

Assessment of School Feeding Programme on Access to Primary Education in Turkana South Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

Despite the government's introduction of School Feeding Programme (SFP) in 1980 in its quest to provide basic education to all school going age children, the access and retention rates in schools in ASAL districts is still very low, compared to other settled communities in Kenya. It was due to this that the researcher set to assess the impact of School Feeding Programme on access to primary education in Turkana South district. The specific objectives of the study were: to establish whether SFP is being implemented in line with the ministry of education policy, find out the effectiveness of SFP in enhancing access to primary education in Turkana South, The study used descriptive survey design which is suitable for the study of behaviours, attitudes, values and characteristics. The target population was 1500 pupils as well as 320 teachers, 70 head teachers and education Officers. The total sample size for the selected study constituted five hundred and seventy respondents (570). Stratified random sampling was used to select 21 head teachers, Simple random sampling was used to select 450 standard six pupils, and 96 teachers while census sampling was used to select 3 zonal education officers. The study used questionnaire (administered to head teachers and assistant teachers), interview schedule (administered to education officers) and focus group discussion (administered to the pupils/learners). Validity of the instruments was determined by the researcher who formulated items in research instruments based on each objective. The instruments were piloted in five schools in the neighboring district that did not take part in the actual study and test re-test method was used to calculate the reliability. A reliability coefficient of 0.7 was attained hence was accepted as reliable. Data collected was analyzed descriptively using measures of central tendency. Results were then presented in tables, graphs and pie-charts. The study found out that SFP was being implemented according to the policy and stakeholder involvement was inadequate. It also found out that SFP greatly boosted access to schools as it was seen as the only major meal that most children ever had. The study also pointed out some challenges bedeviling the implementation of the programme such as inadequate supplies, poor infrastructure and insecurity which generally embed its full success. The findings of this study would be significant to education managers; policy makers and World Food Programme in addressing loopholes in SFP implementation thus improve its effectiveness as far as enhancement of access to primary education is concerned. The study recommended that stakeholders involved with SFP should be sensitized further on their roles, the MoEST to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the programme to ensure its smooth implementation, MoEST to constantly adjust SFP budgets to reflect termly enrolment fluctuations to avoid undersupply, and the government to beef up security in all areas of the district to enhance safety.

Key words: School feeding programme, Access

Introduction

Feeding programmes in schools have been in existence in developed countries since the beginning of this century. Initially, some programmes catered for orphan children and

others were introduced in schools to feed underprivileged children. Urbanization, industrialization, and increase in the number of working mothers' frequency brought longer school days which meant that children

did not receive “proper” meals at home and therefore needed to have it at school (Kanno, 1973). With time developing countries also began SFP.

Many African countries started school feeding programmes following studies done by World Health Organization (WHO) which revealed that malnutrition was rife on the continent and was affecting school age children. In Lesotho for example the WHO Nutritional Survey done in 1960 indicated about 72% of children were victims of malnutrition (Kanno, 1973). Against this background SFP was mounted as a way of reducing or even eliminating malnutrition among school children.

The government of Kenya introduced SFP with the hope of enhancing access to education in ASAL areas. Its impact is witnessed in many of the ASAL districts where SFP enhances enrolment and retention of pastoralist children especially during severe and prolonged droughts and that there would be negligible primary school attendance in many of the ASAL districts without the SFP (Sifuna 2005).

It is however unclear whether SFP has been effective enough in achieving this noble initiative by government. For incidence, Oxfam records quoted by the Diocese of Lodwar show that in spite of SFP, Turkana district registers one of the lowest gross enrollment, retention, and completion rates in the country (Diocese of Lodwar, 2007). In Turkana, where 94% of the people live in poverty (Oxfam, 2008), school enrolment is very low and even lower for children of nomadic pastoralist families. Oxfam reports show that while the national enrolment rate in 2010 was about 95%, for Turkana it was only 43% and less than 20% among the nomadic pastoralist communities (UNICEF, 2010).

Consequently, the School Feeding Programme has had a very negligible impact on school participation and retention in most of the ASAL districts in which enrolments hardly include more than 20% of school-age children (Ngome, 2002). This assertion

apparently portrays these government measures as bearing diminutive impact on the access and participation of pastoral communities in primary education.

Therefore, though government initiatives like PFE and SFP have been especially welcome, this region still lags behind in terms of overall rates of enrolment. For incidence, the 2009 census results show that Turkana south district had 43,617 boys and 36,335 girls of school going age (RoK, 2010). But statistics from the DEOs office indicated that the district had pupil enrolment of 26,996 in 2009. This means that a paltry 20.9% of school going age actually attends primary schooling while a high population of pupils is out of school. This trend raises concern as to whether the government interventions such as SFP, are yielding the desired outcomes or not. Serious questions hence remain unanswered: What is the problem with SFP? Is it the way it is being implemented? Is it the personnel charged with the implementation? It is against this background that the study assessed SFP on access to primary education in Turkana South district.

Objectives of the Study

- (i) Establish whether SFP is being implemented in line with the MoE policy
- (ii) Find out the effectiveness of SFP in enhancing access to primary education in Turkana South district

Research Design and Methodology

This study used descriptive survey. Guided by survey design, the study gathered facts, knowledge, opinions and judgment from teachers, head teachers, pupils and education officers, on how they view SFP in regard to access to primary education and what can be done to make it more effective. The instruments used for data collection

were: One questionnaire for both teachers and head teachers, one interview guide for educational officers and one focus group discussion (FGD) guide for pupils.

Results and Discussion

2. Implementation of SFP in line with MoE policy

Objective one sought to examine whether SFP was being implemented in line with MoE policy. To address this objective the researcher used the following three questions:

- 1) What is school feeding programme?
- 2) Does your school have the MoE SFP manual?

- 3) How do you rate the extent to which SFP manual is followed?

Awareness of School Feeding Programme

In order to gauge the effect of SFP on access it was necessary to find out whether the respondents could distinguish it from other food supplements given to schools. Hence all respondents were asked to show if they knew school feeding programme. Their responses are summarized in table 5.

Table 5: Awareness of the meaning of SFP

Statement	Head teachers	Teachers	Education officers	Pupils
Know the meaning of SFP	21(100)	90(93.4)	3(100)	150 (33)
Do not know the meaning of SFP	00(00)	6(6.2)	00(00)	300 (67)
Total	21	96	3	450

Results in the table above reveal that 100% of the head teachers were aware of the meaning of SFP, 93.4% of teachers were aware while 6.2% were not. Further, this level of awareness was broken down to 33% and 67% for pupils who were aware and those unaware respectively.

These results revealed that awareness of SFP is lowest among pupils and a few teachers in spite of the policy affecting them directly and having been in place for a long time. The implication is that probably, most of these are newly employed teachers who need to be inducted on the use of SFP since they are major players who could highly enhance its success. A further probe of the pupil respondents through their focus groups revealed that the high percentage of pupils' low awareness was partly due to sheer ignorance and that head teachers deliberately do not discuss it with them to avoid scrutiny. No wonder cases of 'artificial' shortages are incurred occasionally concurring with World

Food Programme (2005) survey which indicated that food losses are encountered through the conspiracy by the head teachers and officials during disbursement and Ahmed and Del Ninno (2002) study that identified such malpractices including the diversion of some of the food grains to the black market.

Availability of SFP manual in schools

The study was focused to find out whether schools had in place the Ministry of education SFP manual. Policies give direction to management and make the work of administrators easier and help minimize unprofessional behavior during administration of the programme to the pupils. To achieve this, both the teachers and the head teachers were used. The respondents were asked to state if their schools had the SFP manuals through Yes, No or

Don't know responses as summarized in the figure below.

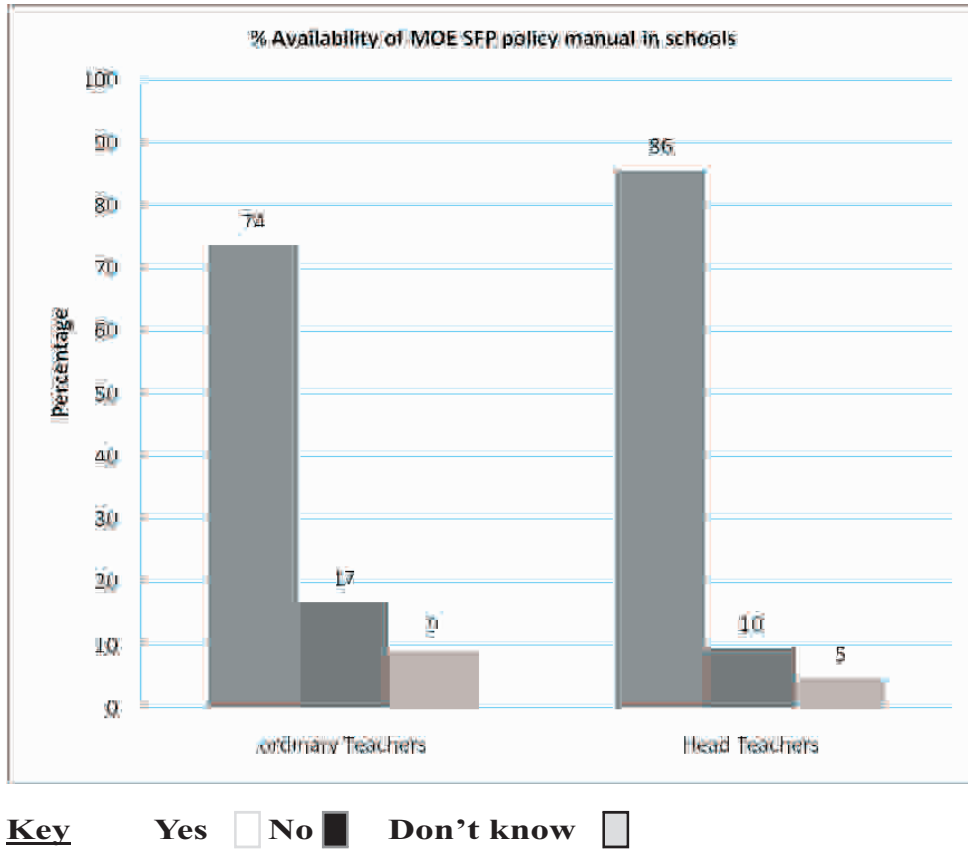


Figure 4: Availability of MOE SFP policy manual in schools

The results in figure 4 indicate that both teachers, and head teachers were of the same view that the MoEST policy manual was available in schools. This was rated yes at 74%, and 86% respectively. However, a significant proportion of respondents indicated that either the manuals are missing or they do not know if they are available or not. This is rated at 17% (teachers) and 10% (head teachers) for missing the manuals and 9% (teachers) and 5% (head teachers) for those who do not know.

This implies that most schools do have the SFP manuals in place and are probably followed in the overall implementation of the programme. Nevertheless, there is need for the ministry to re-look at the schools which do not have the manuals with view to equipping them since the guidelines therein

are critical in the overall success of the programme.

From the responses it emerged that though the MoEST was keen on implementing SFP as per the policy, there was still some gap in that a number of schools missed vital manuals yet they were supposed to follow the guidelines as stipulated in the manuals. This would greatly affect the effectiveness of the programme in terms of quantity of scales and units of measurements for food prescribed for pupils' consumption.

Extent of observation of the SFP manual

The study also sought to establish the extent to which the MoEST policy was being adhered to by the school in the

provision of school feeding as stipulated in the manual. To achieve this, the teachers and head teachers were asked to provide

statements according to their level of agreement in a linkert scale. The results are presented table 6 and 7 below.

Table 6: Frequency of teachers categorized responses to implementation of SFP in line with the MoEST policy

Statement	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	TOTAL
1. The school follows SFP manual	39	0	96	96
2. Teachers & SMC members are trained in management of SFP	38	0	58	96
3. Parents play critical role in SFP provision to pupils	96	0	0	96
4. Pupils get correct food rations as stipulated in the policy	77	0	19	96
5. SFP food is delivered to school in good time	38	0	58	96
6. SFP supplies are adequate to last a full term	96	0	0	96
7. SFP benefits only the pupils	38	0	38	96
TOTAL	422	0	20	672

Results in table 6 show that in total there were 422(62.3%) teachers' responses disagreeing to 250(37.2%) responses, agreeing that SFP

manual is followed adequately. However 20(2.9%) of teachers responses were undecided.

Table 7: Frequency of Head teachers categorized responses to implementation of SFP in line with the MoE policy

Statement	Disagree	Agree	TOTAL
1. The school follows SFP manual	15	6	96
2. Teachers & SMC members are trained in management of SFP	14	7	96
3. Parents play critical role in SFP provision to pupils	14	7	96
4. Pupils get correct food rations as stipulated in the policy	14	7	96
5. SFP food is delivered to school in good time	14	7	96
6. SFP supplies are adequate to last a full term	14	7	96
7. SFP benefits only the pupils	00	21	96
TOTAL	85	62	147

Results in table 7 indicated that 85(57.8%) head teacher respondents disagree while 62(42.2%) agree that SFP manual is followed adequately.

From the responses of both teachers and head teachers, it was apparent that that generally the SFP policy as stipulated in the manual is not adhered to as required. The data reveals that the most affected aspect of the policy that was not being adhered to adequately is the role played by parents with 96(100%) of the teachers and 14(66.6%) of head teachers' respondents disagreeing that parents play critical role in SFP provision. Another aspect

seen to be wanting is pupils not receiving the correct rations. This is rated at 80.2% of teachers' responses and 66.7% of head teachers respectively. Further, data indicated that both teachers and head teachers respondents were generally in agreement that SFP supplies were inadequate to last the entire term with 100% to 66.7% of the teacher and head teacher respondents respectively. Sampled responses from the focus group discussion by the pupils equally voiced the view that the food provided was inadequate and pupils are most times served on half ratios so as to as to last a

longer period of time. It was also confirmed that some parents do not meet their obligations in providing firewood and water forcing the school to send them home to fetch the items or come with parents who apparently are engaged in other “more important” chores of looking after their livestock.

Data collected further confirm that indeed the food provided is inadequate and does not last the entire term as the case should be. This inadequacy arises from the fact that disbursement is based on the figures collected from previous term with no room for increment along with enrolment. As a result, some schools close down before end of term for lack of food hence affecting access to education. This agrees with a world food programme report which indicated that there is undersupply due to pegging supply on data of school enrolments of previous terms without consideration of mid-term fluctuations that are typical of ASAL areas (WFP, 2010).

The inadequate participation by the parents was noted as a major challenge to the overall implementation of SFP. WFP (2012) study acknowledged that, despite the critical need for parental support in the education of children, such parental involvement is inadequate or at best lacking. This is in spite of the fact that the Government of Kenya has mandated that all primary schools create a SMC elected by parents. In effect, the SMC is the institution that helps set school policy (within the guidelines of the MoEST), assist the headmaster in the management of school affairs, promote the school through fund-raising, and encourage parents to enroll their children in school. A sub-committee of the SMC is charged with the management of the school meals programme, which entails the storage of food, the hiring of staff for food preparation and ancillary tasks, establishing the responsibilities of the parents with regard to the provision of water and firewood, and other necessary items. The study by Taylor (2011) reiterates further the parents role by concluding that sustaining the school feeding program cannot be achieved without proper government policies on partnerships and the

input of stakeholders in the whole process. This implies that the missing role of parents is detrimental in the sense that oversight, monitoring and evaluation is then compromised hence room is created for manipulation and abuse by heads.

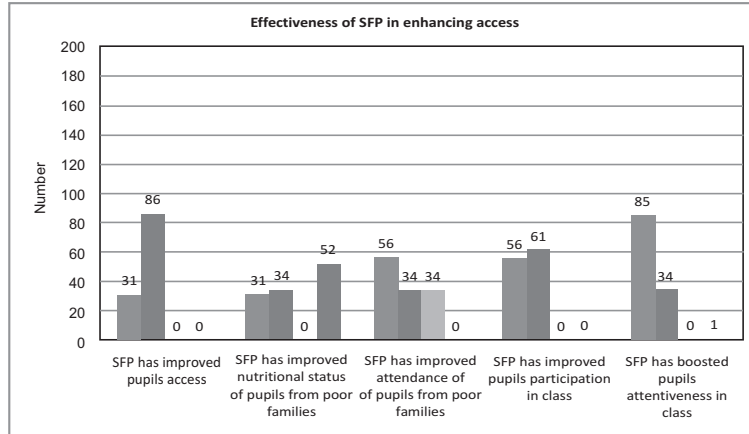
To supplement the information on the implementation of SFP in line with MoEST policy, respondents were asked to give their opinion on what aspects of SFP they felt were not adequately adhered to. The study considered this aspect as crucial because a policy may be in place, but it is not fully actualized hence ineffective. The following responses were noted.

- i) Cooks are not medically examined as required
- ii) Food is poorly handled as children lack water for washing hands both before and after the meals
- iii) Some food is used partly to pay the school workers hence creating the shortages as no additional food is supplied to compensate the shortfalls
- iv) Nutritional value is not followed as pupils are served with maize and peas daily
- v) Food storage is poor leading to losses and contamination
- vi) Measuring units/ scales are not checked regularly for standardization hence arbitrary allocation

From the responses above it was clear that there are lapses in the actual operationalization of school feeding programme. It was established that apparently the MoEST disburses food to schools but relaxes after disbursement without adequate monitoring to ensure adherence to the details of the policy as required. As a result the programme suffers manipulation by respective school administrations and other stakeholders tasked with ensuring its success. This calls for efficient monitoring by MoEST and WFP officials.

Furthermore, WFP (2012) report

revealed that adequate monitoring of the schools is challenged by the fact that many schools are very remote and of precarious access given the physical



Key Very effective Effective Hardly effective Not effective

Figure 5: Effectiveness of SFP in enhancing access

Data obtained from figure 4 above revealed a combination of responses on effectiveness of SFP from teachers, head teachers and education officers with the following ratings; 257(42.8%) being very effective to 256 (42.6%) being effective against 34 (5.7%) hardly effective to 53(8.8%) rating as not effective. This indicated that generally SFP has positively enhanced access to primary education. Respondents were

further asked to state any other valuable contribution of SFP on Pupils' access and common response across board was that SFP has improved academic performance in schools. This implies that in the opinion of the respondents SFP has been instrumental in boosting access to primary education in Turkana south district. This view is confirmed further by documentary evidence from the upward enrolment trends captured in the statistics from the District education office. See figure 6 below.

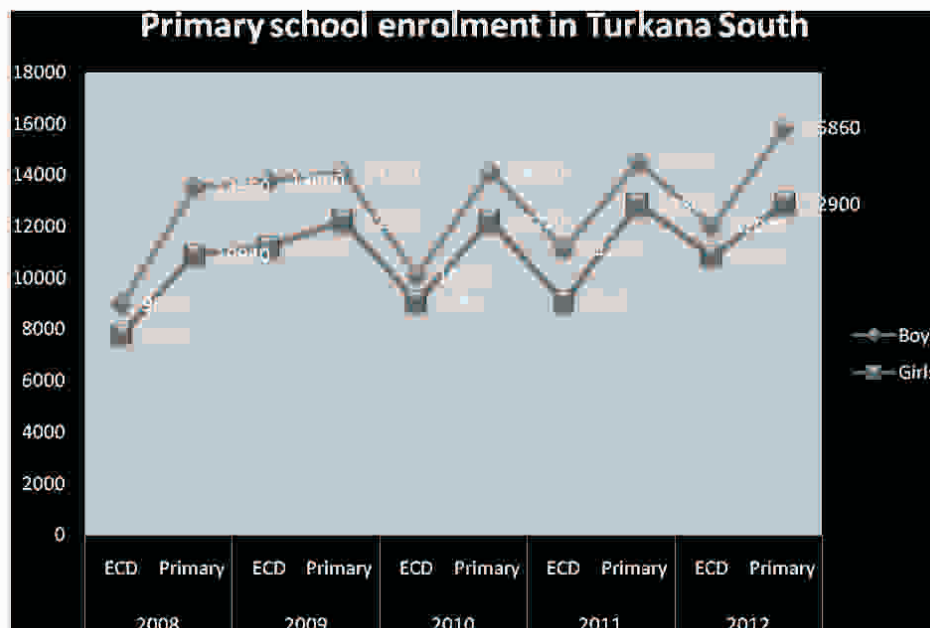


Fig 6: Primary school Enrolment in Turkana South

From figure 6, data indicate that enrolment trends have been steadily increasing overtime meaning that many children are accessing education as shown by the progressive enrolment over the years.

This finding that SFP enhances access to education concurs with many other studies done. For incidence Adongo (2012) asserts that school feeding program has a multiple benefits across nutritional, health, increased enrolment, retention of children at school, and overall performance in class. **Lawson (2012) asserted that** while the impact of these interventions on cognitive skills and abilities of students is still uncertain, there is strong evidence that school feeding programs positively affect school enrollment and attendance rates, especially for girls. He further contents that SFP increases school attendance by lowering the opportunity costs of attending school and providing additional incentives to engage in formal education. This leads to more time spent in school and more time spent towards learning.

Taylor (2011) on the hand affirmed that improved health and nutrition status among children contributes to high enrollments, better school attendance, lower dropout rates, improved performance in academic work and to social equity and economic growth, as healthy persons have the energy to work. School meals are a good way to channel vital nourishment to poor children, having a full stomach also helps students concentrate on their lessons. School is where they get their best meal of the day; by the time they get home their dinner will be little more than a few mouthfuls. This is in concurrence with Abdullahi (2009) study that found out that there is a relationship between the schools feeding Program with pupils' access to education in primary schools in ASAL areas.

Conclusions

Based on the study findings, the following conclusions are made about the effect of school feeding programme on access to primary education in Turkana south district. Firstly, schools had in place the MoEST School feeding manuals which were being followed in management of the programme. Secondly, though the manuals

were being used, some lapses were realized in the implementation that needs to be addressed through seminars and workshops particularly for the stakeholders charged with execution.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and the conclusions of the study:

- i. The study proposes that the Government of Kenya and the Ministry of Education should review the SFP so as to provide more than just one meal. This will attract many more children to school given severity of the hardships prevalent in ASAL areas.
- ii. Through seminars, workshops, and induction programmes, the educational officials need to develop in-service programmes for various stakeholders charged with the task of implementing SFP programmes. These should target the newly employed teachers, newly deployed head teachers, and parents through their respective SMC membership. The key theme of such induction should hinge on the role of stakeholders in the entire process of SFP implementation in schools
- iii. The MoE should strengthen monitoring and evaluation of SFP programmes to ensure that all aspects are dully followed. Emphasis to be put on the need to ensure medical check-up by all food handlers/cooks, regular inspection of measuring scales and units, provision of enough water among other salient aspects that guarantee successful SFP

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