

Management of the Change Occasioned By Free Primary Education in Kakamega and Kajiado Districts, Kenya

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Abstract

The purposes of this study was to conduct an in-depth investigation into how primary schools are managing change with regard to Free Primary Education(FPE) in Kenya and from this, develop a framework for effective change management of FPE. The study was conducted in Kakamega and Kajiado districts. From the 59 schools sampled, 59 headteachers and 177 teachers were included in the study. Fourteen Area Education Officers (AEOs), 118 parents, 118 School Management Committee (SMC) members, 2 District Education Officers and 7 senior officers from the Ministry of Education headquarters were also interviewed. The study used questionnaires, interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for data collection. Some of the key findings from the study were as follows. Most primary schools were found to be inadequately resourced for FPE. There was an inequitable distribution of teachers among schools and teachers had heavy workloads. In terms of infrastructure, there existed considerable discrepancy among schools. As managers under FPE, headteachers cited accounting and management of financial resources as main areas of perceived inadequacy. Teachers evaluated headteachers lowly with regard to the following: involving staff in decision-making for procurement, interacting cordially with staff, identifying in-service training needs for FPE, supervising teaching and supporting teachers to try out new teaching techniques. Headteachers exhibited a high level of compliance with regard to maintaining most key financial documents but some weaknesses were observed in maintenance of analytical documents. Headteachers and teachers indicated that no preparation for FPE had been given to them prior to implementation. However, the training given after FPE was inadequate and too rushed. Headteachers and teachers revealed that most parents were not actively involved in school management affairs and had misinterpreted the FPE policy. Members of SMC were seen as lacking the necessary capacity to contribute effectively in financial management, budgeting and curriculum support in schools. Still, SMCs were more supportive than PTAs. Five concerns emerged as fundamental to the sustainability of FPE in Kenya: budgetary provisions and constraints, Kenya's economic performance, donor support, political commitment and community support. The sustainability of FPE is threatened by high cost of funding, the shortage of teachers, reliance on donor support, uncertainty over continued political goodwill, slowed growth of the Kenyan economy and the apathy from parents. There are policy gaps relating to early childhood education, admission of pupils into primary schools and allocation of FPE grants. Based on the findings and on theory, a model for systemic management of the change to FPE is proposed as an output of the study. It is argued that for there to be effective management of the change process, a systemic approach should be adopted, such that all the relevant and interconnected components of the education system move in synchrony towards sustainable and effective change.

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