


Reflections of Teachers in the FPE Era: Evidence From Six Urban Sites in Kenya

SAGE Open
January-March 2016: 1–8
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DOI: 10.1177/2158244016629189
sagepub.com


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Abstract

The free primary education policy has led to a significant increase in primary school enrollment in the country, from 8.6 million children in 2008 to 9.9 million in 2012. Increased enrollment complicated the work of teachers in the classrooms in the wake of FPE. This article seeks to document the challenges that teachers face in Kenyan classrooms across six urban sites in Kenya. Data come from the Education Research Program at the African Population and Health Research Center, collected in the months of January to March 2012. This article presents data from Focus Group Discussions, which were analyzed using thematic qualitative analysis. Results show that teachers across the six urban sites faced numerous challenges, with the most striking one being the process of evaluation by district quality assurance officers, who need to take into consideration the circumstances in which teachers teach in the schools across the country. Overall, the study called for the need to take the contexts of the respective schools into consideration even as they visit schools to ensure that teachers adhere to the quality assurance and standards procedures. This is because different schools have different teachers implementing the curricula.

Keywords

teaching, primary schools, Kenya, urban, policy implementation, free primary education

Introduction

Enrollment of children who had been out of school increased drastically with the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA; Government of Kenya, 2005; Ngware, Oketch, Ezech, & Mudege, 2009; Ohba, 2009; Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, & Ezech, 2010). The goal of many countries in SSA was to provide universal and free primary education (FPE) to a vast majority of the school-going children after the attainment of independence. In Kenya, there was increased enrollment into the primary school with the introduction of FPE from 8.6 million children in 2008 to 9.9 million in 2012 (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2015). Kenya is one of those countries in SSA that has an urgent need to achieve access to school since the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 (UNESCO, 2008). Research evidence shows that in the post-FPE period, concerns were raised about the quality of education in a vast majority of countries (Chimombo, 2009; Deininger, 2003; Oketch & Somerset, 2010; Somerset, 2009). In Kenya, Ngware, Oketch, Mutisya, and Abuya (2010) showed that the mean score on a math test was less than 50%, and some Grade 6 teachers scored as low as 17% in a test that was to appraise their knowledge in math. Research evidence suggests that many parents preferred to send their children to fee-charging

private schools in the slums because of the perception that the quality of education in the public schools was poor (Oketch, Mutisya, & Sagwe, 2012; Oketch & Somerset, 2010), that these private schools achieve results with relatively low fees (Tooley & Dixon, 2007).

Research evidence suggests that private schools in the slums, also referred to as the low-cost private schools, have increased in number within the urban informal settlements in SSA countries (Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezech, & Epari, 2008; Rose & Adelabu, 2007; Tooley & Dixon, 2005; Tooley, Dixon, & Stanfield, 2008). Studies done in the context of the informal settlements in India, Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya showed that in many instances these low-cost private schools performed better than government schools (Ngware, Abuya, Admassu, Mutisya, & Musyoka, 2013; Tooley & Dixon, 2007). Other scholars have argued that the reason for the rapid growth of the low-cost private schools have been the failure of the government-owned schools to accommodate

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all the students who needed to be in school (Oketch et al., 2008; Rose & Adelabu, 2007). The evidence that is presented in the foregoing paragraph does suggest that as much as quality was a determinant of parental choice for the schools that their children attended (Oketch et al., 2010; Oketch et al., 2012), the inadequacies of government schools were yet another reason for the choice of private schools (Ohba, 2013).

Teachers and Classroom Practices Under the FPE Policy

In the context of Kenya, and whether it is private or public schools, primary school teachers are very instrumental in the teaching and learning process (Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezech, & Epari, 2010). Therefore, teachers are the key in any stakeholder conversations that seek to improve the teaching and learning process in schools. This notwithstanding, teachers continue to be perceived as public servants that have low social status, in part, because of poor pay (Bennell, 2004), and because they find themselves involved in one of the professions without much clout (Wiener, 2010). In January 2003, just when the school term was starting, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government announced the introduction of FPE. Teachers had to rapidly implement this program in Kenya, giving the teachers very little time to internalize the policy and proceed with its implementation (Somerset, 2009). Research evidence suggests that the success and sustainability of any education program depends on how well the objectives of the program are implemented in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1990). In the context of FPE, teachers as key players in the teaching and learning process are central in the success of Kenya's FPE (Oketch et al., 2010). Wiener (2010) argues that little is known about the challenges any policy creates, how teachers respond to these challenges, and how this, in turn, affects students' abilities to learn. Moreover, available evidence suggests that as a result of the FPE policy, children who were out of school were enrolled in school (Ngware et al., 2009; Ohba, 2009; Oketch et al., 2010). While this increased significantly the primary school enrollment in the country, it put a strain on the physical facilities and the number of pupils per class rose from 40 to 60 (Majanga, Nasongo, & Sylvia, 2011; Ngware, Oketch, & Ezech, 2011). Available evidence suggests that the numbers entering the schools made it more difficult for teachers to organize, manage, and deliver lessons in the classroom (Alubisia, 2005), making teachers unable to pay attention to individual pupils (Wax, 2003).

The Need for the Paper

Recent research in the global context shows that there has been a lack of focus on teachers in the global discourse of the education goals (Global Campaign for Education [GCE], 2013), and that the number of teachers and the quality of

teachers still continue to constrain learning in many countries around the world. Research evidence shows that teachers are one of the most important school-based inputs in determining the learning outcomes of children, second only to the characteristics that children bring from their households (Hattie, 2008). Overall, the literature suggests that in some of these countries, and Kenya particularly, where education has expanded rapidly as a result of increased enrollment, teachers may not have the knowledge (Hungu & Thuku, 2010; Ngware et al., 2012; Oketch et al., 2010), either due to being exposed to poor quality education courses and/or due to lowered qualifications for entering teacher training (Shrestha, 2013). This limits teachers' ability to understand and be able to synthesize and break down their students' curriculum (Brown & Ajmal, 2011). When teachers are less confident about their teaching styles, it negatively impacts the children's ability to learn (Shrestha, 2013). For the current article, the researchers worked from the premise that teachers are very essential to the teaching and learning process (Hattie, 2008), and particularly for children in the marginalized communities (Cram, 2013; Shrestha, 2013). The authors are aware that a lot of challenges and issues that afflict teachers have been studied and generalized across similar contexts. The contribution of this study is to add to this discourse by re-examining the issues that may deter teachers from performing their tasks in the classrooms to allow a narration of their own perspectives as the key stakeholders in the teaching and learning process in the classrooms in Kenya. This study seeks to bring to the fore the narratives of primary school teachers in Kenya to contribute their voices to the finding of the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2013/2014) which emphasizes that teachers are part of the solution to the global learning crisis—mostly affecting children who are disadvantaged—living in vulnerable communities. The potential of teachers need to be harnessed to champion quality education, if the global learning crisis is to be averted. Considering this backdrop, we sought to answer the following question: What are the experiences and challenges of teachers teaching in the era of FPE in Kenya?

Method

Study Population

This article is based on the cross-sectional study conducted in major slums within six purposively selected towns across Kenya: Eldoret, Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi, Nakuru, and Nyeri. Research evidence generated by African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) shows that the informal settlements are characterized by poor social amenities including and not limited to poor quality housing, lack of basic infrastructure, insecurity, violence, poor health indicators, and high unemployment rates (APHRC, 2002). According to the report on Urban Poverty and Vulnerability

in Kenya, enrollment into primary schools is generally higher in rural areas. However, fewer pupils, both boys and girls, regularly attend school in the urban centers.

The Schools

This study was conducted across the public and private schools in the selected informal settlements in the respective six sites. In public schools, paying teachers' salaries and providing subsidies to schools such as textbooks and school feeding lies with the government. Schools receive support from the local authorities (city or county councils), which include supervision, pedagogical development, curriculum development, and in some instances the local authorities pay salaries for the non-teaching staff (Onsomu, Mungai, et al., 2004). Onsomu, Mungai, et al. (2004) posit that private schools are privately owned by trusts, private companies, entrepreneurs, NGOs, and churches. These schools' finances come from school fees payments and in some cases benefit from private sponsorship. They obtain their funding from various stakeholders. The type of private schools in this study is atypical of those schools that are poorly resourced and poorly funded.

Data Source, Qualitative Sampling, and Data Collection

Data collection was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI). To arrive at the selection of the participants for the focus group discussions (FGDs), we randomly selected one public and one private school in each of the six towns. In each of the schools (public and private schools), teachers who taught Grades 6 and 3 were invited to attend an FGD. On average, each FGD had nine teachers. Teachers were invited to a central location usually a school that was located in close proximity to the participating schools to attend the FGD. The school head teacher facilitated this process, by inviting the teachers and by giving consent for the venues in their schools to be used for FGDs—for those schools that were chosen to host the FGDs. We conducted seven FGDs with the teachers. Data presented in this article are specific to teachers and describe the perceptions and experiences with teachers with FPE. The number of teachers who participated in the seven FGDs was 63. These FGDs were tape recorded to ensure all the data were captured.

Data were collected using FGD guides (see Table 1). FGDs were conducted by a trained moderator and an assistant moderator between January and March, 2012. They were conducted within the school compound away from the classes and the administration block. The FGDs lasted a minimum of one to one and a half hours. All interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed and analyzed. The discussion began with a short conversation to establish rapport, and to have a formal introduction by all the participants, as well as the moderator and assistant moderator. The moderator led

Table 1. Focus Group Discussion Protocol Questions for Teachers.

Teachers' focus group discussion guide

1. Which type of school do you work in?
2. How many years have you taught in this school?
3. Please describe for me your experiences as a teacher teaching in this school.
 - a. Ensure that you probe on public school for public school teachers and private schools for private school teachers.
4. In your opinion, why do you think parents send their children to this school? [Probe for both private and public schools]
5. In your opinion, what are some of the barriers/challenges that children face that may make learning in the classroom difficult for them?
6. Describe some of home barriers that in your opinion affect the ability of children to learn.
7. Describe some of school-based barriers that affect the ability of children to learn.
8. In your opinion, what are the ways that these barriers specifically affect learning?
9. Explain what mechanisms you have used to ensure that children learn despite all the challenges.
10. What support mechanisms if any have you received to improve your classroom teaching?

the discussion based on a series of questions in the protocol, which were designed to obtain an account of teachers' experiences and perceptions with FPE.

Analytic Procedure

This study used NVivo software to facilitate storage and manipulation of the data. We generated codes from the research question, what are the experiences of teachers with FPE? We also reviewed the transcripts several times to identify any relevant codes that would emerge from the chunks of data, looking either for phrases that occurred frequently or having an eye for unique occurrences within the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first reading of transcripts was to familiarize the researchers with the responses and to gain insights and clues as to what was contained in the data in respect to the teachers' reflections. In the subsequent readings, we looked for ideas, phrases, concepts, and words that were most pronounced in the data; for example, overcrowding, parental support, teacher challenges, and student mobility. These words and phrases formed the root of the themes that emerged from the data. Subsequently, the initial codes allowed us to tentatively group the data, make descriptions, and extract quotes from the data chunks to support the emerging categories, based on the patterns and interpretations given to a code or sets of codes. With subsequent readings of the transcripts, we merged several codes which allowed data chunks to fit into categories that were already established by the initial coding, for example, "parents not helpful,"

“parents not instilling discipline,” “children attitude,” and “teachers’ burden,” into a thematic category “inadequate parental support.”

Results

This article sought to establish the challenges as reflected by teachers in the FPE era in six urban sites in Kenya. The key challenges fall into four main thematic areas: “today we have come tell us your challenges,” overcrowding, inadequate parental support, and mobility of students, from private school to public schools and back to private schools. In the following section, we will represent these main categories while expounding on the teachers’ narratives.

“Today We Have Come Tell Us Your Challenges”

The thematic category “today we have come tell us your challenges” shows the paradoxical situation in which teachers operate in as they attempt to influence the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Although the teachers’ expectation is that the standard and quality of education need to be tracked, they did not approve of the manner in which it was done. Teachers were of the opinion that quality assurance should be done with the teachers and the schools in mind. That it would be useful if the officers would work together with teachers, to identify the challenges they face and collectively work together to mitigate these challenges. On the contrary, this is not in any way close to how the quality assurance officers approached the quality checks of the curriculum in schools as observed by the teachers. The teachers were of the opinion that part of their greatest challenge comes from the very officers who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring the implementation of the curriculum—the FPE. Teachers explained that quality assurance officers do not focus on the challenges the teachers face. Rather, they come with a predetermined mind that they will find faults in the delivery of the curriculum. A respondent in a teacher’s FGD explained,

“... Why are you performing like this?” They cannot even have a dialogue with you. To sit down, and say, “Today we have come; tell us your challenges”... the way we are doing. “Tell us your challenges you face in this school”... So they always come; I will say, they come, and harass... when someone comes and starts to tell me so many things, while I know from where I have brought these children, and when I know, how much I have done for the children... Then someone comes to tell me I am not doing this, I am not doing this, yet he is just there for only thirty-five minutes to check the wrongs; you feel a lot of pain surely... (Teacher Respondent, Nyeri)

Teachers were of the opinion that if the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers took time to establish the ills affecting the curriculum, and the problems that teachers in various schools faced, it would be one step in the right direction.

Teachers would have been supported to undertake their teaching duties. On the one hand, teachers would get a chance to express themselves, and the officers would also get closer to getting to the root cause of the problems that teachers faced in the schools. By establishing the rapport between themselves and the teachers, the possibility of alleviating the challenges for teachers would have been half won. This is the way the teachers explained in regard to their expectation of how the Quality Assurance Officers should behave in ensuring that the standards of education are upheld. They felt that the teachers need dialogue, and the District Education Boards (DEB) needs to have the context of the school in mind, when quality assurance is being undertaken. The teachers explained,

... We would like... if there was such a forum; let them come and visit such schools like ours. Let them sit down with us and have dialogue, so that, they know the school back in their mind. So, that when the officer comes... he knows, I am going to assess teachers in a particular school that looks like this... So, that they appreciate also what we are doing. So that, they don’t kill our morale. (Teachers’ FGD, Nyeri)

Overcrowding

Teachers’ narratives also showed that 11 years since FPE was introduced, overcrowding still persists in Kenyan classrooms across the six urban sites. The teachers explained that because of the introduction of FPE, large numbers of children enrolled in schools and particularly the public schools. On a positive note, many children who had been out of school were enrolled in school. The result was overcrowding in the classes, as the numbers of places did not increase at the same rate as the number of children. With increased congestion in the classes, teachers could no longer have the classroom interaction with the children, as often as was necessary for a teaching and learning process. As a result, the teaching and learning process was compromised because teachers were not able to mark books as often as was required. This was particularly true if parents perceived that particular schools offered better quality teaching.

... A teacher handles about 90. Currently you will realize that in class 6, I am handling 91. So, the class is overpopulated to the extent that making a turn, you as a teacher, to write on the wall becomes a problem... Moving to each and every child becomes a very big problem. Marking books is a very big problem in a class. So, I think it is just a kind of a notion from the community... the fact that it’s within the periphery of the town, and getting the results... parents believe that it’s one of the good schools. So, you find out that it’s overwhelmed with the numbers. (Teachers’ FGD, Kisumu)

The teachers reiterated that overcrowding also led to poor performance and lack of meaningful learning because children were not comfortable in the overcrowded classrooms with strained facilities. When children are not comfortable,

their performance is compromised. Teachers from Eldoret had the following to say:

R5: I want to say that the time when the FPE started, I was teaching in Race Course Primary School, and I remember teaching children sitting on the ground (referring classroom floor). We had to ask them to come with sacks, because the desks were not enough. So, the facilities were strained and these children were not comfortable. It was hard; it was terrible though now at least I think it has improved but not very much. The facilities were very strained . . . If the child is not comfortable, I don't think they can do much because they can't even do well in exams . . . So, such were the challenges although now I think the situation may have improved. (Teachers FGD, Eldoret)

Inadequate Parental Support

Teachers were of the opinion that parents did not support their children and teachers. Parents were not keen on instilling discipline to their children at home—a key prerequisite to classroom instruction. In addition to teaching, teachers became the keepers of the children at school, but they still had to deal with issues of discipline that emanated from home. Teachers were concerned that parents were only keen to come to school to pay any school fees or levies that were due to the school, but they were not keen on interacting with the teachers and identify the problem areas of their children if any. Teachers in a FGD in Nairobi had the following to say:

Parents are not helpful in instilling discipline in their own children for effective learning . . . All the burden of these pupils, the behavior, whatever kind of attitudes, the children had, the teachers had to carry. The parents were only seen maybe to check results and maybe when they are called or to pay the school fees but to come and check on their children's behavior, they are not seen . . . (Teacher, FGD, Nairobi)

At another level, teachers expressed concern about the inability of parents to be concerned about their children's medical issues, to enable children to learn effectively. Failure by the parents to attend to their children's illnesses meant that teachers had to take the responsibility and attend to children when they are sick. In some instances, the teachers took it upon themselves to send the child home to be treated. The end result is that the child misses school, which in turn leads to poor performance, and finally the teachers get to be blamed for not performing well. Nyeri teachers attending the FGD explained,

The child starts off with a mild case of cold. Since there is no one who cares or who has the knowledge . . . the cold starts off slowly, it continues and when it becomes too bad, the child will not come to school . . . you send the child home to tell the parent that you stopped him from coming to school while sick . . . the child will be taken home, maybe he will not even be given proper treatment or be taken to the hospital . . . They will just

buy a few drugs from here. So, all those things put together, it can lead to the poor performance . . . (Teachers' FGD, Nyeri)

Teachers were of the opinion that inadequate parental support to the children was often misconstrued to mean that teachers were not doing their work well. This played itself out in two scenarios: Inadequate parental support resulted into absenteeism among pupils in a class. When pupils were absent, minimal learning took place, then the teachers were blamed. Moreover, when parents abdicated their roles to provide basic materials needed for school, which are not provided by the government under the FPE program, children may not effectively learn in their respective classes. This notwithstanding poor parents did not understand the idea of education being free. Teacher narratives reveal that whenever parents were asked to facilitate their children with items that would enable the children to be able to attend school, in their minds, parents thought that this should have been provided by the children's respective schools. In essence, lack of support by the parents impacted on the teachers negatively when schools opted to send children back home to bring some of these items. The end result was that children ended up missing school, and performance dropped, and the teacher became the culprits to be blamed.

But there was no plan . . . immediately . . . they said there is FPE . . . they didn't understand properly the word free . . . you find that even uniform, there is no proper uniform, even if you go to these classes, there is no proper uniform and if you send the children home, to go and get proper uniform, the child will stay for half a term . . . they are being taken to these private schools . . . but, they are not going to stay there for long because they cannot afford and they are back again . . . So, I am saying, something should be done because the teachers are getting a rough time and they are even being blamed. They are not teaching but don't know 10 kids who were admitted yesterday and the exams is today, they are doing the exam and they don't have any knowledge. Do you think they are going to pass? And finally, they will say that the teachers there are not doing their work. (Teachers' FGD, Nairobi)

The Mobility of Pupils Across Schools in the Era of FPE

Teachers explained in their narratives that the constant movement from school to school by pupils instigated by their parents was neither in the best interest of the pupils nor in the best interest of the teachers. The mobility of pupils into and out of public schools into the private schools negated the teachers' effort at ensuring that the children learn effectively. The pupils lost a lot of time in the process of moving from one school to another, and were always ill prepared to fit into the new schools that they eventually found themselves in. Teachers attending an FGD in Eldoret had the following to say:

R6: . . . You find that most pupils have gone to public schools for those parents who are unable to pay the school fees . . . Parents decide to bring the child back because of the disadvantages that they have seen in public. So, when they come to private again, it is very difficult to handle this child . . . the ones who they were with are way ahead of the child . . . (Teachers' FGD, Eldoret)

Discussion

The objective of this article was to bring to the fore the narratives of primary school teachers in six urban town in Kenya to document their challenges and experiences teaching in the era of FPE. This article highlights some of the challenges that teachers continue to experience 11 years after FPE was started, which include overcrowding of the classes, the inadequate parental support, the perception of the education officials toward the teachers, and the mobility of students across the different categories of schools. The most striking finding was what teachers expressed, "Today we have come tell us your challenges." This was a reflection of the dilemma and the paradoxes of teaching and learning. Despite the fact that teachers are key to the process of teaching and learning in the classroom, their work is far from being easy. The teacher narratives suggest that the education officials coming from the Ministry had particular expectations from the teachers in the primary schools. This is in line with requirements as stipulated in the quality assurance guidelines. However, from a policy perspective, this is how top down policy implementation strategies often constrain the translation of policy into practice. By teachers advocating for the Education Boards (DEB) to have the context of the school in mind, when in the process of ensuring quality education standards, they are asking for the officers to be cognizant of the local context in policy implementation (Darling-Hammond, 1990).

Teachers are putting a strong message that they are the most important assets to children where it matters most—that is in the classrooms. This is similar to the research evidence that shows that teachers are one of the most important school-based inputs in determining the learning outcomes of children, second only to the characteristics that children bring from their households (Ngware et al., 2013). Therefore, teachers input in the teaching and learning process is most important, and they must be allowed as the local agencies to " . . . adapt policy rather than adopting them . . . " (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 341). This is corroborated by the views of a senior official from the umbrella body that is in charge of primary school teachers, when he said, " . . . Let the teachers participate in the activities that influence his or her work, do not condemn the teachers and yet there are no alternatives given for them to be able to change their teaching practices . . . " (Personal communication, July 6, 2013).

In essence, the teachers' narratives reiterate the need to enable teachers and administrators to have opportunities to learn continuously and make decisions in the process of implementation of any policy, in this case the FPE. In that

way, the teachers would be able to share the lessons learnt with the education officials thereby enriching teaching experience. In so doing, such a teacher who finds himself in a classroom with 40 students will find ways of balancing all the students' needs, individual ability levels, in the process of classroom instruction (Abuya et al., 2015). Teacher narratives also focused on overcrowding as one of the most important challenges they faced in the classroom. According to the teachers, overcrowding minimized teacher–pupil interaction in the classroom, and compromised teaching and learning process as the teachers could not effectively attend to all the pupils in the classroom. This finding is similar to other studies that have found that teachers, faced, with overcrowding in their classrooms (Abuya et al., 2012), were unable to establish rapport with their students, leading to pupils opting to leave such schools. More so, overcrowding was one of those phenomena that made parents perceive that quality was compromised in the public schools, similar to the sentiments of Oketch et al. (2012) and Oketch and Somerset (2010). Similarly, Ngware et al. (2013) show that there exists huge disparities in average pupil teacher ratios (PTR) among public, private formal, and private low-cost schools; the PTR is 41, 15, and 21 in public, formal private, and low-cost schools, respectively. The key message is that overcrowding still persists in the post-FPE era, suggesting that space that was needed to absorb the school across the country remains limited. Therefore, overcrowding continues to be a key challenge not only to the parents but also to the teachers. Eventually, overcrowding compromises the teaching and learning process. Over the course of time, education scholars have debated the relationship between enrollment into the primary schools and the immediate overcrowding in post-FPE era (Oketch et al., 2010). The teachers' narratives reinforce the very fact that 11 years after the introduction of FPE, schools are overcrowded, making teachers in the schools unable to provide quality education.

Overcrowding of classrooms may have led to student mobility across schools in the slums. But we could also explain mobility by the perceived quality of education in the low-cost private schools (Oketch et al., 2012; Oketch & Somerset, 2010), that these private schools achieve results with relatively low fees (Tooley & Dixon, 2007). As expressed by teachers, pupil mobility could also be as a result of low-cost private schools having increased in number within the urban informal settlements in SSA countries. (Oketch et al., 2008; Rose & Adelabu, 2007; Tooley & Dixon, 2005).

We suppose that teachers as stakeholders in the teaching and learning process have added their voices to the global agenda in a small, yet in a unique way which cannot be taken for granted. The narratives underscore their importance as education inputs into the teaching and learning process. This study was *limited* in the sense that it covered the informal settlements in the major urban centers in the formerly seven provinces of Kenya (now county headquarters). This was a

cross-sectional study and therefore a one-point snapshot of the teachers' about their perceptions of the type of schools that they teach in. This study has a significant *policy implication* for the Ministry of Education working in liaison with the District Education boards in the respective counties. The Quality Assurance Officers need to take the contexts of the respective schools into consideration even as they proceed with their quality assurance and standards procedures. This is because different schools have different teachers implementing the curricula. It also calls for the Ministry of Education to reevaluate the need to have head teachers and School Management Committees to set guidelines in the respective schools upon which the teachers can be evaluated. This would take care of the curriculum coverage in the respective schools, while ensuring that teachers are involved in their own evaluation. In *conclusion*, the importance of teachers in the teaching and learning process cannot be overemphasized. Teachers are key in the process of the FPE implementation, and where the education matters most—in the classroom. Education administrators need to realize that teachers work almost exclusively in self-contained classrooms, exercising a high degree of discretion in the management of classroom activities. Therefore, direct administrative control over classroom behavior is not only extraordinary but can be difficult, very risky, and may not necessarily produce results. For effective teaching and learning, teachers need to be involved.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article: This work was made possible through funding from William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. However the views and interpretations presented in this paper are solely of the authors.

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