

# Teachers' Preparedness Towards Implementation of Free Primary Education in Bungoma County, Kenya

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## Abstract

*The launch of the Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 by the Kenyan government led to an increase in enrolment of learners in primary schools which posed a challenge to the teacher preparation of handling large number of learners. This paper therefore discusses teacher preparedness with reference to FPE in Bungoma East District in Kenya. A descriptive survey design was used in this study. The target population was head teachers, teachers and the school management committee chair persons. Since there are rural and urban schools, stratified sampling was done to get a more representative sample. Instruments for data collection were questionnaires, interview schedule, and document analysis and observation schedules. Most teachers feel inadequate in handling challenges of FPE on resource utilization due to inadequate in-service programmes. The findings will inform the policy makers in making informed decisions towards proper teacher preparation for FPE implementation.*

**Key words:** Free primary education, Teacher management, Teacher readiness

## 1.1 Background to the study

Education has an immense impact on the human society. One can safely assume that a person is not in the proper sense till he is educated. Man becomes a rational being when he is educated. An uneducated person is shut off from the outside world. Education has the function of transmitting skills, knowledge, norms and values from generation to generation (Eshiwani 1993). Education therefore becomes a liberating phenomenon. Education is a must if a nation aspires to achieve growth and development and its sustenance. It is an absolute necessity for economic and social development. Nelson Mandela once said that "education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world." Efforts therefore should be made to set a conducive environment in which education will take place most effectively. It is through education that man is prepared for life to deal with every day's challenges. Education therefore is considered as a basic human need.

In 2001, the Kenyan parliament enacted the Children Act which recognizes education as a basic right for all children. In this act, it is the responsibility of parents and the government to provide education for the child. The climax of the government's effort to attain UPE was the introduction of free primary education in 2003.

On 10<sup>th</sup> January 2003, a task force to work on the implementation of free primary education held a conference. It constituted stakeholders in education to identify the immediate needs for the implementation of the Free Primary Education (FPE). Six sub committees were formed which comprised of: - curriculum implementation, human resource, physical facilities, needs of disadvantaged groups, public information, media relations and advocacy and financial and other resource implications. The emphasis was on the need for clear policies, strategic planning and strict prioritization of activities at all levels. FPE is a reform geared towards the overall goals of the national economic recovery strategy (ERS), poverty alleviation and national development. It is also one way of contributing to the achievement of millennium goals (MDGS) as discussed at the millennium summit in 2000.

The introduction of FPE saw unprecedented influx of children to schools, putting a lot of pressure on the existing teaching and learning resources. The government undertook funding of all public primary schools. Since the introduction of FPE in 2003, enrolment has been on the upward trend in most areas as shown in table 1.1.

**Table 1: Primary Schools Net Enrolment rates by province 2003-2007 (%)**

**Source: Ministry of Education. \*Provisional**

	2003			2004			2005			2006			2007		
Province	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Coast	66.9	60.1	66.9	63.5	72.8	67.7	75.1	73.3	74.2	72.3	71.2	71.8	84.6	77.0	80.0
Central	83.6	84.2	83.6	83.9	81.4	81.8	87.9	87.0	87.4	83.0	83.0	83.0	84.4	80.7	82.5
Eastern	90.4	90.3	90.4	91.4	91.5	94.9	93.8	94.3	97.4	97.5	97.5	98.7	97.8	97.8	98.3
Nairobi	35.5	40.3	35.5	37.7	35.9	41.1	39.2	40.9	40.1	31.2	34.7	32.9	28.6	29.3	29.0
Rift Valley	84.1	82.0	84.1	83.1	87.8	85.4	87.9	85.3	86.6	91.8	89.8	90.8	98.3	94.0	97.8
Western	97.5	93.2	97.5	95.3	99.3	97.2	99.1	94.6	96.8	98.9	98.5	98.6	99.1	98.9	99.0
Nyanza	96.2	95.4	96.2	95.8	96.9	96.2	98.4	97.2	97.8	99.5	99.2	99.4	98.4	98.2	98.3
North Eastern	26.1	16.2	26.1	21.6	23.6	14.9	26.6	18.8	23.0	24.3	16.5	20.8	33.1	20.8	27.5
Total	80.8	80.0	80.4	80.4	82.2	82.1	83.8	82.6	83.2	86.5	86.5	86.5	94.1	89.0	91.6

On human resources, there was need for mobilization of educational personnel, teachers and school committees and parents in order to improve access at primary level. The policy recommended proper and optimal utilisation of existing teachers as an immediate intervention to address the influx of additional pupils. The teachers were to teach in neighbouring schools and all private tuition was to be banned. The policy recommended further the merging of non viable schools in order to utilise teachers appropriately in the course of the programme. Teachers with heavy work loads were to be given incentives. All these measures were aimed at using the available resources in the most cost effective way. There was need for

capacity building through in-service and re-designing of teacher training programme to cope with challenges of FPE. There was also need for rationalization of functions and deployment before recruitment of additional staff so as to fill the shortfalls (Report of the task force on implementation of free primary education 2003).

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The Kenya governments aim since independence has been to provide every Kenyan child with basic rights such as education. It is in this respect that the government provided Free primary education (F.P.E) in 2003. FPE was received with a lot of enthusiasm by stakeholders in education. However, the massive enrolment put pressure on the teacher adequacy and capacity. For effective learning to take place there must be quality teaching and learning which calls for an understanding of the teachers' level of preparedness for FPE implementation. At the same time the teachers should be aware of the policy guidelines on the implementation. The study therefore sought to assess teacher preparedness in resource utilization in the programme in classroom in Bungoma East district

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Free Primary Education in Kenya**

Provision of quality basic education to all children is a challenge many a country are grasping with (Gravenir et al 2006). Reports and studies show that FPE is currently faced by a number of challenges that undermine the quality of education (UNESCO 2004; Mugenda 2004; GOK 2005). To better understand the challenges of free primary education, a trace of the history of its implementation is worth discussing.

Since the achievement of independence in 1963, the government and the people of Kenya have been committed to expanding the education system to enable greater participation. This has been in response to a number of concerns. Among the main concerns have been the desire to combat ignorance, disease and poverty; provided every Kenyan child the right of access to basic welfare provisions, including education, and that the government has the obligation to provide its citizens with the opportunity to take part fully in the socio-economic and political development of the country and to attain a decent standard of living. Education has also been seen as a fundamental factor for human capital development. The effort to expand educational opportunities has been reflected in the various policy documents and development plans.

The Kenya government policy to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) has to been seen within developments in the wider international context. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, declared that "everyone has a right to education." The World Conference on Education for All (EFA), held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, sparked off a new impetus towards basic education especially with its so-called vision and renewed commitment. It noted, "that to serve the basic needs for all requires more than a recommitment to basic education as now exists. What is needed is an expanded vision that surpasses resource levels, institutional structures, curricula and conventional delivery systems, while building on the best in the practices."

As a result of the free primary education, the situation of the teaching force in most of the districts is generally bad. Teachers complain of increased pupil teacher ratios. Many primary schools are understaffed

as a result of the free primary education programme. This does not augur well for the quality of education being delivered. Many school management committees are of the opinion that as a result on the ban of levies, they are unable to recruit extra teachers through the PTAs and this has also seriously affected the pre-school units.

## **2.2 Teacher preparation**

Teachers have been labeled as the single most important tool for educational effectiveness (Hernes 2001). The teacher is the designer, implementer and evaluator of instruction (Dick and Carey 1996). This makes the teacher a vital element in the success of any instructional programme. He/she is also a resource by virtue of the knowledge, training and expertise. The teachers' own competence in handling learning resources is crucial for the achievement of the curriculum goals. Teacher preparation is therefore key to curriculum implementation. The current Government programmes for teacher education aims at providing qualified teachers. The policy regarding primary teacher education has been for a long time that primary school teachers are trained to teach all the subjects offered in the primary curriculum. This has only changed about four years ago where teachers are allowed to specialize in arts orientation or science orientation. The two years of teacher training is not adequate for the teacher trainee to acquire mastery in content and skills of pedagogy (Session Paper No.1 of 2005). The paper still identifies inadequate inservice for teachers as an impediment to FPE.

The report of the task force on the implementation of FPE had suggested the rationalization of functions and deployment of teachers before recruitment of additional staff to fill shortfalls (GOK 2003). Capacity building through in-service and re-designing of pre-service programmes to cope with the challenges of FPE was also suggested. According to the report, there was need for proper and optimal utilization of existing teachers and also to review the existing staffing norms to incorporate double shift, multi grade teaching and average pupil-teacher ratio. Continuous improvement in the quality of education services should entail continuous skills upgrading for teachers (GOK 2003).

From survey findings many teachers still feel they were not prepared for the introduction of FPE (UNESCO 2004). According to many stakeholders, the implementation of FPE was rather a matter of political expediency rather than a well thought out and planned reform (Sifuna 2003).

Teachers' attitudes also have a role in how they implement the education curriculum. In as much as the teachers' command of their field is vital, their perception of how they are treated, managed and supported professionally may highly enhance or undermine the achievements of FPE (Shiundu and Mutsotso 2008).

## **3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The study used descriptive survey design. The purpose of this design in the study was to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon like the attitude of the people (Kothari 2004). Descriptive survey design is flexible and versatile. According to Mugenda and Mugenda, 2012, descriptive survey lets meaning of the research problem emerge from the respondents hence giving voice to those who are being studied as a way of empowering them.

The proposed study was carried out in Bungoma East district in Western Province. The district is divided into two administrative divisions of Webuye and Ndivisi. It is located between latitude 0<sup>0</sup>25' North and 0<sup>0</sup>53' North and longitude 34<sup>0</sup> east and 35<sup>0</sup> east. It lies at a height of approximately 2000 meters above sea level. The Great North road pass through the district making it fairly accessible.

The study population consisted of all public primary schools in Bungoma East district. The district had ninety nine public primary schools as at March 2010, all of which were mixed primary schools. The sample population was drawn from 20 public schools. All the schools were mixed schools. Four schools were boarding whereas sixteen schools were day schools. Eight schools were urban whereas twelve were rural schools. The study population Consisted of the school head teachers, deputy head teachers, teachers, committee chair-persons from public primary schools and the District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer in the district.

The study employed stratified simple random sampling technique to select twenty schools for the purpose of gathering data. These were both rural schools and urban schools. Another grouping was based on boarding schools and day schools. Purposive sampling was used in the case of selecting the class of pupils to participate in the study. The methods were chosen because every category of the population had to be represented. The head teachers, deputy head teachers, school committee chair-persons of selected schools also formed part of the study population. The DQASO was also selected to participate in the study.

**Table 2: Table showing stratification of schools selected within each division**

Division	Total No. of schools	Total No. to be Sampled	% of sampled schools
Ndivisi	39	8	20%
Webuye	60	12	20%

According to Kerlinger, 1983, 10% to 30% is a good representative sample from which findings can be drawn about a given population. For the purpose of this study a sample of 20% was taken. Therefore out of the total 99 schools in the district 20 schools were selected for the study. The accessible study population and sampled population are shown on table 3

**Table 3: Table showing the sample size in each category**

Group	Population (N)	Total No. to be Sampled (Population (n))	Sampling Techniques	% of sampled
Head teachers	99	20	Random	20%
D/head teachers	99	20	Random	20%
School committee chair persons	99	20	Random	20%

Teachers	400	112	Simple random	20%
DQASO	1	1	Purposive	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>153</b>		<b>21.9%</b>

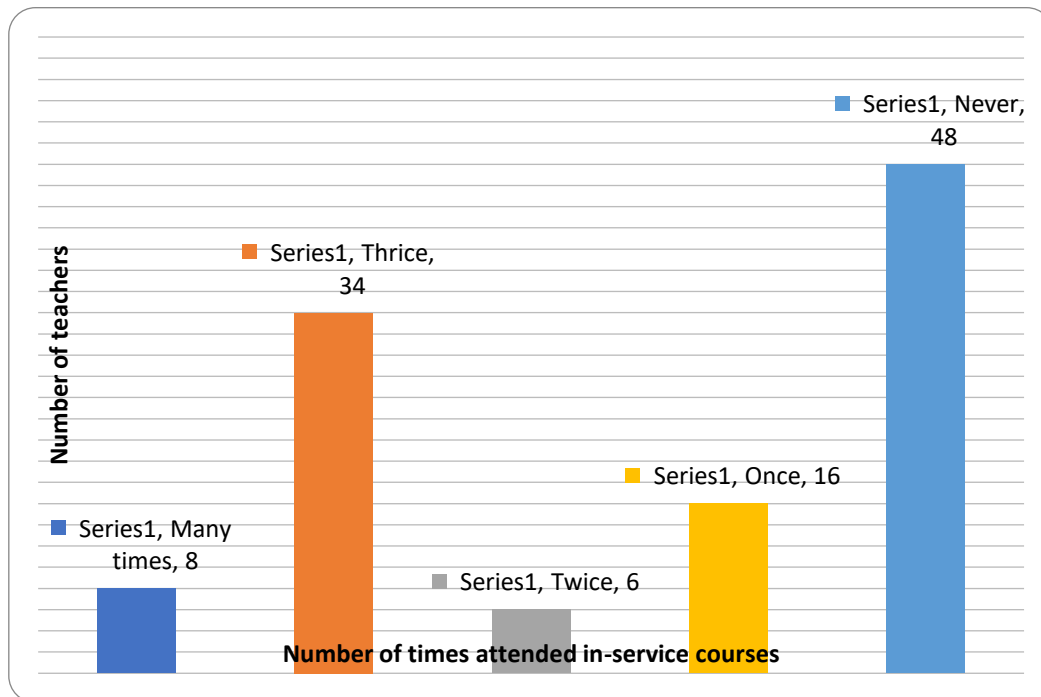
This study employed four instruments of data collection namely; questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis.

#### 4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish the teacher preparedness towards implementing FPE. To achieve this, the teachers were required to respond to questions with regard to in-service courses, their qualifications. The teacher, deputy head teacher and head teacher tools had items which needed their responses to their professional experience, the training they had under gone, and their roles in FPE facilitation and what was their perception of the facilities in regard to FPE.

From the interviews with head teachers, deputy head teachers and chair persons of the schools, it was clear that FPE was introduced without prior arrangements to deal with subsequent challenges. This finding is complemented by the findings of UNESCO study in collaboration with the ministry of education, science and technology which for example reports with reference to teachers' morale that teachers were overwhelmed by the uncontrolled admissions which undermined their morale (UNESCO, 2005). Such uncontrolled admissions definitely would outstretch the learning resource. The teachers were not prepared for such challenges to the implementation of FPE.

All teachers whose views were sought felt that the FPE programme was implemented without adequate preparation on their side to deal with resource utilization. The lack of preparation of teachers is further a firm by the DQASO report where it is stated that there was no preparation on the part of teachers and other stake holders. This implied that stake holders took it normally like they were to continue with what they were accustomed to. The policy saw unprecedented influx of pupils. The government gave funds which were not enough leading to numerous challenges. It is after the launching of FPE that the government started in-service programmes on procurement of learning materials. Teachers and the school management team were brought on board to undergo in-service programme. The frequency at which teachers had attended in-service programmes in line with implementation of FPE was as given in figure 1



**Figure 1: Teachers frequency of in-service course attendance**

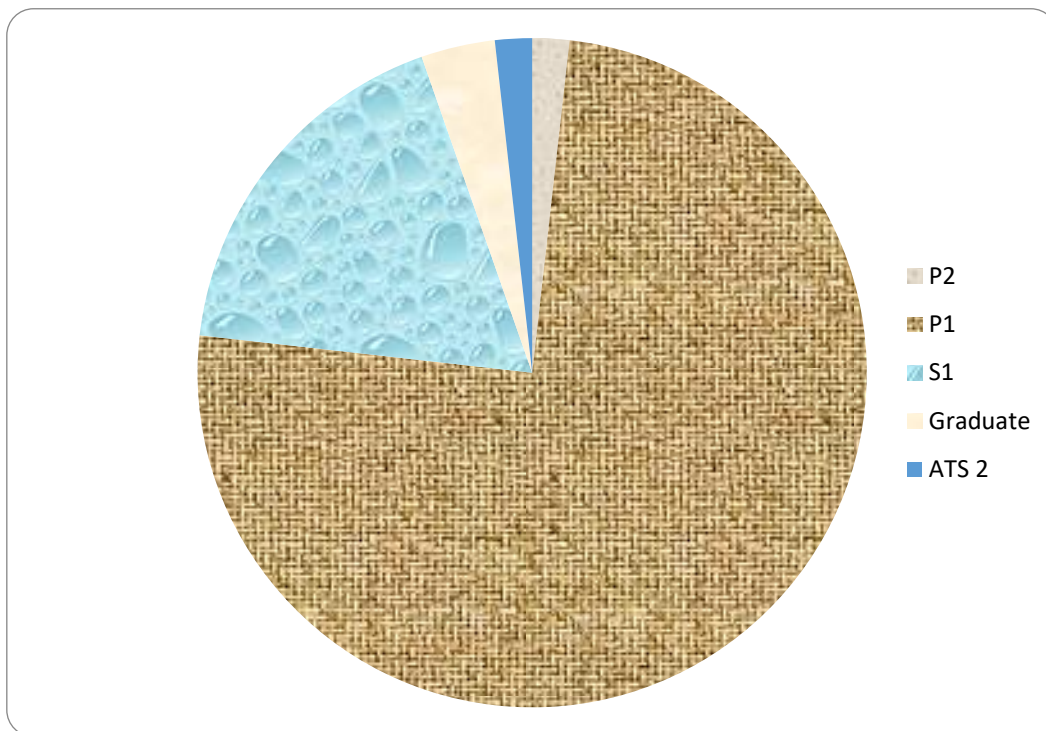
From figure 1, out of the 112 teachers who were involved in the survey, 64 (57%) have attended in service programmes in line with FPE. Given the complexity of the programme, there is need for more in service to make teachers more innovative in resource utilization. 34 (30%) have attended the programmes thrice (3 times) 6 (5%) have had the in-service twice, (2 times) 16 (14%) once and 8 (7%) teachers have attended the programme many times. However, 48 (44%) teachers have not had any in-service training in line with FPE. 44% of teachers stating that they have not attend any in-service program is a pointer to the fact that teachers were not well prepared towards the implementation of FPE hence the utilisation of resource in an innovative way. This is in line with the findings of a UNESCO study that found that teachers were not trained on multi-grade and double shift methods yet they were required to use them (UNESCO, 2005). The findings are also in line with the findings of another study conducted in Keiyo district by Kipkoech. With regard to teachers, head teachers and education officers preparedness in terms of training for the implementation of FPE program Kipkoech reports that even though 60.8% of the teachers had prior knowledge of the implementation of the FPE policy they had not been adequately prepared (Kipkoech, 2011).

From the interview with DQASO at the District Education office it was found out that many of the education officials to facilitate the in-service programmes for teachers had been redeployed. Teacher Advisory Centres (TAC) Tutors who were mandated to facilitate the in-service programmes on resource use had redeployed from the divisions to other districts. This created shortage of manpower. Before the introduction of FPE we had more officers at the grassroots. However with launch of the programme there are more schools but with fewer education officers which has interfered with their efficiency. This greatly interfered with the preparation of teachers towards FPE implementation.

From the interview carried out with the Deputy head teachers, data indicates that though they are on ground working closely with the head teachers, they have not undergone any in-service in that capacity

to make them more effective. This finding is in agreement with the findings of a study carried out in Kenya by UNESCO in collaboration with the ministry of education, science and technology. According to the study, teachers admitted having been got off guard with the introduction of FPE (UNESCO, 2005). The study also established that the provision of learning materials aided their teaching by enabling them to complete the syllabus and teaching new concepts easily (UNESCO, 2005). This is also in agreement with the study findings that the were learning resources from both the interviews with teachers as well as students.

Another aspect of teacher preparation is the qualification of a teacher. In the Session Paper No.1 of 2005 on A Policy Framework on Education Training and Research, the government proposed to regularly review the teacher education curriculum and provide teachers support programmes to make them more effective. From the questionnaire given to teachers asking them to make response with reference to their professional qualification it was found that most of them were P1 teachers. The findings were as shown the figure 2.



**Figure 2: Teachers professional qualifications**

According to figure 2, on pre-service training, out of the 112 teachers who responded, 84 (75%) were P1 teachers, 20 (18%) were S1, 4 (4%) were graduates, 2 (2%) was P2 and 2 (2%) was ATS. This means that all teachers have acquired the recommended qualification to facilitate curriculum implementation.

Aside from teachers pre-service training, the experience one has had in teaching also contributes towards how one may be prepared to handle challenges of utilizing learning resources. The findings of the study with regard to the teaching experience the teachers were as presented in figure 3.



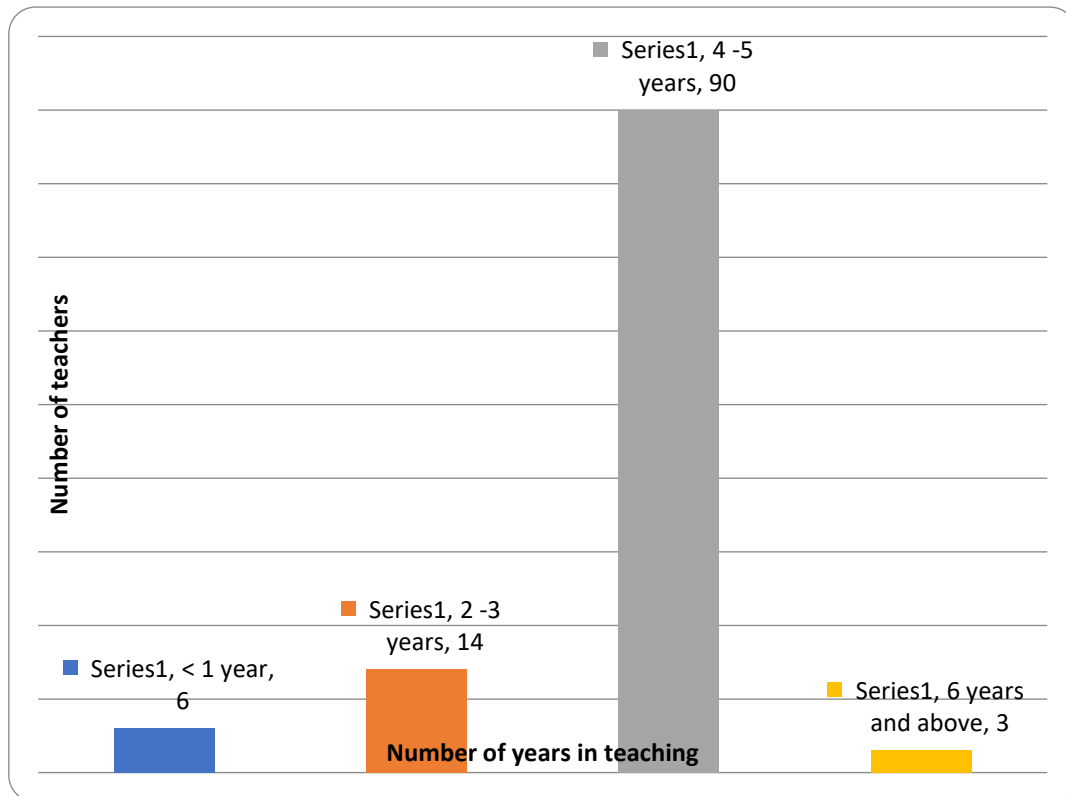


Figure 3: Teachers teaching experience in years

From the figure its clear that 90 (80%) respondents had an experience of 4 years and above, 14 (13%) had an experience of 2 to 3 years, 6 (5%) had an experience of 1 years and less while 2 (2%) had an experience of more than 6 years. Teaching experience has a bearing on effective utilization of learning resources. The longer the experience the more innovative a teacher is in resource utilization. From the teachers’ teaching experience, the researcher concluded that most of the teachers had gained enough experience to help them facilitate curriculum implementation.

A part from the teachers teaching experience the interview carried out by the researcher on the head teachers and deputy head teachers revealed that all had long teaching experiences. However all the Head teachers interviewed said that they were not prepared when the FPE programme began. This is in agreement with the UNESCO study findings that found that teachers were not prepared for FPE introduction (UNESCO, 2005). However, the in-service programme began when FPE had already taken off. In-service programmes are mounted almost yearly or when need arises especially on financial management and resources utilization.

### 5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study sought to assess teacher preparedness in resource utilization in the FPE programme in the classroom in Bungoma East district. From the interviews with head teachers, deputy head teachers and chair persons of the schools, it was clear that FPE was introduced without prior arrangements to deal with subsequent challenges or preparing the teachers accordingly. It is after the launching of FPE that the

government started in-service programmes. Teachers and the school management team were brought on board to undergo the in-service programme.

On teacher preparedness on utilisation of learning resource utilization under FPE program, the research revealed that most teachers feel inadequately prepared in handling the programme. The teachers felt that they require more in-service to enable them be more innovative in resource utilization given the complexity of FPE programme. It is after the launching of FPE that the government started in-service programmes. Teachers and the school management team were brought on board to undergo the in-service programme. The teachers also felt that more in-service programmes should be mounted to equip them with skills on resource utilization.

As much as this was meant to facilitate the training of teachers to prepare them to implement FPE, the programme suffered due to logistics on personnel balancing. It was found out that many of the education officials to facilitate the in-service programmes suffered as a result of Teacher Advisory Centres (TAC) Tutors who were to facilitate the in-service programmes having been redeployed elsewhere. This created shortage of manpower.

The TACs were initially based at the divisional level. However, they are now at the district level manned by fewer education officers. Before the introduction of FPE, many officers were at the grassroots. However with launch of the programme there were more schools but with fewer education officers. This greatly interfered with the preparation of teachers towards FPE implementation further. Despite the shortage of TAC, all teachers interviewed were professionally trained hence had the ability to facilitate curriculum implementation. This was a great boast to FPE. Aside from the teachers' pre-service training, most had good experience in the teaching career. The experience of has had in teaching also contributes towards how one may be prepare to handle challenges of utilizing learning resources.

The FPE programme implementation overwhelmed teachers due to the drastic increase in pupils in contrast to scarce resources. Though in-service programmes were mounted, teachers feel they are not adequate and there is need for more to prepare them effectively for the programme. The head teachers feel that there is need for the government to in-service them more on financial management. A number of them feel it were better if the government would provide learning resources in material form instead of money.

## **6.0 CONCLUSIONS**

Most teachers feel inadequate in handling challenges of FPE on resource utilization due to inadequate in-service programmes. The teacher preparation program towards handling through in-service programmes has been greatly retarded as a result of the shortage of the manpower that had to facilitate them. The head teachers and their deputies feel that there is need for more in-service on financial management.

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