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## Challenges Facing the Implementation of Government Policies on Sanitation in Primary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*The purpose of the study was to determine the challenges faced in the implementation of government policies on sanitation by primary schools in Nakuru County. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population was 1 sub-county education officer, 8 head teachers, 40 teachers, 16 BOM members 16 parents and 280 pupils. Questionnaires, interview schedules, Observation Checklist, Focused Group Discussion, and Document analysis were used as tools for data collection. The obtained data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data was presented in tables while Qualitative data was presented in thematic form. The findings were; first, schools had insufficient funds to help them in implementation of the sanitation policies. Second, drought affected water supply in schools and this is a great challenge because water is a very important aspect in sanitation. Third, schools received little or no support from other ministries which are supposed to help them in the implementation of sanitation policies. Finally, there is unequal distribution of resources, schools located in rural areas and slums had little or no access to basic resources like water needed to help them improve their sanitation situation. In conclusion, schools in rural areas experience more challenges in the implementation of government policies on sanitation as compared to their counterparts in the urban areas. The MOE, the county government of Nakuru and other ministries that are supposed to help schools implement sanitation policies should work hand in hand to ensure that all primary schools in Nakuru County have access to necessary resources to improve school sanitation.*

**Keywords:** Policies, sanitation, schools, county

### **1. Background**

It's every child's right to have access to proper sanitation (WHO, 2011). The 2030 agenda for sustainable development encompasses provision of proper sanitation to all including primary school children. Access to proper sanitation is essential for health development and growth of all children. Providing adequate levels sanitation in schools is of direct relevance to achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality (Grossi et al., n.d.). It is also supportive of other goals, especially those on major diseases and infant mortality. Considering that schools have high populations, the UN Secretary-General highlighted the importance of rapidly addressing and providing sanitation services to schools, therefore, guidelines and support to attain proper school sanitation are widely available. Many countries have ratified and adopted the international guidelines and developed their own national policies on schools' sanitation. However, many schools in developing and developed countries still lack adequate water and sanitation services, with associated potential detrimental effects on health and school attendance. Globally, the call to action for WASH campaign was formally launched in 2010 (Moojiman, 2009). This major initiative involved UNICEF and key partners who called on decision-makers to increase investments on school sanitation (United Nations Children's Fund, 2017). The ultimate goal of WASH was to attain proper sanitation in school, improve learners' health, foster learning and enable children to participate as agents of change within their homes and communities. Kenya has made significant milestones in improving school sanitation. The enactment of the Kenya School Health Policy and Guidelines in 2010 shows the government's commitment in improving the state of school sanitation (Mustafa et al., 2015). Furthermore, the Kenya Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene Policy (KESHP) was formulated in 2016 by the Ministry of Health through the Division of Environmental Health, collaborating with other Government Ministries, Departments, agencies and other national and international stakeholders. The KESHP was formulated in the wake of the Kenya 2010 constitution. It guarantees the provision of sanitation as a human right aspect. It also gives guidelines on school sanitation in Kenya. The policy was formulated in alignment with the new governance system introduced by the 2010 constitution. This was to allow all stakeholders at different governing levels to take part in implementing the policies. It was also formulated as a result of adopting the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development, whose agenda 6 is about providing sanitation and water

for all. Despite the policies being in place, there are incessant cases of water borne diseases reported by primary school pupils. Moreover, the emergence of COVID-19 has revealed that many schools in Kenya are yet to implement the policies successfully. This clearly indicates that as the schools strive to implement these policies, they encounter challenges that hinder them from successfully implementing the policies. This study purposed to identify the challenges that schools experienced in implementing the government policies on sanitation and give recommendations.

## 2. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population was 1 sub-county education officer, 8 head teachers, 40 teachers, 16 BOM members 16 parents and 280 pupils. Questionnaires, interview schedules, Observation Checklist, Focused Group Discussion, and Document analysis were used as tools for data collection. The obtained data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data was presented in tables and graphs while Qualitative data was presented in thematic form.

## 3. Discussion of Research Findings

### 3.1. Lack of Sufficient Funds

The main problem that schools' stakeholders faced in the implementation of school sanitation was the lack of sufficient funds. The education officer, head teachers and Board of Management members, univocally said that the funds that schools received were very little to include and cover sanitation projects. Most schools preferred using the funds received from the government to provide the school with teachers, classes and teaching and learning resources. Gacheiya & Mutua, (2009) found out that schools in Nakuru town prioritized other school needs over sanitation. Similarly, this study noted that school administrators presume that learning resources are more important than sanitation facilities in a school set-up. Consequently, sanitation is given very little emphasis.

Most of the head teachers and BOM members said that their schools choose to rely on other sources to fund school sanitation. Often, they receive support from NGOs, well-wishers/friends of the school and fundraising from parents. Most of these sources are unreliable. NGOs have limited resources and, on most occasions, they cannot support all schools. On the other hand, most parents in Naivasha sub-county do not have a stable and reliable source of income that can enable them to fundraise for school sanitation.

The researcher wanted to know if the funds for sanitation are properly used in the sampled schools. She asked the BOM members and H/T if the funds were being used well. All the BOM members and the H/T said the funds were being used well. However, a slightly higher percentage of teachers (19) 51% said that the funds are well used while (18) 49% said that the funds were not put to good use. This indicates that some teachers don't trust in how the school administrators use sanitation funds. Bishoge, (2021) stated in his study that mismanagement of funds and corruption are among other reasons that many cities in Africa have poor sanitation. NGOs, sponsors, well-wishers and parents sometimes feel reluctant to raise funds for school projects like sanitation because they are aware of corruption and misuse of funds by some school administrators. To earn their trust school administrators are supposed to have integrity and transparency. NGOs and volunteers will not invest their money in an institution with corruption case.

### 3.2. Drought

The researcher used head teachers interviews and teachers' and pupils' questionnaires to know if the supply of water in their schools was affected by drought. The researcher asked the teachers if the water supply in their school was affected by drought or not. Below is response given by the teachers?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Affected by drought	27	73
Not affected by drought	10	17
Totals	37	100

*Table 1: Teachers' Response on Whether Drought Affected Water Provision or Not  
Source: Teachers' Questionnaires (2021)*

From the table above, (27) 73% of teachers agreed that their schools were affected by drought. The rest (10) 17% indicated that the schools are not affected by droughts. To be sure of the given responses, the researcher asked the head teachers if their schools were affected by drought. According to four head teachers, their schools only had water when it rains but when it does not rain, they said that they experienced water challenges. Water is very important in attaining proper sanitation. It is needed for drinking, hand washing and cleaning of the toilets. This means that schools that experience water shortage may not successfully implement the sanitation policies. According to those head teachers, their schools' resorts to get water from other sources like water vendors or community boreholes during the dry seasons. Drinking water from unreliable sources is dangerous for pupils' consumption because such water can be poisoned or it can contain disease-causing organisms that may infect the whole school if used.

It is so ridiculous that up to today, some schools in Naivasha Sub- County have no reliable water sources when the region has a fresh water lake that can supply all schools and homesteads in the region with water. The county government of Nakuru in conjunction with the Naivasha sub-county should work hand in hand to ensure that all schools have a reliable water supply.

### 3.3. Uncooperative and Distractive Community Members

From the interviews with the head teachers, the researcher noted that some schools were dragged behind in achieving proper sanitation by their neighboring communities. One H/T said that the school community is so notorious at destroying sanitation facilities, especially during weekends when no one is in school. Yet another head teacher from a school in the urban area said that the community members who lived in storey buildings surrounding the schools threw litter inside school sanitation facilities. The head teacher also indicated that sometimes they go overboard and throw used baby diapers and used sanitary towels inside the school compound. One head teacher from a rural school lamented as shown below;

*'...they claim that the school is within their community so they can use it for community purposes. So, during the weekends, I would allow the youths to come and play football here. On Mondays when I come back, I return to such a mess. They have used the toilets haphazardly leaving them dirty, they have broken the doors on the school toilets, they have left the little water in the water tanks to flow freely, it's hectic, these people from the society give us very hard time especially concerning school sanitation... They graze their animals here, breaking off the school fence and if you say anything you are the bad one...'*

There is a huge challenge if schools do not receive support from the school community. This could lead to the destruction of everything that has been worked hard for. Often, such issues arise if the school community has personal issues with the school administration. In Naivasha sub-county most head teachers are victims of delocalization and they were yet to be accepted by the school community. This could explain the why most schools experience the destructive behaviors from the school communities. The Education officer said during the interview, that such problems can be solved by the head teachers creating a good relationship with the community members. He also suggested that education and sensitization can help the community members to stop destroying school facilities especially sanitation facilities.

Using questionnaires, the researcher asked pupils if their parents contributed to raising money for school sanitation. This was to measure parents' cooperativeness. According to the pupils, only (215), 79% of pupils agreed that their parents raised funds to support school sanitation while (67) 21% of pupils indicated that their parents don't raise money for school sanitation. This was also emulated in the interviews done by the Head Teachers and parents. One head teacher said that:

*'...Parents in this region are very difficult. I have a very hard time working with them because when you ask for money for anything, they don't give at all, it becomes like a tag of war, you rub shoulders with them, and they speak badly. They say that you just want money to eat their money because the government says that they should send learners to school without paying anything. But sometimes I feel like they get the tough headedness from the MOE because the MOE has repeatedly said that education is completely free and nobody is supposed to ask parents any money, but how do we run these projects when the funds given from the ministry are way too little to do anything? The MOE keeps contradicting itself because the given guidelines indicate that PTA should support a school in doing developmental projects especially those concerning construction....'*

The researcher also noted the mentioned attitude in one parent during the interview, who said;

*'...sometimes these schools exaggerate things. See, the government said that it has given money to schools to do these things concerning sanitation especially after corona came, why do they still ask for money. They just want to eat our money. I cannot contribute my money to go to someone else's stomach when I also need the same money...'*

Schools may fail to run smoothly if parents have such a negative attitude in supporting school projects. This study suggests that policymakers should avoid giving contradicting information and be very clear in their communication, to avoid such confusions.

### 3.4. Other Challenges

The researcher asked H/T during the interviews if there were other challenges that affected school sanitation apart from the ones they had mentioned. Two Head teachers said that the soil in the region is poor and cannot support the long existence of toilets. Once it rains, the toilets sink. According to the head teachers, most toilets sink the year they were constructed and this means that the schools are supposed to construct toilets yearly. Fortunately, the head teachers said that they had discovered a new technique of constructing in a way that would protect them from sinking. The technique involved putting culverts, like those used in road construction in the pits before covering them on top. One head teacher said that her school had already put up a set of toilets using the discovered technique and she expects the newly constructed toilets to last a little longer.

Due to this challenge, schools in this region receive special attention from the PHO who regularly visit other schools. Of the two headteachers, one head teacher said;

*'...when I call the Education office or the head of the Ministry of Public Health during rainy seasons, it's obvious, they know that I am calling to inform them that my toilets have sunk...'*

Unfortunately, these schools don't receive any extra kitty for funding the construction of new toilets. The head teachers reported during the interview that their main source of funding for the construction of new toilets was from well-wishers.

Amazingly, these schools seemed to have very new toilets and they were closer to meeting pupil toilet ratio than schools in other regions. This could be as a result of the regular construction of the toilets in the two schools. These schools also had more demolished toilets, unsealed holes and toilets that were not in use compared to other schools.

Two head teachers from schools in urban areas also expressed their concerns on the effects of the drainage system in Naivasha town. According to one Head Teacher, the drainage system passing near the school is open and carries

a lot of dirt. She added that the drainage system keeps blocking hence polluting the environment around the school with a very bad smell that affects everybody within the school. According to the H/T, the school has very little control because the drainage system passes outside the school. They depended on community youths who do *kazi kwa vijana projects* to clean up the drainage and lessen the smell.

Another H/T complained that the main drainage system of Naivasha passes through the school and it has three openings that are within the school. According to the H/T, sometimes the drainage system leaks causing bad smell and water contamination. The researcher asked the head teacher if the school had taken any action to solve the problem. According to the head teacher, all school stakeholders had gone to the streets to demonstrate the drainage system. She added that the county government had done nothing to rectify the situation even after the demonstrations.

Another head teacher also reported that her school experiences extreme flooding during rainy seasons. According to one H/T, she fears that the floods can lift the toilet waste and spread them within the school and outside the school.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, schools in Nakuru County are hindered from achieving proper sanitation by insufficient funds, drought, lack of support from policy makers and uncooperative and unsupportive members from the school community. Schools in rural areas seems to be more affected compared to their counterparts in the urban areas because they have significantly less access to improved sanitation and often have no utility to depend on to improve their state of sanitation. Worse, the local government is actively seeking to improve the situation of sanitation in schools in urban areas as it leaves behind the schools in rural areas.

#### 5. Recommendations

To address these challenges, the government of Kenya should increase funding to support implementation of school sanitation. The local government should ensure that all schools have access to water even in dry seasons; this can be achieved by drilling boreholes or pumping supplying treated water from Lake. Naivasha. The neighboring schools should be educated on the importance of school sanitation. They should also be encouraged to support the management of school sanitation. If all these efforts are not put in place, schools in Nakuru County will continue experiencing poor sanitation and illness among pupils will continue being experienced in public primary schools located in slums and rural areas.

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