

Impact of Enrollment on the Quality of Learning in Primary Schools in Imenti Central District, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

To promote participation and access to education, the government introduced free primary education. The introduction of FSE has resulted into increased enrolment at all levels which has been blamed for the poor performance of pupils in public primary school of Imenti Central District. The current study sought to determine the impact of enrollment on the quality of learning in primary schools in Imenti Central District. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling was used to select 2 QASO officers in charge of Imenti Central district; giving a sample size of 382 participants. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as tools for data collection. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The results of data analysis were presented using frequency distribution tables and bar graphs. The study established that high enrolment trends in primary schools led to overworking the staff members, inadequate teaching and learning facilities, poor sanitation facilities and inadequate classroom. The increased enrolment impacted to a great extent on the quality of learning in public primary schools. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the government puts measures in place to avail facilities that match the pupils' enrolment.

Key Words: Enrolment, Quality of Learning

Introduction

Due to the importance placed on education by governments around the world, many countries, Kenya included, have invested heavily on Free Primary Education (FPE) (Bishop, 1889). While the investments in education have been quite successful at expanding enrollments in education, for any given level of efficiency, increased enrollments require increased resources, in order to maintain quality (Verspoor, 2008). If these resources are not forthcoming, the increase in educational quantity may come at the expense of quality (Duraisamy, James, Lane & Tan, 1997). Increasing the quantity dimensions of education is of little value if the quality dimensions are ignored. Verspoor (2008) argues that the most important concern involves the relevance of program content for the effective preparation of young people for participation in an economy and society certain to see dramatic change over the next decades. Verspoor (2008) adds that other concerns surround the quality of instruction, the learning environment in schools, and the level of learning achievement. It was therefore important to examine the factors that impact on the quality of learning in public primary schools.

Edmonds (1981), Kirk and Jones (2004), Daggett (2005), and Lezotte (2010), in studies conducted in developed countries, have established that the quality of learning is found in what they refer to as 'effective schools', which are characterized by: strong instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly schools, climate of high expectations for success, frequent monitoring of learner progress, positive home-school relations, and opportunity to learn/time on task. Lezotte (2010) argued that these seven Correlates of Effective Schools are powerful indicators of successful places where all children learn, regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity.

In Kenya, concerns have been raised about the quality of learning in public primary schools especially since the commencement of FPE in 2003 (UNESCO, 2005; Sifuna, 2004). After the introduction of FPE, head teachers in many schools found themselves with more children to enrol than their capacity could hold (Ng'ethe, 2004). While there is a consensus that FPE is an appropriate policy addressing the problem of declining primary school enrolment in Kenya, a serious concern has been raised on the effects the programme has on quality of education (Swamura & Sifuna, 2008; Chuck, 2009; Oketch & Somerset, 2010; Shimada, 2010). Of major concern to this study is the impact of enrolment on the quality of learning in the schools.

Statement of the Problem

Education is key to the development of human resources. To promote participation and access to education, the government introduced free primary education. The introduction of FSE has resulted into increased enrolment at all levels which has been blamed for the poor performance of pupils in public primary school of Imenti Central District. The current study sought to determine the impact of enrollment on the quality of learning in primary schools in Imenti Central District.

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The location of the study was Imenti Central District. The target population for the study was 20,776 subjects made up of 580 teachers and 20,186 pupils in 56 public primary schools in Imenti Central District and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) in the district. The researcher sampled 382 subjects made up of 350 pupils, 10 head teachers, 20 teachers and 2 QASOs to participate in the study.

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for data collection. Questionnaires were used to gather data from the students, teachers and head teachers while interview schedules were used to collect information from QASOs. Spearman Brown prophecy formula was used to estimate reliability and the correlation coefficient for questionnaire for the teachers was 0.938, head teachers 0.845 and that for pupils' questionnaires was 0.94 were obtained. Quantitative and qualitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. The results of data analysis were presented using frequency distribution tables, bar graphs and pie charts. Table 3 shows a summary of methods of the data analysis.

Results and Discussions

The study sought to establish how the sample population was distributed by gender and the data presented on Table 1 reveals the findings.

Table 1
Gender Distribution of Respondents

| Category of respondent | Male | | Female | | Total percentage |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent | |
| Head teachers | 6 | 60.0 | 4 | 40.0 | 100 |
| Teachers | 10 | 50.0 | 10 | 50.0 | 100 |
| Pupils | 168 | 48.0 | 182 | 52.0 | 100 |
| DQASO | 2 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Total | 187 | | 195 | | |

According to the findings in Table 1, majority (60.0%) of the head teachers respondents were males and 40.0% were females. Of the teachers, 50.0% were males while 50.0% were females. The teachers' respondents comprised of deputy head teachers, senior teachers, heads of subjects and class teachers. The information shown in Table 3 further shows that majority of the pupil respondents (52.0%) were girls while 48.0% were boys. This implies that there was heterogeneity in terms of gender among the respondents that took part in this study.

Information was sought on the age of the pupil respondents. This information is illustrated on Figure 1.

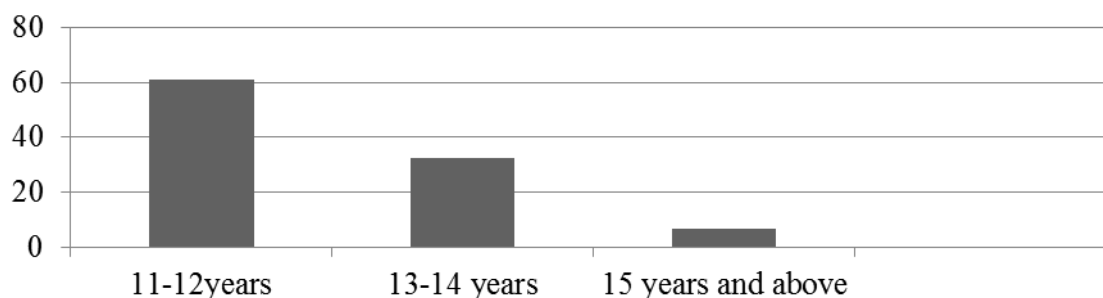


Figure 1. Age Distribution of Pupils Respondents

Figure 1 shows that majority (60.9%) of the pupils were aged between 11 and 12 years whereas 32.6% were aged between 13 and 14 years and 6.6% were aged 15 years and above. This implies that most of the pupils were in the age bracket recommended for this level of education.

The objective of the study was to determine the impact of enrollment on the quality of learning in primary schools in Imenti Central District. To respond to this objective, respondents were presented with 5 items in which they were required to state their agreement levels on a five point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree). Responses obtained from pupil respondents are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Pupils Responses on Enrollment

| Statement | SA | | A | | U | | D | | SD | |
|---|-----|------|-----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Classroom are overcrowded | 197 | 56.3 | 69 | 19.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 41 | 11.7 | 43 | 12.3 |
| Teachers are unable to mark all exercises given | 94 | 26.9 | 116 | 33.1 | 21 | 6.0 | 60 | 17.1 | 59 | 16.9 |
| Overcrowding contributes to noise making and poor class control | 168 | 48.0 | 106 | 30.3 | 18 | 5.1 | 58 | 16.6 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Teachers are unable to offer individual attention to learners | 78 | 22.3 | 110 | 31.4 | 43 | 12.3 | 72 | 20.6 | 47 | 13.4 |
| Textbooks are shared among many pupils | 193 | 55.1 | 108 | 30.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 49 | 14.0 |

As shown in Table 2, majority of the pupils agreed that; classrooms were overcrowded with pupils (76.0%), overcrowding in classrooms had contributed to indiscipline like noise making (78.3%) and textbooks were shared among too many pupils (86.0%). This implies that increase in pupils' enrollment negatively influenced quality of learning in classrooms as teachers were not able to carry out their duties effectively like marking of exercises given learners and offering individual attention to learners.

The study further sought to establish from the teachers and head teacher, their opinions regarding the impact of enrollment on quality of learning, the extent to which enrollment impact on quality of learning, enrollment challenges faced in primary schools and strategies that can effectively mitigate the enrollment challenges faced in primary schools. The data provided in Table 3 was obtained regarding the impact of enrollment on quality of learning.

Table 3
Teachers Responses on Enrollment

| Statement | SA | | A | | U | | D | | SD | |
|--|----|------|----|------|---|---|---|---|----|---|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Classroom are overcrowded | 28 | 93.0 | 2 | 7.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Teachers are unable to mark all exercises given | 20 | 67.0 | 10 | 33.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overcrowding contributes to noise and poor class control | 16 | 53.0 | 14 | 47.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Teachers are unable to offer individual attention | 27 | 90.0 | 3 | 10.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Textbooks are shared among many pupils | 11 | 37.0 | 19 | 63.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

As shown in Table 3, teachers and head teachers agreed with the sentiments that increased enrollment affects quality of learning as classes were overcrowded contributing to noise making and poor class control, teachers were unable to mark all the exercises given, and that learners have to share textbooks. This implies that the

quality of learning is compromised by increased enrollment of pupils in primary schools especially when the schools have inadequate curriculum and physical facilities to cope with the large population.

When asked to give their rating regarding the extent with which enrollment impacts on the quality of learning, the information obtained from the teachers and pupils' respondents is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Responses on the Extent with which Enrollment Impacts on Quality of Learning

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Very great extent | 60 | 16 |
| Great extent | 209 | 55 |
| Small extent | 111 | 29 |
| Very small extent | 0 | 0 |
| No extent | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

The data in Table 4 reveals that majority (55%) of the respondents felt that high learner enrollment impacts on the quality of learning to a great extent as compared to 29% that felt that the impact was small and 16% that that said the impact was very great.

To confirm these findings, the DQASOs interviewed reported that increased pupils' enrollment was due to admission of overage pupils and re-admission of pupils who dropped out of schools as a result of lack of school fees which slightly affects learning quality.

The enrollment challenges facing primary schools established from the pupils respondents included; sharing of learning materials, queuing in order to use some facilities like toilets, increased indiscipline among pupils and overcrowding in classrooms. When asked to state how they would address the enrollment challenges currently being experienced to ensure quality learning, the main responses that featured from the pupils' responses were learning in shifts and barring overage pupils to enroll. The study established from the pupils' responses that employment of more teachers and building of more classrooms would be the best strategies to address the enrollment challenges facing primary schools.

The study further sought teachers and head teachers' free responses on enrollment challenges facing primary schools in Imenti Central. The responses obtained were categorized and coded to facilitate analysis. The challenges that emerged from the head teachers and teachers' responses are captured in Figure 2.

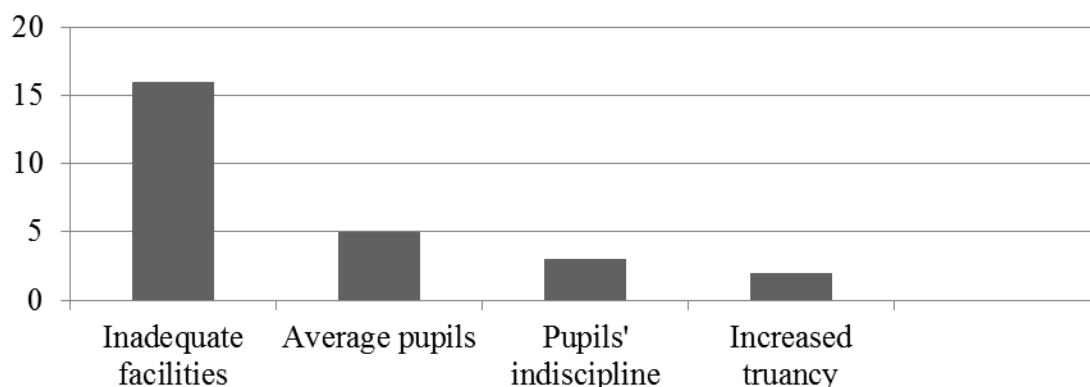


Figure 2. Head teachers and Teachers Responses on Enrollment Challenges

The findings reveal that the enrolment challenges faced included; inadequate facilities to cope with increased population, dealing with overage pupils, discipline and truancy. In agreement to these findings, Inyiega (1997) found out that primary schools which had large number of pupils faced indiscipline cases and experienced problems of insufficient educational facilities, equipment and supplies leading to over-use of some of the facilities that were available in schools. This implies that the head teachers were likely to face constraints in organizing pupils to utilize the limited facilities. This in turn is bound to affect coordination of instructional processes in schools leading to poor achievement of the curriculum objectives by pupils.

When asked to state the strategies they were currently using to address the enrollment challenges being experienced to ensure quality learning, teachers and head teachers said that temporary measures such as employing form four leavers and having learners to share desks was common. When asked to suggest better ways of handling the enrollment challenges to ensure quality learning teachers gave responses similar to those provided by pupils.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the researcher made the following conclusions:

- i. The study also revealed that the increased pupil enrolment affected quality of learning as classes were overcrowded contributing to noisemaking, poor class control, teachers overwhelmed by work and sharing of textbooks amongst the pupils.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations have been made:-

- i. The government needs to develop policies to govern enrolment ratios on both human and material resources to ensure that the quality of learning in public primary schools is not compromised by increased enrolments.

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