

# Examination of the Influence of Equity on the Implementation of Child Friendly School Program in Public Primary Schools in Laikipia East Sub-County, Laikipia County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

A child friendly school is one that recognizes and nurtures the achievements of children's basic rights. The purpose of a Child Friendly School program is to move schools and education systems progressively towards quality standards, addressing all elements that influence the well-being and rights of the child as a learner and the main beneficiary of teaching, while improving other school functions in the process. Child friendly school programme was rolled out on national scale in 2011. Since its inception not much effect has been realized on its implementation. This study therefore sought to examine the influence of equity on the implementation of child friendly school program in public primary schools in Laikipia East Sub-County, Laikipia County, Kenya. The study utilized qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to realize this objective. Descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting this study. The study targeted a total population of 6400 from public primary schools in Laikipia East Sub County of which a sample size of 361 was selected using multistage sampling techniques. The main tools for collecting data in this research were questionnaire with open-ended and close-ended items. The researcher sought expert opinion of the specifically with regard to content validity of the instruments. Data collected was standardized using various control measures, including checking for completeness and consistency before the data entry process. Data was analyzed by use of SPSS (Statistic Package for Social Sciences) computer software version 22.0. Thereafter, the data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequencies and percentages. The inferential statistics was Pearson product moment correlation. The results of the data were presented in form of tables. The study findings revealed that; implementation of child friendly school program was strongly and positively correlated with equity at a coefficient of 0.571, school feeding program by a coefficient of 0.682 and inclusive classroom by a coefficient of 0.811, no equity in resources among most schools (48%), punishment for indiscipline pupils was however done fairly according to the rules and regulation (60%), all pupils sit for the same examinations and marked fairly (76%). most schools do not have adequate food feeding program for pupils with special needs and most schools neither have enough teachers trained to handle inclusive education nor adequate teaching resources and learning resources for special needs education (67%). The study recommends that School head teachers should collaborate with relevant stakeholders to promote equity in school provisions and governance. Schools should also put emphasis on the training and development of its human resources on inclusive education. The study recommends further studies on the influence of trade unions such as KNUT and KUPPET in the implementation of child friendly school programme in public primary schools.

**Keywords:** Equity and child friendly school program.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a crucial element of human development and progress towards this goal will heavily influence the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) "Education is key to the global

integrated framework of sustainable development goals. Education is at the heart of our efforts both to adapt to change and to transform the world within which we live. A quality basic education is the necessary foundation for learning throughout life in a complex and rapidly changing world” (Irina Bokova, Director General of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in UNESCO 2015: 3). Education has a long history as an international priority, and the right to education was first enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Improving education and ensuring all people are afforded a high standard of education will be reaffirmed as a key global goal of development under the post-2015 development agenda. Primary education is the basis for high-quality skills development in numeracy and literacy, which are critical for skills development in scientific and technological education. However, for primary education to move towards its potential, quality education and completion is necessary. Government have placed a strong emphasis on community participation in the educational process. Its effects could not be the same as the direct involvement of the parents themselves. There is evidence which suggest that most parents do not show interest in Parent-Teacher Association meetings and for that matter do not attend the meetings (Chabbott, C. 2004).

UNICEF’s Child Friendly School’s framework is grounded in the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child’s principles of children’s rights, as well as other international human rights instruments and international declarations such as the Declaration of Education for All (1990). These principles emphasize the right of all children to receive free and compulsory education in settings that encourage enrolment and attendance and institute discipline humanely and fairly; develop the personality, talents and abilities of students to their fullest potential. They also espouse respect to children’s human rights and fundamental freedoms; respect and encourage the child’s own cultural identity, language and values, as well as the national culture and values of the country where the child is living. These principles also propose that CFSP program should prepare the child to live as a free, responsible individual who is respectful of other persons and the natural environment. Three other inputs shaped the early development of CFSP. The first was effective school research, which emphasized the importance of school factors for disadvantaged students. The second was the World Health Organization’s mental health promotion initiatives, which focus on the importance of connectedness, caring and access to support. The third was UNICEF’s interest in child, family and community-centered approaches to school improvement. UNICEF envisions and promotes CFSP models not as abstract concepts or a rigid blueprint but rather as ‘pathways towards quality’ in education that reflect three key, and inter-related, principles derived from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2001).

Kenya is a signatory to a number of conventions, declarations, accords, policies among others in education, including the convention to the rights of the child (1989) the world declaration on education for all (Jomtein, 1990) the Dakar accord and the Millennium development goals (2000) which emphasizes the right of every child to quality basic education. In achievement of education development goals, Kenya is bound to provide among other things, quality education according to millennium development goals (MDGs). Thus, the emergence of child friendly schools (CFSP) in Kenya which was catapulted by the forces of agenda 1 and 2 of the millennium development goals (MDGs) which emphasizes on the pro of quality basic education. Child friendly schools (CFSPs) initiative in Kenya is sponsored by UNICEF with the aim of not just providing children right to education but right to the “right” education. The concept of child friendly schools aims at encouraging child centered learning in addressing all facets of education including environment issues of equity and equality and wholesome development of the child. It addresses the child in a holistic manner. Just like other counties, Laikipia East Sub-County has faced various challenges in the implementation of free primary education. The completion rate is still very low and schools perform poorly in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). Laikipia East sub-county is largely rural and semi-arid with 90% of school going students residing in the rural area (CRECO, 2010). Majority of the population live below the poverty line hence posing a great challenge in various developmental agendas including the education sector. Despite of the government initiative to finance primary schools in the country, most families still struggle to facilitate the remaining school expenses (CRECO, 2010).

The purpose of a child friendly School Program (CFSP) model is to move schools and education systems progressively towards quality standards, addressing all elements that influence the wellbeing and rights of the child as a learner and the main beneficiary of teaching, while improving other school functions in the process.

CFSP models are concerned with harnessing the full involvement and support of all parties in a position to facilitate children's right to a quality education. These parties, or 'duty bearers', include parents, communities, teachers, school heads, education planners and civil society groups, as well as local and national governments and their external partners. Their involvement enables schools and education systems to provide the conditions and resources necessary for achieving the quality standards CFSP models envision.

Experience shows that a framework of rights-based, child-friendly schools can be a powerful tool for both helping to fulfill the rights of children and providing them an education of good quality (Bernard, 2003). At the national level, for ministries, development agencies, and civil society organizations, the framework can be used as a normative goal for policies and programs leading to child-friendly systems and environments, as a focus for collaborative programming leading to greater resource allocations for education, and as a component of staff training (Berry, 2002). At the community level, for school staff, parents, and other community members, the framework can serve as both a goal and a tool of quality improvement through localized self-assessment, planning, and management and as a means for mobilizing the community around education and child rights (Bernard, 2003).

Access to food, health care and education is recognized as a basic human right (Levitsky, 2005). This right is enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) through which all member states of the United Nations have committed themselves to attaining universal primary education and eradicating hunger. Despite the high profile given to education within this international agenda to eradicate poverty (UNICEF, 2006) reports that in the poorest countries as many as 29% of boys and 35% of girls are out of primary school and 70% of boys and 74% of girls are out of secondary school. These children are excluded and invisible (UNICEF, 2006).

Children's access to education and to learning is affected by the availability and quality of schooling and by family characteristics such as socio-economic status and parental attitudes to schooling (Levitsky, 2005). Access can also be influenced by child characteristics, such as aptitude, motivation and behavior, which can be negatively affected by poor health and nutritional status. Transmission of infectious agents, which can in turn have a direct influence on children's nutritional status, occurs through a number of routes, including the air, particularly with the spread of respiratory diseases; dirty food, water, and hands, which can cause diarrhea and other intestinal illnesses; skin and soil, the conduits of skin infections; and insects, which can spread viral and parasitic diseases (Scrimshaw, *et al.* 2008). A quality learning environment promotes high-quality teaching of relevant knowledge and skills through instruction that is adapted to meet students' needs and that encourages children's active engagement, rather than relying on traditional rote learning approaches (AIR, 2009).

Two main strategies have been used to improve the nutritional status, attendance rates and cognition of school age children. The provision of meals and snacks for eating in school and Food for Education (FFE) interventions in which food given at school may be taken home. These strategies are underpinned by hypothetical pathways that link the provision of school meals with improved education access and achievement, in two ways. Kochung E (2003) reviewed studies showing associations between current nutrition and school performance (enrollment, attendance, achievement, classroom behaviour, and school drop-out). They found a large number of studies that showed children who were stunted, anaemic, or iodine deficient had poorer school achievement levels and attendance than other children. Fewer studies had examined the experience of hunger, missing breakfast, or poor dietary intakes but most found associations with school performance. In a more recent review of the evidence Kochung E (2003) notes that further associations have been reported between experience of hunger and children psychosocial function or behaviour, academic attainment and attendance.

Rigorous short-term studies of missing breakfast have generally shown detrimental effects on children's cognition whereas studies of providing breakfast have shown benefits particularly in malnourished children. But classroom conditions may modify the effects of breakfast on behavior, (Rok, 2005). This report demonstrated that hunger during school may prevent children in developing countries from benefiting from education. Compared to school feeding programs, Food for Education (FFE) includes a broader range of interventions designed to improve enrolment, attendance, community-school linkages, and learning. The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) is the largest organizer of FFE throughout the world. In 2010

WFP provided food to schools in 70 countries, accounting for more than 15 million children. Once school feeding programs have been launched, complementary activities such as de-worming and HIV prevention education can piggy back these programs to maximize the benefits of food aid (World Food Program, 2010).

FFE involves the distribution of food to at-risk children (usually girls, orphans or other vulnerable children) who attend school regularly as a stimulus to increase participation, and to help offset some of the opportunity and cash costs of educating children. The food may be locally grown and purchased or contributed by aid donors. Where FFE also includes food-for-work, targeted to teachers or parents involved in activities to improve schooling outcomes, it can be used to boost efforts to improve both the demand (enrolment and attendance) for education and the supply (quality) of education, which are of course interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Levitsky, (2005) points out, however, that to be effective FFE interventions must reflect local education supply and demand realities. She argues that if such responses result in contextually appropriate designs then FFE can be a powerful tool for development but warns that the potential of FFE can only be realized if a full analysis of the supply and demand blockages is undertaken. For example, where educational quality is high but demand low FFE can best be used to improve recruitment, but where quality is low but demand high it needs to be used to modify what happens in the classroom.

The importance of school feeding programs is discussed by Levitsky (2005) who notes that the most robust finding from the evaluations of these programs is that they increase school attendance and asks why governments have not used this evidence to initiate more school feeding programs for the poor in order to increase the number of school going children and consequently improve child friendly school programs. Levitsky argues that there is a need for more research to make similar links between school feeding programs and their long-term financial and social benefits in order to build cogent economic and political arguments that will influence policy and funding decisions.

## Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Systems theory by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1960). Systems thinking has been more heavily influenced by the work of a biologist Ludwig Von who examined human biological systems within an ecological environment. Von Bertalanffy believed that all things, living and non-living, could be regarded as systems and that systems have properties that are capable of being studied (Anderson *et al.* 2009). A system is defined as “an organized whole made up of components that interact in a way distinct from their interaction with other entities and which endures over some period of time” (Anderson *et al.* 2009). Systems theory is a way of elaborating increasingly complex systems across a continuum that encompasses the person-in environment, (Anderson, *et al.* 2009). Systems theory also enables us to understand the components and dynamics of client systems in order to interpret problems and develop balanced intervention strategies, with the goal of enhancing the “goodness of fit” between individuals and their environments. This theory therefore justifies and explains the implementation of CFSP program in primary schools in that pupils’ behavior and output is directly influenced by the nature of school environment they live in. A friendlier school system in terms of safety, equity, fellowship and food provision translates to improved learning outcome

## METHODS

Both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were used in this study. The two methods are complementary, each contributing to a better understanding and interpretation of the data in general and to the ultimate findings. Descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting this study. Descriptive survey design was appropriate because it involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or questions concerning the current status of subjects of the study. It is used to test attitudes and opinions about events, individuals or procedure (Gay, 2003). Kothari (2007) notes that descriptive survey design is concerned with describing, recording, analyzing and reporting conditions that exist or existed. Patton, 2000) argues that descriptive methods are widely used to obtain data useful in evaluating present practices and in providing the basis for decision- making. The study targeted a total population of 6400 from public primary schools in Laikipia East Sub County of which a sample size of 361 participants was selected using multistage sampling techniques. Research instruments are a means by which primary data are collected (Patton, 2000). Data was collected by a questionnaire because a large sample of the participants were reached at a relatively low cost, offering an

efficient use of time, anonymity ( for participants), the possibility of high return rate and use of standard questions. This study targeted public primary schools because evidence has shown that most private schools have invested so much in programs that ensured child friendly environment.

## RESULTS

### The Influence of Equity on the Implementation of Child Friendly School Programme in Public Primary Schools

The study sought to determine the influence of equity on the implementation of child friendly school programme in public primary schools in Laikipia East Sub-County, laikipia County, Kenya. Responses are summarized in Table 1 and 2.

Key: SA=strongly agree (5), A= agree (4), (D= disagree (3), SD= strongly disagree (2) DK = Don't Know (0)

Table 1 Influence of equity on CFSP (Teachers Responses)

STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	DK
All pupils are treated equally in our school, without discrimination on basis of gender, tribe or colour.	20%	31%	23%	22%	4%
Best performing pupils recognized and fairly rewarded.	56.2%	19.8%	11 %	10%	3%
With government support our school through provides exercise and text books hence every student is able to access reading and writting materials.	3%	27%	12%	47.5%	10.5%
Punishment of indisciplined pupils is done fairly according to the rules and regulation	33%	27%	19%	21%	0%
All pupils sit for the same exams and marked fairly	48%	49%	0%	1%	2%

Source: Research Data (2022)

Table 2 Influence of equity on CFSP (Pupils responses)

STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	DK
All pupils are treated equally in our school, without discrimination on basis of gender, tribe or colour.	19%	29%	26%	12%	14%
Best performing pupils recognized and fairly rewarded.	36 %	25 %	21 %	10%	8%
With government support our school through provides exercise and text books hence every student is able to access reading and writting materials.	13%	17%	22%	37%	11%
Punishment of indisciplined pupils is done fairly according to the rules and regulation	30%	30%	17%	12%	11%
All pupils sit for the same exams and marked fairly	40%	43%	4%	3%	10%

Source: Research Data (2022)

Table 1 and 2 indicate that 51% of the teachers and 48% of the pupils respondents either strongly agreed or agreed to the fact that all pupils are treated equally in their school without discrimination on the basis of gender, tribe and colour. A significant majority (76%) of the teachers and 61% of the pupils also agreed that

best performing pupils are fairly rewarded and recognized. This fact was however disagreed by 20% and 31% of the remaining teachers and pupils respondents. The findings of the study are similar to the findings by WHO (2004). Great inequality was found in most schools on religion with some pupils found to suffer from diseases due to poor sanitation. Many schools serve communities that have a high prevalence of diseases related to inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene, and where child malnutrition and other underlying health problems are common (WHO, 2004).

The study also investigated whether the government provides exercise and text books to schools so that every student could access reading and writing materials. Some 58.5% of the teachers and 59 % of the pupils' respondents disagreed to this fact. This agrees with earlier findings by AIR, (2009) that quality learning environment promotes high-quality teaching of relevant knowledge and skills through instruction that is adapted to meet students' needs and that encourages children's active engagement, rather than relying on traditional rote learning approaches.

It was observed that 60% of both teachers and pupils agreed that punishment for indiscipline pupils is done fairly according to the rules and regulation. Finally a significant majority (97%) of the teachers and 83% of the pupils agreed with the item that all pupils sit for the same exams and marked fairly. Inequalities would negatively affect implementation of child friendly school program. As was found in Bernard (2003) experience is now showing that a framework of rights-based, child-friendly schools can be a powerful tool for both helping to fulfill the rights of children and providing them education of good quality.

Lockheed and Lewis (2007) further observed that when teachers encourage student to be actively engaged in the learning process and to do well, and when students are presented with interesting learning opportunities, they are more likely to stay in school and succeed academically. Children's active participation in learning reflects not only a child-centered approach to pedagogy but also the principle of democratic participation.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of equity on the implementation of child friendly school program in public primary schools in Laikipia East Sub-County, laikipia County, Kenya. Correlation analysis on the implementation of child friendly school program was strongly and positively correlated with equity hence equity contributed a significant variance in implementation. It was also found that majority of the participants agreed that all pupils are treated equally in their schools without discrimination on basis of gender, tribe or colour, best performing pupils are fairly rewarded and recognized. However, government had not provided exercise and text books to schools hence not every student accessed reading and writing materials. Punishment for indiscipline pupils was done fairly according to the rules and regulation and all pupils sat for the same exams and marking was fairly done.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study concluded that there is no equity in resources among most schools. Although most pupils are treated equally in their schools without discrimination on the basis of gender, tribe or colour, best performing pupils are fairly rewarded and recognised, there is lack of adequate exercise and text books to schools hence not every student had access to the reading and writing materials. It is also concluded that Punishment for indiscipline pupils is done fairly according to the rules and regulation and all pupils sit for the same exams which was being marked fairly. This contributed to the implementation of child friendly school programme.

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