

**AN ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES’
CAPACITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FPE FUNDS IN
PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A SURVEY OF ELDORET
EAST DISTRICT, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 saw a shift in the functions of School Management Committees (SMCs) with emphasis shifting from collection of funds and provision of infrastructure to management of government funds and learning resources in the school (MOEST, 2003). The SMC is responsible for managing funds, settling disputes in the school and procurement. This study sought to assess the capacity of SMCs in implementation of FPE funds in public primary schools in Eldoret East District. The study was guided by the following objectives: To find out the capacity of school management committee members in the implementation of FPE funds and to establish the challenges of SMCs in the implementation of FPE funds in public primary schools. The study conducted a survey of public primary schools in Eldoret East district. Both probability and non-probability sampling methods were employed to select 200 respondents among the head teachers, senior teachers and members of school management committees. From the study findings Majority of the respondents cited the inability of the SMCs to implement devolved FPE funds while at the same time lacking accounting skills and lack of personal continuous development and training.

Key Words: school management committees’ capacity, FPE funds

INTRODUCTION

The international commitments to Education for All (EFA), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, came up with significant efforts, primarily through reducing direct costs to parents, to increase primary school enrolment. Developing countries and their partners increased efforts to improve the efficient and proper use of public funds – reducing Waste, mismanagement and leakage. The management of primary education in much of Africa Since then has been subject to structural changes intended to bring it closer to the ‘user’, and to give citizens at the local Level (particularly parents) a greater stake in management. The goal is to increase accountability, oversight and responsiveness. The new administrative and fiscal arrangements, in line with the Dakar Framework for Action of Education for All (EFA), have placed more responsibilities on regional, district, communal and school level authorities to work together to reach the EFA targets. One of the reasons for promoting this decentralization is the hope that by bringing the resources and decision making processes closer to parents and communities, it will strengthen governance, and the resources available for primary education will be better used (Antonowicz et al., 2010).

Winkler and Gershberg, (2003) noted that decentralization of government is one of the reforms gaining ground in Africa. In search of greater accountability and more efficient service delivery, several countries are creating or recreating elected local governments and transferring to them

responsibilities and resources. Countries are empowering communities and schools to manage the delivery of education. Efforts of decentralizing education are under way in every region of the developing world. Emphasis is being placed on school autonomy, where school board or school management committee is formed to provide oversight. The implementation of decentralization policies poses numerous challenges among them capacities of school boards to govern schools, school directors to manage schools, or teachers and others to work collectively to reform the school are often weak and need development (USAID 2005). With decentralization of financial management, the importance of school-level administration has increased. Schools must now take greater responsibility for financial issues and be accountable to the local community. This is usually done through School Management Committees (SMCs), which oversee management, budgets, expenditures and procurement. In a decentralized system they also take responsibility for repairs, small infrastructure improvements and the purchasing of classroom materials. They monitor attendance and behavior and in a few cases SMCs may also be responsible for recruiting teachers (Antonowicz et al., 2010).

School management committees (SMC) are the most recent governance initiative to hit developing countries education systems in the last two decades or so. In most African countries, the responsibility for overseeing the management of primary schools is often entrusted to a management committee to ensure that governing bodies operate on some common principles; every board has a constitution which provides basic guidelines and the legal framework for its operation. The constitution is usually approved by the Ministry of Education and it provides a blueprint for a boards operation as a legal entity. The constitution of school management committee usually derives its powers from an Education Act or a similar legislation (UNESCO, 2002).

In Kenya, the Education Act cap.211 provides for the establishment of management bodies at various levels of education to advise the minister for Education, Science and Technology. A school committee in the Kenyan educational perspective is a group of parents who are elected as per the Education Act Cap.211, section 9, which states that parents shall elect eight persons whose children are in that school, three persons be nominated by the sponsor and where a school, has no sponsor, three persons to be appointed by the chairman and secretary of the DEB or the MEC. The total number of the school management committee is 13 because of the eight classes in primary schools. The functions of SMCs according to the Education Act cap.211 is to ; advise the chairman and secretary of the DEB or the MEC on matters affecting the general interest of the school and the welfare of the pupils, to collect and account for any funds, in case of a sponsored school ,they are supposed to maintain reasonable religious traditions of the school ,to advise the relevant authorities on the staffing needs of the school, to provide buildings and furniture from funds collected by the committee after approval by the DEB (R.O.K, 1980).

SMCs are the primary institutions of governance for public schools in Kenya. The SMC is responsible for managing funds, settling disputes in the school or making recommendations to the DEO, conducting tendering interviews/approvals for supplies and receiving school supplies (Kenya 2008).

On January 6, 2003 the Minister for Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) launched the Free Primary Education (FPE). Fees and levies for tuition in primary education were abolished as the government and development partners were to meet the cost of basic teaching and learning materials as well as wages for critical non-teaching staff and co-curricular activities. The FPE did

not require parents and communities to build new schools, but they were to refurbish and use existing facilities such as community and religious buildings. If they wished to charge additional levies, school heads and committees had to obtain approval from the MoEST. This request had to be sent to the District Education Board by the Area Education Officer, after a consensus among parents through the Provincial Director of Education, a fairly lengthy and tedious process. The SMCs role of collecting and accounting for funds shifted to managing the funds as directed by the government (MOEST, 2003). This meant that there was a greater need for communities to understand budget processes, and to have the skills to plan and make decisions about education expenditure. This has been achieved by training communities to monitor education policy and budget implementation, and by working to establish good governance structures in schools (Woodrow 2006). Capitation grants are disbursed directly to schools, in two separate bank accounts, one for school materials and one for operational and maintenance expenditures. Both accounts are managed by the SMC which comprises the headteacher as secretary and elected members among parents and teachers. One parent not member of the SMC is a signatory of the account for school materials to ensure transparency and accountability in fund use. The funds are transmitted electronically twice a year by the Ministry of Education. Prior to releasing the first transfer of money to schools, the government conducted training and sensitization of primary school headmasters and as well as of the chairpersons and treasurers of the SMCs. The government also provided procurement and financial management manuals, institutionalized the monitoring of fund utilization, enhanced the capacity of its school audit unit, and made it mandatory for primary school accounts to be audited annually. In addition, parents and communities were empowered to demand to know how funds were used, and the accounts were displayed on the boards for perusal by the stakeholders (Fredriksen 2007).

Grogan, (2006) observed that capacity will need further development if FPE progress is to be sustainable. It is clear therefore from the background above that the SMCs ought to be fully equipped so as to use the FPE funds as required by the MOE in order to sustain the programme. The researcher is therefore of the view that, there is need for elaborate training courses to be conducted on management and financial skills, to enable the SMCs cope with the increased level of technology in the society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of management

Education Management focuses attention on strategies for keeping education resources current, up to date, and accessible. It is ensuring that people have the most recent and suitable education to do their work (Wanderi, 2008).

Management is the process of working with and through others to attain organizational objectives in a changing environment. Franklin, (2002), defines management as a distinct process consisting of activities of planning, organizing, activating and controlling performance to determine and accomplish stated objectives with the use of human beings and other resources. Members of the SMC are therefore expected to work with and through the head teachers, parents and other educational stakeholders to accomplish educational goals.

Chisamya, (2010), emphasize that a strong management system of education is pertinent in ensuring efficient and effective accountability at various levels of education. School management committees therefore need to be empowered so as to have a strong management team which is effective. Management is an important concept in this study as it lays a background of what is expected of the

SMCs as managers in the education sector. It gives a clear guideline on functions of the SMC and emphasize on being conversant with current issues.

Historical Background on School Governance

Since the early 1980s there have been major changes in the governance of education. In the United Kingdom, one of the most important reforms was the devolution of a number of responsibilities from the Local Education Authority (LEA) to individual school governing bodies. The aim of these changes was "to put governing bodies and head teachers under the greater pressure of public accountability, for better standards and to increase their freedom...It is that combination of unpaid but increasingly experienced governors and senior professional staff that is best placed to identify what is required" (DES, 1992:18). The clear assumption in this statement is that governing bodies would be better able, both to manage and be accountable than LEAs.

Fidler, (2007), asserts that the purpose of the governing body is to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of education system to parents, and the local community. An effective school governing body is one of the school's greatest assets thus, establishing a positive working relationship with the governors is critical to the success of the school.

In England and Wales, school management has its roots in the old grammar schools of centuries ago. Before there was a state intervention provision of schooling; and this has only been in the past century and half, schools were founded by various religious charitable or other groups. They were obviously keen to secure value for money so a system of trustees or managers or governors arose. They were locally appointed people to oversee the running of the school. As the education system grew in the last century, the system seemed to be a good one to follow. After all public funds were used to finance education; therefore parents of public school ensured that money raised by the taxpayer was wisely spent as cited by (Mahoney, 1998).

School management committees (SMC) are the most recent governance initiative to hit developing country education systems in the last two decades or so (World Bank, 2005). Passi (1988), in his study on management of schools in Uganda showed that, the government develop expenditure did not keep pace with the expansion of education system. Consequently acute shortage of teaching materials and equipments were experienced at all levels of education. These difficult economic conditions in the country resulted in increased demand for community support through PTA. The SMCs therefore became the major funding bodies of the school and assumed a pivoted role in the development of the education system. The 1969 Education Act gave the government of Uganda the legal right to plan, control and develop education. Thus powers of levying school fees and the general management of the schools was vested in the hands of the management committees. The chief contribution of the 1944 Education Act Section (17:1) to the history of development of school governing bodies was the requirement that there be an instrument providing for the constitutional body of managers or governors of the school selection.

Similarly in Kenya, the Education Act (1968), points out that the central government recognized the school committees as key managers for any first level school, whether aided or unaided. It reduced powers of the county council as education authority, giving official status to individual school committees, instituting for every school. A properly constituted committee of representatives of the local authority, the community served by and serving the school and where applicable the religious sponsors. (Ibid: 37). Furthermore, with the adoption of the Sessional paper, No.1 of (1986) on "Economic management for Renewed Growth," large cuts were made on the Ministry of Education

budget and payment of grants to schools curtailed parents were made to shoulder a large proposition of financing and maintaining schools through cost sharing (R. O.K,1986).

The Kamunge Report, (1988), revealed that Education institutions are managed by governing councils, boards of governors, school committees and administered by their respective heads. Primary schools are established and managed by the local communities and parents through their school management committees comprising representatives of the parents and develop primary schools to ensure the maintenance of school traditions and high standards of education and discipline. The majority of the school committees are parents of children in such schools.

The Sessional paper No.6 of 1988, on Training for the next Decade and Beyond, points out that that the government vests the management of public maintained and assisted schools in school committees and expects them to provide the development of their institutions and the management of finances; discipline of pupils and teachers and to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources. The Sessional paper No.1 of 2005, also indicates that the SMCs have been given the role of managing primary schools with key responsibilities being human and other resource management (MOEST 2005).

Capacity of school management committee members in the use of FPE funds

Balwanz et al., (2006), asserts that capacity building of school management committees and local communities is a critical element of the education programmes. Section 19 of SASA recognises the need for the enhancement of capacity of governing bodies to ensure that their roles are carried out optimally. Capacity building programmes of SGB in South Africa essentially revolve around that of financial management, legal matters, learner discipline and duties of the SGB, communication skills, policy-making, conducting meetings and conflict management.

People need the skills to understand budgets, bookkeeping, financial records and administrative systems. Because of the regular turnover of head teachers and SMC members, capacity building cannot be limited to one-off training. It requires long term strategies, such as regular on-the-job training, support networks, advisory visits, and published guidelines. It is clearly the responsibility of the Ministries of Education to ensure that this takes place. SMC training makes a major positive contribution to school stakeholder cooperation and teamwork as well as better understanding of responsibilities in school management (EQUIP, 2009)

School management committees lack the capacities to oversee and account for the utilisation of resources under them. The inquiry of Koech report (R. O.K, 1999) pointed out that management of educational institutions in Kenya was found to be weak because most the boards of governors lacked quality management capabilities. A Governing Body that has good financial management competencies will fulfil its financial roles and responsibilities better. It will be a more effective "Critical Friend" to the School's Management, especially the SMCs or equivalent Provide a clearer strategic lead on Financial Management issues more robustly ensure that the school is properly accountable for the financial aspects of its performance. Institutions will need to be strong but flexible and capacity will need further development, if FPE progress is to be sustainable (Grogan, 2006).

Antonowicz et al., (2010) observed that financial management training has a positive influence irrespective of the original level of education of the SMC. In fact, there is a greater reduction in malpractice when the SMC involved has capacity in financial management. The high level of SMC

members who are not trained in financial management limits the quality of oversight over school finances, opens the door to financial mismanagement and undermines the ability of management to detect corruption.

Segwapa (2008), in a study on assessing the performance of school governing bodies, points out that that school governing body must be able to control and raise funds, draw up the school budget, manage rentals like water and electricity and also purchase learner support materials and other necessary equipments for school. One of the reasons for the mismanagement of funds and for confrontations between SGBs and principals is lack of appropriate financial management skills for implementation of the financial policy where it exists (S.Africa Journal of Education 2006)

Research done by Du Preez and Grobler (1998) has indicated that there is a correlation between sound financial management and effective, efficient SGBs. The HoD must ensure that school governing bodies are trained continually. One of the reasons for the mismanagement of funds and for confrontations between SGBs and principals is the absence of an effective school financial policy or the ineffective implementation of the financial policy where it exists (S.Africa Journal of Education 2006)

ROK (2005) asserts that the Government proposes a capacity building and support component to enhance programme capacity at school level for SMCs they need the right skills and facilities to implement new procedures and guidelines and to effectively manage their financial resources. It is essential that existing school management committees are strengthened so that they have the capacity to take a more active role in ensuring that children in their community access quality education and also be in a position to review proposed projects and budgets and report to DEBs on the performance of frontline service providers. Prudent financial management is critical for the realization of the set goals. For this reason there is need to invest in this component so as to ensure: appropriate utilization of FPE funds; effective monitoring of the flow of FPE funds; effective monitoring of the flow expenditures and balances in Textbooks Accounts; ascertaining the existence of SIMSC in schools and their participation in textbooks and other instructional materials procurement process; regular updates on the current textbook pupil ratios in the sampled schools; ensuring a tracking level.

Bennell & Akyeampong (2006), reports that in Ghana the widespread introduction of SMCs has served urban communities better because they have been able to muster financial capital to improve quality of some urban schools, thus widening the quality gap between them and rural public schools. In Ghana, the Ministry of Education embarked on capacity building plans for district education authorities with focus on improving management efficiency and transparent decision-making (MOESS, 2006). In Ghana, for example, SMCs have been set up and its member's undergone training on developing work plans for school improvement (World Bank, 2005; MOESS 2006). In Bangladesh, there is widespread dissatisfaction with how school management committees are functioning. They tend to be dominated by head teachers and local political leaders reason been lack of sufficient capacity to manage and use devolved funds.

Bah-Lalya (2003), asserts that implementation depends on the capacities, abilities, nature and degree of willingness of all the actors to respond to the challenges and expectations that comprise their work. Indeed, capacities for effective management require on-the ground capacities that can deal effectively with corruption. Mwanje et al., (2008) asserts that the capacity of SMCs is under

the spotlight. It is often reported that some of the members of these important body have no knowledge or skills to enable them to understand the implementation and use of FPE funds. There have been cases where school heads are reported to have mismanaged school funds without adequate action being taken by concerned authorities this is largely attributed to the incapacity of the SMCs to manage FPE funds adequately. It was also stated that treasurers in some schools lack the necessary financial expertise and merely sign cheques presented to them by the principal or the chairperson of the SGB. Some have very little knowledge of financial accounting (S.Africa Journal of Education 2006)

Challenges of SMCs in the implementation and use of FPE

The findings of studies in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia indicate that the implementation of governance reforms is encountering major difficulties. Teacher opposition to these reforms has been intense in some countries. In Nepal, for example, some teacher unions have resisted plans to hand over the management of schools to communities because of fear that their rights and privileges will be trampled upon and teachers will be excluded from decision-making. In Bangladesh, there is widespread dissatisfaction with how school management committees are functioning. They tend to be dominated by head teachers and local political leaders and do not have sufficient resources to carry out their designated responsibilities (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2006).

Antonowicz,(2010) observed that in survey findings conducted in Uganda, Ghana, morocco and Madagascar indicated that payments to schools are often late and/ or less than expected. In Uganda and Ghana payments that are expected each term reportedly have been delayed for up to a year. Similar delays are reported in Madagascar. Even with capitation formulae, many schools report that they are never sure how much will arrive. This makes planning a frustration rather than an opportunity, and implementation of any plan is constrained if funds do not arrive in full. There are also reported cases of underpayment against expectations. In Morocco the allocation criteria from central to local level is unclear. Clearly, planning is difficult when head teachers and SMCs are not sure how much money they will receive or when they will receive it. These unpredictable and essentially inexplicable differences undermine the opportunities for public oversight and understanding. Administrative inefficiency is hard to distinguish from corruption at this level. High percentage of head teachers and managers do not know when resources are dispatched, or what to expect in terms of amounts or the kind of resources sent to them. There is a high degree of uncertainty and inconsistency as to when the money is received in these cases planning, financial management and oversight are undermined. Such administrative inefficiencies and information black holes increase the risks of corruption.

Most challenges facing SMCs are as a result of limited education and lack of training on relevant skills pertaining their management functions. In Kenya, primary school fees were abolished in 2003. Subsequently, enrolment in primary schools rose from 5.9 million to 7.6 million between 2002 and 2005, an increase of nearly 30 percent, (UNESCO, 2006). Yet this progress creates its own new challenges. The influx of new students has raised pupil teacher ratios. By 2005 in the area we examine Kenya, the average class size in first grade was 83, the median was 74, and 28 percent of first grade classes had more than 100 students. Some schools hire teachers locally using parent contributions to supplement the teachers hired by the Ministry of Education.

Bold, et al., (2009), asserts that in 2003, Kenya introduced free primary education (FPE) nationwide. While FPE has succeeded in increasing the quantity of children enrolled in school,

there is widespread concern that school quality has suffered – particularly in a subset of districts. We assess three common explanations for this alleged decline: the failure of school budgets and staffing levels to keep pace with enrolment in some areas; changes in the composition of students; and the loss of local accountability as school management and funding has become centralized in the Ministry. The outright embezzlement of public funds by school heads and frequent cases of fraudulent projects have compromised the quality, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the education centre (KESSP 2006).

From the literature above, it is clear that the challenges facing SMCs are quite many, emanating from added roles without proper preparations to undertake the responsibilities; insufficient resources to carry out their designated responsibilities, lack of training on relevant skills among other factors. There is therefore need to empower the SMCs before they embark on their responsibilities.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 saw a shift in the functions of SMCs with emphasis shifting from collection of funds and provision of infrastructure to management of government funds and learning resources in the school (MOEST, 2003). However, following the implementation of FPE, the Government has initiated a programme for school committees in financial management, procurement of instructional materials and the efficient utilization of school funds and resources. Nevertheless, the nature of training required will not be achieved without a comprehensive training programme and availability of a full time training facility (ROK, 2005). There is therefore need for increased capacity of SMC members to participate in the FPE process and manage devolved funds effectively. Capacity will need further development if FPE progress is to be sustainable (Grogan, 2006).

There have been so many complaints from parents on embezzlement of FPE funds, demonstrations have been reported in several schools in Eldoret East District over mismanagement of FPE funds for instance in Ilula primary, Kaptuktuk, Lelit among other schools. There are also cases of pending bills even when FPE funds have been released this is an indication of misappropriation of funds. Complaints of poor management of the FPE funds have been reported where SMCs charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the funds are properly used are bent on its mismanagement. Most primary schools committees are fond of quoting exorbitant prices to gain from funded projects (Agwanda, 2009). There are also other instances where the FPE funds end up in accounts of Institutions they were not meant for. These issues raise eyebrows especially when the program has been in place for the last seven years. There is therefore need to establish informed and well skilled SMC members to participate in the FPE process, and manage devolved funds effectively at schools. There is confusion about the FPE programme and SMCs do not have the capacity to effectively play the roles set out in FPE Policy. Studies on the implementation of FPE have been explored extensively by Riddell (2003), Sifuna (2005), Kenya, (2008), Woodrow (2006), Vreede (2003). However what remains is the capacity of SMCs in the implementation of FPE funds. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the capacity of SMCs in the implementation and use of FPE funds in public primary schools in Eldoret East District.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the capacity of school management committee members in the implementation of FPE funds in public primary schools in Eldoret East District

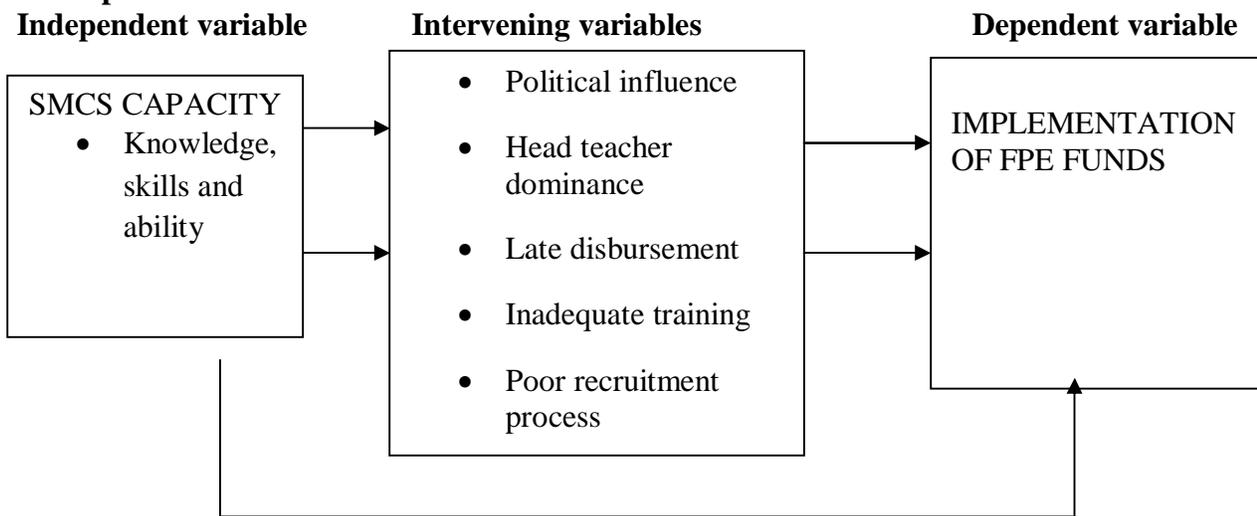
2. To find out the Challenges of SMCs in the implementation and use of FPE funds in public primary schools in Eldoret East District

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on cognitive resource theory of Fiedler and Garcia, (1987), which assumes that intelligence and experience and other cognitive resources are factors in leadership success. Cognitive resources refer to the leaders’ intelligence, ability and technical competence. This theory has a belief that training leads to improved job performance. The theory is relevant to the study on the capacity of the School Management Committees’ in the implementation and use of FPE funds in public primary schools, since it stresses on the fact that the SMCs need to possess the right intellectual abilities, technical competence and necessary knowledge so as to be effective in their work. It emphasizes on training which leads to improved performance just as it is stressed by commission reports like the Koech Report, (1999), and Kamunge Report, (1988), the work of Maranga, (1993), Koskei,(2004) among others.

This theory provides a framework that is helpful in understanding factors that influence the effectiveness of the School Management Committees hence become an eye opener to the Ministry of Education to put up a clear criteria on the appointment of the SMCs, to consider their intelligence, experience, ability and technical competence which is to a large extent attained by considering their academic qualification and enhancing training for better performance. By being competent, it means that the SMCs can adequately perform their management functions.

Conceptual Framework



The model shows the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. The Implementation and use of FPE funds is greatly influenced by the skills, knowledge and ability possessed by the SMCs. Other factors like political influence, late disbursement of FPE funds, training needs and recruitment process also affect the capacity of the SMC.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research followed the descriptive survey design. Questionnaires were issued to school management committee members, headteachers and teachers. Interview schedule was administered

to the DEO. A stratified random sampling technique was used to sample the public primary schools in Eldoret East district. Simple random sampling was used to select schools from each stratum. Purposive sampling was used to select the school management committees chair persons and senior teachers of the sampled schools who formed the 201 study respondents. The data collected was then analyzed using SPSS and descriptive statistics. The findings were presented in frequency tables, charts and graphs.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Demographic Information of the Respondents

The study involved a survey of public primary schools within Eldoret East District. The participants of the study included both male and female. For SMCs male were (54.7%) and female were (45.3%), for headteachers male were (72.0%), female (28.0%) and for the senior teachers, male were (52.0%) and female (48.0%). The gender disparity witnessed above indicates that women are not active participants in the process of school management and therefore this leads to biased decision making regarding the implementation of the FPE funds. This further implies that in the study area, women are not involved in key decision making this may eventually lead to inefficiencies in the management of schools in the region.

The findings showed that 68.0% of the head teachers were aged 40 years and below, 10.0% were aged between 41 and 50 years, while 22.0% were aged 51 years and above. This means that teaching profession in the area is dominated by individuals aged between 31 and 50 years. However no member of SMC was aged 30 years and below, 52.3% were aged between 31 and 40 years, 40.7% were aged between 41 and 50 years while the remaining 7.0% were aged 51 years and above. This implies that most of the members of SMCs are people who are strong and energetic and hence expected to be very active in their roles. Majority of the senior teachers were between 36-45 years, 30.0% were between 26-35years while 30% were above 45 years.

Most of the headteachers were diploma holders, 82.0% of the senior teachers have P1 certificates while 82.6% of SMC member have o'level certificates. With regard to their academic credentials, all of them were literate and suitably qualified for their role in school management. Majority of the headteachers and the senior teachers in the study have been in their current schools for more than five years while most of the SMCs have been in the schools for more than three years, implying that intensive training on financial management has not taken place indicated by a small percentage of financial management courses attended.

Capacity of school management committees in the use of FPE funds

Bah-Lalya (2003), asserts that implementation depends on the capacities, abilities, nature and degree of willingness of all the actors to respond to the challenges and expectations that comprise their work. Indeed, capacities for effective management require on-the ground capacities that can deal effectively with corruption. Implementation and use of devolved funds in Eldoret East district be will only be made possible by developing the capacity of the SMCs. Fullan (1999), points out that reform on a large scale depends on the development of local capacity to manage multiple innovations simultaneously.

ROK (2005) asserts that the Government proposes a capacity building and support component to enhance capacity at school level for SMCs; they need the right skills and facilities to implement new procedures and guidelines and to effectively manage their financial resources. This is depicted in the study where the SMCs are not effective as they ought to be due to inadequate skills to do so.

It is essential that existing school management committees are strengthened so that they have the capacity to take a more active role in ensuring that children in their community access quality education and also be in a position to review proposed projects and budgets and report to DEBs on the performance of frontline service providers. Prudent financial management is critical for the realization of the set goals. For this reason, there is need to invest in this component so as to ensure: appropriate utilization of FPE funds and effective monitoring of the flow of FPE funds.

When asked what was essential for them to manage finances effectively, 97.7% of the SMCs in the study were of the opinion that they needed the capacity to manage and use devolved funds, they must attend a course on financial management, must have accounting skills, have experience in financial management, Knowledge on financial and they must be trained continually. This is an indication that majority of the SMCs have not been developed enough to manage FPE finances effectively. Mwanje et al., (2008) asserts that the capacity of SMCs is under the spotlight. It is often reported that some of the members of these important body have no knowledge or skills to enable them to understand the implementation and use of FPE funds. There have been cases where school heads are reported to have mismanaged school funds without adequate action being taken by concerned authorities this is largely attributed to the incapacity of the SMCs to manage FPE funds adequately. It was also stated that treasurers in some schools lack the necessary financial expertise and merely sign cheques presented to them by the principal or the chairperson of the SGB. Some have very little knowledge of financial accounting (S.Africa Journal of Education 2006). The issue on little knowledge of financial management is similar to the findings of this study therefore a signal that much needs to be done in African countries on capacity building of the SMCs.

From the study carried out it is clear that most SMCs do not have financial management related skills evident by unnecessary skills not related to management of finances appearing at the top when rated. This agrees with the findings of Antonowicz et al., (2010) which asserts that Members of these bodies are given limited financial management training and support, which raises serious questions about their ability to fulfill their role of planning and monitoring school resources. This then is an indication that most workshops and seminars attended by SMCs are not related to use and implementation of FPE funds. This is alarming because studies done have shown that financial management training has a positive influence irrespective of the original level of education of the SMC. In fact, in the studies conducted there was a greater reduction in malpractice as a result of financial management training in countries like, Ghana, Morocco and Niger. This is also applicable in Kenya since this study has shown that the level of education of the SMCs is not a guarantee to effective financial management, (82.6%) of the SMCs have O' level certificate and they are not very effective, what is therefore required is the financial management training. SMC members who are not trained in financial management limits the quality of oversight over school finances, opens the door to financial mismanagement and undermines the ability of management to detect corruption. (Antonowicz, 2010). Although Fredriksen (2007) noted that Prior to releasing the first transfer of money to schools, the government conducted training and sensitization of primary school headmasters as well as of the chairpersons and treasurers of the SMCs, it is evident from this study that these trainings are no longer conducted frequently yet new SMCs are elected every year.

Challenges of SMCs in the implementation of FPE funds

Bennell & Akyeampong, (2006) observed that the findings of studies in sub-Sahara Africa and South Asia indicate that the implementation of governance reforms is encountering major difficulties.

The disbursement of Free Primary funds also poses a challenge; remote rural schools receive the government funds at the end of the term instead of the beginning of the term. There is delay in releasing school funds hence become heavily indebted. The SMCs are then left in a difficult position, since parents are unwilling to give any money as they claim there is money from the government (Bii, 2010).

The survey findings done in Uganda and Ghana showed that payments to schools are often late and/or less than expected. There cases were the funds have been delayed for up to a year. Similar delays are reported in Madagascar. Even with capitation formulae, many schools report that they are never sure how much will arrive. This makes planning a frustration than an opportunity, and implementation of any plan is constrained if funds do not arrive in full. The findings are similar to this study as the findings indicated that 45.3% of the SMCs strongly agreed that delays in disbursement of FPE funds is a challenge they face and 43.0% agreed to the same. A third of surveyed schools in Ghana report underpayment against expectations. In Morocco the allocation criteria from central to local level is unclear. Clearly planning is difficult when head teachers and SMCs are not sure how much money they will receive or when they will receive it (Antonowicz, 2010).

The study findings showed that insufficient infrastructure is among the challenges facing the SMCs, 30.2% strongly agreed to this and 51.2% agreed. There are too few classrooms for the current number of pupils, resulting in very high pupil: classroom ratios. Typically in Uganda the ratio may reach 120 pupils per classroom and many rural pupils have no classroom at all so that children must sit all day without shelter from sun and rain. Though the situation in Kenya is less acute, buildings are often temporary structures or of poor quality with insufficient light; some buildings are old, in need of repair or even dangerous. The pupil: classroom ratio in Kenya often reaches 80:1. The government recommended ratio in both countries is 50:1. Large classes have a negative effect on the teaching and learning process, as teachers are unable to adequately attend to individual boys' and girls' needs, or effectively carry out proper assessment of their pupils' learning competencies.

Decision-making in the development process is often highly centralised and bureaucratic, particularly in Kenya, and is seen as being the sole responsibility of leaders and the elite. Despite government policies to the contrary (for example the school development planning process) the SMCs are often left out of the process, further reinforcing their powerlessness. Delivery of education services therefore remains at the institutional level, with parents and children mere spectators. Yet it has been shown that a school's effectiveness is more influenced by the commitment of the school's stakeholders than the resources it has. The study established that majority of the SMCs (78.0%) are not involved in decision making in the use and implementation of FPE funds yet they are the ones on the ground, they have views which when given chance would better the education sector.

Poor governance, corruption and inefficient use of public resources by authorities are critical barriers to the achievement of national education targets. Because of their low hierarchical position in society rural communities often cannot assert themselves, and demand from the government their rights to services. Greater parental participation results in improved accountability and management of school resources, and ultimately better classroom teaching and learning. The need to create ownership amongst communities is therefore not just an important aspect of development, but a contributor to sustainability of education programmes.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Good governance in education, as broadly defined, is about ensuring that the necessary resources for an efficient and effective education system (financial, material and human) are managed in a transparent and accountable manner. A well-organized, well-managed and transparent education system is essential for achieving quality primary and basic education (Antonowicz, 2010).

The management of school finances can be one of the most challenging activities of the SMCs' responsibilities because for many, it is an area in which they have little or no training or expertise. It is also likely that the elected members of the (school) governing body may be equally ill equipped for the task Clark (2008).

People need the skills to understand budgets, bookkeeping, financial records and administrative systems. Because of the regular turnover of head teachers and SMC members, capacity building cannot be limited to one-off training. It requires long term strategies, such as regular on-the-job training, support networks, advisory visits, and published guidelines. It is clearly the responsibility of the Ministries of Education to ensure that this takes place, although KESI provides in-service to other school leaders such as principals, deputy principals, heads of departments it rarely does so to other school leaders such as, school committees and boards of governors (Otunga et al., 2008). Thus, lack of capacity can be traced to inadequate funding to KESI and lack of full time training facilities (Sessional Paper No. 1 2005: 65). Capacity will need further development if FPE progress is to be sustainable (Grogan, 2006).

Low capacity of the SMCs at the district and school levels has undermined efforts to improve the quality of education. Weak leadership at school level can manifest itself as poor management of school finance. A School's effectiveness is related not to the level of resources available to the school, but how well the resources are utilized (Govender, 2004).

From the research findings the paper concludes that it is evident that the capacity of the SMCs in Eldoret East District is not up to the desired levels with regard to the management of the FPE funds, this is attributed to inadequate skills and knowledge on the use of devolved FPE funds in the public primary schools in the study area. However there is a ray of hope since most of the SMC members are becoming more aware of the need to develop themselves in order to improve their efficiency in the management of the free primary education funds. There is need to develop the members of the committees on diverse areas in order to enable them have a holistic approach in the management of the public primary schools. The capacity of the committee was therefore limited by the knowledge, skills and attitudes they have. Therefore school managers should be trained to ensure that they have the right skills to use devolved funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the study findings, the researcher felt that the following recommendations are necessary to effectively manage the free primary school funds by both the school administration and the members of the school management committees:

1. Guidance manuals on FPE funds must be developed and made widely available to head teachers, SMC members, and all those involved in the management of schools resources.
2. Head teachers and SMCs should be trained in financial management, budget planning and monitoring of expenditures.
3. The Ministry of Education should ensure prompt disbursement of FPE funds.
4. FPE funds to be increased to cater for all the needs in the school.

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