

An Assessment of School Management Committees' Capacity in the Implementation of FPE Funds in Public Primary Schools

Joyce W. Kanyiri, Mary W. Nganga & Faith J. Kiprono

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. The school management committees (SMC) are 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 training needs of SMCs on 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 personal continuous development and training. The study recommends that the SMCs should be trained on financial management to be able to run the schools professionally.

Keywords: *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). 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. 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. 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).

Statement of the problem

The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya 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 of Kenya initiated a programme for training 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. In addition, the capacity will need further development if FPE programme is to be sustained (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 school, Kaptuktuk primary school, Lelit primary school, 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 ten 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 of FPE funds in public primary schools in Eldoret East District.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are;

- To find out the capacity of school management committee members in the implementation of FPE funds
- To establish the training needs of SMCs on the implementation of FPE funds in public primary schools

Justification of the Study

The study sought to find out the gap that exists between the added roles of the SMCs, their capacity, training needs and their effectiveness, which needs to be filled, just as it is stated in the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 that, majority of education managers lack adequate competencies to utilize available information for management purposes, SMCs have not been exposed to adequate management training. This study was meant to establish the capacity of the school management committees' in the implementation of FPE funds in public primary schools.

Theoretical frame work

This study was 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 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.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to establish the capacity of the SMCs in the implementation of FPE funds in public primary schools. The study specifically targeted respondents involved in the management of FPE funds in the district who included; headteachers, chairpersons of the SMCs, members of the school management committees, senior teachers and an officer from the District Education Office in charge of the SMCs. To obtain the sample, both stratified and simple random sampling criteria were used. Simple random sampling was then used to select schools from each zone. A sample size of 50 schools in Eldoret East district was arrived at. A total of 201 respondents were selected. Questionnaires and interview schedule were used as research instruments. Descriptive statistics were used to group data into frequency tables according to responses of various respondents. In each table the frequency of responses per item was used to indicate their percentages, means and modes which were eventually used in the description.

Research findings and discussion

(i) Gender of the Respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender. This was to help the researcher know whether there is gender parity in the management of schools, 47% of the SMCs were male while 39% were female, 33% of the headteachers were male while 13% were female and 25% of the senior teachers were male while 23% were female. This is presented in table 1.

(ii) Age of the Respondents

The study sought to establish the age of the respondents. This was important because it was to gauge whether the age of respondents influenced the effectiveness of school management. From the findings, 52.3% of the SMCs were between ages 31-40, 40.7% were between 41-50 years old, 7.0% were above 51 years old. 31.2% of the senior-teachers were between 26-35 years, 37.5% were between 36-45 years 31.2% were above 45, 69.6% headteachers were between 31-40 years, 10.9% were between ages 41-50, while 19.5% were above 51 years old.

(iii) Level of Education of the Respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of their education; this was to purposely prove studies done which have shown that financial management training has a positive influence irrespective of the original level of education of the respondents. Results show that most headteachers in the district 39.1% were diploma holders, 34.8% were degree holders, while 26.1% possess P1 certificates. Majority of the senior teachers 81.2% had P1 certificates, while 18.8% were degree holders, 7.0% of the SMCs had primary level of education, 7.0% had certificates in various fields, and 3.5% were degree holders while majority of them, 82.6% had O’level certificates. The findings show that most teachers in the region had P1 certificates

Capacity of School Management Committees in the Implementation of FPE Funds

The first objective of the study was to find out the Capacity of school management committee members in the implementation of FPE funds in public primary schools in Eldoret East district. The following subsections present the results under this objective; effective financial management and skills possessed by SMCs.

(i) Effective Financial Management

The respondents were required to rate the capacity of SMCs on effective financial management using a five point level scale, the respondents were asked to respond by strongly agreeing, agreeing, being neutral, disagree or strongly disagree with the given statements which enhances effective financial management. The results show that majority, 53.5 % agreed that the capacity to manage and use devolved funds is important

for SMC members to actively take part in this whole process. Also, 48.8 % of respondents agreed that attending a course on financial management was a pre-requisite. Majority 54.7 % agreed that they needed accounting skills, 51.2 % agreed that SMCs must have experience on financial management, 50.0 % were of the opinion that SMCs needed knowledge on financial accounting while 46.5 % said that SMCs need regular training as presented in table 1.

Table 1 Effective financial management

	SD		D		UN		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Capacity to manage and use devolved funds			3	3.5	12	14.0	46	53.5	25	29.1
must attend course on financial management			3	3.5	14	16.3	42	48.8	27	31.4
Must have accounting skills	3	3.5	12	14.0	5	5.8	47	54.7	19	22.1
Have experience in financial management			9	10.5	10	11.6	44	51.2	23	26.7
Knowledge on financial accounting	3	3.5	11	12.8	11	12.8	43	50.0	18	20.9
Must be trained continually	3	3.5	9	10.5	11	12.8	40	46.5	23	26.7

The findings above show that the respondents believed they need the capacity to manage and use the devolved funds, must attend courses on financial management must have accounting skills among other skills.

This implies that the SMCs in the study region did not have the capacity to manage the devolved funds effectively.

(ii) Skills possessed by SMCs

Members of school management committees require different types of skills to manage the day to day activities of the school and also to effectively use the Free Primary Education funds. The members were asked the skills they have in school management. The results indicate that 84.9% and 80.2% of SMCs have skills related to public relation and planning as compared to financial management. Table 2 shows the skills that SMCs possess from what was chosen by the majority to the least chosen.

Table 2 SMCs skills

Skills	Freq	%
Public relation skills	73	84.9
Planning skills	69	80.2
Managerial skills	60	69.8
Financial Management skills	51	59.3
Budgeting skills	47	54.7
Accounting skills	12	14.0
Human resource management skills	6	7.0
Monitoring and evaluation skills	3	3.5
Leadership skills	3	3.5

From the findings it is evident that, SMCs lack financial related skills that make them ineffective in financial management. It is therefore clear that the SMCs do not have the necessary capacity required of them in the implementation of FPE funds. The findings show that the committee members in the study area have inadequate capacity in the management of the FPE funds. This concurs with work done by Du Preez and Grobler as cited in Mestry (2006) which showed that there is a correlation between sound financial management and effective and efficient SGBs, this

therefore calls for continuous training of the SMCs. There is need to put Programmes on the training of the SMCs in place and funds for training the SMCs to be made available just as it is happening in other countries like UK (Edwardson, 2004).

Training Needs of the SMCs

This second objective sought to establish the training needs of SMCs on the implementation of FPE funds in public primary schools. This was presented under the following sub headings; training on financial management, areas which SMCs need training, problems resulting from lack of training and benefits of training of SMCs.

i) Training on financial management

The study sought to establish whether SMCs in the region had any training on financial management. From the findings, 32 % of the respondents were of the opinion that SMCs had training on financial management while 68 % said the SMCs didn't have any training on financial management.

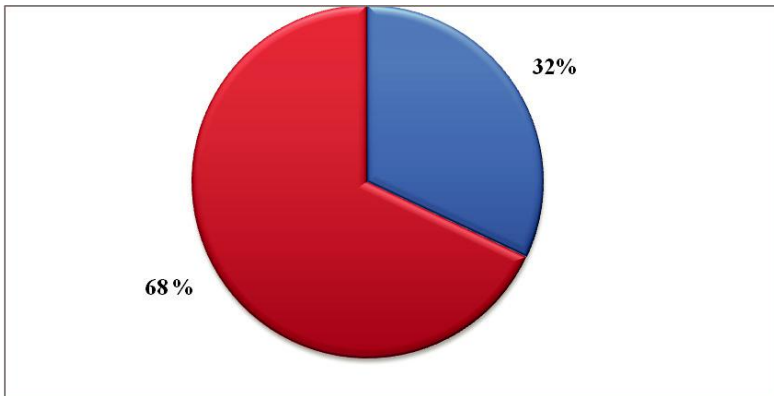


Figure 1 SMCs Training on financial management

The study findings show that majority of the SMCs didn't have any training on financial management while a smaller number indicated that they had financial management training. This had an implication that there are no measures put in place to ensure that SMCs receive the required trainings.

ii) Areas which SMCs need training

SMCs were asked to identify areas in which they needed training. According to the findings, 55.8 % strongly agreed that they need training on Management of FPE funds, majority 61.6 % agreed that they need training on Human resource management, 47.7 % of the respondents strongly agreed that they need training in Project management, 54.7 % agreed that they need training on Financial planning while 47.7 % of the SMCs said they needed training on Procurement of instructional materials as shown in table 3

Table.3 Training needs of the SMCs

Training Areas	SD		D		UN		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Training on management of FPE funds					3	3.5	35	40.7	48	55.8
Human resource management	6	7.0			9	10.5	53	61.6	18	20.9
Project management			3	3.5	9	10.5	33	38.4	41	47.7
Technological training	3	3.5	3	3.5	11	12.8	31	36.0	38	44.2
Financial planning	5	5.8					34	39.5	47	54.7
Procurement of instructional materials	5	5.8			8	9.3	41	47.7	32	37.2
Public relations			3	3.5	2	2.3	46	53.5	35	40.7

Training on their roles and responsibilities	3	3.5	5	5.8	46	53.5	32	37.2
Monitoring and evaluation skills			73	84.9	10	11.6	3	3.5

The findings show that the major area of concern where training is needed includes; management skills on FPE funds, human resource management skills, and procurement of school instructional resources, management of physical resources and financial management. Managerial skills in FPE will enable the committees to fully understand the concepts behind the funds, what the government expects is accountability issues related to the same. The results imply that committee members need skills related to financial management.

Conclusion

The study has observed that the capacity of the SMCs is not up to the desired levels with regard to the management of the FPE funds this is due to little knowledge attributed to inadequate training and also the low level of education by both the head teachers and the SMCs members in the public primary schools in the study area. Basing on the research findings it can be concluded that the key training needs suitable for SMC members are; financial management, project management, financial planning, public relation, and training on monitoring and evaluation. This skill combination will enable the committee manage the school funds effectively and in a more cost effective manner. Introductory training for newly elected SMCs should be conducted to enable them to perform their functions. They should also be provided with continuous training to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions. Training in financial school management should be practice based and the following sections should be covered in training: The legal framework that underpins financial school management, financial planning and this includes budgeting, financial organization, financial control and school information systems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study it is evident that Members' training plays a great role in the organization, it helps to give clarity of roles and responsibilities and therefore training and development in educational institutions should be adopted as a function and be implemented in a continuous process. The following recommendations are necessary to effectively manage the free primary Education Funds by both the school administration and the members of the school management committees:

There is need for the ministry of education to come up with a clear strategy to develop Members of the school committee, it is necessary that they are trained on financial management, budget planning and monitoring of expenditures in order to increase their skill set as they manage the devolved funds.

Concerning the training needs of the SMCs the study recommends that prior to any form of training conducted, a training needs assessment could be carried out to find out the exact needs of the institutions and be able to distinguish them from the problems facing the schools. This will take into account the personal, institutional and task analysis and provide a holistic approach to training.

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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). 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).

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Financial Management skills	51	59.3
Budgeting skills	47	54.7
Accounting skills	12	14.0
Human resource management skills	6	7.0
Monitoring and evaluation skills	3	3.5
Leadership skills	3	3.5

From the findings it is evident that, SMCs lack financial related skills that make them ineffective in financial management. It is therefore clear that the SMCs do not have the necessary capacity required of them in the implementation of FPE funds. The findings show that the committee members in the study area have inadequate capacity in the management of the FPE funds. This concurs with work done by Du Preez and Grobler as cited in Mestry (2006) which showed that there is a correlation between sound financial management and effective and efficient SGBs, this

therefore calls for continuous training of the SMCs. There is need to put Programmes on the training of the SMCs in place and funds for training the SMCs to be made available just as it is happening in other countries like UK (Edwardson, 2004).

Training Needs of the SMCs

This second objective sought to establish the training needs of SMCs on the implementation of FPE funds in public primary schools. This was presented under the following sub headings; training on financial management, areas which SMCs need training, problems resulting from lack of training and benefits of training of SMCs.

i) Training on financial management

The study sought to establish whether SMCs in the region had any training on financial management. From the findings, 32 % of the respondents were of the opinion that SMCs had training on financial management while 68 % said the SMCs didn't have any training on financial management.

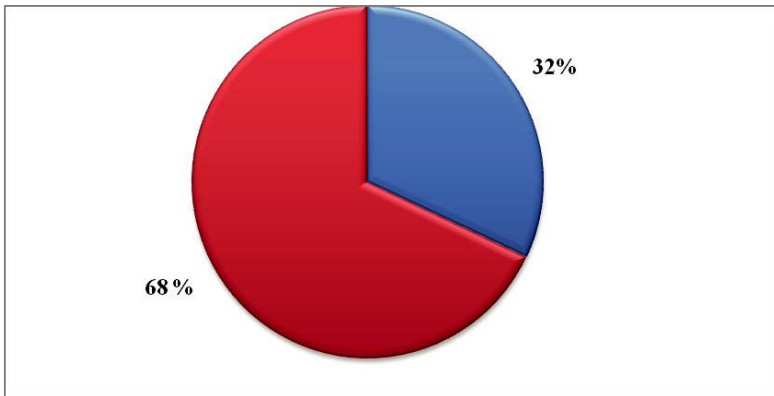


Figure 1 SMCs Training on financial management

The study findings show that majority of the SMCs didn't have any training on financial management while a smaller number indicated that they had financial management training. This had an implication that there are no measures put in place to ensure that SMCs receive the required trainings.

ii) Areas which SMCs need training

SMCs were asked to identify areas in which they needed training. According to the findings, 55.8 % strongly agreed that they need training on Management of FPE funds, majority 61.6 % agreed that they need training on Human resource management, 47.7 % of the respondents strongly agreed that they need training in Project management, 54.7 % agreed that they need training on Financial planning while 47.7 % of the SMCs said they needed training on Procurement of instructional materials as shown in table 3

Table.3 Training needs of the SMCs

Training Areas	SD		D		UN		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Training on management of FPE funds					3	3.5	35	40.7	48	55.8
Human resource management	6	7.0			9	10.5	53	61.6	18	20.9
Project management			3	3.5	9	10.5	33	38.4	41	47.7
Technological training	3	3.5	3	3.5	11	12.8	31	36.0	38	44.2
Financial planning	5	5.8					34	39.5	47	54.7
Procurement of instructional materials	5	5.8			8	9.3	41	47.7	32	37.2
Public relations			3	3.5	2	2.3	46	53.5	35	40.7

Training on their roles and responsibilities	3	3.5	5	5.8	46	53.5	32	37.2
Monitoring and evaluation skills			73	84.9	10	11.6	3	3.5

The findings show that the major area of concern where training is needed includes; management skills on FPE funds, human resource management skills, and procurement of school instructional resources, management of physical resources and financial management. Managerial skills in FPE will enable the committees to fully understand the concepts behind the funds, what the government expects is accountability issues related to the same. The results imply that committee members need skills related to financial management.

Conclusion

The study has observed that the capacity of the SMCs is not up to the desired levels with regard to the management of the FPE funds this is due to little knowledge attributed to inadequate training and also the low level of education by both the head teachers and the SMCs members in the public primary schools in the study area. Basing on the research findings it can be concluded that the key training needs suitable for SMC members are; financial management, project management, financial planning, public relation, and training on monitoring and evaluation. This skill combination will enable the committee manage the school funds effectively and in a more cost effective manner. Introductory training for newly elected SMCs should be conducted to enable them to perform their functions. They should also be provided with continuous training to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions. Training in financial school management should be practice based and the following sections should be covered in training: The legal framework that underpins financial school management, financial planning and this includes budgeting, financial organization, financial control and school information systems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study it is evident that Members' training plays a great role in the organization, it helps to give clarity of roles and responsibilities and therefore training and development in educational institutions should be adopted as a function and be implemented in a continuous process. The following recommendations are necessary to effectively manage the free primary Education Funds by both the school administration and the members of the school management committees:

There is need for the ministry of education to come up with a clear strategy to develop Members of the school committee, it is necessary that they are trained on financial management, budget planning and monitoring of expenditures in order to increase their skill set as they manage the devolved funds.

Concerning the training needs of the SMCs the study recommends that prior to any form of training conducted, a training needs assessment could be carried out to find out the exact needs of the institutions and be able to distinguish them from the problems facing the schools. This will take into account the personal, institutional and task analysis and provide a holistic approach to training.

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