

The Influence of Age of Pupils on the Management of Pupils' Discipline by the Headteachers in Public Primary Schools in Uasin Gishu County

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Abstract

The Free Primary Education (FPE) policy was introduced through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in January, 2003 in Kenya. The public, especially poor families were happy that they could enroll their children who may not have had a chance to study due to lack of school fees. The response was overwhelming as was expected in a country where substantial proportions of children were out of school. In many schools, the headteachers had more children to enroll than their school capacity. More so, since the Government had not given an age limit for enrolment, even those who were „over- age” were enrolled and this worsened the congestions in schools. Due to minimal time in preparing to implement the policy directive, various logistical challenges arose. These included among others, over enrolment, shortage of physical facilities, teachers, teaching and learning materials and introduction of over age children in different classes. This paper investigates the influence of pupil's age on the disciplinary management of public Primary schools by headteachers in Uasin Gishu County. The study used a cross- sectional survey design to enable the author collect data from the headteachers in order to determine the current status of their experiences and opinions with respect to one or more variables. The study was carried out in Uasin Gishu County of Kenya with a target population of 400 public Primary headteachers. A sample size of 200 was selected using stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaires were used in data collection. The study found that there was presence of over-age pupils in all the classes of the public Primary schools and that it had influenced discipline management in public Primary schools. The study recommends that, the Government should admit the correct ages of pupils in all the classes and enroll adult learners in adult education Programme.

Key Words: Age Influence, Free Primary Education, Headteachers, Management, Pupils' Discipline

INTRODUCTION

The Free Primary Education Intervention in Kenya

The history of free primary education in public Primary schools goes back to 1974 and later in 1978 when the Government launched free primary education programmes aimed at achieving free and universal primary education. The vision for free, primary-age

schooling has been a part of the political conversation in Kenya since the 1960s. At the country's independence from Britain in 1963, Kenya's first post colonial president, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, waived fees at schools in the most impoverished areas. In 1978, President Moi abolished school fees in all primary schools (Muhoho, 1975).

Primary education is the second level and caters for children age between six and 13. Pupils sit for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination after eight years of learning as stated in Education Act, 1970. By the early 1980s, enrollment in primary schools soared, and most primary-school going age children were attending school. But the reality of making universal education work was severely straining resources. The national Government shifted the financial responsibility for social programs such as education and health care to local communities that were forced to charge user fees. For many families in a country where more than half the population live on less than a dollar per day, the fees pushed education out of reach. Some advocacy groups argue that the policies of international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund exacerbated the problem (Kojwang, 2003).

On January 6, 2003 the Minister for Education Science and Technology (MoEST) launched the Free Primary Education (FPE). Before its introduction, parents had to pay for a variety of things. On top of the basic fee there were charges for text books, water, electricity and maintenance, depending on the type of school and the school policy.

FPE Management Problems

Kipkoech, Cheruto, and Wambua (2010) in their study on management problems facing implementation of Free Primary Education in Kenya, a case of Keiyo district, interviewed Education officers, Headteachers, and Teachers. Their study concluded that, there were problems facing school management that were associated with FPE. The study pointed out issues like; inadequate physical facilities, inadequate finances, delay in disbursement of funds, conflict with parents, difficulty in financial management, indiscipline among pupils, and shortage of teachers and support staff.

Yara and Rita (2012) posited in their study that, Primary school headteachers face a variety of constraints in their efforts to implement FPE. These included among others; lack of teaching learning facilities, over enrolment, lack of motivation among teachers, indisciplined pupils, reluctance of the community to contribute to school development and lack of adequate training for headteachers in financial management.

A descriptive survey study by Akoth (2012), established that; there was high enrolment in public Primary schools as a result of FPE, Government funding as well as facilities and teaching and learning materials were inadequate, the schools were understaffed, pupils underwent poor teaching, there was overcrowding in classes, books were inadequate, classrooms were poorly constructed, there was heavy workload due to understaffing, inadequate non teaching personnel, difficulties with parents was experienced, student indiscipline was at high rates, there was poor financial management skills and inadequate finances. The study recommended that, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should employ more teachers, sensitize parents on their role in the

implementation of FPE, allocate more funds and train headteachers on financial management..

Odhiambo and Simatwa (2012) observed that 31.5% of the headteachers had gone for workshops organized by Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) and very little was tackled on financial management. They found that the workshops were not effective in providing competencies in managing FPE funds mainly due to headteachers' lack of commitments. No effective evaluation was done to find out if the headteachers understood what they were being taught. They further noted that during the interviews, headteachers commented that they were headteachers and not financial managers and therefore financial management should be the duty of accounts clerks. The headteachers interviewed were negative towards seminars on financial management as they felt that they were not accountants, but teachers. The study concluded that primary headteachers in Rachuonyo District handled large sums of money; however these funds were not enough to cater fully for the needs of the pupils.

Orutu (2012) on his research paper entitled, challenges facing the management of FPE in Nyamira county posited that, there was a high pupil-teacher ratio; sixty pupils per one teacher (60:1) in that county. He concluded that these resulted into poor syllabus coverage, pupils with special needs not taken care of, indiscipline among pupils, inadequate attention to individual pupils, poor academic performance in national examinations, limited facilities and resources, mass exodus of pupils from public to private schools, increased teaching workload for teachers, and inadequate curriculum delivery. The study further pointed out that there were inadequate and delay in disbursement of funds to schools in Nyamira county and that some schools fail to get funds at all.

Over Age Children

With the introduction of FPE in Kenya in 2003, tens of thousands of "over-age" children, including those who dropped out of school to work and who now returned to finish their primary schooling, needed to be catered for urgently. Students of all ages trooped to school barefoot and without uniform; from the ages of two-and-a-half to 85, to seek registration in standard one. The directive was categorical, rather than send away anyone; schools would have to be creative in accommodating all those seeking admission (Killeen, 2003). This would largely influence the disciplinary management of schools by headteachers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a cross sectional survey research design. This design was chosen because it is used for collecting information at a single point in time which was the case in this study. It enabled the author collect data from the headteachers in order to determine the current status of their experiences and opinions with respect to one or more variables. The study was carried out in Uasin Gishu County of Kenya. The target population for the study comprised all the 400 public Primary school head teachers in Uasin Gishu County. There are 360 public Primary headteachers in Uasin Gishu, (Eldoret East, Wareng,

and Eldoret West) County and 40 in Eldoret Municipality, forming a total study population of 400 respondents (MoEST, 2003).

The sample size was obtained by using the Table by Kathuri and Pals (1993). Given that the population of this study (N) was 400 then the sample size (S) obtained from the table was 200 respondents as suggested by Kathuri and Pals (1993). This study used stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire was used in collecting relevant data. A total number of 200 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and 190 were received back. The respondents comprised the headteachers from Uasin Gishu County which is made of Wareng, Eldoret East, Eldoret West Districts and Eldoret Municipality. The data generated by questionnaires were subjected to both descriptive (percentages, frequencies,) and inferential (chi-square) statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Influence of Age of Pupils on the Management of Pupils' Discipline

The introduction of Free Primary Education policy allowed children who had dropped out of school due to lack of school fees to go back and complete their studies. These included street and over-age children. The headteachers were requested to respond to a number of statements so as to evaluate whether the re-admission of these over-age children had influenced the management of discipline in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County. The dependent, discipline, variables tested included; absenteeism, lateness, sneaking, disobedience, drug use/abuse, bullying and incidents of punishments recorded. Chi-square cross-tabulation was done with some of these variables and the independent FPE challenge variable (over age pupils), in order to determine if there was any significant association.

Decline in pupils' discipline. To assess whether with the introduction of free primary education policy pupils discipline declined, Table 1 shows the distribution of the headteachers' responses; minority 22.1 % (42/190) of the respondents disagreed while majority 76.9 % (146/190) agreed that discipline of the pupils has declined since the introduction of Free Primary Education programme, and 1.1 % (2/190) were undecided.

Table 1. Pupils' discipline declined with the introduction of FPE

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	16	8.4
Disagree	26	13.7
	42	22.1
Undecided	2	1.1
Agree	87	45.8
Strongly agree	59	31.1
	146	76.9
Total	190	100

Age of pupils. The headteachers were asked to respond to the statement which assessed whether with the introduction of FPE, there were over-age pupils, who were attending

classes in their schools. As illustrated in Table 2, majority of the headteachers, 69.5 % (132/190) agreed, while a few, 24.2 % (46/190) disagreed and 6.3 % (12/190) were undecided.

Table 2. Over-age pupils attending classes

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	20	10.5
Disagree	26	13.7
	46	24.2
Undecided	12	6.3
Agree	86	45.3
Strongly agree	46	24.2
	132	69.5
Total	190	100

Association between over age pupils and decline in discipline. Further analysis with chi-square test was carried out on the headteachers' responses to assess whether there were over age pupils attending classes in their schools, with the responses that tested whether there was decline in discipline levels. This aimed at determining if there was any significant influence of over-age pupils' enrolment on the management of pupils discipline by the headteachers in public Primary schools in Uasin Gishu County.

Incidents of Punishments Meted Out to Pupils

To assess whether with the introduction of Free Primary Education programme, more punishments meted out to the pupils were recorded than before, majority of the respondents 76.3% (126/190) agreed while minority 31.6% (60/90) disagreed and 2.1% (4/190) were undecided. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3. More punishments recorded since introduction of FPE

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	16	8.4
Disagree	44	23.2
	60	31.6
Undecided	4	2.1
Agree	81	42.6
Strongly agree	45	23.7
	126	76.3
Total	190	100

Association between over-age pupils and record of punishments meted out to the pupils. Chi-Square test was computed on the headteachers' responses to the item that assessed if with the introduction of FPE, there were over-age pupils attending classes versus the results to the statement that tested if there were more punishments meted out to pupils. The data was categorized into those who agreed and those who disagreed and

the undecided in each variable, which was then cross tabulated using SPSS. Significant relationships represented by $P = 0.01 < 0.05$ was obtained as illustrated on Table 4. A conclusion was therefore made that there was a significant relationship between over-age pupils and punishments meted out to pupils.

Table 4. Association between over age pupils and punishments meted to pupils

	Value	Df	P-Value <0.05
Pearson Chi-Square	59.604	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	62.460	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.494	1	.011
No. of Valid Cases	190		

Level of Absenteeism among Pupils

Table 5 illustrates the distribution of the headteachers' responses to assess whether with the introduction of Free Primary Education there was high rate of absenteeism recorded among pupils. Majority 71.1 % (135/190) agreed that there was high rate of absenteeism, while minority, 26.8% (51/190) disagreed and 2.1% (4/190) were undecided. It is therefore evident that with the introduction of Free Primary Education programme absenteeism increased.

Table 5. Since introduction of FPE there is high rate of absenteeism recorded among pupils

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	8	4.2
Disagree	43	22.6
	57	26.8
Undecided	4	2.1
Agree	90	47.4
Strongly agree	45	23.7
	135	71.1
Total	190	100

Pupils' School Punctuality

Table 6 illustrates the headteachers' responses to whether with the introduction of FPE programme, pupils punctuality declined. From these findings, majority of the headteachers 53.1 % (101/190) agreed that pupils' punctuality declined while 44.7 % (86/190) disagreed and 2.1 % (4/190) were undecided.

Table 6. Since the introduction of FPE pupils' school punctuality has declined

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	8	4.2
Disagree	77	40.5
	} 86	} 44.7
Undecided	4	2.1
Agree	70	36.8
Strongly agree	31	16.3
	} 101	} 53.1
Total	190	100

Sneaking out of School

Table 7 presents the headteachers' responses to whether with the introduction of FPE programme, pupils were not sneaking in and out of the school. The results showed that majority 59 %, (93/190) of the respondents disagreed whereas 46.8 % (89/190) agreed and 4.2 % (8/190) were undecided.

Table 7. There was no sneaking in and out of school by pupils

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	26	13.7
Disagree	67	35.3
	} 93	} 59
Undecided	8	4.2
Agree	58	30.5
Strongly agree	31	16.3
	} 89	} 46.8
Total	190	100

Pupils were more Disobedient than before the Introduction of FPE programme

Table 8 summarizes the respondents' results on whether with the introduction of free primary education; pupils were more disobedient than before. Majority of the respondents, 57.3% (109/190) agreed while 37.4% (71/190) disagreed and 5.3% (10/190) were undecided.

Table 8. Pupils more disobedient than before the introduction of FPE

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	12	6.3
Disagree	59	31.1
Undecided	10	
	} 71	} 37.4
Agree	73	5.3
Strongly agree	36	38.4
	} 109	} 57.3
Total	190	100

Association between over age pupils and disobedience. Chi-Square analysis was done on the headteachers' responses to whether with the introduction of FPE, there were over-age pupils in various classes versus that which tested whether pupils were more disobedient than before. The data was categorized into those who agreed, disagreed, and the undecided in each variable. The data was then cross tabulated using SPSS. The results showed a significant relationship, $P = 0.004 < 0.05$ as illustrated in Table 9. It was concluded that there was a significant influence of the presence of over-age pupils on the management pupils' discipline by the headteachers in public Primary schools in Uasin Gishu County.

Table 9. Association between over age pupils and disobedience

	Value	Df	P-Value <0.05
Pearson Chi-Square	51.446	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	49.029	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.338	1	.004
No. of Valid Cases	190		

Support from Parents on Discipline

Table 10 illustrates the headteachers' responses on whether there was support from parents on disciplinary. 86.3% (164/190) of the respondents agreed that with the introduction of Free Primary Education, there was less support from parents on discipline, while 13.7 % (26/190) disagreed and none of them was undecided.

Table 10. Less support from parents on pupil's discipline

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	16	8.4
Disagree	10	5.3
	26	13.7
Agree	104	54.7
Strongly agree	60	31.6
	164	86.3
Total	190	100

Discipline Guidelines from Ministry of Education

Table 11 shows the respondents responses on whether there were any guidelines from the Ministry of Education on how to instill discipline in public Primary schools. 69.4% (132/190) of the respondents agreed that there were no guidelines, while 27.4 % (52/190) disagreed and 3.2 % (6/190) were undecided.

Table 11. No guidelines on discipline

Responses	Frequency		Percentage	
Strongly disagree	22	52	11.6	27.4
Disagree	30		15.8	
Undecided	6		3.2	
Agree	74	132	38.9	69.4
Strongly agree	58		30.5	
Total	190		100	

Drug Abuse (Alcohol and Smoking)

Table 12 summarizes the headteachers' responses on whether with the introduction of Free Primary Education programme; there were drug abuse cases among pupils in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County. Majority of the respondents 59% (112/190) agreed, while 33.7% (64/190) disagreed and 7.4% (14/190) were undecided.

Table 12. Drug abuse among pupils

Responses	Frequency		Percentage	
Strongly disagree	16	64	8.4	33.7
Disagree	48		25.3	
Undecided	14		7.4	
Agree	87	112	45.8	59
Strongly agree	25		13.2	
Total	190		100	

Association between over age pupils and drug abuse. Table 13 presents the results of the chi-square analysis on the headteachers' responses to the item that assessed, whether with the introduction of FPE, there were presence of over-age children versus that which tested whether there was drug use/ abuse among pupils in public Primary schools in Uasin Gishu County. The data was categorized into those who agreed, disagreed and undecided in each variable and cross tabulated by use of SPSS. A significant association was noted, $P=0.02 < 0.05$ indicating that the two variables were not independent of each other. It was concluded that there was a significant association between the presence of over-age pupils and drug use/ abuse in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County.

Table 13. Association between over age pupils and drug abuse

	Value	Df	P-Value<0.05
Pearson Chi-Square	37.527	16	.002
Likelihood Ratio	41.465	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.191	1	.021
No. of Valid Cases	190		

Over-Age Pupils Bully Younger Pupils

Table 14 illustrates the responses to whether with the introduction of FPE programme, over-age pupils bullied the young ones in their classes in public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County. There were an equal number of respondents who agreed 47.4% (90/190) to those who disagreed 47.4% (90/190), only 5.3% (10/190) were undecided.

Table 14. Over-age pupils bully younger pupils

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	25	13.2
Disagree	65	34.2
Undecided	10	5.3
Agree	63	33.2
Strongly agree	27	14.2
TOTAL	190	100

Association between over-age pupils and bullying of younger pupils. Chi-Square test was computed on the head teachers' responses to whether with the introduction of FPE, there were over age pupils, versus the results to whether over age pupils bullied younger ones. The data was categorized into those who agreed, disagreed and undecided in each variable, later cross tabulated using SPSS. Significant relationships, $P = 0.05 = 0.05$ was obtained as illustrated in Table 15. From the responses, it was not clear whether over-age pupils bullied younger pupils.

Table 15. Association between over age pupils and bullying of younger pupils

	Value	Df	P-Value <0.05
Pearson Chi-Square	59.604	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	62.460	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.494	1	.005
No. of Valid Cases	190		

DISCUSSIONS

From the findings this study established that the introduction of FPE programme in Kenya in 2003 enabled pupils of all ages including the over-age to join public primary school education. Majority (69.5%) of the headteachers in Uasin Gishu County agreed that there were over-age pupils in their schools. A number of the head teachers (76.9%) also agreed that discipline of pupils has declined with the introduction of FPE programme in public Primary schools in Uasin Gishu County. This was further illustrated by majority (71.1%), of the headteachers who agreed that there were high levels of absenteeism, (53%) stated that there was decline in punctuality, 76.3% indicated that there were more punishments meted out to pupils recorded, 57.3% showed pupils were more disobedient, while 59% noted that there were drug use/ abuse cases among pupils. A number indicated that there was sneaking in and out of school by as represented by (59%), 86.3% said that there was less support from parents on pupils' discipline and 69.4% indicated that there were no guidelines from the Ministry of Education concerning management of discipline. It was however not clear whether over-age pupils bullied younger ones in their classes as reported in the equal response of 47% each.

This study further established that there was significant association between over-age pupils and; more punishments meted out to pupils at, $P=0.001>0.005$; pupils' disobedience $P=0.000<0.005$; and drug use/ abuse among pupils $P=0.002<0.005$ respectively, the null hypothesis that there was no significant association between over age pupils and management of pupils discipline was rejected and the alternative accepted. This implied that the presence of over-age pupils have influenced the management of discipline in public Primary schools in Uasin Gishu County.

These results indicated that, with decline in discipline, the teaching and learning environment may not be favorable as is required. Handling pupils with varied ages and abilities coupled with large classes and shortage of teachers may be very difficult. The study also found that teachers' time and energy is diverted to handling and management of disciplinary issues instead of teaching. More punishments meant that teaching and learning time was wasted as teachers spend more time instilling discipline. The fact that pupils did not observe punctuality and were always absent from school affected concentration and pupils missed concepts taught while away. This inhibited proper syllabus coverage.

The findings of this study concur with Alubisia (2005) who pointed out that, large class size affected class management by teachers in terms of maintaining discipline. He commented that it was difficult to maintain discipline as some children were unruly. The findings also revealed that the government did not prepare for the large turnout of pupils in terms of increasing the number of schools and classrooms. Njura (2012) also found similar results to these findings. She pointed out that, with the introduction of FPE, headteachers were experiencing various types of pupils' indiscipline such as laziness, lateness, absenteeism, and taking alcohol and drugs.

Similar findings to the study were found by Wachira *et al.* (2011) in Embu West District. These researchers found that pupils' discipline went down with the introduction of FPE programme and guidance and counseling personnel department found it difficult to cope

with their management, due to large number of students and teachers that were not adequately prepared in this area. In their findings, 46.8% showed that there were many cases of discipline recorded, while 33.9% indicated there were few cases and 19.5% indicated that there were average cases of discipline recorded.

They also established that teachers had difficulties in management of discipline in their classes and that; these difficulties were compounded by large variations of ages of pupils in one class. The age varied in some classes from six years to sixty years. This implied having classes with pupils who had different needs which impacted negatively on the management of discipline and teaching and learning.

In the study, the most difficult areas of pupils management were identified by head teachers as overcrowding represented by 25%, absenteeism 12%, discipline 25% while 38% indicated that some pupils had special needs which were not easy to meet since the schools were not prepared or facilitated to handle such needs. The constitution of Kenya (2010) Article 43(1) (f) and Article 54(1) (b) disallow discrimination and or denying individuals access to education based on their unique features.

UNESCO (2005) established similar findings which showed that there were high percentages of over-age pupils in all the classes in Kenyan public Primary schools; class 1 (70.6%), class 2, (46%), class 3(85.4%), class 4 (80.7%), class 5 (80.1%), class 6 (80%), class 7 (84.8%), class 8 (77.5%) respectively. Killeen (2003) posited that, street and over-age children have lowered the discipline of pupils in public primary schools in Kenya by mocking younger ones, diverting children from normal learning to lifestyles out scaled in of school and introducing street stories. Kipkoech *et al.* (2010) in their research, also present similar results. They point out that with the introduction of FPE programme, 14.3% of the education officers, 53.8% of the headteachers and 91% of the teachers indicated indiscipline as one of the problems facing public Primary school management in Keiyo District.

CONCLUSIONS

This study established that with the introduction of FPE programme, there were over-age pupils attending classes in public Primary Schools in Uasin Gishu County. This study also found that discipline had declined with the introduction of Free Primary Education programme. This was illustrated by high rates of absenteeism among pupils. More pupils were reported to be attending schools late and increased rate of punishment meted out to pupils. Pupils were also found to be more disobedient with high rates of drug use/abuse; on alcoholism and smoking. The study reported that parent provided very little support on the discipline of pupils.

The study further established that there was a statistically significant association between over-age pupils and absenteeism, disobedience and increased punishment records meted out to pupils in public Primary schools in Uasin Gishu County ($P=0.000<0.05$). It was also determined that over-age pupils bullied younger ones (in their classes) though the association was not strong, as represented by $P=0.048<0.05$.

The study found out that there was a significant influence of over age pupils on the management of discipline in public primary schools by the headteachers in Uasin Gishu County. This paper therefore concludes that the presence of over age pupils have influenced the management of discipline by the headteachers in Uasin Gishu District.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government should provide admission guidelines in order to ensure admission of the right ages of pupils in all the classes. It's easier to instill discipline when pupils are put in the same age groups as this study established that over-age pupils have contributed to the decline in discipline. Repetition should be abolished, this will ensure that correct cohorts complete Primary school in time and hence ascertain that the system in place is efficient and effective. Adult pupils should be enrolled in adult education programmes.

Further sensitization of the public on FPE programme should be carried out to secure more support from the parents and other stakeholders on matters of pupils' discipline. Government should issue guidelines on how to instill discipline in public primary schools in Kenya, since corporal punishment was abolished.

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BIO-DATA

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