

## **Challenges in Provision of Free Primary Education in Public Primary Schools in Mombasa County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

The main focus of the study was to investigate the challenges of free primary education in public primary schools since its inception in 2003 in Kenya. The study was carried out in 9 public primary schools in Mombasa County, Coast province. The sample consisted of 9 head teachers, 36 teachers, and 18 pupils randomly selected. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study findings were that though teachers were highly qualified and experienced they were inadequate, and that teacher-pupil ratio, inadequate physical facilities and teacher professionalism all hindered provision of free primary education. The main challenges the school administration faced were high pupil enrolment, inadequate teachers and instructional materials.

**Keywords:** Free Primary Education, Teacher-Student Ratio, Physical Facilities, Teachers' Professionalism, Administrative Practices.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Provision of educational opportunities, especially of basic education has been an objective of investment of many countries all over the world. Basic education has been considered as a right which nations have an indisputable responsibility to guarantee their children (Abagi, 1998). The world conference on Education for All (EFA), held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 stipulated, among other goals, to ensure that by 2015, all children have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education (Sifuna, 1990).

Since independence, Kenya has placed a considerable importance in the role of education in promoting economic and social development after the achievement of independence (Otiende & Sifuna, 1994). In 2003, Kenya introduced free and compulsory primary education. Under the free primary education (FPE) program, the government and development partners meet the cost of basic instructional materials and general purpose expenses. However, school management committees still encounter serious constraints to improve the state of learning facilities due to lack of financing. This has led to complaints and doubts about the quality of education offered (UNESCO, 2005).

FPE has been accompanied by a high influx of pupils to the schools. In 2003 with the introduction of FPE, enrolment increased by 20% to 1.2 million pupils within one week of its introduction and the worst hit was Olympic primary school in Kibera, Nairobi which enrolled an additional 450 pupils in class one, two and three above its capacity of 1700 pupils (Marete, 2004). Despite investment in free primary education, commensurate effects on quality of education and performance in national examinations are yet to be noticed. Overloaded curricula, lack of teaching materials, poor teaching approaches, poor or lack of adequate supervision and low morale of teachers are among the factors cited for poor quality of education (Angelina, 2004).

### **Primary school administrative practices**

In Kenya, a number of studies have been done that associate proper and effective management of teachers with pupils' performance in national examinations. The reports, according to

Republic of Kenya (1985) and Bogonko (1990) as cited in Wachiye (1996), claim that pupils' academic performance is immensely influenced by the mode of teacher management by the various management authorities in Kenya.

At the institutional level, school management committees receive and account for all free primary education resources, develop and implement school plans, mobilize additional resources and implement government policies and guidelines (MOEST, 2005). The head teachers bring all the stakeholders on board to ensure that pupils excel in national examination in order to get the limited chances in secondary schools (Abagi, 1998). The quality of the leadership and management provided by the head teachers influences pupils' academic achievement. As enrolment increases, the head teachers are faced with serious dilemmas in boosting schools performance in the national examinations. The task of running a school requires the head teacher to have professional skills to be able to set achievable goals.

### **Teacher - student ratio in primary schools**

The introduction of free primary education led to a significant increase in enrolment which presented logistical challenges. A study by MOEST (2005) showed that in some districts, especially those in high potential and urban slums, teachers had to provide instruction to class sizes of 100 students and more while in other districts in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, class sizes could be less than 15 in a class. Empirical findings on the relationship between teacher-student ratio and teaching and learning have been found (Kibui, 1995).

Teachers working in situations where teacher-student ratio is high are expected to be overworked and lack enough time to prepare their work. The Koech commission (1999) recommended the teacher-pupil ratio in primary schools to be 1:40. Further recommendations indicated that when there are a few pupils in a class, multi-grade teaching was recommended while in cases where there are more than 40 pupils in a class, shift teaching should be applied (Huha, 2003).

### **Physical facilities in primary schools**

Physical facilities like classrooms, desks, chairs, libraries and toilets are an important factor in both attendance and achievement. This has led to school management committees to highly prioritize the improvement of primary school infrastructure (MOEST, 2005). With the significant increase in enrolment following the introduction of free primary education, additional pressure has been put on existing school facilities.

It is generally agreed that the facilities have a direct bearing on good performance among students in developing countries (Ayoo, 2000). Lack of adequate facilities and a shortage of permanent class rooms particularly in poor districts, poor state of existing school infrastructure due to lack of investment, poor construction standards and inadequate maintenance, limited number of primary schools serving poor population in isolated rural areas and the huge discrepancies in needs have been major talking points. Eshiwani (1983) pointed out that schools that had the best facilities like libraries, laboratories and playing fields were among the high achieving schools. Nguru (1986) observed that crowding of classes interferes with learners' sitting positions and make it difficult for children to write, while teachers find it difficult to move round to help needy children or mark students work while the lesson is going on.

### **Teachers' professionalism and work related behaviours**

The success of free primary education initiative and the achievement of Education for All largely depend on having well trained, adequate and highly motivated teaching staff. Teachers should be committed to continuous professional development and lifelong learning in order to face the challenge of new information technologies and emerging issues (MOEST, 2005).

High qualifications develop self-confidence in the teacher who in turn serves as a source of inspiration to the pupils (Huha, 2003). Teachers need to have mastery of the subject knowledge they teach and the professional skills to teach it to children of different ages, abilities, aptitudes and backgrounds. The quality of the teaching staff is often said to be the main determinant in achievement of the pupils. The teachers' attitude towards their work and pupils, their classroom management and their interaction with the pupils has a great impact on pupils' academic performance (Abagi & Odipo, 1997). According to Mulford and Silins (2003), the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom is the key to raising academic standards. Teachers' continuous reflection on their actions makes learning to improve.

### **Statement of the problem**

The Government of Kenya introduced free primary education in 2003 so as to enhance access to primary education. This resulted in a significant increase in enrolment in primary schools, rising from 5.9 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in 2003. The phenomenal increase has presented primary education some significant challenges particularly to the teachers. Challenges regarding teaching and learning have resulted in many schools recording poor Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) results. To-date, many pupils attend school without proper classrooms or adequate learning facilities such as water, desks, toilets, chalkboards and textbooks. This has compromised the quality of education. Against this background, this study sought to establish challenges to the provision of free primary education in public primary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study sought to:

- i. Find out the extent to which teacher-student ratio influences the provision of free primary education in public primary schools.
- ii. Find out challenges to school administrators as a result of free primary education in public primary schools.
- iii. Assess the contribution of physical facilities on provision of free primary education in public primary schools.
- iv. Determine the relationship between teachers' professionalism and the provision of free primary education in public primary schools.

### **Conceptual framework**

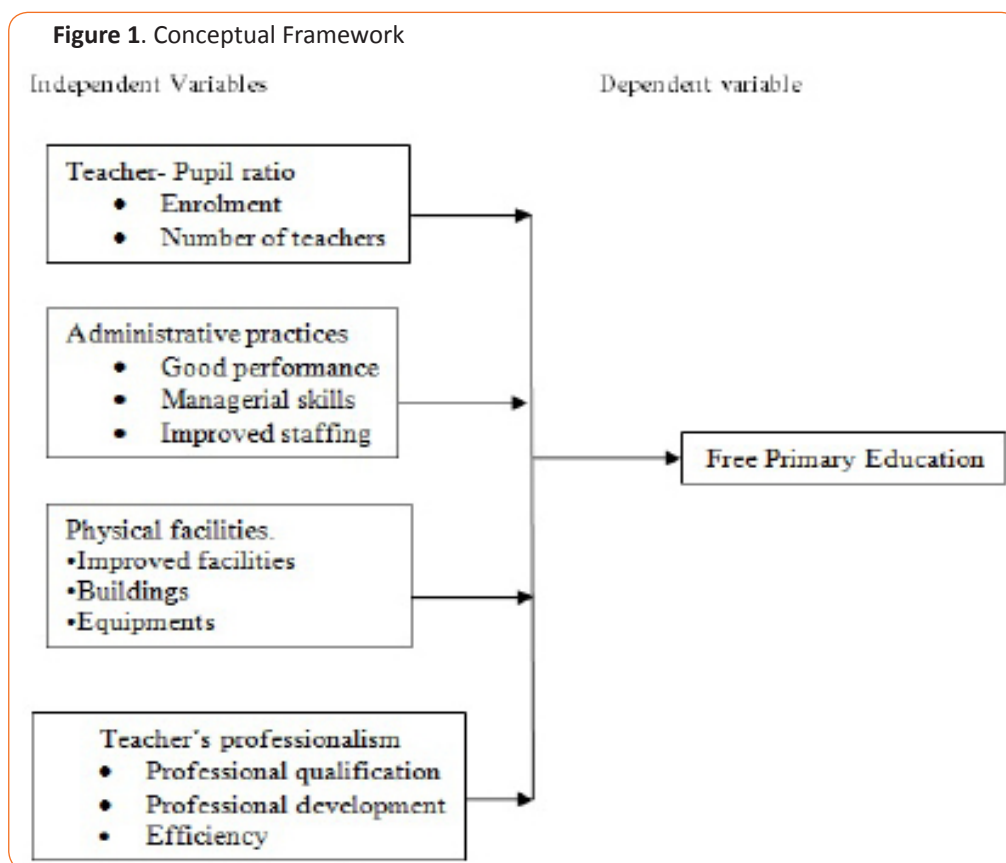
The framework of this study is based on the systems approach which relates the variables essential for the success of free primary education in Kenya. For the policy to succeed in producing quality education there is need to have adequate learning facilities, adequate qualified teaching staff and improved physical facilities. Continuous professional development in the form of training head teachers in management skills increases the effectiveness of teaching and learning and results in improved academic performance. The framework was presented in Figure 1.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

The study used the descriptive survey research design. The stratified sample consisted of 63 respondents; 9 head teachers, 36 class 8 subject teachers and 18 pupils from 9 primary schools

in Mombasa County, Kenya. Data was collected using questionnaires and an observation checklist. Demographic information was sought in both questionnaires. Additionally, the pupils' questionnaires sought information concerning the pupil's background, gender, age and the socio-economic status. They also sought information about the pupil's performance, the available resources to the pupils and their opinion on what they felt would positively influence their performance. Data was presented in tabular form.



### Findings of the study

**Demographic data of the respondents:** The study found out that almost two-thirds 22 (61.1%) of the teachers who participated in the study were females while 14 (38.9%) were males. Almost all 8 (88.9%) the head teachers were male with only one female. Nearly half 17 (47.2%) of the teachers were aged 40-49 years while 11 (30.6%) were in the age bracket 30-39 years. Equal proportions of 4 (11.1%) comprised of teachers in the 20-29 year and over 50 years age brackets respectively. Most 5 (55.6%) head teachers were in the 40-49 year age bracket while equal numbers of 2 (22.2%) each were in the 30-39 and 50 year and above age brackets.

It was found out that most classes had more than 50 pupils in class eight as expressed by 3 (33.3%) and 4 (44.4%) of the head teachers who said the classes had less than 40 girls and boys respectively. Almost half 4 (44.4%) of the head teachers said the classes had 41-50 girls compared to 1 (11.1%) who said they had 41-50 boys per class. This difference showed that the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) of the boys was slightly lower than for girls, this could be attributed to the efforts made towards girl child education neglecting the boy child. Only one school was reported to have 61-70 girls per class. More 2 (22.2%) head teachers said that they had 81-90 boys per class compared to 1 (11.1%) with 81-90 girls per class eight. The head teachers concurred that there were variations in the number of pupils per class from as low as 13 to as high as of 93 pupils per class.

On average, only 6 (16.7%) of the teachers reported that the classes had less than 40 students.

One quarter 9 (25.0%) expressed the view that their classes had an average of 41-50 pupils. It was also found out that 13 (36.1%) had 51-60 pupils per class, 4 (11.1%) had 61-70 pupils. Only one teacher said that the school had 81-90. The largest classes were said to have 91-100 pupils, representing 3 (8.3%) of the teachers. The implication is that introduction of the free primary education program led to increased enrolment creating pressure on the limited resources.

The head teachers accepted the view by the teachers that more schools had less than 40 pupils per class in class eight, as found out from 2 (22.2%), 3(33.3%) said that the average class size was 51-60. The low enrolment in most schools could be due to restrictions set by individual schools to enhance performance.

**Influence of enrolment on provision of free primary education:** Majority 31 (86.1%) of the teachers said that the pupil numbers had greatly affected performance. This opinion was rejected by 5 (13.9%) of the teachers. Majority 8 (88.9%) of the head teachers said that the number of pupils had increased compared to 1 (11.1%) who said the number had decreased. The results of the findings on the effect of the increased numbers of students based on teachers' views were presented in Table 1.

Findings from Table 1 indicate that the greatest challenge was the large numbers of pupils per class as reported by 7 (19.4%) teachers. It was found out from 6 (16.7%) of the head teachers that it was not easy to attend to the individual needs of every pupil due to overcrowding in classes. Recent studies by UWEZO, an international NGO in 150 districts in Kenya indicated that some schools still experience the challenge of large pupil to teacher ratios of up to 1:60. The study showed that Western Kenya was most affected (Muindi, 2011).

**Table 1:** Effect of student numbers

Challenges of student numbers	n	%
High enrolment	7	19.4
Not easy to meet individual needs	6	16.7
Inadequate instructional resources	3	8.3
Pupils disturb other and teachers	3	8.3
Lack of exposure	2	5.6
Very high pupil to teacher ration	2	5.6
Non-conducive learning environment	4	11.1
Others	9	25.0
Total	36	100.0

Similarly, four teachers said unfavourable learning environment interferes with the learning teaching process. Three (8.3%) of the teachers said crowding and sharing of desks and chairs leads to some pupils disturbing others while classes are in progress. Very high student teacher ratio and lack of exposure also affects learning and the overall student performance. This also posed a challenge to the ability of the teachers to reinforce discipline and maintain proper class management.

**Challenges that school administrators face as a result of free primary education:** The school administration plays a critical role in ensuring effective curriculum implementation. It was therefore necessary to seek an insight into the challenges these groups face in the implementation of the free primary education. These challenges were tabulated and presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Challenges that schools have faced since the implementation of FPE

Challenges faced by school administrators	n	%
High enrolment	16	44.4
High cost	4	11.1
Lack of trust between teachers and parents	4	11.1
Teacher shortage	3	8.3
Lack of teaching-learning materials	3	8.3
Discipline	2	5.6
Large classes	1	2.8
Frequent movement of students	1	2.8
Others	2	5.6
Total	36	100.0

Results from Table 2 show that 6 (66.7%) head teachers that schools had less than 20 teachers, 2 (22.2%) had 21-25 while only 1 (11.1%) had 26-30 teachers. This finding reveals the magnitude of the challenge facing the few available teachers in the primary schools.

Of the respondents interviewed, 16 (44.4%) noted that free primary education had led to very high pupil enrolment, which has led to other problems including heavy teaching loads, movement of students in and out of schools, teacher shortages and inadequate instructional materials as said by 3 (8.3%) of the teachers respectively. It was the opinion of 2 (5.6%) of the teacher respondents that student indiscipline was on the rise. It was ironical that despite implementation of free primary education, 4 (11.1%) of the teachers reported that the high cost of education was a challenge. Numerous challenges exist in schools and are a major source of conflict and mistrust between the teachers and the school management as reported by 4 (11.1%) of the teachers.

The greatest challenge that was cited by the teachers is teacher inadequacy as reported by 9 (25.0%). Another major challenge that schools face include inadequate instructional materials as reported by 6 (16.7%) of the teachers. Despite provision of free primary education funds, some schools still have shortages of classes, desks and chairs as was reported by the teachers. According to 5 (13.9%) teachers, high enrollment has led to congestion in classes, making learning difficult. At least 7 (19.4%) of the teachers said that pupils are unable to understand as teachers can't give individual attention to each pupil.

**Influence of physical facilities on provision of free primary education:** The study sought to find out whether availability of physical facilities contributed to provision of free primary education in schools. The facilities of interest were classrooms, library, staffrooms, toilets, desks and chairs. These are basic utilities in any learning environment. The findings on availability of teaching resources are as shown in Table 3.

Findings in Table 3 indicate that all the head teachers and teachers were in agreement that classrooms, libraries, desks, chairs, toilets and staffrooms were available. Majority 7 (77.8%) of the head teachers said that classrooms were available and adequate; an opinion that 26 (72.2%) of the teachers concurred with. Libraries were available but inadequate as reported by 6 (66.7%) of the head teachers and 16 (44.4%) of the teachers. The staffrooms were not adequate as said by 4 (44.4%) of the heads and 13 (36.1%) of the teachers. At least 2 (22.2%) and 13 (36.1%) of the head teachers and teachers respectively said that library services were not available. Just 1 (11.1%) of the head teachers and 7 (19.4%) of the teachers said that the library services were available and adequate.

**Table 3: Availability of learning teaching resources in schools**

Classrooms	Library				Staffroom							
	H/Ts		Teachers		H/Ts		Teacher		H/Ts		Teachers	
Availability	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Available and adequate	7	77.8	26	72.2	1	11.1	7	19.4	5	55.6	22	61.1
Available but inadequate	2	22.2	13	27.8	6	66.7	16	44.4	4	44.4	13	36.1
Unavailable	0	0	0	0	2	22	13	36.1	0	0	1	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>

**Availability of toilets, desks and chairs for students:** Table 4 presents findings on the availability and adequacy of the various physical resources in the respective schools as stated by the teachers and head teachers.

Table 4 shows that 2 (22.2%) of the head teachers accepted that chairs for the pupils were not available, with 4 (44.4%) saying that the chairs were adequate. This was supported by 14 (38.9%) of the teachers who noted that the chairs were adequate and available. At least 9 (25.0%) of the teacher said that chairs were inadequate, an opinion that even 2 (22.2%) of the head teachers agreed with. This finding was an indication that there is need for the government and school management committees to ensure that health and sanitary facilities are adequate in order to safeguard the pupils against poor sanitation related health problems.

**Table 4: Availability of toilets, desks and chairs for students**

	Toilets		Desks				Chairs					
	H/Ts		Teachers		H/Ts		Teachers		H/Ts		Teachers	
Availability	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Available and adequate	2	22.2	12	33.3	3	33.3	20	55.6	4	44.4	14	38.9
Available but inadequate	7	77.8	22	61.1	6	66.7	16	44.4	3	33.3	13	36.1
Unavailable	0	0	2	5.6	0	0	0	0	2	22.2	9	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The findings in Table 4 also show that 2 (5.6%) of the teachers were of the opinion that toilets were not available differing with that of the head teachers. This is an indication that despite the free primary education, some schools are still unable to access basic facilities necessary for effective learning and teaching to take place. Nine (25.0%) of the teachers reported that in some schools chairs were not available forcing students to share or sit on the floor, a situation that does not favour the learning teaching process.

**Condition of the classrooms after implementation of free primary education:** Findings in Table 5 show that class conditions had worsened as reported by 5 (55.6%) of the head teachers and 14 (38.9%) of the teachers. However, 3 (33.3%) of the head teachers agreed with 11 (30.6%) of the teachers that classroom conditions have remained the same, while at least 6 (16.7%) of the teachers and one head teacher confirmed that the condition was much better.

**Table 5:** Condition of the classrooms after implementation of FPE

<i>Condition of the classrooms after implementation of FPE</i>				
Condition of the classrooms	Head teachers		Teacher's	
	n	%	n	%
Same	3	33.3	11	30.6
Better	1	11.1	6	16.7
Worse	5	55.6	14	38.9

**Professional qualification of the teachers and head teachers:** The findings in Table 6 present the professional qualifications of the head teachers and teachers as expressed by the respondents. The findings in Table 6 indicate that an equal number of the head teachers had KCE (O-Level) and Bachelors degree qualifications respectively. Two had KACE (A-Level) academic qualification while one had a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). More 5 (55.6%) of the head teachers had the Approved Graduate Teacher qualification, with 2 (22.2%) in each case saying that they had diploma and university qualifications. Data fits in with Caldwell (2003) who suggested that successful transformation of schools calls for 'new professionalism' in which the teachers' work is increasingly research based, outcome oriented, data driven and team focused. This can only happen if the teachers are qualified and certified to be fit to teach. Findings also indicate that half 18 (50.0%) of the teachers had professional teacher qualifications of Primary Teacher 1 (P1); 7 (19.4%) were diploma holders while 6 (16.7%) had Approved Teacher (ATS) qualifications.

**Table 6:** Professional qualifications of the head teachers and teachers

Professional qualifications	Head teachers		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%
Primary Teacher 1 (P1)	0	0	18	50.0
Diploma	2	22.2	7	19.4
Approved Graduate Teacher	5	55.6	6	16.7
University Graduate Teacher	2	22.2	5	13.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Teaching experience of the teachers and head teachers:** The study findings showed that only 5 (13.9%) of the teachers had less than 5 years teaching experience. An almost equal distribution of teachers with 6 to 29 year teaching experience was noted as 10 (27.8%) were in the 6-12 year bracket, 9 (25.0%) in 13-19 year bracket and a slightly higher number, 12 (33.3%) in the 20-29 year teaching experience bracket. The head teachers were highly experienced teachers with over 6 years teaching experience. An equal proportion of 3 (33.3%) of the head teachers had 13-19 years and 20-29 years of teaching experience respectively. Only one teacher had 6-12 years experience, with 2 (22.2%) having 30 years and above teaching experience. These findings are represented in Table 7.

**Involvement of teachers in school management:** Results of teacher involvement in school management through planning of the institutional programs, academic performance, acquisition of instructional materials and student discipline are presented in Table 8.

Findings in Table 8 show that the teachers were actively involved in the day-to-day running



of the schools. Majority 29 (80.6%) of the teachers said teachers were involved in planning of institutional programs, 35 (97.2%) said that they were actively involved in pupils academic performance; 31 (81.6%) said that they participated in acquisition of instructional materials. Almost all 33 (91.7%) of the teachers said that the teachers were fully involved in student discipline.

**Table 7:** Teaching experience of the head teachers and teachers

Teaching experience	Head teacher		Teacher's	
	n	%	n	%
Less than 5 years	0	0	5	13.9
6-12 years	1	11.1	10	27.8
13-19 years	3	33.3	9	25.0
20-29 years	3	33.3	12	33.3
30 years and above	2	22.2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 8:** Involvement of teachers in school management

	Planning institutional programs		Academic performance		Acquisition of instructional materials		Student discipline	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Yes</b>	29	80.6	35	97.2	31	86.1	33	91.7
<b>No</b>	7	19.4	1	2.8	5	13.9	3	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to 7 (19.4%) of the respondents, teachers are not involved in planning of institutional programs. This contradiction indicates that some head teachers could be using leadership styles that do not give teachers an opportunity to participate in decision-making. Further, it was reported by 5 (13.9%) teachers that they are not involved in acquisition of instructional materials. One teacher reported that they were not involved in academic issues. In general, the study found out that the teachers were involved in the day-to-day running of the schools. This is a prerequisite to effective teaching and teamwork. However, schools in which teachers are not consulted or involved in decision-making experience more serious challenges that culminate into poor performance.

Participative leadership is the key to school performance, pupil achievement and academic excellence. Studies by Olembo, Karagu and Wanga (1992) indicated that to manage the massive numbers of pupils and teachers, it requires management skills, appropriate organization and adequate human and material resources. The Head teachers must bring all the stakeholders on board to ensure that pupils excel in national examination in order to get the limited chances in secondary schools (Abagi, 1998; MOEST, 2005).

**Report on staff meetings as reported by teachers:** The study found out from most of the teachers that staff meetings were often held in schools, but differed on the frequency. Table 9 shows the frequency of staff meetings as reported by the teachers.

**Table 9:** How often staff meetings are held

Frequency of staff meetings	n	%
Once per month	17	42.7
Once per term	14	38.9
Once per year	4	11.1
Not at all	1	2.8

Almost half 17 (47.2%) said that they held staff meetings once in a month. Except for one (2.8%) teacher who said they never held staff meetings, 14 (38.9%) said that meetings were held once per term. Staff meetings and other consultative meetings are paramount for effective and efficient running of the schools. The staff meetings are often held to lay down strategies that may help enhance pupil performance.

**Attendance of refresher courses:** In-service training is a very important practice for new and practicing teachers. Most of the teachers 23 (63.9%) said that they attended refresher courses; of these 13 (36.1%) had attended once, 4 (11.1%) twice and 6 (16.7%) had attended thrice. Some 3 (8.3%) said they had not attended any refresher. Refresher courses or in-service training is a necessary requirement for practicing teachers in order to update their knowledge and skills. Such courses help in stimulating interest and morale hence motivation towards effective implementation of the curriculum.

**Table 10:** Frequency of attending refresher courses

Attendance of refresher courses	n	%
Once	13	36.1
Twice	4	11.1
Thrice	6	16.7
Never attended	3	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Frequency of team teaching as expressed by the teachers:** The study also found out that team teaching was practised in most schools as reported by 14 (38.9%) who said they it was done more often, 13 (36.1%) said less often; although 9 (25.0%) of the teachers did not practice team teaching. Teachers should be committed to their work, seek continuous professional development and lifelong learning in order to face the challenge of new information technologies and emerging issues (MOEST, 2005). Huha (2003) agrees that teacher collaboration through team teaching, discussions and resource persons can help boost performance. The principle of team spirit envisages unity in achievement of desirable goals.

### Discussion of the findings

The study finding on the extent student-teacher ratio influences performance in public primary schools was in line with a study by MOEST in 2005 that showed some districts, especially those in high potential and urban slams, teachers had to provide education to class sizes of 100 students and more while in other districts in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, class sizes could be less than 15 in a class.

Assessment of the results of the study on the influence of physical resources on academic performance indicated that the condition, adequacy and availability of the resources had a direct effect on the performance. The findings were in line with Eshiwani (1983) who concurred with Awiti (2006) that schools endowed with adequate physical facilities perform better than those with inadequate and dilapidated physical facilities.

Through the free primary education program, more children and adults altogether have been able to access primary schools. Similarly, the population of school dropouts has drastically dropped. This is attested through a studies carried out in the country (MOEST, 2005).

Findings indicating that majority of the teachers were highly experienced and qualified corroborates Huha (2003) who asserted that teachers need a mastery of the subject matter, knowledge and professional skills to teach children of different ages, abilities, aptitudes and

backgrounds. This could be realized if teachers are professionally trained and qualified to teach. The study finding was an indicator that the available teaching force was compliant with the government regulation on minimum academic qualification of primary teachers. The fact that some of the teachers who participated in the study were degree holders showed that primary teachers were keen on improving their professional qualifications. This supports Mulford and Silins (2003) who noted that quality teaching and learning is the key to raising academic standards; and that teachers should continue to seek professional growth and development in order to acquire more knowledge, skills and develop positive attitudes that may help improve learning. This explains reasons why more primary school teachers are more qualified and or seeking higher academic and professional qualifications. These findings showed that teachers learn, enhance and use appropriate knowledge, skills and values directed at raising standards and the improvement of teaching and learning. It was further found out that most teachers had a wealth of experience and capacity to deal with the challenges of free primary education. It should be realized that introduction of free primary education in 2003 ushered in a wide range of changes in the Kenyan education system.

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