand, education quality was said to have improved remarkably with the introduction of FPE. Pupils were spending more time in school since they were not being sent home to collect school fees from parents. Teachers and pupils said learning had improved because there was 'continuous learning' and they had textbooks (some for the first time), exercise books and other reading materials. Though textbooks are shared, teachers and pupils felt that FPE has had a positive impact.

Teachers consider the provision of teaching and learning materials as the major accomplishment of FPE programme. These materials have improved the teaching and learning process. The atlases, wall charts and globes, and the other learning materials have significantly improved the quality of teaching and made syllabus coverage easier. Teachers can now give assignments and prepare in advance for class work.

Pupils actually had much to say about teaching and learning materials, especially the geometrical sets, which they appreciate a lot. However, many observed that there were fewer textbooks and other materials compared to the number of pupils. They have to share books at a ratio of 1:3 and some 1:5 and this made it hard for them to do home works on time.

Despite the appreciations for the provision of textbooks, deep concerns were expressed over the falling quality of education. Teaching and learning has definitely been compromised by large classes and shortage of teachers. The study found teachers handled classes with 60, 70 or 100 pupils. In such cases, pupils hardly got the attention they deserved, hence, many were not learning much. Teacher-pupil interaction is minimal and teachers can only move with the brighter pupils, leaving out the slow learners. Without personalized attention, the weak learners are unlikely to perform well. Teachers admitted that they could not give individualized attention to the pupils and that it was not possible to assist slow learners or those with special needs.

The quality of education is declining under FPE. You teach them, give exercises and mark the books at once. Attention is not given to slow learners and so they will keep lagging behind. "We are just teaching fast learners". Those who teach in the morning also teach in the afternoon. Parents concurred that teachers were overworked. Teachers said that if the government employed more teachers, double shift arrangements could be

feasible and this would ease the current congestion in classes and make teaching more manageable and effective.

Pupils are also worried about the teacher shortage and how the need for more teachers would be met. Repeatedly, they said that teachers were inadequate and could not cater for them. They noted that the teacher shortage had affected the performance of those schools that used to do well in national examinations before FPE. They reported that teachers no longer marked all the exercise books on time because there were so many pupils. Some teachers with many lessons missed some because they could not cope. Others handled two classes at the same time and that affected their performance. This was precisely captured by a respondent who noted that "closes interaction with teachers is not possible because they are busy all the time as they have too much work."

It was also noted that since teachers were giving fewer assignments than before, there was likelihood that this would affect quality. Subjects like mathematics and languages require constant practice and feedback and without that, it is not possible to gauge the pupils' progress. But due to increased workload, teachers had resorted to fewer assignments to avoid a huge marking load. Some teachers were asking pupils to exchange books and mark for each other in class. This, it was reported, affects a teacher's ability to identify pupils' weaknesses and assist them. Some teachers admitted that they had reduced the number of assignments they gave to pupils because they could not cope with the increased workload. Pupils also concurred that teachers had reduced the number of questions in assignments as well as the number of assignments given to them. Pupils further said that teachers gave assignments but did not mark them. They also said that teachers took too long to mark their work. In fact, they confirmed that some teachers asked pupils to exchange and mark their books by themselves. The effect of this practice is realized by teachers and was expressed in the phrase "nowadays instead of giving a lot of assignments, I have turned to giving remedial work because some pupils can't read or write."

Many parents complained about the teacher shortage and its effects on the quality of education. Some observed that typically, urban schools have a better pupil-teacher ratio than rural ones. Parents asked why the government had not rationalized the posting of teachers to deal with the unfair distribution that was skewed against rural schools. Parents sought to know if more teachers would be employed and posted to schools to alleviate the shortage.

The 'any age' admission policy had resulted in many over-age pupils who were finding it difficult to adjust in classes with younger pupils. Newly-enrolled over-aged pupils were found in all schools. Many of them had been working as house-helpers (especially girls) or engaged in other forms of child labour. Teachers complained that some of the older pupils who had been working or married found it hard to follow rules and obey teachers. Such pupils, they noted, ended up having a negative influence on other

pupils. The teachers also reported on parents who insisted that their children had to be placed in certain grades even when they were not intellectually suitable for those classes. Teachers ended up having some pupils, say in Class 6, who could not read or write. In the end, such pupils found it hard to cope and eventually dropped out. Without procedures for assessing prior learning, it is difficult for teachers to determine the appropriate grade level to admit a new pupil. Youth who would have been better suited for adult education enrolled in primary school because it is free.

There is also a problem when admitting children who come to school for the first time directly from home. Many parents who cannot afford nursery school are 'bypassing' it altogether and enrolling their children directly into Class 1. Quite telling, many parents were not ready to pay the nursery school fees. They questioned the rationale of making primary education free but not the nursery class, which ideally should also be free. To this extent, therefore, and given that there was no age limit for admission; parents simply opted to send their under-age children to Class 1 to benefit from free education. Their message was clear: free education should also include nursery school.

All in all, teachers noted that teaching lower classes was tough since they enrolled many pupils, including those who had never attended nursery school. Such pupils did not know even how to hold a pen and basic things. This meant that teachers had to take a lot of time assisting the new learners and had to go slow with syllabus coverage to ensure that everyone moved at the same pace.

Most of the older pupils did not go to nursery school and it becomes difficult for teachers to handle them, for example, a 15-year old in class 1. Those who have not gone through nursery affect the pace and quality of education. Some of the children from the streets do not even know how to hold a pen.

Since the introduction of FPE, continuous assessment tests and examinations have been done away with. Teachers said that they no longer gave frequent exams due to lack of money to print the papers. The fund provided for examination was too little and parents were not willing to pay for exams since all levies had been abolished. The government allocated Ksh.5 a term per child but that was not adequate. Teachers were forced to write exams on the chalkboard but this was difficult when there were many questions. Generally, chalkboards were not big enough to contain many questions and pupils could not cope with a high speed if a teacher had to erase some questions to write new ones. Teachers said that the exams needed to be done regularly to monitor learning progress and increase competitiveness. There were pupils who were not putting much effort because no one would follow them closely.

If teachers have to organize with parents to buy exam papers, they will just be internal ones and these could not be used to compare one school against another. The teachers suggested that there should be frequent examinations and district mocks to allow pupils to compete with others. Pupils concurred that they were not being adequately assessed. This is well captured when one pupil noted that "We are under-examined because instead of the teacher giving five sums or 10, he gives only two which he can easily mark".

Pupils also said that the examination registration (Ksh300) for the KCPE was too high and they wished that the exam fee would be covered under FPE. In particular, it was suggested that orphans who could not afford exam fees should be allowed to take exams without paying. Parents said that the continued levying of exams showed that primary education was not entirely 'free'.

Teachers and parents alike felt that the government should allow holiday tuition to be conducted together with morning and evening preps to ensure effective syllabus coverage. Parents especially complained that tuition ban was likely to affect the performance of class 8 candidates. Pupils complained that teachers no longer gave them extra tuition on Saturdays or holidays because they were not being paid. They said that the weekend and holiday tuition should continue but be 'free' so that every pupil can benefit. Despite the ban, in some schools, parents, the school committee and the head teacher had made some arrangement of carrying out extra tuition and paying the teachers. A parent said: "some teachers provide tuition in a rented venue and advise us to take our children and we pay for it".

4.3.12 Teacher Preparedness for FPE

The majority of the teachers admitted that they were caught off guard with the introduction of FPE. Despite it all, many were upbeat with the provision of various teaching and learning materials that were capturing their interests. The teaching and learning materials had improved their performance since they were able to cover the syllabus and teach new concepts easily and faster. They were also able to give assignments, without writing them on the chalkboard. With the teachers' books and reference materials, lesson preparation was also easier than before. However, an uncontrolled admission with large enrolments has affected teachers' performance and morale. Teachers were overwhelmed with the workload, thus they left some classes and subjects untaught. Teachers increasingly resorted to giving out fewer assignments to pupils.

Teachers said that they did not have enough time to complete the syllabus and revise the work done. Views on teachers' performance varied among the respondents. Most parents and pupils felt that the teachers had really tried to cope with FPE and had done their best in teaching the large pupil numbers, hence they deserved praise. However, some said that coping mechanisms adopted by teachers such as giving fewer assignments were undermining the quality of education. We heard from pupils that there were teachers who had become relaxed and lazy, some were drunkards and

absented themselves from class. But the teachers felt that they have been up for the task while admitting that FPE had been a lot of work.

This study has found out that the workload of teachers was progressively demotivating them. Teachers said it was difficult to pay attention to more than 50 pupils in class. They did not give assignments because they did not have time to mark all of them objectively.

The overload on the part of the teachers was noted well in the phrase “we feel frustrated since the government knows so well there is an increase in enrolment in schools but it doesn’t want to employ more teachers. We can’t cope with the workload.” Added to this are problems of indiscipline, especially among the newly-enrolled and over-age pupils. Indiscipline was said to be very demotivating. Teachers said that since they no longer caned children, indiscipline was rampant in schools. Teachers’ morale was low and that meant poor classroom management. New pupils were reportedly fond of insulting others and teachers could not do anything about it. They said even if they tried guidance and counselling, it was not possible to do that with a class of more than 50 pupils. Teachers now realized that it was not always easy to teach the over-age (young father’s) especially in lower primary. “These young adults feel shy in the midst of the young ones who call them ‘baba’ (father). “In my classes, these old pupils beat the young ones and recently it was reported that some of them nearly raped young girls on their way home after school”, one teacher noted.

Teachers talked of fatigue and lack of job satisfaction. Many get to school early in the morning and leave late in the evening and yet do not complete their work. It is hard to give individual attention to pupils. “I teach because I have to earn my daily bread. Otherwise, teaching a class of 100 pupils is like preaching in a church”.

Teachers say that they were never prepared to effectively manage large classes, let alone communicate effectively with every pupil. They are ill-equipped to deal with a double-shift system, especially when it is the same teacher handling both morning and afternoon shifts. They say by lunchtime, they are already tired and cannot teach properly in the afternoon. The afternoon classes suffer. They feel that FPE is putting more emphasis on quantity than on quality.

You can find yourself having five groups in Class 1. One group from nursery, which is good, and another that is slightly below average and another that never went to nursery and can’t even hold a pencil. In this case, the teacher ends up doing nursery work, pre-unit work and the Class 1 work.

Teachers admitted that their performance was declining. They talked of lack of motivation, which meant that they might not implement the programme to the best of their ability. Under the circumstances, it was likely that performance of schools may go down with time. Talking to teachers, one got the impression that many were just in the job to earn a salary: *The will to teach is there, but the strength has gone down because of*

large numbers of pupils. For me the number of children is large and I can't teach them the way I should. It takes much longer to mark books than before; and another voice: Many of us have double work and are overburdened. It is only the parents who are benefiting from FPE. The government should think of teachers because we (teachers) are carrying the burden.

Although not directly related to FPE, the teachers raised the issue of lack of career progression, which they said was demoralizing. Many of them had stayed in particular grades – P1 – for more than 15 years. With the increased workload under FPE, the question of promotion has taken another dimension. They were saying if they were to work effectively and make FPE succeed, then the government must fast-track the job grading system so that many could move up the ladder. The frustration was also compounded by the fact that some of them have done extra courses to improve their skills but had not been upgraded or promoted. Further, there are no longer any rewards given to teachers who excel. After FPE was introduced, parents stopped offering rewards to teachers. In the past they did that, and it motivated teachers to put more effort in their work.

Parents noted that teachers' performance had improved under FPE because they were provided with adequate teaching aids, reference materials and textbooks that enabled them to prepare their lessons well. Provision of textbooks and exercise books to pupils made teaching easier.

Some parents admitted that teachers have been working harder because there are more pupils to teach. Parents see the extra efforts that teachers are making, such as lower primary teachers assisting colleagues in upper primary. On the issue of syllabus, parents felt that the teachers were generally prepared since it had been changing over the years. The problem was the delay in the arrival of the teaching materials that had put teachers in an awkward situation.

Most parents argued that teachers should be better paid. It was noted that teachers were the backbone of society and should be paid well as "all of us have to pass through their hands". Some parents would like teachers to be allowed to do tuition (extra coaching) for pupils. This way they would get additional income for the extra work from parents. Before FPE, parents used to boost morale and motivate teachers, but today it has stopped and teachers have just decided to 'relax' and drink or simply be absent. Parents said they were powerless; they cannot do anything about teacher performance and behaviour.

Parents candidly disclosed that some financially able parents had withdrawn their children from public primary schools because teachers' performance had gone down. They predicted more transfers of this kind. Pupils had mixed views about teachers' performance. Some said teachers were performing well. With the provisions of textbooks and reference materials as well as teaching aids like wall charts, teachers were able to prepare well for their lessons and were able to give illustrations that made it easier for the pupils to understand concepts being taught. Yet many pupils confirmed that teachers' performance had gone down since the inception of

FPE and this had, in turn, adversely affected the performance of pupils and schools at large. Large numbers of pupils in classes made it difficult for the teachers to give attention to all the pupils, especially slow learners. Some felt that teachers were rushing over issues/topics in class and gave very few examples and therefore many children could not understand. Teachers were also giving fewer assignments, as it was not possible for them to mark all the work effectively. They said that teachers only benefited the few fast learners in class.

Teachers in Embu, Busia and Kwale, among other districts, complained that they were not prepared at all for the FPE. They were not prepared to handle larger classes and over-age pupils. Teachers had to handle pupils of diverse age groups and that was difficult. The teacher-pupil ratio showed a serious shortage of teachers; this meant a heavy workload for the teachers. Some teachers complained of misconceptions, whereby it was being alleged that more teachers had been posted to their schools yet they had never received any. But the teachers reported that they were learning to cope with the difficulties.

Teachers reported that they were poorly motivated. They work so hard and take care of so many children with different needs and nobody appreciates their work even after a good performance. The workload is too heavy. It becomes very frustrating and many feel like giving up. The syllabus keeps changing and teachers have a problem accessing the recommended books on time.

Teachers lamented about poor pay. It was reported that the gap between the graduate teachers and PI teachers was too big. Teachers were frustrated because they try had to improve their education levels by doing extra courses at their own expense, yet they never get promoted. Some pointed out that only corrupt individuals were able to get promotions through unfair means. On the other hand, teachers were happy that now they have all children attending classes without having to be sent away to get school fees. That is good for consistency and quality learning.

Teachers complained that the syllabus was changing too fast and printers were taking time to print the required books and that affected teaching. They commended the ministry for trying to provide teaching and learning materials. They reported that they had more manila papers unlike before. They felt that the money allocated was focused more on the pupils than on the teachers.

On the issue of whether teachers were adequately prepared or not, parents and school committees in Nakuru district noted some of the new pupils were direct from home while others had been in school and dropped out because of some problems and were now coming back because education was now 'free'. The majority of such pupils were slow in understanding what was being taught and attempts to make them catch with the others dragged syllabus coverage. Teachers were not prepared as to how to handle such pupils, not to mention that some of the newly-enrolled were not suited for their grades. Teachers were also not prepared for the double-shift

system because it meant that the same teacher handled both sessions because of staff shortage.

Considering that the number of teachers was still low and there were no additional teachers vis-à-vis the increased number of pupils, teachers ended up being overworked because class sizes were large. This translated into increased workloads especially in marking assignments. In addition, the teacher shortage meant that one teacher handled several subjects in different classes. "Some teachers tell us that they have up to 38 out of 45 lessons in a week and others have at least 42 out of the 45 – I wonder when they do the marking."

Teaching and learning materials were also delivered late. Some only came at the end of the second term. The government was not punctual in providing the funds, thus causing delay in purchases and this affected the teaching and learning process.

Parents and opinion leaders in Kwale district gave contrasting views regarding teacher preparedness. About a half of them argued that the teachers were neither prepared for the programme nor the increased workload. They observed that even before the introduction of FPE, the number of teachers was inadequate. The teachers were also not prepared for the massive increase of pupils. Apart from the inability of teachers to give proper attention to pupils, levels of indiscipline have also increased, a development they said teachers were not prepared for: "The teachers were caught off guard since not everyone believed it would be implemented. When it was started, no preparations had been done."

On the other hand, a lot of parents and opinion leaders felt that although the teachers had not been adequately prepared for FPE, they had done well in implementing it: "They must have been prepared in the mind because they have management skills to implement the programme well."

It clearly emerged that teachers were not prepared for the FPE. The majority of the teachers admitted that they were not prepared to handle the large number of pupils who had enrolled in school. They also said that they were not prepared to handle pupils of such significant age differences and learning capabilities in the same class. They admitted that they were not ready for the current increased workload.

Issues on teachers' preparedness for FPE in Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret, Busia, Bungoma, Rachuonyo, Kisumu, Kitui, Mombasa, Isiolo, Marsabit, Nyandarua, and Thika appear to conform to what has been discussed under Embu and Kwale cases.

4.3.13 Knowledge and Understanding of FPE

This study sought to establish how the various respondents, namely, teachers, pupils and parents, understood the policy of FPE. Did they understand FPE in the same way? The study attempted to establish how knowledgeable these stakeholders were on FPE-related issues and to identify any existing knowledge gaps in the conceptualization of FPE. The

study found out that, although there is a consensus among the stakeholders that FPE is a government-supported system of education that provides teaching and learning materials freely to the pupils, there are variations in the interpretations of what the government was expected to provide 'freely'.

The typical definition of FPE by teachers in Bomet district is that it is a government system of education whereby parents are assisted by the government to meet some of the costs of primary school education. One teacher had the following definition of FPE.

Table 14. Knowledge and understanding of FPE

Respondents	Verbatim Meaning of FPE
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the arrangement by government to ensure that parents are assisted in terms of meeting the cost of school for primary children. • It is an effort made by government to ease the burden borne by parents for buying learning materials for their children and building of schools.
Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme in which parents do not pay anything. Books and pens are provided in school. • It is a system whereby pupils do not pay money in order to learn. It is a system of education that does not require us to pay money.
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a system whereby pupils do not pay money in order to learn. It is a system of education that does not require us to pay money. • FPE is a system where everything is free. In free education, the government builds the school for you, the government employs teachers, and it buys books and all the necessary learning materials. The only work of the parent is to send the child to school. • The way I understand, FPE is a system where children are sent to school without anything, they find books and teachers freely; we also expect the school to provide them with uniforms. This has enabled all children from where I come to go to school – even those who are over age.

Table 15. The perceived goals of FPE by teachers and parents in Bomet District

Teachers' perceived goals of FPE	Parents' perceived goals of FPE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To eradicate illiteracy among Kenyans and especially the children irrespective of their background • To enable the poor to educate their children • To improve the level of education by enabling all children of school-going age to enroll in school • To eradicate poverty in the long run • To reduce child labour • Ensure all Kenyans to receive basic education • Make people self-reliant in future • Discourage early marriages • To empower people with effective survival skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist the poor parents to educate their children • To bring down levels of illiteracy in the country • To provide primary education to all school-going children • To eliminate child labour • To help parents to prepare and save for secondary education • To promote equality of both rich and poor • To remove crimes because even street children can learn • To enable children to get opportunities of employment in future.

This study found out that the manifest goal of the FPE as perceived by the parents was to help the poor parents to educate their children. More specifically, parents explained that FPE is largely geared towards helping the poor, disabled and orphaned children to access primary level education, which they were not able to access readily before its introduction. For this reason, some parents were angered by the fact that FPE was all inclusive and benefited all children irrespective of their socio-economic background. To ease the congestion reported in many primary schools covered, such parents strongly recommended that FPE should exclude the children of the rich.

Pupils in Busia district had a clear understanding of FPE. To them, FPE means that the government provides pupils with exercise books, textbooks, pens, pencils and other teaching and learning materials. They described it as a relief to parents, who were no longer required to pay fees or buy books and other items that children use in schools (*Under free primary education, parents do not pay any money and it is the government that provides books, pens, and other materials that we need in school; In the past, we were paying fees but*

with free primary education, we just learn free of charge and get all materials that we need at school because they are provided by the government).

There were indications, though, that some pupils misunderstood FPE as they thought it meant the government was to provide everything, including uniforms, lunch and exam fees: “FPE means that the government even pays exam fees for children while parents only provide food and uniform.”

Teachers in Embu district noted that they received information on FPE through the radio, newspapers, TV, head teacher and from some parents. They also heard about FPE through the NARC campaigns prior to the December 2002 elections and also through the chief’s barazas.

On the goals and rationale of FPE, teachers reported that: it was a political tool to enable NARC to win the elections; to educate and remove children from the streets; to relieve parents of financial burdens of paying school fees; to provide all children a chance to learn; to eradicate illiteracy; to minimize child labour; and to reduce poverty in the long run.

In Kisumu district, teachers had a good knowledge about the goals and objectives of FPE, namely, to eliminate illiteracy, create an educated citizenry and eradicate poverty. They also said that FPE was a way of fulfilling the provisions of the Children’s Act that calls for compulsory and free primary education. Similarly, it is a means to realizing the Education For All (EFA) goals, to which Kenya is a signatory: “FPE was started to provide all children with basic education considering that in the past many did not have a chance because of numerous levies charged in schools.”

Some respondents also viewed FPE as a political gimmick in that NARC was implementing the programme to fulfil an election pledge. Implicit in this is the view that the programme may not have been well thought out and like all political issues, may not be sustainable: “I think the NARC is fulfilling its election campaign promise of providing free and compulsory education.”

Unless it is clearly explained to them, parents are likely to take a back seat in the provision of education, which is risky. They need to be told their roles and made to understand that educating their children is first and foremost their responsibility. So, when the government has taken over the duty of providing teaching and learning materials, they should provide facilities like classrooms or toilets. They should provide uniforms, food and other basic things their children need. This was emphasized severally by teachers: “Parents and other community members should supplement the efforts of the government on the provision of FPE. They should organize fund drives to put up more classrooms and other physical facilities like toilets to accommodate the large numbers of children enrolled in schools.”

Most importantly, with the burden of paying fees removed for their children in primary schools, the teachers said the parents should make plans to educate them when they reach secondary level. They should also take a keen interest in what their children learn and discipline them. In so doing, they would be able to take issue when their children are not taught because

of lack of teachers and in that way, seek ways to redress the problem. It is worth noting that in the past parents contributed money to hire teachers wherever there was a shortfall and that helped to ensure quality. This has stopped with FPE; yet this is the time that schools need more teachers given the increased numbers of children.

Some teachers also indicated that FPE was not a new development. They knew the programme had been implemented in the past – before independence and in the 1970s – but never worked. The point here is that the people were sceptical about the success of the programme this time round. Equally important, they were pointing out that the current government has a history to draw from as it implements FPE. The programme has many pitfalls and due care has to be taken if it has to succeed.

Despite the divergent views of the respondents in Kwale district, there seemed to be aware that FPE referred to 'free' education where the government pays for expenses previously covered by parents. However, they were not all clear about the role of parents in the FPE implementation process.

The majority of the parents reported that FPE meant pupils learning without paying any school fees. The government was also supposed to provide all learning materials as well as desks, maintenance and construction of classrooms with parents' role being limited only to buying the school uniform. This was captured in the sentiments: "We took it to mean that there will be no more buying of books and paying of any school levies apart from buying uniforms."

Still a few parents and school committee members felt FPE meant that everything would be 'free' and that nothing would be levied on the parents anymore. Others indicated that the government would even provide uniforms for the pupils. The main argument was that, if the parents buy the school uniform then the programme is not entirely 'free'. "Look at the word free (*bure*), when something is free, it means free...that everything will be done for you....the child will be given everything."

Parents said they obtain information on FPE from various sources. However, for the majority, the 2002 election campaigns were their main source of information on FPE since it was one of the main pledges made by NARC, then a coalition of opposition parties. Other sources cited included the mass media and head teacher, who shared information on the new government policy: "Most children were at home because of school fees...but now they are in school."

Interestingly, a few participants felt that FPE was just among the many political campaign pledges and had nothing to do with helping the poor. Those who were of this opinion, felt that the government's commitment to the success of this process could not be trusted.

An attempt to determine pupils' understanding of FPE revealed that pupils are quite aware of FPE. They said FPE meant getting education without

paying any levies such as books, pens, pencils, geometrical sets and rulers provided by the government. A few pupils added that it was education for all, because even those who could not afford fees in the past can now go to school. They also recognized that FPE was introduced through a presidential directive.

On the goals of FPE, the majority of teachers in Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret, Busia, Bungoma, Rachuonyo, Kisumu, Embu, Kitui, Mombasa, Kwale, Isiolo, Marsabit, Nyandarua, and Thika districts concurred on a number of issues. They said that the major goal of FPE was to enable every child to acquire basic education by removing the burden of paying school fees by the parents in order to fight and eradicate illiteracy in the country.

A few others felt that FPE was meant to reduce school dropout rates, increase the quality of education through the provision of learning materials to schools, reduce child labour, boost girls' education as well as reduce the number of street children. They also argued that, generally, FPE was meant to improve living conditions and eradicate poverty in the country.

The teachers sampled from Nairobi schools gave various views on what they understand FPE to mean and how they perceived it. According to teachers, FPE meant children going to learn without paying or buying anything like learning materials, equipment and school uniforms being provided with all facilities needed for learning such as buildings and books provided by the government. Thus, the government meets the entire cost or payments in the school.

They also described it as formal learning where there was no payment of fees or cost-sharing by the parents for their children from Class 1 to 8: "The government provides everything like learning materials, teachers and buildings so that the child walks into school and walks out without paying anything."

It also meant provision of free teachers whereby the parents do not pay them. The government pays for teachers, electricity and workers in the school. FPE enabled all children go to school irrespective of whether they come from rich or poor families. It gave a chance to the disabled and those with special learning needs; hence, children from all walks of life are able to go to school.

Through FPE, the government provides for all the learning necessities for Kenyan citizens between five to 18 years of age from Class 1 to 8 and education is compulsory. In some schools, pupils felt that there are inadequate desks and chairs in most classes due to the increased number of pupils. They have ended up squeezing, with some sitting on the floor mats or stools: "Some do not have desks, they look for pieces of wood to put between two seats to use as a seat."

Pupils in Nairobi felt that one major effect of FPE was that now they are congested in classrooms and this affected teaching and discipline: "Because we are squeezed, if you have something in your pocket, someone can take it and you cannot know."

Pupils also felt that teachers were not adequate when compared to the number of pupils. This, according to pupils, has affected the performance of the public schools in national examinations. Some of them that used to do well no longer topped the ranking list. In some cases, the pupils reported that teachers were not doing their work effectively and were relaxed.

Parents in Nairobi made the following observations on what FPE is all about:

- It is a form of education where the government provides funds to school to purchase all teaching and learning materials. It is 'free' education to enable all children go to school and get basic education.
- It is an education system where the government provides for all the required learning materials and the pupils and teachers are expected to receive the same without any payment – absolutely 'free' education: "You walk in and out, lunch is given, you pay nothing and the parents have no liability because everything is free. The children get everything they require to learn as they are provided for by the government."
- FPE is an effort by the NARC government to assist poor parents, who could not afford to pay school fees or the required textbooks and stationery, to send their children to school without making any contributions. It is an education system that seeks to create equality among all pupils regardless of their backgrounds.

The respondents said that they learnt about FPE through the media and NARC political campaigns in 2002. Information was also obtained from government officials such as chiefs and education officers from Ministry of Education and the City Education Department. They also learnt about FPE through seminars, other parents as well as their children. They also said they had learnt about the programme through NARC's election campaigns in 2002.

When probed about the goals and rationale of FPE, they said it was to provide every citizen with a chance to learn and improve their economic status. It was aimed at eliminating illiteracy, child labour and retrogressive traditional practices such as early marriage in some communities.

Teachers quoted various sources of knowledge about FPE. For example: "The NARC leaders told us: if you give us votes, we will provide you with free primary education."

The other sources were circulars sent to schools by the MoEST. They also learnt about it through the teachers, churches, public gatherings, NGOs and the children themselves.

Parents had a fair knowledge about FPE in Nakuru district. They said FPE meant the government was providing learning and teaching materials such as textbooks, exercise books, chalk, maps, and charts, among others. By doing this, the government was offering a relief to parents and ensuring that all children, particularly those from poor background, had access to education. In the past, many children were locked out of school because of numerous levies.

An element that came out of the parents' understanding of FPE is that they had a minimal role in its implementation. In view of the fact that the government has undertaken to provide the teaching and learning materials, parents could sit back and let the children enjoy the free provisions. This impression had a negative impact on the implementation of the programme because everything is being left to the government, yet it cannot provide everything.

At the same time, parents were aware that this was not the first time that the government was introducing FPE. They said similar attempts had been made in the past in the 1970s but was dropped midway due to several constraints, including lack of funds: *Talk about free primary education started before independence. During campaigns for independence, African leaders promised to provide their people with free education if they took power. Indeed, this was done by President Jomo Kenyatta in the 1970s but it never went for long.*

In Isiolo district, parents said they got the information through political rallies addressed by NARC politicians in 2002 and later through radio, newspapers and Chief's barazas. Some also said that they were informed by head teachers, who convened meetings at the schools and told them about the programme.

4.4 Impact of FPE on School Enrolments

In January 2003, Kenya had recorded unprecedented declines in primary school enrolment and increasing dropout rates due to rising levels of poverty and social problems, child labour, early marriages and increased number of orphans due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, among others. In fact, to a large extent, FPE was launched to address the twin problems of falling primary school enrolments and increasing dropout rates. Data on this issue are presented in the subsequent subsections.

In Bomet District, the findings of this study show that after the introduction of the FPE, there was a massive influx of children to primary schools that overwhelmed the existing classrooms in some schools in Bomet District. Data from teachers confirm that the majority of the new enrollees were pupils who had been out of school for various reasons. In this regard, one teacher observed:

In our school, we have experienced large intake due to those who had been out of school because our neighbourhood is poverty stricken. There are many orphans who live with their grandparents who could not afford to feed them, let alone taking them to school. Before the introduction of

FPE, some children worked as house-helpers, took casual jobs, or engaged in any other work that could provide them with food.

Another teacher further noted that before the FPE, some children lacked motivation to go to primary school since they were discouraged by their parents. Such parents reasoned that there was no point in taking children to primary schools if they (parents) knew very well that they could not afford to take them to secondary schools. This reasoning ultimately discouraged many children from enrolling. However, after the introduction of FPE, teachers and parents unanimously reported that there was an increase in enrolments for those who had been forced to stay out of school. Consequently, FPE seems to have benefited the targeted category of children who, due to myriads of factors, had been forced out of the school system.

The findings of this study show that there were very few transfers from private schools to public schools. Some schools reported transfers of pupils from public to private schools. Obviously, these were the children of the relatively able parents who could afford the high tuition charged in private schools. In this regard, one teacher had the following to report: "Many parents are taking their children to private schools or other better public schools to get quality education. There are no facilities here as you have seen for yourselves."

If the initial teething problems associated with FPE are not addressed, public primary schools will be regarded as "dumping ground" for the children of the poor. In addition, if quality of education is compromised in public primary schools, part of the massive government resources allocated to the FPE could go to waste or fail to benefit the targeted population.

This study found an emerging consensus among teachers and parents that more girls than boys enrolled. How can we explain this reality? On their part, teachers explained the factors that forced pupils out of school before the advent of FPE and how they affected the girl child more than the boy child. As a result, the new policy 'bailed out' more girls than boys as reflected by the higher number of enrolments among girls than boys.

Teachers observed that there are mixed ages in each class. For example, some teachers said that "there are children who are over-age". Examples of over-age pupils given by teachers include 13-year old pupils in Class 2, 20-year old in Class 8 and so on. Another respondent in the same school pointed out that most of the over-age children enrolling in school were formerly baby sitters in the tea plantations before the introduction of FPE.

In Busia district, it was noted that increased enrolment changed class size, class interaction, pupil-desk ratio, school schedule (double-shift), discipline among others. As noted earlier, teachers were in agreement that FPE encouraged more enrolments that increased especially at lower levels. In fact, the majority of teachers reported that the number of pupils had shot up too high, increasing the respective class size remarkably. This view was echoed by pupils themselves who reasoned that the new enrolments helped

to expand class sizes. For example, one pupil reported: “We were few last year but now many new pupils have joined our class. Almost 20 new pupils have joined Class 7.”

The problem of teacher shortage in primary schools was expressed very clearly by pupils. The following views clearly suggest that pupils experienced and understood the problem of teacher shortage in their school.

At the moment, one teacher handles three subjects in a number of classes, but before FPE, a teacher taught only one subject in different classes.

In our school, we have eight teachers and I see that they are not enough because some have to teach two to four subjects in every class.

In general, teachers explained that since the inception of the FPE, the large classes and the many subjects they had to teach overwhelmed them. For this reason, some teachers admitted that the performance of some of them had declined. In making this point, one teacher had this to say: “The will to teach is there, but the strength has gone down because of large numbers of pupils.”

Another teacher reasoned that they could not perform as they used to after the inception of the FPE: “We have to take much more time marking pupils’ work, leaving us with very little time to prepare for lessons.” Another teacher who voiced the following concerns echoed the same sentiments:

I think it is true we do not have time to even prepare teaching aids because there is a lot of work. Teachers are undergoing stress, at the end of the day, I feel so tired that I cannot even do any other thing and yet the government is doing nothing to motivate us. If at all the ministry would have motivated us, it would have been better.

The study reveals that the overwhelming work associated with FPE without a corresponding increase in salaries has demotivated teachers – who are critical stakeholders in the implementation of FPE. As a result, teachers’ performance has decreased – as exemplified by the way they teach, mark pupils’ work and handle pupils. Further, two serious concerns, viz. absenteeism and drunkenness, were reported that could seriously undermine the quality of education.

Table 16. Reasons for teachers’ poor performance

Teachers’ reasons	Pupils’ reasons	Parents’ reasons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of moral support and additional payments from parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demoralized teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly prepared teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of teachers’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers indifferent

of multi-age classes	commitment to their work	to pupils' needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many pupils compared to the available teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large numbers of pupils in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate teaching and reading materials for classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate teaching and learning materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor administrative structures to ensure effective inspection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread cases of indiscipline among pupils mainly due to withdrawal of the cane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwillingness on the part of teachers to do away with corporal punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated cases of drunkenness among teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate time to give pupils individual attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't care attitude among teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laxity and laziness among teachers

The study found that while all teachers appreciated government efforts in providing textbooks and other teaching and learning materials to schools, they differed in their assessment on how much the government should provide the school materials. On the one hand, there were some teachers who share the view that the government had done more than enough in providing the essential supplies. Such teachers suggested that parents should be involved in the provision of the essential supplies to schools to supplement government efforts. One pupil summarized this point by stating: "There are not enough textbooks and exercise books are not replaced once they are filled up."

This study found out that due to inadequacies of space, textbooks, desks and chairs, normal class disputes were quite frequent. In particular, congestion in classrooms was a cause of many petty class quarrels. But despite such disputes, pupils still reported that in general, they had healthy relationships with their classmates.

Teachers stated that it had become increasingly difficult for them to give and mark many pupils' assignments as was expected. In explaining this situation, one teacher had this to report: "Nowadays, instead of giving a lot of assignments, I have turned to giving remedial work because some pupils cannot read or write." Another one added: "You cannot mark all the assignments before you go for the next lesson because of the large number of pupils."

However, teachers denied the allegation that they do not give assignments at all. In a situation where teachers were overwhelmed by large number of pupils, they expected parents to help their children with home works. Indeed, some teachers blamed those parents who were indifferent to their children's homework. To cope with the overwhelming class sizes, teachers had to reduce the number of questions given in an assignment as well as the

number of the assignments. Nonetheless, teachers were fully convinced that they were doing their best.

The study found out that the double-shift system was not common in the schools covered in Busia. Teachers explained that it was not possible to have double-shift schedules because of the acute shortage of teachers. This mode of provision of education would be the most appropriate in a situation where class sizes are overwhelming. However, given the limited number of teachers, it would force teachers to teach the whole day without a break – those who teach the morning shift. Teachers observed that if the government employed more teachers, the double-shift arrangement could help ease the current congestion in classes experienced in many schools.

Most parents in Kwale district who participated in this study felt that primary school enrolment had increased since the introduction of FPE. In some schools it was reported that enrolment had almost doubled or even tripled. It was also noted that most new admissions were in the lower grades. A teacher in one school remarked, “Enrolment has increased by more than 100 per cent. Before 2003, enrolment in Standard One was normally about 50 pupils. But by 2003, we managed to enrol 120 pupils in Class 1, which is more than 100 per cent increase.”

The tremendous increase in enrolment was attributed to the increase in the number of children joining primary school for the first time rather than those transferring from private schools. The majority of the participants argued that there were no transfers from private to public schools since there were either few or no private schools in the surrounding areas. It also emerged that the economic status of most parents could not allow them to send their children to private schools. However, a few parents from schools near urban areas (like Denyenye, Mariakani, Mvita, Mwaroni) reported that there had been a few transfers from private to public schools.

In terms of gender, respondents noted that enrolment had increased for both girls and boys after the introduction of FPE. However, more girls than boys enrolled compared to previous years: “Initially girls were staying at home to help with domestic work because boys were given priority when resources were limited but now all go to school.”

Respondents observed that there was no discrimination in enrolment based on age. It was reported that in some schools there were cases of enrolment of over-age pupils. There were cases where those above 15 years were enrolled in Class 1. However, participants agreed that there could have been a few isolated cases of discrimination during enrolment.

The majority of the parents agreed that the provision of funds by the government for the purchase of teaching and other learning materials has been one of the major accomplishments of FPE in the area. The increased enrolment of pupils in schools was also cited as an important accomplishment of FPE. Other accomplishments mentioned included the provision of money by the government for repairs and maintenance.

On challenges faced, the majority of the parents argued that lack of teachers was one of the major hindrances to the implementation of FPE. They also cited lack of adequate classrooms to accommodate the large number of pupils especially in lower grades as another challenge. It was reported that in some schools the number of pupils in Class 1 exceeded 300 and such a large number could not be accommodated in the available classrooms.

Some participants felt that the directive from the government to parents not to pay any school levies was a major setback. They argued that many projects that had been initiated by the parents (such as construction of classrooms, building toilets and purchase of desks) had stalled since the introduction of FPE.

Another challenge cited is lack of adequate learning materials like textbooks. Participants also observed that with FPE, movement of pupils from one school to another was no longer controlled as head teachers were not allowed to deny anyone admission. This, it was argued, compromises discipline in schools because pupils with disciplinary problems moved from one school to another freely.

There were contradictory views on teachers' performance. A few participants noted that teachers' performance had improved since teachers now had enough reference materials and that pupils now hardly missed schools. Some based their argument on the improvement in performance by some schools in the previous year's Class 8 examination results.

However, most parents argued that the teachers now have a big workload as they had a larger number of pupils to attend to. This made it difficult for the teachers to give individualized attention to the pupils. This, they argued, compromises teachers' performance.

There was consensus that since the introduction of FPE, teachers are demotivated and frustrated. The majority of parents attributed this to the large number of pupils in schools. "Pupils are many and therefore class control is hard so the teacher is frustrated and demoralized." Some parents, however, contradicted this view claiming that teachers were happy with their work.

Regarding the role of the head teacher, the majority of the parents concurred that the head teacher has effectively sensitized parents and other community members about FPE. This had been done during meetings with parents.

A few parents also argued that the head teacher had enrolled pupils without considering their age or academic abilities. So there were some over-age pupils in a class they were not suited for. They said head teacher should take full charge over the use of school funds and oversee repairs and even construction of facilities. The head teacher should keep informing parents, committee members and the community of what was going on in regard to FPE.

On teachers' role in the implementation of FPE, parents reported that the teachers continued doing good work despite increased workload. They were teaching without complaining. They further observed that teachers have been teaching extra hours at no pay to prepare candidates well for national examinations and also assist slow learners in other classes.

Nothing much was said about parents' role in the implementation of FPE. Most respondents, though, said parents were responsible for providing food, shelter and uniform to their children and ensuring that they go to school without default: "I want to tell you that we were happy and we will continue taking the children to school."

A few of the parents also felt that the parent had the role of inspecting the pupils' books and visiting schools to monitor the progress of their children. There was a general consensus that parents did not understand the role of the school committees. Even some of the committee members did not understand their role in the new policy. Some committee members said that their role had been reduced to rubber-stamping what has already been decided by the head teacher concerning the different vote heads. The majority of parents, however, argued that the school committees' role was to mobilize parents to bring their children to school, monitor the use of FPE funds and generally oversee the running of the school: "The school committee no longer quarrels with parents because education is now free. The committee now educates parents on the importance of FPE."

While the majority of the parents were not clear about the role of the community leaders in the implementation of FPE, they did, however, agree that other local community members have been supportive of the programme and have been encouraging parents to take their children to school.

Regarding the role of sponsors and other NGOs in the implementation of FPE, the majority of the parents noted that the main role of the sponsors was to provide spiritual and moral support to the school. They also noted that some donors had supported the schools by constructing classrooms and providing teaching and learning materials. A few parents reported, though, that they had not seen what sponsors had done and so could not acknowledge them for anything.

Teachers in notable districts such as Embu, Kisumu, Nairobi and Mombasa, observed that FPE was a political tool to enable NARC to win the hearts of the electorate. That is, FPE would educate and remove children from the streets; relieve parents of financial burdens of paying school fees; give all children a chance to learn; eradicate illiteracy; minimize child labour; and reduce poverty in the long run. All the schools experienced a general increase in enrolment, especially at the beginning of 2003. However, in 2004, there was a low increase in enrolment and about five to ten pupils per class were missing in lower primary.

In Mugui Primary School, Embu district it was reported that girls who were previously maids were enrolling more than the boys and they generally

performed better. St. Mary's Muchagori Primary School reported a higher enrolment for boys. The entry ages were generally 9 to 14 years though there were few over-age pupils.

In Kisumu district there was consensus that FPE had positive impacts, key among them being that it increased enrolment and ensured that children, who would otherwise have wasted away, got a chance to learn: "Quite a number of children, who had dropped out of school due to levies charged before, have come back and are adjusting well."

Two, provision of teaching and learning materials has significantly improved the quality of teaching. Teachers, pupils and parents said that the first time they were provided with teaching materials like atlases, wall charts and a globe, which made the teaching and learning process easier and enjoyable. Teachers can now give assignments and be assured that they would be done. With the textbooks, pupils can now do private studies at home and prepare in advance for class work.

Three, teachers and parents reported that FPE has seen more girls enrolling in school, especially those who had withdrawn to work as house helps or even get married as their parents could not pay the levies charged in the past. Even then, some teachers indicated that some parents still kept their children out of school to help them do domestic chores, including looking after animals or farming. It should be noted though that a physical check of classrooms in some schools showed that FPE had resulted in optimum utilization of facilities. Due to the levies charged in the past, enrolments had dropped to about 20 pupils per class in some schools but this has now gone up to about 35 or 40 pupils, which is ideal. In fact, some respondents admitted that the new enrolments have ensured that some spaces that were not being used are now utilized.

While teachers sought to determine new pupils' abilities and place them in suitable classes, many parents did not agree with that. They kept insisting that their children be placed in particular classes even when the children were not suited for them. So, teachers talked of having some pupils in Class 6 who cannot read or write; yet their parents insisted that they be kept in those classes. Since some classes were big and teachers also had a heavy workload, such pupils hardly got the attention they deserved; hence they were not learning much. One teacher thus remarked:

At the beginning of this year, we enrolled a 12-year old pupil in Class Two. What is happening is that pupils are admitted to various classes without considering their ages and academic background. Although he had appeared to be knowledgeable, it later emerged that he could not cope and he dropped out of school.

We had to admit a girl in Class Seven because her parents insisted that she was mature and had to join big girls. Yet, she cannot read or write and there is no way she will catch up in other subjects.

Added to this, teachers said, some of the older pupils who had been working or married are undisciplined. They find it hard to follow rules and obey teachers and are poor role models to other pupils: “FPE has brought in some rude pupils. Since caning was banned, it is difficult to discipline such pupils by merely talking to them. We feel that teachers should be allowed to use the cane once in a while.”

Not all over-age pupils are a problem, though. Teachers reported that some over-age pupils were catching up and doing well in class. What they required was support and encouragement so that they can exploit their potential.

4.5 Discipline in Schools

In all the districts covered by this study most teachers expressed their concern about the general decline in discipline since the implementation of FPE. First, teachers placed the blame on parents. One teacher explained this as follows: “Some parents discuss teachers negatively with their children. They even tell them bad things about teachers; hence pupils have no respect for teachers.”

Further, teachers cited incidences where pupils carry crude weapons to school and some pupils abuse drugs and are difficult to manage. Teachers disclosed that “these pupils even introduce these drugs to other innocent pupils.” Indeed, the indiscipline at home and village is carried over to school – where teachers are left to enforce discipline alone. The majority of the parents were reported to have left the responsibility of enforcing the discipline of their children to the teachers. In all, teachers appear to have given up on enforcing and ensuring high levels of discipline in schools.

On their part, pupils reported that there was a general problem of indiscipline in schools. Pupils blamed their parents and teachers for poor discipline in their schools. For example, a pupil narrated the following incidences of indiscipline in their school: “Some teachers are not disciplined,...the headmaster fought with another teacher on Monday and since then, they have not come to school. This is not the first incident, some teachers also fought recently after drinking.”

In Embu district, teachers suggested that the government should specify the mode of disciplining the pupils after abolishing caning. They stated: “...an African child can not respect anybody without caning.” Teachers did know what to do because they have not been prepared on how to guide and counsel undisciplined children. The teachers noted that when they used the cane, they did it out of love to correct wrongs. They pointed out that teachers were also parents; hence they did not cane to harm the child. They said the children were becoming very undisciplined due to the ban of the cane.

4.6 Achievements of FPE

This study sought to document the positive impacts – achievements – of FPE as reported by teachers, pupils and parents. Teachers, pupils and parents have identified various achievements that are presented in this section.

Respondents in the research areas appeared to concur on many issues. Teachers noted that there were notable improvements in the availability of teaching and reading materials after inception of FPE. Even though the materials provided were not enough, teachers appreciated the government's efforts to supply schools with the required materials. In addition, teachers acknowledged that the FPE enabled many children from poor families who had been kept out of the education system to access education by enrolling in schools. A teacher observed: "There has been a remarkable improvement in the learning and teaching process. This is so because of the books provided by the government."

While this view makes a lot of sense, many pupils and parents did not support it. Indeed, the latter were more concerned about the declining quality of education. Pupils concurred with teachers in appreciating what the government had done to provide them with learning and teaching materials. They were also happy that many of them have been rescued from child labour and other forms of abuse. But they complained that the materials were not enough; they were also worried over the declining quality and discipline. Nonetheless, pupils also appreciated that the large number of students per class had sparked off stiff competition among themselves, which enhanced good performance.

Parents highly appreciated FPE and supported the NARC government for taking over the burden of educating their children from them. As a result of FPE, schools had recorded a massive enrolment of children who hitherto, had been locked out of the education system due to financial constraints.

In summary, teachers, pupils and parents appreciated FPE and noted its accomplishments, including increased enrolment and the supply of teaching and learning materials to schools. However, there was consensus that what the government had done was not enough and that some gaps should be filled to safeguard the quality of education.

4.7 Impact of FPE on Quality

The teachers in all the districts covered in this study concurred that they were unable to examine the children well because of the limitation of writing the questions on the chalkboard. Some schools also reported that they had to stop giving frequent exams because they lacked money to print the exam papers and that made the pupils to be lax. They suggested that the exams be given frequently to increase competitiveness, otherwise, they could not monitor pupils' progress under the circumstances. It was also noted that lack of individualized attention was due to the large number of pupils, which had also contributed to the poor quality of education.

In Kisumu district parents were aware that free primary education had negative and positive impacts on quality of learning and teaching. In the first place, FPE enabled all children to access to education, which was not possible in the past given the numerous levies charged in schools.

Secondly, they said that FPE had allowed more girls to come to school. When schools charged levies, parents withdrew their girls from schools having them get married or sent to work as house maids. This shows that parents are aware of the fact that poverty affects girls' schooling more than boys. Any move to alleviate poverty, therefore, has a positive impact on girls' schooling: "The number of girls has increased with the implementation of FPE. This is because in the past girls were withdrawn from school to go and work or get married when parents were not able to pay levies."

Thirdly, through FPE pupils were getting free exercise books, textbooks, pens, rubbers and even mathematical sets. This was a big relief to parents and, most importantly, it ensured that pupils got quality education. With textbooks, pupils can do assignments at home, revise and read ahead of the teacher. This hastens the teaching and learning process. Due to the provisions, pupils are now motivated to go to school and absenteeism rates have gone down, which is good for ensuring continuity in the teaching and learning process: "Children are learning well because they have desks and books. The classrooms that were in bad shape have been repaired and the children can now sit comfortable and enjoy their lessons."

However, they also identified some negative impacts of FPE. The first was that the number of children has increased, yet the number of teachers remained constant, if not reduced. That meant that some classes or subjects were not taught. Due to large numbers, it was not possible for the teachers to give all the children the attention they deserved. They also noted that teachers were no longer giving many assignments as used to happen in the past so the pupils did not have enough work to practice or help them revise what they had learnt: "Enrolment has increased because pupils who never used to be in school have come back, including street children. Enrolment in this school has increased from 400 to 600 yet the number of teachers has not gone up".

Teachers in Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret, Embu, Mombasa, Nyandarua and Thika talked about congestion in classrooms due to increased numbers of pupils, a scenario that did not augur well for effective learning and teaching. They said their children had to share a desk among four or five unlike in the past when only two shared a desk.

In Kwale district contradictory views were expressed regarding the quality of education under the FPE. Some parents strongly believed that the quality of education had improved, while others thought that the quality of education had deteriorated. Most of those who argued that quality of education had improved based their arguments on availability of learning materials and exam mean scores of the previous year, where a favourable

increase in mean score was interpreted to mean an improvement in quality of education.

On the other hand, the majority, who believed that the quality of education had drastically gone down argued that inadequate teachers, lack of sufficient textbooks, and reduced continuous assessment tests were some of the key factors that had led to the decline in the quality of education in schools. The delay in the disbursement of FPE funds by the government to schools for prompt purchase of school learning materials was also seen as another factor contributing to the drop in the quality of education. Parents also cited the ban on extra tuition as another factor contributing to declining education quality.

On measures to be taken to ensure quality FPE, most parents recommended that the government should employ more teachers to sustain the programme and should also build more classrooms to accommodate the large number of pupils in schools. They also argued that the government should continue to fund the programme by providing more learning materials to the schools. A few others felt that FPE funds to schools should be disbursed in good time for better planning. They also recommended the reintroduction of 'harambees' to enable parents to undertake minor construction. They encouraged parents to show interest in their children's work and not leave learning only to teachers. They also recommended that FPE should start from nursery school to ensure a good foundation for learners.

4.8 Challenges of Implementing FPE

Findings of this study confirm that FPE policy is highly appreciated by all the stakeholders covered. However, there are teething problems that have affected its implementation. The general problems encountered include:

- i) Failure by the government to appropriately involve the other stakeholders such as parents, PTA and NGOs in the formulation and implementation of FPE.
- ii) Confusion among stakeholders on who should do what. For example, it is not clear what role parents and local communities should play in the implementation of FPE.
- iii) Over-enrolment of pupils in schools that have limited facilities. Besides these bottlenecks, teachers, pupils and parents voiced other specific problems. The teacher-related bottlenecks are:
 - Few teachers and overwhelming numbers of pupils. As a result, teachers reported that they were overloaded.
 - Lack of motivation among the teachers due to their poor salaries and also by the fact that they have been denied tuition money.
 - Congestion of pupils that makes classes uncomfortable for teachers to perform their duties effectively.
 - Inadequate teaching and learning materials – making teachers less effective.

- Lack of discipline among pupils making it difficult for teachers to take full control of the pupils in their respective classes.

The challenges raised by the pupils are related to those listed by teachers and are as follows:

- i) Inadequacies of the essential supplies that include textbooks, other learning materials and physical facilities. Such inadequacies adversely affect the performance of pupils.
- ii) Congestion in classes.
- iii) Pupils keep transferring from one school to another; hence, there is inconsistent learning.
- iv) There is understaffing – there are fewer teachers in schools.
- v) There has been a mushrooming of private schools, which entice those who can afford and who are in search of a better quality of education.
- vi) Lack of cooperation from parents. Some parents do not allow their children to repeat even if they are weak and this causes hostility between the teachers and the parents.
- vii) Pupils who work for a living and attend school keep absenting themselves in areas growing commercial crops such as tea, sugarcane and *miraa*.
- viii) Over-age pupils and ‘newcomers’ find it hard to cope with school life since they are taught together with the regular pupils, who have been in school, and there is no time to give them individualized attention.
- ix) Parents have become difficult and arrogant since government declared education ‘free’. They even demand uniforms from the school. Some parents even want to withdraw their children from schools and send them to pick tea. They consider earning Ksh 400 a day better than education because some teachers are even less paid.
- x) Desks, tables and chairs are not enough. In some schools, a desk designed to accommodate two pupils accommodates up to four or five pupils.
- xi) Some pupils do not have a permanent home and they keep moving with their parents. This is especially the case with children of single parents, who keep moving as they seek tea-picking jobs. This makes it difficult for such children to go to a particular school consistently. There are also pupils who go to school regularly, for two to three days in a week, as they have to balance school and family work.
- xii) Some chiefs and the local communities have ‘relaxed’ on insisting that all the parents take all their children to school. There are cases of parents who do not want to cooperate with the administration to

bring their children back to school. They do not seem to value education.

- xiii) Due to rampant poverty, many parents cannot afford uniforms and food for their children. Most young men with families are frustrated because of unemployment and resort to heavy drinking and chewing *miraa*.
- xiv) Some children have never been to nursery school. Teachers have to offer remedial teaching for the ones who cannot catch up during class hours. This creates a lot of work for the teachers.
- xv) Many children stay with their grandparents who are old and cannot take care of them well. Sometimes these children go to school without food. Consequently they cannot concentrate on learning.
- xvi) Pupils who had dropped out of school years ago have come back and want to skip classes to join their previous classmates who had continued with school, yet they can not cope with the class work.

Parents in Kisumu district identified several factors that hindered the implementation of the programme. The first was the increased numbers of pupils in schools that overstretched teaching and learning facilities and overburdened teachers. Schools did not have adequate facilities like desks and toilets and that meant that some children had to sit on the floor or go to the bush to relieve themselves: "We have many pupils in our schools and they cannot fit on the desks available, so some have to sit on the floor and that is not good for effecting learning."

They also mentioned delays in the disbursement of funds, which made it difficult for schools to buy the necessary provisions on time. They talked of cases where pupils would go for a term without exercise books because the funds had not come in time. The parents also identified lack of information as having caused a lot of confusion on the implementation of the programme. Other than what they heard through the press and a few meetings in the schools, parents have not been sensitized on their roles. Apart from buying uniforms, feeding children and sending them to school, the parents do not know that they have other roles to play in the implementation of FPE.

Parents also said indiscipline was rising in schools because of two factors. One, there were too many children in schools and teachers could not keep tabs on all of them. Moreover, some over-age children who had come back to school were undisciplined and it was difficult to change their habits. Two, the ban on caning had made it difficult for teachers to discipline pupils. Although counselling has been proposed as the best way of instilling discipline, it was not practical in a situation where teachers had heavy workloads and had not been properly trained in it.

They also identified HIV/AIDS as a major obstacle to the provision of FPE. In one particular school, parents said more than half of the pupils were orphans and were under the care of grandparents and other relatives. Most

of the children, they said, went to school on an empty stomach most of the time making it difficult for them to concentrate on class work. The children were also traumatized and disturbed so much that they are not able to participate effectively in school.

Pupils in Embu district listed some of the negative impacts of FPE, top on the list being congestion in classroom following influx of children into schools. They said the classes were squeezed and they could not walk freely, thus inhibiting classroom interaction. Unlike in the past when they shared desks among two or three, the pupils reported that they were now sitting four or five. In some schools, pupils in lower classes sat on the floor for lack of desks.

They also talked of the negative influences of the over-age pupils, who were indisciplined and harassed younger children. The pupils noted that some of the over-age pupils were bullies and routinely defied teachers' instructions.

One of the challenges reported by teachers in Nairobi was that discipline had gone down due to the influence of the newcomers. They noted that there was division among the pupils, with the over-age pupils staying on their own and avoiding the young ones. Parents were reluctant to provide their children with basic requirements like food and uniforms. The parents expect the government to support everything. After all it is free primary education.

Double-shifts were introduced to cater for the increased population of children, yet the number of teachers had not been increased. The same teacher is expected to work both shifts, hence more work for them. Quality of education appears to be deteriorating because teachers cannot address the pupils individually due to the large numbers.

Teachers also noted the delay in the provision of government funds to purchase textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. Since the textbooks were not enough, pupils were forced to share them, making it difficult to give class or homework. The other problem was shortage of facilities such as classrooms, chairs, desks and toilets. Communication breakdown between the teachers and pupils, especially the newcomers who could not speak English or Kiswahili, also affected the learning process. One example is reflected in schools that have admitted foreigners such as Somalis and Ethiopians who have gone to school and communicating with them requires an interpreter, a provision that is lacking.

The reduced number of subordinate staff initially paid for by parents had now forced teachers to utilize some of the pupils in maintaining the cleanliness of the school. Mass transfers in and out of the schools destabilized the school population and affected learning because there is no consistency. Due to FPE, most pupils are moving to schools near their homes, which they could not afford earlier. Communication breakdown between the teachers and parents because FPE is viewed to have given more powers to the parents than the teachers; for instance, in the past,

teachers were motivated by the parents who provided them with tea or sometimes took them out for a trip. This made the teachers work hard and ensure good performance. But with FPE, rewards were no longer being offered and this was likely to demotivate teachers, thereby leading to poor performance.

Some of the new-comers had never been to school and thus needed special attention from teachers but slowed the pace of syllabus coverage. Pupils were also transferring from poor-performing schools to better-performing schools, thus the need for improved teaching to bring all the pupils to the same level. New weak children give teachers a lot of difficulties as they try to bring them to the level of the others who are academically strong. So, instead of moving forward, teachers keep coming back to them thus dragging the lessons such that if you were able to teach five lessons before, you now end up teaching only two or three a day.

Some teachers felt that they were ignored because they were not consulted before the implementation of FPE, which in turn ensured that the PTA teachers were laid off. This increased the workload for the TSC teachers. Now the number has increased to almost 70 in a class and pupils cannot be reached individually within the allocated period for a lesson. This is demotivating and affects performance.

4.9 Observation on Sustainability of FPE in Kenya

Teachers noted that the government should move in and put in place systems to make FPE work. The first thing they want to see done is to intensify an information awareness campaign to sensitize parents, sponsors, NGOs and communities on their roles in implementing FPE. In particular, they suggested that parents and community members should be made to understand that it is their responsibility to provide schools with teaching and learning facilities, including classrooms and toilets. They should contribute funds and other materials for repair of classrooms and ensure that their children learn in good conditions.

The schools also want the government to employ more teachers and improve their terms and conditions of service to motivate them, especially in view of the increased workload that has come about due to FPE. In the same vein, the government should promote teachers who have stagnated in one job group for long because they were demotivated.

Besides, the teachers said the government had continually recruited more teachers and offered supervision services. The Ministry of Education ought to continue training head teacher and members of the school committees and also sensitize them about FPE and their roles in implementing it. From the discussions, it emerged that inspection was done on an ad hoc basis and more often than not, it was intended to find faults and not to assist teachers to improve professionally.

It was also noted that the Chiefs and their assistants had played a role in bringing children to school. They did this through public *barazas* where they advised parents to take all eligible children to school. In some cases, it

was reported that Chiefs and their assistants visited homes and talked to parents, who were keeping their children, to take them to school.

Parents were concerned that the role of school communities had diminished under FPE given the fact that all financial transactions were now being done by the head teacher. As a key component in school management, they felt that school committee members should be involved in various activities such as procurement and distribution of the materials. They should be involved in making decisions on books and other items to be bought. They also felt that the committees should take a more proactive role and organize fundraising drives to collect money to put up classrooms and toilets so that the pupils can learn in a conducive environment. They should help the head teacher to mobilize parents to bring their children to school and contribute towards school activities in general.

Teachers were very clear about their role, namely, implementing FPE. They were also aware that they are responsible for instilling discipline in the pupils and providing counselling as well as sensitizing parents on their roles in implementing FPE and in providing a link between the government and the community. Teachers were also involved in selecting books and advising the head teacher on what titles to buy, distributing them and taking care of them and other teaching aids in their classes.

The teachers also suggested that the government should send the money for buying teaching and learning materials on time to avoid delays. It was noted that some schools only got the funds late and that caused delays in buying the materials and affected teaching and learning. In some schools, they said, the delay had created bad blood between teachers and parents, where the latter felt that the former was withholding the funds and making it difficult for the pupils to get the provisions. In addition, they said the funds should be given according to the needs of schools, arguing that boarding schools, which have high expenditures because of their operations, should not be given equal amounts like day schools. They also want the government to make provisions for co-curricular activities and joint mock exams.

They also suggested that the government should employ accounts clerks/bursars to take charge of procurement and accounting for the monies sent to school. This would relieve head teacher of the agony of having to do financial transactions and balance the books of accounts when they do not have the skills to do so.

Further, the teachers want the government to consider providing meals to schools in hardship areas. Noting that schools in the arid and semi-arid lands had government-supported feeding programmes, teachers said the programme should be extended to other areas and this should be done on the basis of poverty indices. Given the poverty levels in many parts of the country, many children failed to go to school even if learning was free because of hunger. Many pupils who went to school on empty stomachs do not concentrate in class work and this affected their learning.

Teachers noted that the provision of teaching and learning materials had motivated them and improved their performance. They were able to cover the syllabus fairly fast because pupils could now read ahead and that made teaching of new concepts easier and faster. The pupils can cover some topics on their own and only require little explanations from the teacher to understand them. They were also able to give assignments without writing them on the chalkboard and that enabled them to save time for actual teaching. With the teachers' books and reference materials, lesson preparation was now easier than before.

In Embu, Isiolo, Marsabit, among other districts, parents acknowledged the fact that sustaining the programme is a big challenge. They noted that the resources required were enormous and therefore, sustaining the programme required proper planning and coordination. They identified the following as some of the things that need to be done to sustain the programme. One, the government should employ more teachers to meet the staffing shortfall in schools. It was noted that most schools have a deficit of about two or three teachers on average and this affected quality of teaching and learning. Some classes or subjects went untaught and that does not augur well for provision of quality education. They want the ban on caning lifted arguing that without the cane, it is hard to instil discipline in the pupils, especially the over-age who came to school in the wake of FPE.

In Embu it was noted that to sustain FPE, funds should be disbursed according to the needs of schools and regions. There are hardship areas that require more funds than others. The government should establish the particular needs of various areas and give the funds that reflect their needs. The teachers should be encouraged to continue with their positive attitude towards FPE and assist the government by accepting to work harder under the present conditions. Parents and the local community should support the administration by informing them of the children that are at home so as to force their parents to take them to school.

4.10 Lessons Learnt

The first lesson is that it is possible to provide education to all children if the government is ready to do so and parents are supportive. In the past, it was thought that FPE was impossible to implement but now parents acknowledge that it is possible. Several parents said that the challenges of FPE brought out the strengths of teachers, who were able to assist and work with many children. This was deemed impossible in the past. The success of such a programme requires effective public information and communication to educate all stakeholders so that they can play their roles effectively. Provision of FPE, excluding early childhood education, was an anomaly, which should now be addressed afresh.

Teachers were unanimous that the large numbers of pupils had affected their performance. They said that they could not give individual attention to the pupils and that it was not possible to assist slow learners or those with special needs. To cope with the increased workload, teachers had resorted to giving fewer assignments to pupils to avoid marking many books. Since

all forms of fees were banned, most teachers had stopped giving extra tuition, which was popular in the past. Matters were made worse by the fact that teachers felt they were put under siege from all fronts – parents, community, pupils and government. They felt that nobody cared about their working conditions, which were characterized by large numbers of children, inadequate facilities and poor pay. They also saw the implementation of FPE without consulting them as a show that their input in education programmes was being underrated and that dented their ego and affected their performance.

Teachers noted that parents need to support FPE by taking their children to school and encouraging them to work hard in their class work. Secondly, they should be involved in providing material support to schools, particularly putting up physical facilities. Given that the government does not provide funds for physical development, it is incumbent on the parents to organize themselves and find ways of pooling resources to provide such facilities so that their children can learn in conducive environments. Most importantly, they should change their attitude and be made to understand that they have a role to play in their children's education.

The teachers also reported that FPE had brought a lot of administrative work for head teacher, which left them with little time to teach. The head teacher had to attend many meetings at the zonal and district offices, go to the bank for financial transactions, and do procurements of the teaching and learning materials and then account for them. The procurement procedures were long and so are the accounting systems. This meant head teacher spent most of their time on non-academic matters.

Teachers recognized that parents had done their bit by sending their children to school and providing them with uniforms, meals and shelter. In some schools, parents had contributed money for renovations and repairs and even built new classrooms to accommodate increased number of pupils. They also come to school to receive exercise and textbooks on behalf of their teachers, which is a system some schools have established to show transparency in the acquisition and distribution of the teaching and learning materials.

The Ministry of Education has provided procurement and accounting procedures to schools, which are to be done by the head teacher and this has made school committees rather irrelevant in financial management. In fact, school committees have little say on how the purchases are done and more or less, are left to supervise what the head teacher has done without much influence.

Some teachers also said that school committee members had become reluctant to attend meetings because they no longer get the sitting allowances they used to. Some of them used to get tenders to supply the school with some materials but this was stopped because the procurement procedures had changed.

There was concern, though, among teachers that sponsors like the church and NGOs were making unnecessary demands on schools, which could not be justified because they did not assist schools much. Teachers said the sponsors were represented in the school committees, where they nominated people who were not knowledgeable on education issues and hardly added value to the school. So, their representatives enjoyed some advantages, including deciding on the appointment of head teacher, which they did not deserve.

The pupils presented the positive and negative impacts of FPE. On the positive side, they said the programme had allowed many children to go to school, particularly orphans and the poor, who had dropped out due to numerous fees that were charged in the past. They also reported that through FPE they were able to get textbooks, exercise books, pens, pencils, rulers and geometric sets, which made learning exciting and enjoyable. With the textbooks, the pupils said, they were able to do assignments without fail, revise and read ahead of the teachers. They also said the funds provided by the government had enabled schools to repair desks and classrooms and make them feel comfortable.

Pupils had mixed views about teachers' performance. While some said teachers were doing well and coping with the large number of children, some said teachers' performance had gone down. Those who said that teachers were performing well noted that with the provisions of textbooks and reference materials as well as teaching aids like wall charts, teachers were able to prepare well for their lessons and were able to give illustrations that made it easier to understand concepts being taught.

Those who talked about reduced teacher performance noted that the large numbers of pupils in classes made it difficult for the teachers to give special attention to all the pupils. Further, they noted that teachers were giving fewer assignments as it was not possible for them to mark all the works effectively. Without adequate assignments, it was not possible to gauge and monitor pupils' performance well and this has a bearing on the quality of education.

Notwithstanding this, the pupils said teachers were trying their best to handle the large classes and ensure that the pupils got quality education. In many schools, teachers were working overtime – mornings, evenings and weekends – without any extra pay to cover the syllabus and ensure the pupils got the best.

Pupils identified a number of difficulties they faced with the implementation of FPE. The first was the large enrolment that overstretched the facilities like classrooms and toilets. The second was shortage of teachers, which was made worse when the number of pupils increased. Third, they also talked of delays in disbursement of the funds and consequently delay in procurement of the teaching and learning materials. They also said that the provisions were not adequate and that when they ran out of them, there were no replacements. Four, they said

many children came to school hungry as they did not have food at home and that affected their participation in schools.

The requirement that pupils must put on uniforms was also cited as another obstacle to the implementation of FPE. Given the poverty levels, the pupils said, some families could not afford to buy uniforms for their children and that blocked their access to education as schools insisted on them.

The pupils reported that cases of indiscipline have increased in schools due to FPE. There are increased cases of theft and naughtiness among pupils because it is not easy for teachers to take full control of the classes. There is also an increased rate of noise-making in classes even when the teacher is teaching. The over-age pupils were a negative influence on the younger ones. Some are rude, abuse drugs and, at times, abuse each other and the teachers. Some pupils have developed a 'do-not-care' attitude because they know that there was no restriction in enrolment and they can transfer to any school of their choice at any time.

Parents acknowledged the fact that teachers had taken a lead role in the implementation of FPE. They recognized that teachers were making sacrifices to teach large numbers of pupils and that some of them worked for long hours and weekends to teach and mark pupils' assignments. They also noted that the teachers were instrumental in instilling discipline in pupils and counselling those with special needs.

Parents were happy that under FPE the government had reduced roles to only providing uniforms, feeding and sending their children to school. Occasionally, they attended school meetings when invited but not to play and a big role, as was the case in the past. They saw the provision of facilities, which they used to do in the past, as the responsibility of the government.

Most parents appeared to be clear about the goals and rationale of FPE. They said it was introduced to improve literacy by giving all children a chance to learn. They also said the government was doing this to conform to international charters and protocols on the right to education and also implement the Children's Act that provides for free and compulsory primary education. In addition, they recognized that the programme was aimed at fighting poverty since it is assumed that an educated citizen is able to participate effectively in the social, economic and political development of the nation.

Parents and pupils were critical in their attitude towards FPE. It was pointed out during discussions that some teachers were so negative about FPE that they kept complaining about the increased workload and many other things. In fact, some abused the over-age pupils, called them by nicknames and this affected their participation in the classroom. Although they work under difficult conditions, it was suggested that teachers must develop a positive attitude towards FPE to make it work. Specifically, they need to accept and treat over-age children with respect and help them to adjust and learn.

At the same time, the parents noted that the increased numbers of pupils had affected the performance of teachers. Having large numbers of children, parents said, the teachers were not able to give all the pupils the attention they deserved. Among others, they do not give a lot of assignments to the pupils because they can not cope with the heavy marking load. They also noted that teachers were working under difficult conditions that affected their performance.

Parents were appreciative of the role of head teacher in implementing FPE. A number of them reported that the head teacher had convened meetings to sensitize them about the programme immediately it was launched. The head teacher, they said, advised them to send all their children to school because the government was to provide them with all the resources they needed to learn.

DEOs/PDEs noted that stakeholders like NGOs, donors and community members should give donations to enable schools to put up facilities such as classrooms and toilets. Such assistance is needed to supplement the government's effort to ensure quality and sustainability of the programme. The majority of the DEOs/PDEs observed that the number of pupils has increased tremendously in Classes 1 and 2 in most schools, making it difficult for teachers to cope. As result, they argued that teachers no longer marked all their books on time. Some teachers have many lessons to teach in a day and sometimes missed some. The large number of pupils has demoralized teachers, as they cannot monitor the weak pupils. But some parents disputed the fact that there is a critical teacher shortage, saying they had enough.

They also said that discipline had generally deteriorated in schools and they attributed that to the readmission of over-age pupils, some of whom had been working or were involved in crime. They felt that these pupils had difficulty in adjusting in school and obeying the rules. Other facilities such as desks, chairs and toilets were reportedly not enough in most schools. They reported that in some schools pupils are forced to queue during break-time to use the toilet or had to go to the bushes to relieve themselves. A few, however, argued that there was now too much noise from other classes, which affects their concentration during lessons.

4.10 Observation Report of Schools Visited

Analysis of the schools observed indicated that the majority of the schools had clean compounds with adequate space. However, a third of the schools had spacious but untidy compounds. Only three schools had small and untidy compounds.

Looking at the walls of the different classrooms, it was evident that most had permanent and well-maintained walls. While the majority of the schools showed no significant variations regarding type of roofing, floor, lighting, ventilation and even noise, a noticeable variation was in space where, in almost every school, the lower grades were congested while the upper grades had adequate space. The same variation existed in the

distribution of furniture where most of the lower classes in the majority of the schools had inadequate furniture compared to the upper classes where furniture was sufficient.

Most of the schools had pit latrines that were gender-sensitive for both teachers and pupils. There were no flush toilets in schools visited. The majority of the schools did not have perimeter fences. However, all of them, except one, had guards to provide security.

Only four of the visited schools had first aid kits, while the remaining twenty-four schools did not have any. One school had the kit without the necessary supplies. Regarding water supply, half of the schools relied on tap water from outside the school compound fetched mostly by handcarts or pupils. About a third of the schools relied on rainwater harvested by use of water tanks. In most cases, water supply was considered reliable and fit for drinking. All the schools had playgrounds within their compound.

Twenty-nine of the schools visited lacked computers, only one school had a computer but it was not being used due to lack of electricity. The majority of the sampled schools had typewriters and duplicating machines. A third of the schools, however, had radios that were operational. None of the schools had any facilities for supporting children with special learning needs. Ten schools reported having had pupils with disabilities. In total, there were one hundred and four children with physical disabilities in the schools visited. Two schools were found to have a feeding programme that catered for all pupils. The rest of the schools did not have any feeding programmes. In regard to the above observations, most respondents observed that the government should:

- i) Construct more classes and other facilities like toilets.
- ii) Employ more teachers and motivate them through promotions.
- iii) Ensure that the fund disbursement is done early to enable schools to buy the materials on time so that learning can start immediately the schools open.
- iv) Rehabilitate the street children first before integrating them into formal learning institutions.
- v) Prepare, update and distribute informational materials to create awareness among teachers, parents, community members and other stakeholders about FPE policy and what is expected of them to ensure its smooth implementation.
- vi) Encourage enrolment of pupils who are still out of school and restrict transfers to avoid negative effects on performance because of the interruptions caused to schools by these changes.
- vii) Clarify what is 'free', but not declare that everything is free, as that encourages laxity among parents.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The implementation of Kenya's FPE by the NARC government is a considerable support for UNESCO's Education For All initiative. This has, however, not come easy as over-enrolment threatens to lower standards of education. Numerous donors who have shown support for FPE have alleviated other emerging problems such as lack of facilities and amenities. However, as long as there is political will and available financiers, FPE is bound to be successful. FPE in Kenya has proved EFA goals can succeed, now and in years to come. Despite the challenges that continue to threaten continuity, FPE has been termed a success by respondents across the sampled districts of Kenya. However, the government needs to improve on its strategies and put them in place to deal with the many challenges and disparities faced by FPE.

There was consensus that the FPE programme was a major milestone in the country's education system as it opened the doors for children, who would have otherwise missed a chance to access education and improve their lives. It also emerged that the FPE programme is popular. It has motivated children to learn; offered teachers a chance to utilize their skills to the best of their abilities; and given schools the opportunity to optimize resource utilization. Pupils are provided with exercise and textbooks and for those who had joined school life for the first time, they are able to carry home reading materials and do their home assignments, revise on their own and read ahead of their teachers, thus making learning an enjoyable experience. The provision of textbooks to pupils was a big boon – teachers no longer write homework's on the chalkboard or dictate notes as they used to do in the past. Now, they simply ask the pupils to do the exercises from the textbooks, revise and read ahead on their own so that they can participate in classroom discussion quite effectively. Similarly, pupils are provided with geometrical sets, items they had never known in the past, but which are critical for good performance in mathematics. There was consensus that the quality of education was bound to improve. Moreover, pupils were no longer missing lessons due to lack of fees as used to happen in the past. That consistency in classroom attendance was helpful in realizing quality teaching.

Teachers reported that the programme had enabled them to get reference materials like atlases, wall maps and globes, which made their work easier. This has motivated them as they are able to prepare adequately for their lessons and in that way do their best in the classroom. For parents who have all along agonized over numerous levies that locked out their children from school, this was a timely intervention that relieved them of a heavy burden

and accorded them the opportunity to organize and prepare themselves for providing their children with secondary education. With the burden of school fees and other levies taken away from them, parents now just have to provide their children with basic things like food, shelter and uniforms. Since their children have been provided with the exercise and text books, they can easily monitor what they are doing or assist them with revision and homework.

Even so, the FPE programme faces several challenges as clearly articulated by all the respondents. Increased pupil population; shortage of teachers; lack of clear guidelines on admission; inadequate consultations with teachers, parents and communities; delay in disbursement of funds; expanded roles that have overtaxed head teacher were cited as some of the major challenges faced by FPE.

It was particularly noted that the implementation of the programme without prior consultation or preparation of teachers and lack of regular communication to sensitize the various stakeholders on their roles hampered the smooth implementation of FPE. There was general misconception about the meaning of 'free' education with parents taking the view that they were no longer required to participate in school activities. The political leaders were also sending conflicting signals to the parents and communities as they pointed out that fund raising or voluntary contributions were no longer necessary.

In a nutshell the key obstacles faced by FE in PPS in Kenya that emerged from this study are:

- (a) High birth rates in Kenya (about 3.8%) contribute to large number of school-going children who will continue to outweigh the available facilities/resources. Indeed, high birth rates may continue to enhance the problem of over-enrolment.
- (b) Inadequate classroom space and facilities such as textbooks increases congestion in classrooms and creates poor classroom interactions.
- (c) Fixed school curriculum makes learning distasteful to learners with varied backgrounds. That is, rigid school curriculum does not allow learners to develop their talents so as to be self-reliant. It demoralizes learners from venturing into their areas of interest.
- (d) Poor economy may not continue to sustain FPE/UPE in the near future. The majority of the parents cannot afford to pay fees and as such learners are likely to drop-out of school before acquiring any useful skills if cost-sharing is introduced.
- (e) Classroom teacher-learner ratio has increased from 1:40 pupils per class to 1:60-90 pupils per class. This affects methodology and teaching – learning interaction. This has put a high demand on teachers, stationery, equipment and physical facilities in the 18,000 plus primary schools in the country.

5.2 Recommendations

In view of the findings and based on suggestions by the various respondents, the following recommendations should be considered if the FPE programme is to succeed.

Teachers Preparedness for FPE

The government should, as a matter of priority, design an effective and user-friendly communication strategy whereby teachers, parents, pupils and communities are regularly informed of what they should do to guarantee success of the programme. The Ministry of Education should regularly send out circulars to schools, telling teachers what they should do and using the mass media and the provincial administration to inform parents and communities of what is expected of them. It is in this way that misconceptions will be eliminated and teachers, so that parents and pupils would act in an informed way.

Teachers were hardly prepared to offer counselling and, in the absence of corporal punishment, they were handicapped in disciplining deviant pupils. It is therefore recommended that teachers take in-service courses to train them on new ways of instilling discipline without using the cane. Teachers too need to be trained on guidance and counselling, especially to enable them to deal with over-age learners.

Teachers in particular were unhappy that they had to stay in the same job grades for a long time and they also did not have opportunities for training to improve their skills and performance. It is recommended that the government carry out a thorough staff balancing exercise to ensure that all schools have enough teachers. The government should recruit more teachers, promote those who have stagnated in some positions for years and generally improve their terms and conditions of service. There was an overwhelming sense of frustration among teachers which had been made worse with the increased workload, and that did not augur well for the effective implementation and sustainability of FPE. In a nutshell, the key recommendations to enhance teachers' preparedness are:

- i) The government should consider employing more teachers to ease the shortage.
- ii) It could also consider engaging contract teachers, who would be cheaper to maintain.
- iii) Parents and communities should also be encouraged to engage part-time teachers, especially the unemployed trained teachers.
- iv) The government and stakeholders should devise ways of motivating teachers, including promotion and rewarding best performers.
- v) The government should provide regular in-service training to teachers to improve their performance.

Enrolment under FPE

To reverse the declining enrolments and emerging drop-out cases, it is recommended that parents and community members be made aware that it is their obligation to ensure that all children are taken to school. Parents and community members should be encouraged to monitor the progress of FPE and ensure that all children enrol and attend school regularly. Those who are not enrolled or drop out of school should be reported to the chief or local education authorities for action.

School Facilities and Learning Environment

The mass influx of pupils into school due to FPE has overstretched facilities to the limit. The classrooms are congested, desks are inadequate and so are textbooks. Toilets are lacking or inadequate in several schools. This has badly affected girls, the disabled and young children. There were reports of pupils resorting to relieving themselves in the nearby bushes, which is unhealthy. The congestion in classrooms affects teaching and learning activities. Slow learners are not taken care of. The net effect of all these is that the teaching and learning environment is not conducive, especially for the over-age learners and the disabled. Consequently, some schools have recorded dropouts and declining enrolment and this does not augur well for the goal of expanding access, retention and completion rates. On bases of this, there is need to build more schools and extra classrooms in existing schools to cope with the increased enrolments to ensure that pupils are not congested and squeezed in a particular school.

Content and Quality of Education in the Era of FPE

Based on these findings, the MoE should undertake stringent measures to streamline the contents and implementation of the FPE to insure quality and competitive education. By all means, the MoE should act fast to ensure quality control in the implementation of FPE. Unless quality assurance is guaranteed, the MOESI will find it difficult to enhance a positive public image of FPE among the various stakeholders who include teachers, pupils and parents. Indeed, the MoE should put all the necessary measures to safeguard FPE from the emerging complaints that the new policy is compromising the quality of primary education in Kenya.

Monitoring and Evaluation of FPE

It was also noted that education officers and inspectors were not effective in their duties. On the contrary, they go out to find faults rather than provide professional support. It is thus recommended that head teacher, teachers and school committees should be trained on book-keeping, accounting and general procurement procedures. The government should recruit, in-service, and deploy more inspectors to enhance services and guarantee quality education. It should also consider engaging bursars/account clerks to serve as a cluster of schools. Not only would this ensure effective accounting procedures for the funds but it would also relieve head teacher from that task, which they are not well equipped to do. There should be regular inspection to inspire (and not discourage) teachers,

and improve the quality of teaching. The government should ensure that education officers inspect schools and support teachers to improve the quality of their teaching and not victimize them.

Local education officers, plus the DEO and PDE office, should monitor teaching to ensure that quality is maintained and that the teachers are using the recommended books and follow the syllabus. They should also hold in-service training to update the teachers on issues of the new curriculum and the best methods of delivery. They should assess whether teachers are coming up with teaching aids.

Implementation and Sustainability of FPE

Given the support by donors and development agencies, MoE should curb wastage in primary schools to ensure high retention rates. Issues such as early marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM), child labour, drug abuse, negative cultural values and the effect of AIDS on families should be addressed urgently, since they pose a threat to the achievement of FPE goals.

There is need to re-define the roles of various groups involved in school management, namely, head teacher, sponsors and school committees, to enable them carry out their activities without conflict or duplication. With the government having taken over the provisions of teaching and learning materials, it was not clear what roles school committees were expected to play. It is not surprising; therefore, they had taken a back seat and were not involved in school activities as they used to do in the past. Equally significant, the role of sponsors needs to be clearly spelt out to avoid a situation where they exerted a lot of influence on the school's management without commensurate input in terms of resources.

Enhance Clarity of FPE Policy

The study established that the main problem with FPE is lack of a clear policy that clarifies the roles of the various stakeholders, admission criteria, handling of discipline, as well as ways of involving parents and communities in school activities, among others. Schools operate in a vacuum and that gives room for subjective decisions and actions, which are likely to affect learners. For instance, teachers appear to behave as though they are being forced to admit pupils in classes that they are not suited for.

The government through the Ministry of Education needs to provide a clear FPE implementation guideline stipulating the admission criteria, placement of over-age pupils, transfers, alternative modes of education delivery, among other logistical requirements. Presently, schools operate in a vacuum and that gives room for subjective actions, which are likely to affect learners.

Although parents and communities are willing to continue supporting schools by providing physical facilities, their roles and involvement in school activities have not been clearly defined. Indiscipline is becoming a serious problem in schools because of large numbers of pupils, who are

difficult to control and also because of the enrolment of over-age learners. In the meantime caning, which was the teachers' best means of instilling discipline, is outlawed and the counselling that has been recommended is hard to implement because of inadequate training and heavy workloads. Thus, the study recommends that the government should as matters of priority develop the FPE policy that clearly defines what FPE is all about. The FPE policy should give direction on access, quality assurance, retention and completion strategies and admission criteria. The policy should also provide for the needs of children with disabilities, clarify funding sources, define roles of various stakeholders, and provide a framework for instilling discipline and conducting assessments. The policy should be published and disseminated widely.

The FPE policy should be implemented within the broader EFA framework, which provides for a holistic approach to education provision. To realize this, the government should adopt various strategies of expanding access, ensuring retention and completion and also expand, strengthen and create centres for accelerated learning targeting over-age youth. Vocational and skills training, adult literacy and education programmes should also be strengthened so that they can accommodate the over-age learners.

That is, FPE policy should be done within a broader and holistic education context. It should be linked with young skills and vocational training, and adult and continuing education. A link should also be created between FPE, secondary and higher education so that there is clarity of mind on how one fits into the other. Instead of putting together the continuing pupils with former dropouts who are over-age as well as former street children and those who have never attended any formal education, the government should revive adult education to cater for that lot. The over-age can be catered for through adult education while the street boys can be taken to rehabilitation centres. In this way, their entry points can be established before they are incorporated into formal schools.

Most respondents were of the view that primary schools should be categorized for ease of FPE provision based on their ability. In the past, schools were categorized into three groups, namely, A, B, and C. Here, one category would be that of a school which cannot manage to purchase the learning materials and this would require total support from the government. Another category would be composed of those schools that are able to make some contributions on their own and therefore, would get government supplements. The third category would be composed of schools, where parents can provide support, and therefore, do not need government subsidies. With such a system, parents feel that they would be able to place themselves in the school favouring their financial ability.

Communication and Community Sensitization about FPE

There is a need for the government to provide guidelines on what is going to be provided by whom and what is expected from other stakeholders. Each stakeholder should know its expected roles in FPE. The government

should not just declare that education is 'free'; other stakeholders like the parents have a major role to play towards its implementation. The government should conduct awareness campaigns to ensure that stakeholders understand their roles and participate as expected, that is, parents should clearly understand their specific role in the implementation of FPE. In the absence of such clarifications, the existing knowledge gaps are likely to cause misunderstanding especially between parents and school heads. To ensure a smooth running of the schools, head teacher are likely to charge some levies; yet parents hold the view that through FPE, the government is set to provide everything free – including buildings and desks.

So, it is recommended that the MoE urgently design an effective communication strategy to create awareness about the FPE policy, what it entails and how it is to be implemented. In addition the MoE should use the mass media and the provincial administration to popularize FPE and inform parents and communities of what they are expected to do to make it successful. Teachers, parents, pupils and communities need to get regular updates about FPE and how to address emerging challenges and to work as a team to address those challenges.

For these to work, the ministry needs to work with seasoned communication experts to develop the right content, correct messages and design the best formats that will be easy to read, listen to or to watch. The ministry also requires an effective media and public relation desk, one that liaises regularly with the media houses and provides materials and information that is needed for public consumption. The message that could go out is that every stakeholder, that is parents, teachers, communities, sponsors and even donors have a role to play to ensure successful implementation of FPE. It must be made absolutely clear that it is not only the government that is responsible for FPE, but all of us.

Capacity Building

After the introduction of FPE, the government organized in-service training for head teacher and school committees on its implementation. They were trained on book-keeping, procurement, textbooks selection and accounting systems. However, it was reported that the training was inadequate and did not prepare the head teacher and the school committee members fully for their task. Most importantly, it is noted that the training focused on financial issues but did not incorporate curriculum management.

Teachers were never trained on multi-group and double-shift teaching methods, yet they are required to use them. It was also noted that education officers and inspectors are not effective in their duties. They hardly provide professional guidance to teachers when they visit schools. On the contrary, they go out to find faults rather than provide professional support services. It is thus recommended that the government should recruit, in-service and deploy more inspectors to the districts to improve inspection services and guarantee quality.

Enhance Good Discipline in Schools

The study established that due to increased enrolment in schools through FPE, discipline was becoming a big challenge. It was noted that with the presence of over-age pupils in schools, some were deviants, and with large numbers of pupils in classrooms, it was not possible to maintain discipline in schools. Disciplinary matters have been compounded by the fact that corporal punishment is outlawed and teachers are required to use counselling to instil discipline. While the general suggestion among teachers was that the ban on corporal punishment should be lifted, the fundamental issue is that the ministry should provide a clear guideline on maintaining discipline.

It is evident from teachers, pupils and parents that discipline has been deteriorating in schools and without tight discipline in schools (among all stakeholders), teaching and learning cannot take place effectively. It is thus mandatory for the MoE to mobilize the relevant authorities at all levels to address the problem of declining discipline in schools once and for all. The current practice among stakeholders of blaming each other, if not checked, is likely to worsen the situation. All the parties concerned should be brought together to address the issue amicably. That is parents, school communities and sponsors should be involved in disciplining of pupils.

Teacher Recruitment, Deployment and Motivation

There was clear evidence that schools suffer a serious teacher shortage across the board. On average, there was a shortfall of two to three teachers in each of the schools visited. The teachers were having a heavy workload, handling many lessons and many pupils. It is difficult for teachers to give personalized attention to all the learners, give adequate assignments to test what has been taught and take full control of their classes. The majority of teachers were also frustrated by poor terms of service.

In particular, teachers were unhappy that they had to stay in the same job group for a long time and they also did not have opportunities for training to improve their skills and performance unless through self-sponsorship. It is recommended that the government should carry out a thorough staff balancing exercise to ensure that all schools have enough teachers and also sponsor those who wish to further in education. The government could also consider employing more teachers to ease the shortage, hire contract teachers, who would be cheaper to maintain.

Parents and communities should also be encouraged to engage part-time teachers, especially the unemployed trained teachers. The government and stakeholders should provide regular in-service training to teachers to improve their performance and devise ways of motivating teachers, including promoting and rewarding best-performers.

Funding FPE

The study found out that the fund disbursement was fairly good. Despite a few cases of delays that resulted due to logistical or technical reasons, most

of the funds were sent out on time. The government should ensure that the disbursement of the funds for purchasing the learning material is done on time and also there is need to increase the amount to ensure that enough textbooks, exercise books and other items are purchased.

Flexibility should be allowed in the use of funds on the condition that parents, communities and school committees agree on what they want to be purchased. For example, schools that do not have electricity or telephone bills to pay should have the liberty to use votes for those items alternatively for pressing needs like paying the ECDE teacher. Voluntary participation of parents and communities to provide resources to put up non-budgetary facilities like toilets and classrooms should be encouraged. However, strict guidelines must be put in place to eliminate cases of exploitation of parents.

Special Education and Needs

Although FPE had opened doors to many children to enrol in schools, it did not provide for the needs of children with disabilities. There are no special facilities for the children with various disabilities like hearing aids or brail materials. The school buildings and particularly toilets are not conducive for use by the physically disabled. Neither is the teaching and learning environment responsive to their needs. The fact that the classes are congested means that teachers cannot give individual attention to those with disabilities. Moreover, the teachers are not trained to handle those with various disabilities and special learning needs, including the hyper-active or dyslectic children or the ones who are gifted.

It is therefore recommended that the government should provide the infrastructure for the children with special needs. There is need to expand existing special schools to cater for more children. School buildings should be made conducive to those with physical disabilities. Parents and communities should be sensitized so that the disabled children are taken to school. Teachers should be trained on ways of handling children with physical disabilities. The system of school data collection should be improved to capture the information on children with special learning needs.

Support for ECDE

It emerged that ECDE programmes had almost collapsed because parents at that level are required to pay levies to cover teachers' salaries; primary education is 'free'. So, parents had opted to sending their children straight to Class 1 without going through ECDE that provides children with solid foundation for primary and further education. Teachers reported that children who skipped ECDE had difficulty coping because of poor preparation. To this extent, therefore, it was recommended that a comprehensive ECDE policy be developed that defines the various components of the sub-sector; the kind of curriculum it should offer, teacher training, recruitment and payment as well as what roles the parents, the communities, the Ministry of Education and the local authorities should play. The government should ensure that each public school has a nursery

class to prepare young children for primary education. Besides, the respondents recommended that other players need to come in to ensure quality FPE through the enhancement of ECDEs.

Intensify Campaign against HIV/AIDS on FPE

The study established that HIV/AIDS was impacting negatively on FPE. It had taken toll on teachers, thus reducing the capacity of schools to handle the large number of children enrolled. Similarly, it has created a large pool of orphans who do not attend school consistently as they lack basic needs like food and clothing. Such children do not concentrate on their studies and some end up dropping out of school. Some schools also reported cases of HIV positive children who were not able to attend school regularly due to opportunistic diseases.

HIV/AIDS has also reduced the capacity of the communities to support schools given that it had killed productive members of the society, specifically teachers. In view of this, it is recommended that the government should intensify the campaign against HIV/AIDS in schools and design special interventions to support those affected and infected by the scourge. Further, the government should publicize and widely distribute relevant information to assist schools, parents and communities to fight the scourge.

Cooperation and Partnership for FPE

Notwithstanding the numerous benefits that have accrued due to FPE, it was noted that the programme had killed community initiatives in education funding and provision. While the communities were keen to provide physical, material and financial support to schools, in the recent past they have withdrawn. They have been made to understand that the government has taken over the full responsibility of providing education. Yet, this is not the case. Ideally, as the government provides teaching and learning materials, parents and communities should provide the physical structures. Ironically, parents and community members were saying that they are ready to support schools but there is no framework for doing so.

Parents also felt that teachers should consider pupils as their children and thus offer the best to them to ensure that they do well in the national examinations. Teachers should stop complaining about salaries and instead, concentrate on providing quality education.

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