

**STREET LEVEL BUREAUCRACY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION
POLICY IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN EMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of street-level bureaucracy on the implementation of free primary education policy in Embu County, Kenya. The study used explanatory research design. The target population for the study was 389 education stakeholders, namely; 384 head teachers, 1 Embu County Director of Education and 4 Sub Counties Directors of Education. The study used census and simple random sampling techniques to select 120 respondents to participate in the study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The researcher used content experts to establish the validity of the instruments while Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7 was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaires. The researcher used SPSS version (21.0) to organize quantitative data which then was analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely; percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation while multiple regression analysis was used to answer the research questions. Data was presented in tables, bar graphs and pie-charts. The study found that teacher autonomy, financial facilitation, coping mechanism and teaching methods had a positive significant influence on the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya. The study found that teacher autonomy empowers teachers, supporting their work satisfaction and professionalism. The text books and other learning materials were adequate. The school was free from both internal and external wrangles, gender stereotype roles within the community affects the uptake of education in my school and teachers work to accommodate each students' needs, allowing for individual personal growth and discovery amidst collaboration with others. The study concluded that teacher support for autonomy is critical for augmenting appropriate outcomes, and it is deemed as a strong predictor of learners' particular resources along with their motivational styles and educational achievement. Allocation of funds affected the implementation of the FPE as the amount allocated by the government was not adequate. The major coping mechanism in the implementation of free primary education included hiring of extra teachers paid by parents through school management committees. Proper application of teaching methods helps students achieve their learning goals, increases student engagement in the classroom.

Key Words: Teachers Autonomy, Financial Facilitation, Coping Mechanisms, Teaching Methods, Educational Policy Reforms, Public Primary Schools in Kenya

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INTRODUCTION

Education policy can be formally understood as the actions taken by governments in relation to educational practices, and how governments address the production and delivery of education in a given system. Education policies cover a wide range of issues such as those targeting equity, the overall quality of learning outcomes and school and learning environments, or the capacity of the system to prepare students for the future, funding, effective governance or evaluation and assessment mechanisms, among others (OECD, 2015). Education policy implementation refers to the web of processes through which policies are interpreted, translated and reconstructed, rather than a simple process of execution (Bell & Stevenson, 2015).

The inception of Universal Primary Education (UPE) has enabled most children especially from developing countries particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa to enroll in schools (GOK, 2005a; Ngware, Oketch, Ezeh, & Mudege, 2009; Ohba, 2009; Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware & Ezeh, 2010). The incorporation of UPE in the Millennium Development Goals agenda, the intention of achieving UPE has been enhanced, particularly between 1990 and 2000 (Watkins et al., 2008). The improved effort has been illustrated in countries such as Malawi (1994), Uganda (1997), Tanzania and Lesotho (2000), and Burundi, Rwanda, Ghana, Cameroon, and Kenya (2003) (Grogan, 2008; Kadzamira & Rose, 2003; Watkins et al., 2008).

The term street level was coined by American scholar Michael Lipsky (1969) at a time when social scientists in the United States were especially concerned about urban policy problems but refers to any level at which government bureaucrats interact with clients, regardless of the setting. According to Camillo (2017), street-level bureaucracy refers to the practice by the lowest levels of government of implementing public policies via direct day to-day transactions with individual members of the public. Street-level bureaucrats are the frontline public service workers who interact directly with citizens and clients to deliver government services (Lipsky, 1980). Indicators of street-level bureaucracy include a high degree of discretion, direct and frequent interaction with clients, and the interpretation of rules and regulations to suit individual and local circumstances (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Street-level bureaucrats also receive feedback from clients regarding the quality of services provided, deal with complex cases, have a high degree of professional autonomy, and work with limited resources (Lipsky, 1980). Additionally, street-level bureaucrats are accountable to the public for the quality and effectiveness of the services they provide (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Subsequently, the indicators of street level bureaucracy in the proposed study include teachers' autonomy, financial facilitation, coping mechanisms and teaching methods.

Nearly all government organizations, or bureaucracies, have multiple levels policies, especially complex ones, pass through the levels before they reach individuals or organizations in forms, such as property tax bills, traffic tickets, and school vaccination requirements. The level at which they reach the public is called the street level. Street-level bureaucracies differ from other bureaucracies in that, a significant proportion of their employees are street-level bureaucrats, "public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have extensive discretion in the execution of their work" (Lipsky 1980). The classic example of a street-level bureaucracy is a welfare office in which workers process applications on a case-by-case basis under the supervision of unit managers.

The introduction of free primary education policy in Kenya in 2003 was in tandem with the efforts of the international community who had adopted the six Educations for All (EFA) goals at the World Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, as well as the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 that called for increased access to quality basic education and training which have been domesticated in Kenya (World Education Forum, 2000; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). This broad Vision of education and the holistic approach to sector development was fully embraced by Kenya as a critical vehicle for realizing Vision 2030 (Odhiambo, 2010; Gikondi et.al, 2010; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). The Constitution of Kenya 2010 unequivocally promises all Kenyans unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on the progress made thus far in order to exploit

the full potential of education for each and every child, youth and adult in the nation (Republic of Kenya, 2010b, 2012).

Free Primary Education (FPE) was introduced in Kenya in January 2003 by the NARC government, which was elected in December 2002. This was the second attempt to introduce the policy in the post-colonial Kenya, after the first attempt back in 1970s failed to achieve much. The renewed efforts were an intentional strategy by the government to comply with UN recommendation on the children's right for education, which was reinforced by the recommendations of the UNESCO Addis Ababa conference of 1961. Section 7(2) of the Children's Act 2001 reinforces this point by asserting that, "Every child shall be entitled to free basic education which shall be compulsory in accordance with article 28 of the United Nations' convention on the rights of the child." It was in view of this clause and the realization of the fact that education contributes directly to the growth of the national income and improvement of human welfare that the new government of Kenya initiated the FPE policy (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985).

Primary education is the first stage of a child's learning and is essential for a child. Initial schooling is a basic right of every kid. A good foundation of initial learning of children ensures their overall progress and growth and lies to social, cognitive, cultural, emotional, and physical skills according to the best of their abilities. Moreover, paves the way for social, economic, political progress, and development of a society and a country as a whole. The main purpose of providing primal study is to formulate children's strength to play their ability completely in social, political, and economic well-being for the country. The Kenya government announced the Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya to boost its educational welfare and move to a 2-6-3-3-3 pattern instead of an 8-4-4 structure. Before independence in Kenya, initial schooling was almost exclusively the responsibility of the communities or nongovernmental agencies such as local church groups.

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of Free Primary Education policy in Kenya in January 2003 prompted the enrollment of about two million new pupils into the primary school system. This increased the gross enrolment from 5.9 million to 7.6 million pupils (SID, 2004). This was an increase of over 29%. On the other hand, teacher population in the whole country has stuck around 180,000 (Republic of Kenya, 2002). This implies a very high PTR of 43:1, considering that the recommended pupil-teacher ratio is 35:1 (Mulama, 2003). However, despite the rationale for attaining universal FPE, some counties in Kenya still have a low teacher population, a phenomenon that is likely to adversely affect the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. As a result, many pupils are likely to fail to benefit from free primary school education.

Although the policy of free primary education has received a lot of praise, its implementation is faced with numerous challenges, which include the unavailability of physical facilities, school furniture, equipment and teachers, among others. This has led to overcrowding in classes and overburdening of teachers, and could have negative effect on the quality of education. The implication is that there are loopholes in the policy (free education) that can render it ineffective. This is simply because of lack of clear explanation of policy. In spite of the government interpretation that free education implies non-payment of fees, there are other alternative ways of collecting money from parents were substituted for "school fees" using different concepts like building fund, activity money among others (Sifuna, 1990).

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To assess the effects of teachers' autonomy on implementation of free primary education policy in public primary schools in Embu County, Kenya.
- To examine the effects of financial facilitation on implementation of free primary education policy in public primary schools in Embu County, Kenya.
- To examine the effects of coping mechanisms on implementation of free primary education policy in public primary schools in Embu County, Kenya.

- To examine the effects of teaching methods on implementation of free primary education policy in public primary schools in Embu County, Kenya.

The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the effects of teachers' autonomy on implementation of free primary education policy in public primary schools in Embu County, Kenya?
- What are the effects of financial facilitation on implementation of free primary education policy in public primary schools in Embu County, Kenya?
- What are the effects of coping mechanisms on implementation of free primary education policy in public primary schools in Embu County, Kenya?
- What are the effects of teaching methods on implementation of free primary education policy in public primary schools in Embu County, Kenya?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Literature Review

This section focused on various studies conducted in relation to street level bureaucracy and implementation of free primary education policy.

The concept of implementation of free primary education policy

According to Viennet and Pont (2017), education policy implementation is a purposeful and multidirectional change process aiming to put a specific policy into practice and which may affect an education system on several levels. Implementation is purposeful to the extent that the process is supposed to change education according to some policy objectives. Similarly, education policy implementation is multidirectional because it can be inflected by actors at various points of the education system. Further, education policy implementation is contextualized in that institutions and societal shocks and trends such as culture, demography, politics and economy affect the education system and the ways in which a policy is shaped and translates in the education sector.

During the 2002 general elections, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) made the provision of free primary education part of its election manifesto. Following its victory, on January 6, 2003 the Minister for Education (MOE) launched the Free Primary Education (FPE) to fulfil NARC's election pledge. This marked the third attempt to F.P.E in trying to achieve education for all goals by 2005. In implementing F.P.E, the government provides grants to schools for buying teaching and learning materials, repairs and maintenances besides paying for teachers' salaries (MOEST, 2003). To provide guidance, a taskforce was set up in January 2003 to make recommendations on the FPE implementation. This was followed by a National conference on education and training in November 2003.

In addition, the Basic Education Act 2013 reiterates the fact that basic education which has been made free and compulsory in Kenya should be operationalized through the legal framework enshrined in the Act (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Both the Constitution 2010 and Basic Education Act 2013 guarantees and provides legal mechanisms of ensuring that every Kenyan citizen gets access to basic education and other economic and social rights that hinge upon the citizens access to, and performance in, education, as much as on the application of knowledge, attitude and skills gained through the educational experience (Republic of Kenya, 2010a 2010b, Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; UNESCO, 2012 ; World Banks, 2012; Republic of Kenya,2013).

Teachers Autonomy and Implementation of Free Primary Education Policy

According to Sachs (2001), autonomy refers to the latitude for discretionary judgement exchanged for specialized expert knowledge that professional practitioners are assumed to use to promote client welfare. Similarly, Abbot and Wallace (1990) claim that autonomy simply refers to control over work. The concept 'pedagogical autonomy' as used by Eden (2001) applies when 'the system does not intervene in teachers' acts

and assumes they are fully competent in their work. In this study, teacher autonomy is operationalized the amount of freedom a worker has to schedule their work and to determine the procedures in carrying it out including the freedom to choose teaching methods and content, within limits defined by legislation and official steering documents, as well as the responsibility for professional development (Fischer's,1992).

Arcia, Macdonald, Porta (2011) investigated the school autonomy and accountability in selected countries in Europe. The study established that school autonomy as a tool for increasing accountability and inducing improved learning works well in contexts where formal educational institutions are weak as well as where governments are unable to provide public goods of sufficient quality. Further, results indicated that autonomy and accountability in school based management were not a necessary condition for success in education systems where formal educational institutions are strong, especially in the area of training and selecting good teachers. The study however focused on accountability, thus the effect of autonomy on the implementation of FPE is still not clear. Similarly, the study was conducted in schools in Europe implying that the findings may not be applied in the contexts of schools in Kenya.

In Kenya, Kilonzo (2011) investigated the challenges of autonomy in higher institutions of learning. The study concluded that there was need to encourage autonomy, not solely by the institutions but with the help of the government funding. This can be done through improvement of or establishing relevant tertiary level institutions and colleges. Nonetheless, the study was conducted in institutions of higher learning, thus the findings may not apply in basic learning institutions. It is therefore imperative to determine the effect of teacher autonomy on implementation of free primary education policy in Kenya.

Financial Facilitation and Implementation of Free Primary Education Policy

Shukia (2020) used qualitative research methods to examine the implementation of the fee-free basic education policy in Tanzania. The study established that there were variations in the amount of grants that the schools received. Some schools reported receiving less than the expected amount while others, the secondary schools in particular, received slightly more than they had anticipated. Although the study used qualitative approach, a mixed method approach would have revealed comprehensive findings regarding the problem investigated. The proposed study will therefore use a mixed method approach to establish the effect of financial facilitation on implementation of free primary education policy.

The political economy of reform looks at limited public budgets and resistance by interest groups, which policy makers must find a way to bypass in order to reform effectively. School change scholars suggest that unless teachers, school leaders and other actors in education understand and share the policy meaning, it is unlikely to get implemented (Fullan, 2015). These new dynamics create more challenging situations for policy implementation. Change programme in public organizations tend to fail for reasons such as a lack of vision, incapacity to communicate, or failure to strike the right balance between marginal changes and structural transformations (Kotter, 1995; Keller & Price, 2011).

A case study conducted in Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi and Uganda in 2004 by the World Bank showed that, Malawi was the first of these four countries to start working toward UPE, abolishing school fees grade by grade beginning in 1991. However, the policy was not strongly enforced. In all four countries there was acknowledgement of the need for free primary education, but financial challenges, prevented full implementation until the issue was championed at the highest level and supported by a democratically elected majority party (World Bank, 2004).

Coping Mechanisms among Teachers and Implementation of Free Primary Education Policy

Mulinya and Orodho (2015) employed descriptive survey research design to examine the challenges of implementing free primary education and coping strategies in public primary schools in Kakamega South District, Kakamega County, Kenya. The sample comprised 23 head teachers, 92 teachers and one Ministry of education officer working in the study locale, yielding a sample size of 117. The main research instruments

were questionnaires and interview guidelines. Findings of the study were that whereas FPE policy had led to an exponential increase in the numbers of children enrolling in primary schools, this had over stretched the available human and physical resource base to cope with these numbers. The major coping strategies included hiring of extra teachers paid by parents through school management committees to supplement those posted by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) as well as providing material and financial incentives to teachers to enable them go an extra mile and teach longer hour outside the recommended workload. The study was however conducted in Kakamega County; thus the findings may not be applicable in Embu County.

Abobo, Osero and Orodho (2014) employed descriptive survey research design to investigate the coping strategies applied by teachers and school managers to implement life skill education in secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia West District, Kenya. The study used stratified random sampling to select a sample size of 225 respondents from a target population of 1800 respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedule. The study established that teachers and school managers were not well prepared to implement life skills education because of the fact that not only were the teachers not specifically trained to handle LSE, but they also claimed that since LSE is not examinable subject, it was also an added burden in the context of the high student-teacher ratio due to inadequate teaching force. Further, the study indicated that teachers and school managers had adopted various largely appropriate and participatory coping strategies including discussion, debates, brain-storming, case studies and storytelling amongst students and teachers to implement the LSE curriculum. The study however focused on the coping strategies by teachers to implement life skill education. The effect of coping mechanisms among teachers on implementation of free primary education policy is therefore still unknown.

In comparison, the New Public Management movement from the 1990s transformed schools into production systems responding to the economies' demand for knowledgeable and highly-skilled professionals (Lessard & Carpentier, 2015). In Bell and Stevenson's framework, the socio-political environment "shapes the context within which policy is framed and enacted. Malen (2016) posits that the sociocultural forces define the values prevailing in a given system, and therefore contribute to filtering the educational issues and policy solutions that are acceptable socially. The societal contexts therefore have a mediating effect on politics of implementation, because they define the issues that can arise and the policy solutions offered, they shape and constrain actors' strategies as well as the implementation plan.

Teaching Methods and Implementation of Free Primary Education Policy

The Transformative Pedagogy and English for Effective Communication PD programme initiated by the PDP government and Neuroscience based Mindfulness & Emotional PD initiated by DNT failed to address the main concerns of classroom realities. The teachers display their willingness and openness to learn and seek opportunities to improve content knowledge, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation. So far, the PD suffers from content delivery resources, expertise and time. To date, the professional development programme are less transferable to the classroom setting and practises with little follow up (Dorji, 2020; iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009).

Dorji (2022) adopted exploratory research design to investigate formulation and implementation of education policy as part of public policy in Bhutan. The study established that education policy was more politicized and influenced by the government ideologies and promises made in the political party manifestos. Further, the findings revealed that there were limited wider consultations and dialogues and the use of research-based evidence to support policy formulation and implementation. The study concluded that Bhutanese education was more of experimentation, trial and error oriented in the name of reforms. Nevertheless, the effect of teaching methods on implementation of education policy is still unknown. Similarly, the study was conducted in Bhutan, a different context from Kenya; the findings may therefore not apply in the context in Kenya.

According to the Center on Education Policy (2011), states expect implementation of education policies to be difficult and slow. According to its report, "States' Progress and Challenges in Implementing Common Core

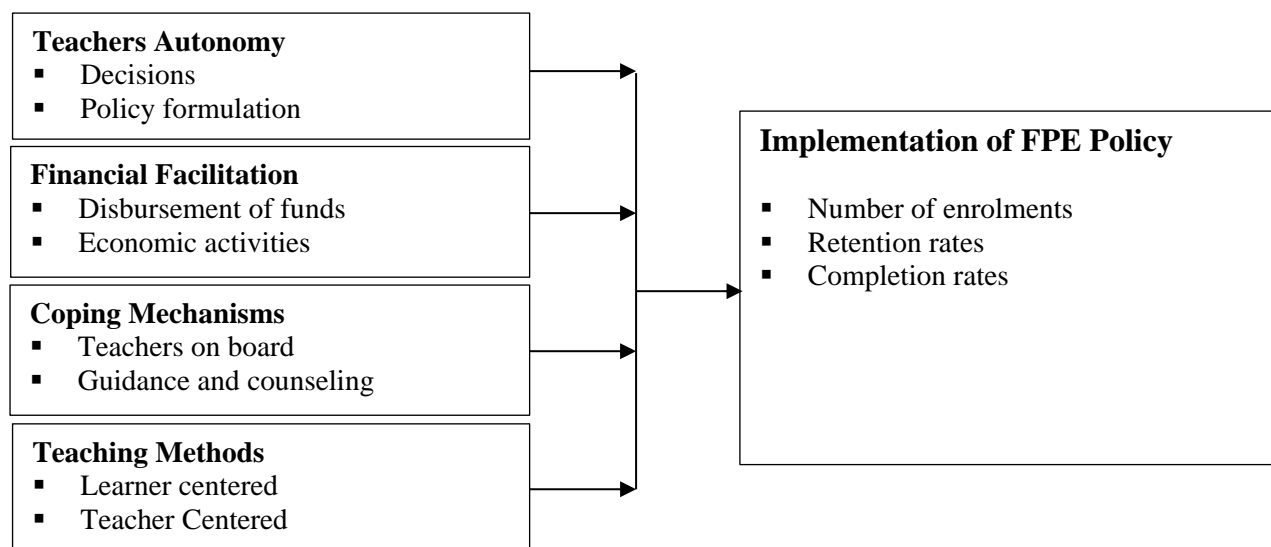
Standards,” many states expect to face significant challenges aligning teacher preparation requirements and evaluation systems, implementing new assessments, developing new curriculum materials and finding the resources to do all these things well. Nonetheless, the role of teaching methods on implementation of education policy is still limited. Even though various studies have been conducted on the effect of teaching methods on implementation of education policies, none has been conducted in Kenya. The study therefore aims to fill this gap in knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Micro Institutional Theory

The study will be based on Based on a micro-institutionalist theory of policy implementation by Rice (2013). The theory presents an overarching framework of influences over the caseworker-client interaction. On the one hand, the standardized interactions between caseworker and client become part of the broader institutional framework guiding those interactions and restricting what actions are permitted or are regarded as relevant or appropriate. On the other hand, that institutional framework may change not only as a result of systemic forces (such as change ideological change) but also as a result of individuals doing things differently in that interaction. She argues that whilst legal and regulatory documents, staff and budgets represent the building blocks of the welfare state, it only becomes real as a political institution when caseworkers (SLBs) meet citizens and take decisions. But the moment ‘at which the welfare of state becomes a manifest reality in the interaction between caseworker and clients is also the moment at which it starts to evolve and possibly to change. The framework bridges the micro-level of the caseworker-client interaction, the meso level of the implementing organization and the macro level of the wider societal context.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The study used explanatory research design to investigate the effects of street-level bureaucracy on implementation of free primary education policy in Embu County, Kenya. The researcher used explanatory research design because it allowed collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The target population for the study was 389 education stakeholders, namely; 384 head teachers, 1 Embu County Director of Education and 4 Sub Counties Directors of Education. The study used census to select county director of education and

sub counties directors of education. The researcher used simple random sampling technique to select head teachers. The researcher selected a sample size of 30% of the head teachers while all county directors and sub county directors of education were selected for the study which made a total of 120 respondents. The study used two research instruments, namely; questionnaires and interview. Questionnaires will be used to collect quantitative data from head teachers. The researcher used interview schedule to collect qualitative data from county director of education and sub county directors of education. Subsequently, the researcher used five experts who will comprise 1 supervisor from the department of public policy and administration and 4 experts in the field of public policy. Test-retest reliability was used to test the reliability of the instruments. A reliability analysis for questionnaires will be established using Cronbach's Alpha. A correlation of 0.7 and above was used to judge the reliability of the questionnaire (Orodho, 2009).

The researcher used SPSS version (21.0) to organize quantitative data which was then analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely; percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation. Regression analysis will be used to answer the research questions.

FINDINGS

Results of Descriptive Statistics

Analysis of descriptive data was presented in terms of percentages (%), Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD). The results are presented as per the study specific variables as follows;

Teacher Autonomy

The descriptive statistics on teacher autonomy are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teacher Autonomy

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	Std. Dev
	%	%	%	%	%		
Teachers have the possibility to prepare the lessons independently, choose textbooks and topics to be taught	47.8	32.2	2.6	10.4	6.9	4.12	0.154
The teachers are allowed select teaching methods and engage in time planning	19.1	54.8	3.5	13.9	8.8	3.78	1.274
Teachers are allowed to assess and evaluate pupils	39.5	46.6	6.8	4.7	2.6	4.16	0.842
Teacher autonomy empowers teachers, supporting their work satisfaction and professionalism	63.5	28.7	0.0	6.9	0.9	4.60	0.394
Teacher autonomy increases one's own knowledge and skills through development and rigorous training	45.9	44.7	0.0	5.9	3.5	4.24	0.764
Teacher autonomy allows teachers to decide about their teaching in isolation from others	36.5	49.4	11.8	2.4	0.0	4.20	0.805

Source: Survey Data (2023)

The results in Table 1. show that the statement that Teachers have the possibility to prepare their lessons independently, choose textbooks and topics to be taught had a mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 0.154 with 47.8% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 32.2% agreed, 2.6% neutral, 10.4% disagreed and 6.9% strongly disagreed. The statement that the teachers are allowed select teaching methods and engage in time planning had a mean score of 3.78 and standard deviation of 1.274 with 19.1% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 54.8% agreed, 3.5% neutral, 13.9% disagreed and 8.8% strongly disagreed. The statement that teachers are allowed to assess and evaluate pupils had a mean score of 4.16 and

standard deviation of 0.842 with 39.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 46.6% agreed, 6.8% neutral, 4.7% disagreed and 2.6% strongly disagreed.

The results in Table 1. also show that the statement that Teacher autonomy empowers teachers, supporting their work satisfaction and professionalism had a mean score of 4.60 and standard deviation of 0.394 with 63.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 28.7% agreed, 6.9% disagreed and 0.9% strongly disagreed. The statement that teacher autonomy increases one’s own knowledge and skills through development and rigorous training had a mean score of 4.24 and standard deviation of 0.764 with 45.9% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 44.7% agreed, 5.9% disagreed and 3.5% strongly disagreed. The results in Table 1. also show that the statement that Teacher autonomy allows teachers to decide about their teaching in isolation from others had a mean score of 4.20 and standard deviation of 0.805 with 36.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 49.4% agreed, 11.8% disagreed and 2.4% disagreed.

Financial Facilitation

The descriptive statistics on financial facilitation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Financial Facilitation

Statement	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	M	Std. Dev
Funds disbursed to my school for learning materials is sufficient	47.8	39.1	0.0	8.7	4.3	3.74	1.296
FPE funds to the school are disbursed efficiently	66.1	33.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.58	0.387
Library facilities are adequate to cater for the school capacity	68.2	12.9	0.0	18.8	0.0	4.31	0.696
Physical facilities are adequate for the process of learning	45.9	33.7	8.2	6.6	5.6	4.07	0.931
The school provides an enabling environment for both teachers and pupils	28.7	55.7	1.7	7.8	0.6	3.91	1.036
My school is well endowed with support staff	39.5	46.6	6.8	4.7	2.6	4.16	0.849
Text books and other learning materials are adequate	57.4	38.3	0.0	3.5	0.9	4.51	0.406
Low parental income affects implementation of free primary education in this locality	27.8	64.3	0.9	6.9	0.0	3.73	1.064

Source: Survey Data (2023)

The results in Table 2. showed that the statement that funds disbursed to my school for learning materials is sufficient had a mean score of 3.74 and standard deviation of 1.296 with 47.8% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 39.1% agreed, 8.7% disagreed and 4.3% strongly disagreed. The statement that FPE funds to the school are disbursed efficiently had a mean score of 4.58 and standard deviation of 0.387 with 66.1% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement and 33.9% agreed. The statement that library facilities are adequate to cater for the school capacity had a mean score of 4.31 and standard deviation of 0.696 with 68.2% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement and 12.9% agreed, 18.8% neutral. Physical facilities are adequate for the process of learning had a mean score of 4.07 and standard deviation of 0.931 with 45.9% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 33.7% agreed, 8.2% neutral, 6.6% disagreed and 5.6% strongly disagreed.

The results in Table 2. also show that the statement that the school provides an enabling environment for both teachers and pupils had a mean score of 3.91 and standard deviation of 1.036 with 28.7% of the respondents strongly agreeing, 55.7% agreed, 1.7% neutral, 7.8% disagreed and 0.6% strongly disagreed. The statement that their school is well endowed with support staff had a mean score of 4.16 and standard deviation of 0.849 with 39.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing, 46.6% agreed, 6.8% neutral, 4.7% disagreed and 2.6% strongly disagreed. The statement that text books and other learning materials are adequate a mean score of 4.51 and a

standard deviation of 0.406 with 57.4% of the respondents strongly agreed, 38.3% agreed and 0.9% strongly disagreed. The statement that low parental income affects implementation of free primary education in this locality had a mean score of 3.73 and standard deviation 1.064 with 27.8% of the respondents strongly agreeing, 64.3% agreed, 0.9% neutral and 6.9% disagreed.

Coping Mechanism

The descriptive statistics on coping mechanism are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Coping Mechanism

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	Std. Dev
	%	%	%	%	%		
Gender stereotype roles within the community affects the uptake of education in my school	32.2	36.5	8.7	16.5	6.1	4.52	0.612
Retrogressive cultural practices such as early marriage is still being practiced in this locality	46.9	26.9	4.3	13.0	8.7	4.08	0.518
Negative attitude is still a challenge to the implementation of free primary education in this school	36.5	34.1	11.8	4.7	12.9	3.76	1.246
Pupils in my school are often given a lot of duties at home to the extent that they are not able to concentrate in school	63.5	27.1	0.0	4.7	4.7	4.45	0.554
Pupils in this school walk for long distance to reach school	40.9	22.6	6.9	18.2	11.3	3.64	1.275
The school receives support from the community	55.3	42.4	0.0	2.4	0.0	4.51	0.494
The school is free from both internal and external wrangles	60.0	18.8	0.0	8.2	12.9	4.05	0.954
The sponsor supports the school to meet its Objectives	42.6	31.3	0.0	14.9	11.3	3.46	1.585

Source: Survey Data (2023)

The results in Table 3. show that the statement that gender stereotype roles within the community affects the uptake of education in my school had a mean score of 4.52 and standard deviation of 0.612 with 32.2% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 36.5% agreed, 8.7% neutral, 16.5% disagreed and 6.1% strongly disagreed. The statement that retrogressive cultural practices such as early marriage is still being practiced in this locality had a mean score of 4.08 and standard deviation of 0.518 with 46.9% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 26.9% agreed, 4.3% neutral, 13.0% disagreed and 8.7% strongly disagreed. The statement that Negative attitude is still a challenge to the implementation of free primary education in this school had a mean score of 3.76 and standard deviation of 1.246 with 36.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 34.1% agreed, 11.8% neutral, 4.7% disagreed and 3.76% strongly disagreed.

The results in Table 3. also show that the statement that Pupils in my school are often given a lot of duties at home to the extent that they are not able to concentrate in school had a mean score of 4.45 and standard deviation of 0.554 with 63.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 27.1% agreed, 4.7% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The statement that Pupils in this school walk for long distance to reach school had a mean score of 3.64 and standard deviation of 1.275 with 40.9% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 22.6% agreed, 6.9% neutral, 18.2% disagreed and 11.3% strongly disagreed. The statement that the school is free from both internal and external wrangles had a mean score of 4.05 and standard deviation of 0.954 with 60.0% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 18.8% agreed, 8.2% disagreed and 12.9% strongly disagreed. The statement that the sponsor supports the school to meet its objectives with 42.6% of the respondents strongly agreeing, 31.3% agreed, 14.9% disagreed and 11.3% strongly disagreed.

Teaching Methods

The descriptive statistics on teaching methods are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Teaching Methods

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	Std. Dev
	%	%	%	%	%		
Learner-centered teaching methods empowers pupils to own their learning paths by focusing on how the knowledge they are gaining can solve problems or add value to a situation	41.2	34.1	12.9	8.2	3.5	4.01	0.991
Learner-Centered teaching methods encourages diversity	35.3	49.4	4.7	4.7	5.9	4.04	0.965
Pupils are involved in decision-making which makes them find relevance in the curriculum that's being presented to them	45.9	44.7	0.0	5.9	3.5	4.24	0.764
Learner-centered approaches place a high emphasis on relevance and engagement which greatly impact the level of retention students experience in the learning environment	39.5	46.6	6.8	4.7	2.6	4.16	0.841
Learner-centered teaching method facilitate personalized learning	43.5	47.1	8.2	1.2	0.0	4.33	0.675
Teachers work to accommodate each students' needs, allowing for individual personal growth and discovery amidst collaboration with others	50.6	42.4	5.9	1.2	0.0	4.42	0.587
The teacher-centered approach allows for the teacher to have full control of the way the activities and discussions will be structured	56.5	18.8	0.0	18.8	5.9	4.01	0.990

Source: Survey Data (2023)

The results in Table 4. show that the statement that learner-centered teaching methods empowers pupils to own their learning paths by focusing on how the knowledge they are gaining can solve problems or add value to a situation had a mean score of 4.01 and standard deviation of 0.99 with 41.2% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 34.1% agreed, 12.9% neutral, 8.2% disagreed and 3.5% strongly disagreed. The statement that Learner-Centered teaching methods encourages diversity had a mean score of 4.04 and standard deviation of 0.965 with 35.3% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 49.4% agreed, 12.9% neutral, 4.7% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

The results in Table 4. also show that the statement that Pupils are involved in decision-making which makes them find relevance in the curriculum that's being presented to them had a mean score of 4.24 and standard deviation of 0.764 with 45.9% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 44.7% agreed, 5.9% disagreed and 3.5% strongly disagreed. The statement that Learner-centered approaches place a high emphasis on relevance and engagement which greatly impact the level of retention students experience in the learning environment had a mean score of 4.16 and standard deviation of 0.841 with 39.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 46.6% agreed, 6.8% neutral, 4.7% disagreed and 2.6% strongly disagreed.

The results in Table 4. also show that the statement that Learner-centered teaching method facilitate personalized learning had a mean score of 4.33 and standard deviation of 0.675 with 43.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 47.1% agreed, 1.2% neutral, and 1.2% disagreed. The statement that teachers work to accommodate each students' needs, allowing for individual personal growth and discovery

amidst collaboration with others had a mean score of 4.42 and standard deviation of 0.587 with 50.6% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 42.4% agreed, 5.9% neutral and 1.2% disagreed. The statement that the teacher-centered approach allows for the teacher to have full control of the way the activities and discussions will be structured had a mean score of 4.01 and standard deviation of 0.990 with 56.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 18.8% agreed and disagreed respectively and 5.9% strongly disagreed.

Implementation of Free Primary Education

The descriptive statistics on coping mechanism are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Implementation of Free Primary Education

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	Std. Dev
	%	%	%	%	%		
Pupils have the basic learning materials	29.6	58.3	3.5	6.1	2.6	4.34	0.834
Learning and instructional materials are in good condition to facilitate learning	65.2	29.6	0.9	4.3	0.0	3.84	0.671
Classrooms facilitate the process of teaching and learning	38.8	43.5	1.4	4.5	11.8	4.11	1.361
There is an enabling environment that facilitates effective learning	18.3	76.5	0.0	0.0	5.2	3.90	1.002
Teachers are readily available to students for further consultation	32.2	60.9	0.0	6.9	0.0	4.45	0.518
Pupils in the school have benefited from Free Primary Education	29.4	49.4	1.2	20.0	0.0	3.88	1.72
The implementation of FPE has led to the recruitment of more teachers	30.6	55.3	3.5	2.4	8.2	3.98	1.02
The implementation of FPE has led to the increased availability of teaching resources in primary schools	31.3	49.6	1.2	9.4	22.4	3.52	1.48
The implementation of FPE has led to the reduction of gender parity in enrolment in primary school	38.8	28.2	1.2	9.4	22.4	3.52	1.48
Implementation of free primary education has increased participation of stakeholders to ensure that it achieves its goals	55.3	29.4	0.0	4.7	10.6	4.14	0.86

Source: Survey Data (2023)

The results in Table 5. showed that the statement that pupils have the basic learning materials had a mean score of 4.34 and standard deviation of 0.834 with 29.6% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 58.3% agreed, 3.5% neutral, 6.1% disagreed and 2.6% strongly disagreed. The statement that learning and instructional materials are in good condition to facilitate learning had a mean score of 3.84 and standard deviation of 0.671 with 65.2% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 29.6% agreed, 0.9% neutral and 4.3% disagreed. The statement that classrooms facilitate the process of teaching and learning had a mean score of 4.11 and standard deviation of 1.361 with 38.8% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 43.5% agreed, 1.4% neutral, 11.8% disagreed and 4.11% strongly agreed.

The results in Table 5. also show that the statement that there is an enabling environment that facilitates effective learning had a mean score of 3.90 and standard deviation of 1.002 with 18.3% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 76.5% agreed and 5.2% strongly disagreed. The statement that teachers are readily available to students for further consultation had a mean score of 4.45 and standard deviation of 0.518 with 32.2% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 60.9% agreed and 6.9% disagreed. The statement that pupils in the school have benefited from free primary education had a mean score of 3.88 and standard

deviation of 1.722 with 29.4% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 49.4% agreed, 1.2% neutral and 20.0% disagreed.

The results in Table 5. also show that the statement that the implementation of FPE has led to the recruitment of more teachers had a mean score of 3.98 and standard deviation of 1.020 with 31.3% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 55.3% agreed, 3.5% neutral, 2.4% disagreed and 8.2% strongly disagreed. The statement that the implementation of FPE has led to the increased availability of teaching resources in primary schools had a mean score of 3.52 and standard deviation of 1.480 with 31.3% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 49.6% agreed, 1.2% neutral, 9.4% disagreed and 22.4% strongly disagreed. The statement that Implementation of free primary education has increased participation of stakeholders to ensure that it achieves its goals had a mean score of 4.14 and standard deviation of 0.860 with 55.3% of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, 29.4% agreed, 4.7% disagreed and 10.6% strongly disagreed.

Results Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was carried out to show how the variables related to each other. The findings are presented in Table 6, 7 and 8.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.869 ^a	.755	.744	.630

Source: Survey Data (2023)

The results in Table 6. indicated that teacher autonomy, financial facilitation, coping mechanisms and teaching methods explain 0.744(74.4%) of the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya as represented by the adjusted R square value. This therefore means that other factors not studied in this research contribute 0.256(25.6%) of the implementation of FPE policy.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	102.310	4	25.578	187.309	.000
	Residual	15.021	110	.137		
	Total	117.331	114			

Source: Survey Data (2023)

The results in Table 7. show that the statistical F value is greater than the statistical mean square value (187.578 > 25.578) at 5% significance level. The value 0.000 shows the significance level is less than 0.05 showing a statistical significance of the model on how independent variables studied influenced the dependent variable. These conditions confirm the significance of the model.

Table 8: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.731	0.130		5.623	.000
	Teacher autonomy	0.746	0.249	1.639	2.996	.000
	Financial facilitation	0.644	.120	4.157	5.367	.001
	Coping mechanism	0.704	.117	2.004	6.017	.002
	Teaching methods	0.538	.107	3.439	5.028	.000

Source: Survey Data (2023)

The results in Table 8. showed that when Teacher autonomy, financial facilitation, coping mechanism and teaching methods are held at constant, the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya would be at 0.731. A unit increase in teacher autonomy would lead to increase in the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya by 74.6%, A unit increase in financial facilitation would lead to increase in the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya by 64.4%. A unit increase in coping mechanism would lead to increase in the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya by 70.4% and a unit increase in teaching methods would lead to increase in the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya by 53.8%.

The final regression equation is described as follows:

Implementation of FPE policy = 0.731 + 0.746 (teacher autonomy) + 0.644 (financial facilitation) + 0.704 (coping mechanism) + 0.538 (teaching methods).

The results in Table 8. also indicate that the teacher autonomy had a positive significant influence on the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya as indicated by beta value of 1.639 and a significance value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. The findings agree with the findings of Arcia, Macdonald, Porta (2011) study which investigated the school autonomy and accountability in selected countries in Europe. The study established that school autonomy as a tool for increasing accountability and inducing improved learning works well in contexts where formal educational institutions are weak as well as where governments are unable to provide public goods of sufficient quality.

The study found that financial facilitation had a positive significant influence on the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya as indicated by beta value of 4.157 and a significance value of 0.001 which is less than 0.05. These findings agree with findings of a study by Shukia (2020) which used qualitative research methods to examine the implementation of the fee-free basic education policy in Tanzania. The study established that there were variations in the amount of grants that the schools received. Some schools reported receiving less than the expected amount while others, the secondary schools in particular, received slightly more than they had anticipated.

The study revealed that coping mechanism had a positive significant influence on the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya as indicated by beta value of 2.004 and a significance value of 0.002 which is less than 0.05. The findings agree with the results OF Mulinya and Orodho (2015) study which employed descriptive survey research design to examine the challenges of implementing free primary education and coping strategies in public primary schools in Kakamega South District, Kakamega County, Kenya. The major coping strategies included hiring of extra teachers paid by parents through school management committees to supplement those posted by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) as well as providing material and financial incentives to teachers to enable them go an extra mile and teach longer hour outside the recommended workload.

The study determined that teaching methods had a positive significant influence on the implementation of FPE policy in Embu County, Kenya as indicated by beta value of 3.439 and a significance value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. The findings concur with Dorji (2022) which adopted exploratory research design to investigate formulation and implementation of education policy as part of public policy in Bhutan. The study established that education policy was more politicized and influenced by the government ideologies and promises made in the political party manifestos.

Results from Interview Schedules

The interview schedules were carried out to the County Director of Education and Sub County and the following were findings;

The study sought to establish some of the challenges that are faced with implementation of the Free Primary Education policy and some of the challenges identified included Under Staffing, Poor working conditions, inadequate funding, Kenya's primary Education system and acquisition of literacy and Lack of school libraries, poor infrastructure; limited awareness towards education; limited community support.

The study sought to find out some of the coping strategies that had been put in place to counter these challenges faced with implementation of the Free Primary Education policy. The respondents indicated the following; employment of more teachers, inviting voluntary trained teachers, gathering all pupils in available classrooms, improving available physical facilities, fund raising to put up learning facilities, subdividing existing classrooms etc.

The study sought to establish the teachers work environment and motivation since inception of FPE. The respondents indicated the following; teachers generally had positive attitudes towards the implementation of the free basic education policy. In their efforts to implement the policy, the teachers treated the students with passion, listening to students' problems, encouraging students to participate in implementing the policy and motivating students to study hard to attain their goals. Teachers' practices included their participation in school decision-making, communicating with parents to encourage them to side school in implementing the free education policy, preparing the learning environment for the implementation of the policy, monitoring, supervising, and distributing teaching/learning materials to students equitably, and supervising students' academic progress.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that teacher support for autonomy is critical for augmenting appropriate outcomes, and it is deemed as a strong predictor of learners' particular resources along with their motivational styles and educational achievement. Through teacher autonomy support in their classroom, the learners' basic psychosomatic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are gratified, which consequently endorses their commitment in the classroom.

The study concluded that allocation of funds affected the implementation of the FPE as the amount allocated by the government was not adequate. However, the parents come in order to contribute to the extra needs. With the introduction of free secondary education, schools get some funding from the government while parents are required to meet various other costs such as school development projects and boarding fees. The study also concluded that head teachers play a major role in the management of all school financial activities, which involve the disbursement of money. The money is obtained through various sources such as fees. The head teacher is responsible for budgeting, accounting and auditing functions of financial management.

The study concluded the major coping mechanism in the implementation of free primary education included hiring of extra teachers paid by parents through school management committees to supplement those posted by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) as well as providing material and financial incentives to teachers to enable them go an extra mile and teach longer hours outside the recommended workload.

The study concluded that proper application of teaching methods helps students achieve their learning goals, increases student engagement in the classroom, enhances the quality of your feedback to students and creates a positive learning environment. Teaching methods give the teacher a chance to have a variety of techniques to reach their goals. Each teacher can determine which one of these methods is suitable for him and for his students. Cooperative and collaborative small group work provides the best Education for Students and the Teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that the school management should provide teachers more opportunities for peer observation so as to increase the chances across the school for development, autonomy and growth. Taking onboard teachers' perspectives, acknowledging their feelings and providing opportunities for choice will ensure that teachers comes away from coaching and mentoring experiences with a sense of ownership over their career and feeling empowered and autonomous.

The study recommended that the government should consider increasing the allocation towards the FPE since the study established that funds allocation per child was not enough as the funds allocated could not meet the

needs of the school. The study also recommended that the School Management Committees (SMCs) should be financially and legally empowered through an act of parliament to hire teachers more regularly as soon as need arises.

The study recommended that the government of Kenya should hire more teachers to add up to the existing numbers. The government of Kenya, through Teachers Service Commission (TSC), should give equal chances to all schools irrespective of their settings. There is need to improve on the physical facilities in our public primary schools since the teaching and learning facilities available on inception of FPE were overstretched. The government in conjunction with other stakeholders should take decisive measures to alleviate the situation through refurbishment and establishment of more physical facilities.

The study recommended that for effective application of teaching the teachers should stay open to trying new methods. Consider teaching key topics in multiple ways using a mix of methods to help pupils remember the information. The study also recommended that it is essential for the teachers to enhance student engagement through active learning, to promote student inclusivity through the learning process (experiential and blended learning) and to match outcome with the faculty and student expectations through assessments.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The current study suggests that other studies can be carried out that focus on private primary schools in Embu County, Kenya. In addition, similar studies can be done that focus on primary schools in other Counties apart from Embu County, Kenya.

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