

ABSTRACT

The study on the challenges facing the implementation of the Free Primary Education (FPE) in the Meru Central District was carried out in 30 public primary schools. The district has 93 public schools and therefore this number represented 32.5 percent of the target population. The study picked 1440 boys and 1020 girls from the sampled schools. The study also targeted 90 teachers from the district and 60 members of the school committee members. The reports from the ministry of education Science and Technology (MoEST) indicated that the district had an enrolment of 23,915 pupils (11,920 boys and 11,995 girls). Thus students targeted in this study represented 10.3 percent (i.e. 12 percent boys and 9.1 percent girls). The overall aim of this study was to establish the challenges facing the implementation of FPE since it was initiated by the government in 2003. The study aimed at taking a stock of challenges facing the FPE programme and making recommendations to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology on ways of addressing those challenges to ensure successful implementation of FPE in the future. The study used both questionnaires and focus group discussions to collect data from the respondents. The study administered questionnaires to all teachers, head teachers, pupils from class 7-8 because this was a group that could read, make decisions and write their views without many difficulties. Focus group discussions were conducted in school for pupils in class 5-6 and the members of the school committees. This was done in order to clarify items that were not clear to them. The study established that FPE resulted to increased enrolment in the district since the introduction of FPE in 2003. The data available indicated that the enrolment of the district increased from 16,348 (in 2002) to 23,915 in 2006. This represented an increase of 46.3 percent. The study established that another main achievement of FPE was the provision of enough teaching and learning materials by the government. This brought a reduction of the cost burden of education on parents and thus leading to an influx of pupils. The study also established that FPE was successful in increasing the access to education by many pupils whose parents could not afford to keep them in school. The study on the other hand established that FPE faced a number of challenges since it was initiated by the government in 2003. These challenges included lack of adequate number of teachers, increased workload of teachers and demotivation of teachers, lack of adequate classrooms, increased number of pupils who had not gone through pre-primary, orphans as a result of HIV and Aids, cultural practices that hindered children from attending school, lack of sufficient inspection of schools. The idea of FPE was a welcome idea to many parents. However the challenges identified should be taken care off in order. to make the programme meet its objective of making education free and compulsory for all the children in the country.