

## Effect of Government Education Funding on Facilities' Status in Primary Schools in Bumula Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya

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### Abstract

The introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya in 2003 led to rapid increase in primary school enrollment. This exerted pressure on instructional facilities and created new challenges including inadequate information materials required by the learner. In the assessment of the success of any education system, one cannot overlook the importance of facilities afforded by the system as indicators of its strength. This study investigated the effect of education funding on the state of facilities together with Free Primary Education (FPE) hidden costs in Kenya. Specifically the study looked at resource provision and educational expenses parents still incurred in Primary Schools in Kenya. The study used descriptive survey design to determine the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. 125 public primary schools, 375 grade 1-3 class teachers, and 125 head teachers in Bumula Sub-County, Bungoma County were targeted. Twenty five head teachers and 75 teachers were randomly selected, while 1 Sub – County Education Officer was purposively selected. Questionnaires and interview schedule were instruments for collecting data. Validity of instruments was confirmed from piloting and experts. Correlation coefficient computed indicated instruments were reliable. SPSS Version 27 was used to analyse data, using means(average), percentages and frequencies. Findings showed that resources were inadequate and parents still incurred educational expenses. The findings are useful to education stakeholders who need to strengthen FPE Policy. The study recommends that the government increases the capitation for schools and recruits more teachers in the sub-county.

**Keywords:** *Free Primary Education, State of facilities, Government education funding, Primary schools, Bumula Sub-county, Bungoma county, Kenya*

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### 1.0 Introduction

Education flourishes thereby encouraging socio-economic development when primary school pupils access a variety of reading materials. By doing this, they are able to cultivate independence. According to Al and Richardson (2018), resources play a significant role in society, and their

impact on social and economic development should not be underestimated. Information materials, according to UNESCO (2017), are essential and advance learning and research at all educational levels. According to Baada et al.

(2019), resources encourage creativity, imagination, support literacy and leisure reading.

Education is regarded as a global basic human right, especially at elementary and fundamental stages (Adero and Otieno, 2023). Article 26 of the UN charter bounds governments to provide free and compulsory basic education. A key pillar of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also provides for universal education or Education For All (EFA). These world-wide efforts are further bolstered by the Dakar (Senegal) 2000 Conference, where EFA was regarded as a basic right, requiring political and economic support and participation by all EFA partners (UNESCO, 2004).

According to the constitution of Kenya, every child below 18 years is required to attend the highly subsidized basic school programme. Through the basic school programme, the government has enabled parents/ guardians to only cater for their children's basic needs; such as, food, uniforms and shelter, making the learning process almost free ((ROK, 2010). Government guidelines and policies through the Ministry of Education (MOE) is to regulate, maintain and manage quality teaching and lifelong learning (Kenya, Republic of, 2024). The Free Primary Education (FPE) program expanded access to education. Section 13(1) of the Children's Act 2022 asserts that "Every child has the right to free and compulsory basic education in accordance with Article 53(1)(b) of the Constitution (Kenya, Republic of, 2022). Owing to this clause, education has contributed significantly to the growth of the national income and thereby improving human welfare (UNESCO, 2013).

After the implementation of the Free Primary Education Program, the Free Secondary Education Program was implemented to deal with the high transition rates from primary to secondary school. The Free Secondary Education Program targeted students from low income households. Olang'o et al. (2021) observe that the Government of Kenya launched the Free Secondary Education (FSE) program at the beginning of 2008 to address the plight of children from poor households who, upon completion of free primary education, could not get access to secondary school, primarily because of school fees.

*"The study concludes that schools in Bumula Sub-County had poor facilities which deteriorated year after year with the worst hit facilities being the textbooks, with Religious Education and Environmental Activities where as many as 20 pupils shared one book in one of the schools sampled."*

Despite the gains made by the Free Education programs, Bett and Ahonobadha (2024) point out that under staffing, poor working conditions and inadequate learning materials and infrastructure are still a major challenge. To address these issues, this research investigated the effect of FPE policy in Bumula Sub- County, Bungoma

County, with the adequacy of physical facilities, resources for both the pupils and the workforce, as well as the hidden costs of education as the key variables of the study.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The Ministry of Education should ensure that schools are equipped with enough teaching and learning materials, including textbooks, teaching aids and stationery for effective implementation of the curriculum (Chepkonga, 2020). Such investment in education helps to foster economic growth through enhanced productivity, and reduced social inequality (Mongare & Ayienda, 2020). Obilo and Saugoleye (2015) maintains that in curriculum implementation, the government must provide physical facilities; such as classrooms, laboratories, workshops, libraries and sports fields. Consequently, government funding through grants, donations, bursaries and scholarships influences the implementation of curriculum in public schools. Although the teaching and learning materials are provided on time in Bumula Sub- County, they are not adequate. This is because provision of TLR has remained a challenge in Kenya, leading to low learning outcomes (James, Simiyu, & Riechi, 2016). However, there is scanty literature on the effect of government funding on the quality of educational resources in Bumula Sub-County, Bungoma County. Ilavonga and Kimani (2023) did a study on the provision of information services and resources for enhanced performance of class 8 pupils in Kimilili and conclude that if resources are well utilized, the

performance of class 8 pupils would be greatly enhanced.

Therefore, funding education supports learning processes through acquisition of learning materials. Inversely, inadequate funds lower the quality and quantity of infrastructure like classrooms, workshops, laboratories and learning resources. As a consequence, the learning processes in public learning institutions in Kenya has been compromised, forcing school management to request parents/guardians to add extra development funds, which is against the FPE policy.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The study examined effect of free primary education funding on the state of facilities in primary schools in Bumula Sub-County, Bungoma County.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

- i. To establish the effect of FPE on adequacy of physical facilities in primary schools in Bumula Sub-County, Bungoma County.
- ii. To determine the hidden costs of learning in Bumula Sub- County.

### ***Research Questions***

- i. How does FPE affect adequacy of facilities in schools in Bumula Sub-County?
- ii. What are the hidden costs of education in primary schools?

### ***Critical Theory of Education***

Critical theory was developed by Karl Marx (1830). The theory focuses on emancipation of individuals, groups, and of society through education. Through exposure to education, people become less

oppressed and move toward emancipation. Under the critical perspective, people use their acquired knowledge and skills to understand and ultimately change. Critical thinking is based on politics and education (Bodner & Maclsaac, 1995). Foster (1982) quips that critical theory relies on both objective and subjective knowledge.

Critical theory of education was later expanded by Applebaum (1970). The views of Karl Marx fit well in the general purpose of education in the acquisition of knowledge, skills values and attitude that will make the learner an active and productive member of the society. Provision of free basic education in Kenya is meant to create an equitable society by according all school-going children equal educational opportunities.

#### ***Adequacy of Physical Facilities and Material Resources***

Benbow et al. (2017) did a research in the USA on class sizes in developing world and showed that having an appropriate level of basic school resources can greatly improve student achievement. Alebiosu, (2015), in their study on challenges of curriculum innovation in Nigeria argue that if obstacles to education implementation are not removed, moving from the implementation phase to the continuation phase would suffer from the failure. Inadequate teaching and learning resource materials have negative impact on curriculum implementation. Oryema and Odubuker (2015), in their study on resource provision and teacher effectiveness in Uganda, note that provision of teaching and learning materials ensures that schools meet the minimum quality standards in teaching and learning; including equipping all secondary schools with science laboratories and

science equipment.

Free Primary Education led to an over-enrolment, and subsequent meaning overstretched resources. School facilities include offices, classrooms, laboratories, workshops, stores, libraries, hostels, houses and play grounds; material resources such as textbooks, charts, maps, audiovisual and electronic instructional materials ,paper, pens, erasers, exercise books, chalk, and rulers. Muthoni (2022) did a study of public secondary schools in Nairobi County and concludes that increased enrolment is straining physical facilities, material resources and human resources.

Kenya, like other African countries, has committed to guaranteeing 12 years of primary and secondary education for all children in line with the African Union's (AU) Continental Education Strategy (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Kenya's legislative and policy framework provides a series of guarantees and privileges for all children seeking to access education. At an international level, Kenya is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACWRC), from which it derives fundamental human rights for children. Kenya is also committed to working towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which encourages countries to ensure access to inclusive, equitable and quality education for all. Kenya's 2010 Constitution, Children's Act (2001) and National Children Policy (2010) make up the core domestic legal framework. These are supplemented by legislative policies on basic education, teachers' services, special needs in education, alternative provisions and nomadic education (National Council for Children's Services, 2015). Article 53

of Kenya's Constitution guarantees basic education – a phrase often synonymous with primary education – for every child. This is reflected in the Education Act, which provides for the holistic maintenance of educational systems, resources and governance structures to ensure the provision of free education (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2020). Collectively, these policies support the government's efforts to provide free education for all and deliver a 100% transition rate from primary to secondary level education (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2020). This forms part of Kenya's Vision 2030 Strategy, a development framework presenting the country's roadmap to development and prosperity.

In 2003, Kenya introduced free primary education, leading to an immediate increase in enrolment to 84% (UKAID, 2024). As of 2022, roughly 93% of the country's children were enrolled in primary school education (UNICEF, 2022). This reflects an identified upward trend in net primary school enrolment throughout the 2010s (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2020). Children have also been completing primary education at an impressive rate, with over 85% of children completing primary education in 2019 (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2020). Between 2018 and 2020, the percentage of students transitioning from primary to secondary school also increased from 83% to 95% (Kibaara, 2021).

Khayo (2019) conducted a study to evaluate the use of learning resources in Kakamega County using questionnaires issued to teachers, department heads, and subject heads. Results revealed that insufficient

funding was a significant obstacle to the provision, use, and upkeep of resources. The researcher in the current study aims to find out challenges experienced in public primary schools in Bumula.

### ***Hidden Costs of Education***

Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) and FPE sometimes have unanticipated implications on education funding and learning (Ministry of Education, 1985). They affect local communities and parents who meet the cost of education. A significant number of children remain unable to access primary or secondary education. More broadly, 2.5 million children aged 4-17 have never been to school (UNICEF, 2022). The persisting statistics of children unable to access education despite the government's effort to provide free education can be attributed to hidden costs.

Although the Kenyan government remains the chief financial provider in the free primary and secondary education programs, economic challenges and faults in the education infrastructure have led to schools finding ways to push some costs onto the learner and their families (Areba, 2011). The government maintains the primary responsibility in the remuneration of school staff and infrastructural maintenance, leaving some room for an array of crucial essential costs, including enrolment fees catering for interview and registration costs, school materials costs, textbooks and exercise books, stationery and uniforms, activity costs to support extra-curricular activities, excursions and subject-related activities, additional tuition costs, where necessary, examination fees, including, practical costs, including transport to and from school, lodging and

subsistence, bedding for boarding students, and health care costs in the event of illness or injury (Areba, 2011).

This long list evidences the inherent complexity of 'free' education. While basic elements of educational provision may be free, the comprehensive range of indirect costs presented to families may deny a large population access to education. The hidden costs keep many children from impoverished families out of school since they cannot afford indirect costs.

## 2.0 Materials and Methods

### *Research Design*

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study utilized a mixed method approach because it involved collection of both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a more holistic understanding of the research problem. The selection of this design enabled in-depth explanation of the study context (Siedlecki, 2020). The study used a survey method to answer the research question using the information collected.

### *Target Population*

The target population consisted of 125 head- teachers and 375 teachers for grade 1-3 in 125 public primary schools in Bumula Sub- County, Bungoma County.

### *Sample Size and Sampling Techniques*

25 head teachers and 75 teachers as respondents were selected using simple random sampling technique, which yielded 20% of the target population. Mugenda (2003) says a sample size of between 10-30% is a good representative of the target population; hence, 20% sample size was appropriate for this study. The Sub- County

Education Officer was selected purposively.

### *Instruments for Data Collection*

Questionnaires and interview schedule were administered to headteachers and class teachers and Education Officers respectively. The validity of the research instruments was ensured by Peers in Curriculum Instruction and Media corrected the the instruments. It was further ascertained through pilot study, returning a reliability index of 0.75 and 0.78 for headteachers and class teachers respectively.

### *Data Analysis and Presentation*

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 27 was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were analysed in frequencies and percentages and presented using distribution tables.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with clear explanations of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing responses and securely the data collected. Approval to conduct the research was sought from the selected schools' administrators and the County Director of Education. Participants were also assured that the data collected would be used solely for research purposes.

## 3.0 Results and Discussion

### *Response rates*

Response rate was 100% for all respondents.

**Reliability results**

Reliability index was 0.75 and 0.78 for head teachers and class teacher’s questionnaire respectively.

**State of facilities**

The study assessed the following indicators of the strength of the free education program: class rooms and seats, library, teaching personnel, games and sports facilities and text books. Other facilities like rulers, exercise books and geometrical sets were also considered.

**Classrooms and seats**

Findings indicated that schools were experiencing shortages of facilities. Most of the schools (95.5%) had inadequate classrooms. 90.9% of the schools sampled were built of bricks or stones with iron sheet roofing, 64.5% had unplastered floors, while 30.9% had plastered walls. Pupils in 35.5% of the sampled schools had to water the floors to reduce the dust, while

one school had mud walls. The mud-walled classrooms as well as those that were unplastered posed the risk of collapsing on learners, especially during the rain season.

Although 59.1% schools had wooden windows, there were 18.2% schools with no windows at all. This meant pupils greatly suffered during the rainy and windy seasons, prompting them to assemble in one corner to shelter. Only 31% of the schools had doors on all the classes, meaning majority of the schools lacked doors.

On sitting facilities, findings indicated that 49.8% of the schools had an average of between 8-18 desks per classroom of an average enrollment of 70 pupils. It was only one school (1.4%) which had an average of 34 desks in a classroom of about 70 pupils. Sitting patterns varied from one class to another, and from school to school. Sharing patterns ranged from 3-6 pupils per desk in grade 1-3; as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Sitting arrangement per desk, per class*

	Class/percentage of schools		
	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3
Number of pupils per desk			
1 pupil	-	-	-
2 pupils	-	-	-
3 pupils	15.0	20.0	30.0
4 pupils	60.0	60.0	55.0
5 pupils	20.0	15.0	5.0
6 pupils	5.0	5.0	10.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

*N=25*

**Note:** Dashes indicate absence of a sitting arrangement.

Table 1 shows that the minimum sharing pattern recorded was 3 pupils per desk in all the three classes (Grade 1-3), and the maximum recorded pattern was 6 pupils per desk across the grades. Any sharing of

desks in which over four pupils shared a desk was considered overcrowding. This means that there is over crowding in 85% in grade 1, 80% in grade 2 and 70% in grade 3. The findings therefore indicate inadequate seats. These results concur with Muthoni (2022) who did a study in Nairobi

County and concluded that the schools had inadequate resources due to increased enrolment.

### ***Library facilities***

Findings indicated that only two (9.1%) schools had a library building. From the findings, 44.6% of the schools had library books ranging from 501 – 2000, which was rated between average and very good; while 55.4% schools had books ranging between 250 – 500 rated below average. Library facilities are essential in any education system. They assist pupils to broaden their perception in various topics in the course of learning.

### ***Teaching personnel***

To achieve good performance in all grades, there was need for adequate, trained and experienced teaching force. The research revealed that all the sampled schools had trained teachers. All teachers interviewed had a minimum of P1 training. Findings further indicated that the major problem facing teachers was the unequal teacher-pupils ratio. Since classes were not equally distributed, some teachers handled bigger classes, while others handled smaller ones. The teacher-pupil allocation ranged from as low as 30 pupils in one school, to 130 in another school. Eighty percent of the schools had an average class enrolment of 50-130 pupils per class. This meant that in many schools, the normal teacher pupil ratio of 1:40 was rarely observed, thus affecting the teacher-pupil contact and full control of the class. As indicated on the establishment of the teachers, 72.5% of the schools had between 6-9 teachers handling 8 classes some of which may have had more than one stream. The worst scenario of staffing was also confirmed by the Sub-County Director of Education who said

most schools had an acute shortage of teachers. The sub-county had 125 public primary schools with a total teaching force of 745 teachers against 46,468 pupils. This indicated a shortfall of 490 teachers.

### ***Sports and games facilities***

All schools offered games and sports including football, volleyball and netball. However, only 90.9% schools had a football pitch, while 9.1% schools had no football pitch. 90.9% schools had a volleyball pitch, while 86.4% schools had a netball pitch. The findings indicated that some schools did not offer physical education and training to their pupils. The two schools (9.1%) which did not have a playground were suspected of not taking out pupils for physical education (P.E.) lesson, which is a compulsory subject in all schools.

### ***Provision of textbooks and other facilities like geometrical sets, exercise Books and rulers***

All the schools (100%) did not provide pupils with geometrical sets and rulers, but they all provided exercise books to pupils. The sharing of text books in five selected learning areas ranged as high as 5 pupils per English book, 6 pupils per Kiswahili book, 4 pupils per mathematics book, 10 pupils sharing Religious Education book, and 8 pupils sharing Environmental Activities book (see Table 3). Patterns differed from class to class, and from school to school. However, in English, Kiswahili and Mathematics, about 90% of the schools had a sharing ratio of between 2 - 6 pupils per book in all classes except in one school with a ratio of 20 pupils per book.. This finding indicates that most schools have received text books from the government in these subjects. As regards Religious Education



and Environmental Activities, about 60% of the schools had a sharing ratio of between 2-4 pupils per book, while 40% had a sharing pattern of between 7-10 pupils per book in the two subjects. This

**Table 2**

*Sharing of text books per subject*

Grade	Subject														
	English			Kiswahili			Maths			Religious Education			Enviromental Activities		
	AV	LR	HR	AV	LR	HR	AV.	LR	HR	AV.	LR	HR	AV.	LR	HR
1	8	3	10	8	3	10	8	3	10	12.7	2	20	12.7	3	20
2	8	3	10	8	3	10	8	3	10	15.5	2	20	15.5	3	20
3	8	3	10	8	3	10	8	3	20	11.4	2	20	11.4	3	20

Key

AV- Average

LR-Lowest recorded

HR- Highest recorded

The facilities were measured in terms of adequacy or inadequacy of classrooms, classrooms sizes, overcrowding, and the provision of exercise books, rulers and geometrical sets. The size and quality of teaching force, library, and laboratory, as well as games facilities were also reviewed; in addition to the sitting patterns, and, the

**Table 3**

*Hidden costs of schooling*

Levy	Frequency	Percent
Feeding schemes	50	75.8
Building funds	36	54.5
Activity fee	0	0
Mock / trial tests fee	50	75.8
Examination fees	35	53.0
Dues remedial study	19	28.8
Equipment levy	6	9.1
Watchman wages	2	3.1

N=75

Table 3 shows the frequency of hidden costs of schooling in the selected schools. Results indicate that 75.8% of schools had feeding schemes for breakfast and

implies that most of the pupils in the schools relied on teachers notes as the books were not enough. The distribution of text books is shown in Table 2 below

sharing of desks among pupils in the various classes were also observed.

***Hidden costs of education***

From the foregoing paragraphs, hidden costs still existed in schools. Class teachers were asked the levies parents still pay. From the number of times the various expenses were mentioned, a rank ordering was done; as presented Table 4.

lunch, while another 75.8% charged mock and trial tests fee. Other charges not listed but mentioned include desks, uniforms, learning materials, field trips and holiday

coaching. Areba (2011) says that schools charge learners to raise additional funds for school activities. The Director of Education confirmed that extra-charges were levied to parents after approval by the sub-county education office.

#### 4.0 Conclusions

The study concludes that schools in Bumula Sub-County had poor facilities which deteriorated year after year. The worst hit facility were the textbooks, with Religious Education and Environmental Activities where as many as 20 pupils shared one book in one of the schools sampled. On average 8 pupils shared one text book. There was overcrowding due to shortages of classrooms. Some classes were as big as 130 pupils and are therefore hard to teach effectively and manage. Sitting patterns and sharing of desks was also poor, with as many as 4 pupils sharing one desk. Schools

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- lacked library and some had missing playgrounds. There was also an acute shortage of teachers, with an average teacher-pupil ratio of 1:62. Parents still paid for levies such as building and harambee fund, desks and examination money. They also buy additional reading materials. In this respect, the study concludes that education is not entirely free and compulsory.
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