

**Disparities in the System: The Effects of Free  
Primary Education (FPE) on the Quality of Education  
in Nairobi's Public Schools.**

**By Adrienne Chuck**

**SIT Kenya: Development, Health and Society  
Academic Directors: Odoch Pido and Jamal Omar  
Advisor: Dr. Mohamud Jama  
Spring 2009**

## **ABSTRACT**

In 2003, the Kenyan government implemented Free Primary Education on a nation-wide scale. Since then, the policy has received both support and disapproval from the public. Although many analyses have examined the impacts of FPE on a nation-wide or district scale, minimal research has been done on how the policy has affected schools with different social and political characteristics. This study aims to look at how FPE has impacted schools' learning environments and how those impacts influence the academic performance at these schools. From this information, the research determines whether or not the educational quality of these institutions has suffered under free education, and if the policy has increased, sustained, or alleviated educational disparities. By looking at the data gathered by a number of headteachers of Nairobi primary schools, this paper asserts that FPE has benefitted the most advantaged and disadvantaged schools, but puts strains on primaries in the middle-performing tier, especially those located in slums. These impacts have exacerbated disparities in the quality of education offered at various public primary institutions, which has repercussions on overall economic inequity and the reduction of poverty.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Abstract	1
Table of Contents	2
List of Charts	3
List of Acronyms	3
Acknowledgments	4
I. Introduction and Background	5
II. Statement of the Problem	11
III. Objectives	14
IV. Research Questions	16
V. Literature Review	17
VI. Methodology	24
VII. Assumptions	26
VIII. Limitations	26
IX. Analysis and Results	28
X. Conclusion and Recommendations	40
Appendix A: Map of Nairobi and Primary Schools	44
Appendix B: List of Interviews	45
Appendix C: Questionnaire for Headteachers	46
Appendix D: Letter of Verification for FPE Research	47
References and Bibliography	48

## **LIST OF CHARTS**

Chart 1: FPE Impact on Primary School Enrolment

Chart 2: Difference in Student-Teacher Ratios: 2002-2009

Chart 3: FPE Impact on KCPE Scores

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ASAL Arid and Semi-Arid Lands

CREATE Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity

EFA Education For All

EMIS Education on Management Information Systems

ERS Economic Recovery Strategy

FPE Free Primary Education

FTC Feed The Children

KNEC Kenya National Examination Council

MDGS Millennium Development Goals

MOE Ministry of Education

MOEST Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

MVC Most Vulnerable Children

NARC National Rainbow Coalition

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

SNC Special Needs Children

TSC Teacher Service Commission

UNESCO United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UPE Universal Primary Education

WFP World Food Program

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the Ministry of Education for being incredibly accessible and accommodating during my research period, and for giving me the background and advice I needed to fully understand and execute this project.

I would also like to acknowledge the Chief Advisor to Schools in the Nairobi City Education Office, Mrs. Jecinta Charles, without whom I could not have completed this project. Mrs. Charles spent every morning making personal calls to headteachers so that I would be able to interview them.

I cannot forget to recognize the nine primary headteachers who shaped the direction of this project. It was inspiring to meet with the extremely talented and dedicated individuals. They took time out of their day (and some, their holiday) to welcome me to their campuses, serve me chai, and to help me attain an accurate picture of the situation at their school. It was apparent how much each headteacher cared for their primary, and I would like to thank them not only for being extremely courteous to me, but also for working extremely hard to connect with their students and improve the quality of education.

Thank you to my advisor, Professor Jama, for agreeing to meet with me whenever I called, and for providing guidance and direction for my research when I needed assistance.

I want to also show gratitude to the numerous *matatu* conductors I came into contact with during my research (numbers 2, 102, 46, 111, 23, 32, 8, 58, 36, 118, 11) who showed me where to alight, exactly where to walk, and which numbers to transfer to when I had no idea where I was or where I was going.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my Significant other, who kept me mentally and emotionally stable during the entire ISP period. My project encountered roadblocks on more than one occasion, and if not for the constant support and consoling, I would not have made it this far.

## **I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **Background of FPE**

Universal education is one of the principal concerns of governments around the world. In 1948, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed that education, especially elementary education, was a fundamental human right. Every person has a claim to a basic level of knowledge regardless of his or her social, political, or economic status. This document established that equality was the highest priority in the provision of primary education, and set the stage for the rise of free universal education policies around the world in subsequent years. After decolonization occurred, education moved to the top of nations' post-independence development agendas, especially those belonging to the African continent. Head-of-states met in 1961 for the Conference of African States on the Development of Education, held in Addis Ababa, to discuss their priorities in the educational sector and how it can lead to the promotion of economic and social development in the continent.<sup>1</sup> Universal education is a key factor in development because it is linked to both higher per capita income and increased civic participation.<sup>2</sup> On a national scale, this means that more education leads to the generation of human capital and economic growth. Equality of access to education is important for countries around the world where development is still an ongoing process.

### **The Role of Free Education in Kenya**

Education has a long history of significance in Kenya. Before the nation achieved independence, access to education was extremely limited under colonial rule.<sup>3</sup> While primary education was a requirement for all British children, very few Kenyans had the

---

<sup>1</sup> Oketch, Moses O., and Caine M. Rolleston. Policies of Free Primary and Secondary Education in East Africa: A Review of the Literature. Ed. Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity. Research Monograph 10. CREATE. June 2007. UK Department for International Development. 8 May 2009 <[http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf\\_documents/PTA10.pdf](http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/PTA10.pdf)>. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Kenya. Ministry of Education. "Chapter 13: Primary School Enrolment and Achievement under FPE." Education Statistical Booklet 2003-2007. By Educational Management Information Systems. Nairobi. 2008. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Oketch, 4.

opportunity to go to school even if they desired it. The Kenyans that were able to receive a small portion of schooling was the Kikuyu tribe, due to their economic relationship to the white settlers.<sup>4</sup> When the nation achieved independence, the Kikuyus dominated many of the top political and economic posts because of their experience and knowledge. Therefore, education is now perceived as the sole channel in which an individual can attain a higher social-status.<sup>5</sup> Kenyan families prioritize sending their children to good schools. When the nation's first president Jomo Kenyatta encouraged self-help development in the form of the Harambee program, most of the projects Kenyans initiated were not health centers, cattle-dips or water systems, but primary and secondary schools.<sup>6</sup> For Kenyans, education is synonymous with success and achievement.

Although Free Primary Education did not actually materialize in Kenya until 2003, there have been many attempts to put the policy into motion. FPE was first mentioned in the KANU Manifesto of 1963, then in the Ominde Report of 1964, and again in the Sessional Paper no. 10 of 1965.<sup>7</sup> In all of these instances, universal primary education was tied to the concept of national progress. Not only was there already a strong demand on the part of the Kenyan people to advance in education, but there was also a government push for it. To promote countrywide progress, Kenyatta promised free education to disadvantaged peoples living in arid and semi-arid lands in 1971. He then tried to bring free education to all students from standards 1-4 and cap the cost of tuition for standards 5-7 at 60Ksch per annum in 1973. When 1 million additional schoolchildren flooded into the education system in 1974, primary schools were unable to handle the massive enrollment and imposed "building cost" levies to expand their facilities. In some cases, these school levies were even more expensive than

---

<sup>4</sup> Oketch.

<sup>5</sup> Hill, Martin. Self-Help in Education and Development: A Social-Anthropological Study in Kitui, Kenya. 1974. 38. Bureau of Educational Research, University of Nairobi.

<sup>6</sup> Hill.

<sup>7</sup> Ngugi, Margaret Njeri. "Impact Assessment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) Policy in Kenya Between the Years 1974-2000." MA thesis. U of Nairobi, 2003. Nairobi. 7.

what families paid in the first place.<sup>8</sup> The result of this was massive dropouts in the following years and the abolishment of the program.<sup>9</sup>

When President Daniel Arap Moi came to power, he tried to complete what the Kenyatta administration could not do. In 1978 Moi did away with all primary school fees. However, economic recessions in the 1970s and 1980s made it extremely difficult for the government to maintain its educational budget, let alone expand it.<sup>10</sup> In addition to this, the 1980s World Bank and IMF's SAP programs enforced cost-sharing policies at schools, making it unfavorable for Kenyan families.<sup>11</sup> The 1990s were marked with declining enrollment rates: 95% of Kenya's children were attending primary schools in 1991, which fell to 78% a decade later.<sup>12</sup> In 2002, completion rates for primary schools were less than 50%.<sup>13</sup> Before the FPE policy in 2003, primary schools were charging between \$20 and \$350 per child for a year of schooling, and a separate fee of around \$30 for a uniform and books.<sup>14</sup> Sending their children to primary schools was not an option for most poor Kenyans.

However, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) reintroduced FPE as one of its campaign promises in its 2002 Manifest.<sup>15</sup> The new government made a promise to Kenyans that it would be more fiscally responsible and would reallocate funds to support a greater budget for education. When the party was elected into government, it instituted nation-wide FPE. The policy aimed to do several things: improve participation, progression, and

---

<sup>8</sup> Oketch, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Kigotho, Wachira. "Kenya: History is Repeating Itself On Free Education" The East African Standard. 16 May 2007. <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200705160998.html>>

<sup>10</sup> Oketch, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Ford, Neil. "Overwhelming demand for free schooling. (Kenya)." African Business. (April 2003): 50. Academic OneFile. Gale. Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 18 Apr. 2009 <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.middlebury.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>.

<sup>12</sup> Ford.

<sup>13</sup> "Resources and infrastructure: Education." Economist Intelligence Unit: Country Profile: Kenya. Economist Intelligence. (2002). Academic OneFile. Gale. Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 18 Apr. 2009 <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.middlebury.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>.

<sup>14</sup> Wax, Emily. "Too many brains pack Kenya's free schools" Washington Post Foreign Service. 9 October 2003. 20 Apr 2009. <<http://www.laborrights.org/stop-child-labor/560>>

<sup>15</sup> Barasa, Lawrence. Personal Interview. 20 Apr. 2009.



completion rates, reduce the burden of cost of education on poor households in line with the ERS, implement the provision of the children's Act 2001 which required the state to provide FPE, and improve on learning achievement.<sup>16</sup> The FPE fund is divided into two parts: the Simba Account (which takes care of tuition costs like textbooks, exercise books, school supplies, and reference materials) and the Operations Account (which accounts of maintenance costs including staff wages, water bills, transportation, communication). The total amount provisioned to each primary school student is 1,020 Ksch per year. The MOE also has other accounts that focus specifically on disadvantaged students, like SNC, MVC, and ASAL.<sup>17</sup>

A few reasons accounted for why Kenya was now able to successfully implement FPE. First, Kenya was in a stronger economic position to support the program than it was before. It was no longer suffering from economic decline that crippled it in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>18</sup> The country also received a considerable amount of international support and financial aid that helped it put the program into place. The 2000 Education for All Campaign gathered African heads of state in Dakar, Senegal, to promote the importance of access to primary education for all. Free primary education is also a Millennium Development Goals. So when Kenya proposed the FPE program, the international community was more than willing to help. International donors include the World Bank (\$50mil), UNICEF (\$2.5 mil), the UK Department for International Development (\$21.1 mil), the World Food Programme (\$13.9 mil) and OPEC (\$9.9 mil).<sup>19</sup> The government had enough funding to get its program up and running.

---

<sup>16</sup> Barasa.

<sup>17</sup> Barasa.

<sup>18</sup> "Resources and infrastructure: Education."

<sup>19</sup> Mushtaq, Najum. "Kenya: Failing Grade For Primary Education?" Inter Press Service. 2008. 9 May 2009. <<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=44303>>

## Evaluating the Current FPE Policy

Since its implementation, FPE has received both praise and criticism. On the whole, the policy received widespread support because it alleviated financial concerns from parents and gave children who had no chance of going to school the opportunity to do so. Enrolment increased by 39% from 5.9 million in 2002 to 8.2 million in 2008, incorporating an additional 2.3 million Kenyans into the school system.<sup>20</sup> 47.5 billion Ksch has been distributed to 18,346 primary schools to date.<sup>21</sup> The government has not failed to provision its 1,020 Ksch to each student per year.<sup>22</sup> Primary school completion rates have increased from 62.8% in 2002 to 81.0% in 2007. Concurrently, transition rates from primary to secondary schools have also increased by just over 10%.<sup>23</sup> More girls have also been integrated into the system, nearly attaining gender parity at the national level.<sup>24</sup> Textbook ratios have also improved, providing every child with one textbook who previously could not afford it.

Despite its achievements, FPE also has many challenges. The policy was said to be more of a political strategy than a genuine development project. NARC promised the nation free primary education before consulting the Ministry of Education, District Education Officers, schools and teachers. Kenya's education system was caught completely off-guard and failed to enact adequate preparations for this new policy. The number of teachers or facilities were not expanded to accommodate new numbers, headteachers lacked any knowledge on financial management, communication between stakeholders was poor, funds were not always allocated on time, and there was a lack of accommodations for SNC and MNC to name a few issues. Additionally, more and more parents have taken the point of

---

<sup>20</sup> Barasa.

<sup>21</sup> Barasa.

<sup>22</sup> Barasa.

<sup>23</sup> Barasa.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations. United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Challenges of Implementing Free Primary Education in Kenya. Mar. 2005. UNESCO Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Capacity-Building of Human Resources. 8 May 2009 <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001516/151654eo.pdf>>.

view that quality of education has deteriorated as a result of FPE, leading to withdrawals from public schools and admissions into private schools.

In actuality, FPE has affected different actors in different ways. While some schools have really struggled, others have experienced huge improvements. This study will look at which schools in Nairobi have benefit or lost as a result of the policy.

### **The Setting of the Study**

Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, is located in the southwest portion of Kenya. Its name is derived from the Maasai phrase meaning “stream of cold water.” The city was founded in 1899 as a European settlement on the East African Railway line. It is the country’s largest and fastest growing city, populated by over 3 million inhabitants. The weather in Nairobi is relatively temperate due to its high elevation of 1,680m.<sup>25</sup> Surrounding the city center, which is characterized by high-rises and government buildings, is an array of suburbs and slums. Nairobi and its surrounding areas are home to a large number of public and private schools that accommodate its high population. These institutions vary in economics, performance, and stability. Thus, the education system in Nairobi provides a diverse sample of schools, making it an ideal location to conduct primary school research.

---

<sup>25</sup> "Nairobi History & Facts." [Nairobicity.com](http://www.nairobicity.com) 8 May 2009. <<http://www.nairobicity.com/history-facts.php>>

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although FPE has thoroughly increased access to primary education, there is no question that FPE has also brought public primary schools additional problems to deal with. While there are issues of implementation, administration, and access that are worthy of discussion, this study will look specifically at critical issues of FPE that affect quality of education. There were three core effects of FPE that evaluators of the policy claim have deeply impacted students' performance in schools.

### Enrolment

The increase in enrolment as a result of FPE had huge consequences for schools. From 2003 to 2008, the population of students attending primary school expanded an additional 2.3 million pupils, a national increase of 39%. This has put huge strains on the quality of education that schools are able to provide. First, the influx of students created a massive teacher shortage. While the number of students increased, the number of teachers did not. The government reports that there are simply no more teachers to provision.<sup>26</sup> As a result, teachers were overwhelmed and overworked. Classes were manageable at 40 or 50 students, but some classes have expanded to over 100 students.<sup>27</sup> Especially in the case of rural areas, class size has tripled due to the number of older students that started their education in 2003 who had missed the opportunity before.<sup>28</sup> At rural schools, teachers have even resorted to a multishifting structure because there are too many students to handle. Some students come in for morning classes and a different group comes in for afternoon ones. Teachers are less able to address the needs of individual students, discipline children, or

---

<sup>26</sup> Barasa.

<sup>27</sup> Banda, Tim Kamuzu. "Kenya; Kenya Makes Great Stride in Education." *The Nation*. (16 Jun 2007). 8 May 2009. < <http://allafrica.com/stories/200706160037.html> >

<sup>28</sup> Ford.

create opportunities for interactive learning. Teachers are also conducting classes in a lecture format, which does not hold the attention of young primary students.<sup>29</sup> Less homework is being assigned due to the inability of teachers to mark 100 papers every night. Quality of education suffered as teachers became overburdened and stopped being able to provide students with the attention they need.

Second, enrolment has also overloaded school facilities. Like with the number of teachers, the number of classrooms has not increased correspondingly to the increase in students. Classrooms that were built for 30 students to sit comfortably are now packed with three times the number of students. The shortage of desks forces two or sometimes three students to squeeze onto a small bench. The learning environment has become uncomfortable, encouraging students to become distracted. In some cases, the number of classrooms is not enough, so classes need to be held outside on the field while teachers conduct them with megaphones.<sup>30</sup> Offices and other schoolrooms have been converted to classrooms for the children. Facilities have been much more difficult to maintain and have led to deterioration.

### **Lack of restrictions in admissions**

When the government implemented FPE in 2003, it stated that all children had a right to a free education from standards 1 through 8. There were no guidelines or restrictions in admissions. As a result, many students with no previous educational background enrolled in schools. Headteachers had no record of how much school experience these children had and placed them in classes they did not belong in. A large number of older children who could not afford education before enrolled in standard 1 with children 8 years younger than them.<sup>31</sup> The

---

<sup>29</sup> Wax.

<sup>30</sup> Wax.

<sup>31</sup> Murphy, John. "Free education hits hurdles in Kenya" BBC News World Edition. 7 May 2003. 20 Apr 2009. <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/crossing\\_continents/3006889.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/crossing_continents/3006889.stm)>

MOE reports “the proportion of students who are at least one year older than the regular age in grade 8 has increased from 28% to 48% between 2002 and 2004 and there is at least anecdotal evidence from teachers that this leads to disciplinary problems.”<sup>32</sup> These students add to the difficulty of controlling classes and keeping them focused. Aside from older students, FPE has also seen an increase in MVC and SNC. However, not all schools have the facilities or qualified teachers to support this. Therefore, these students are incorporated into regular classes and teachers must assist them in the best way they can.

### **Increasing inequalities in the school system**

There is also a hypothesis that FPE has expanded differences in quality of education between schools. Most of the primaries that faced high increases in enrolment were also ones that did not have the infrastructure to support it.<sup>33</sup> Schools in wealthier areas that could have absorbed more students did not experience high enrolment because the children living in those surrounding areas could already afford an education. So poorer schools were faced with more challenges, leading to a larger quality disparity between schools.

---

<sup>32</sup> Kenya. Ministry of Education, 72.

<sup>33</sup> Mushtaq.

### III. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to examine how FPE has impacted the educational quality of a variety of public primary schools in Nairobi to see if the policy has benefited certain kinds of schools over others. The Kenyan government claims that FPE is a pro-poor policy,<sup>34</sup> however, the validity of this claim is uncertain. The objectives of this project are to:

- Document the impacts of FPE on students' learning environments.<sup>35</sup>
- Observe whether or not these impacts have affected students' academic performance.<sup>36</sup>
- Assess which schools have had a more difficult time maintaining their quality of education.<sup>37</sup>
- Determine if educational inequalities<sup>38</sup> between schools have been exacerbated, sustained, or relieved.

The study will occur in a two-part format. The report will first analyze whether the students' learning environments have improved, sustained, or declined since FPE. Their learning environments are defined by four main categories: the availability of effective teaching (student-teacher ratios, student-teacher attention, the percentage of qualified teachers, the method in which classes are conducted), learning resources (student-book ratios, exercise books, writing tools, blackboards and chalk, additional educational materials), an accommodating curriculum (number of elective classes, advanced or slower classes, remedial

---

<sup>34</sup> Kenya. Ministry of Education, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Learning environment is defined by the educational conditions a student experiences everyday while attending school.

<sup>36</sup> Academic performance is defined by a student's ability to do well in school, measured in terms of daily and annual achievement.

<sup>37</sup> Quality of education is defined by the corresponding relationship of students' learning environment to their academic performance.

<sup>38</sup> The educational inequalities this study focuses on are those between schools' learning environments and academic performances.

classes, multishift structures), and school facilities (number of classrooms, electricity, clean running water, lunch services).

In the second part of the study, information on students' academic performance will be gathered in order to determine whether or not FPE's impact on the learning environment has heavily influenced their ability to do well in school. Academic performance is defined primarily by KCPE scores, but also by daily performance (discipline, attention spans, participation, enthusiasm) and annual progress (dropout, repetition, completion and transition rates).

This study is significant because primary education is linked to development phenomena such as rising literacy rates, gender equality, and overall economic progress. If FPE is truly a pro-poor policy and educational inequalities have been alleviated as a result of its implementation, this means that more disadvantaged people have the opportunity to climb the social ladder, reducing social and economic inequalities too. However, if inequalities have been exacerbated, it could lead to rising poverty levels and more development concerns for the nation.



#### **IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study will analyze the data on students' learning environments and academic performance, and derive patterns and themes from the information. From these trends, the research will proceed to answer five important questions concerning FPE's impact on quality of education in public primary schools:

- Has the implementation of FPE greatly affected the learning circumstances for children at schools?
- Have these changes also impacted the academic performance of students as well?
- By looking at both the impacts of FPE on learning environments and academic performances, what can be concluded about the overall quality of education currently offered at public primary schools?
- Is there a tendency for FPE to benefit certain types of schools over others?
- Do these trends lead to the decrease, perpetuation, or exacerbation of educational inequalities?

By answering these questions, the researcher will be able to compare the effectiveness of FPE on a variety of public schools in Nairobi. From there, the researcher will determine if FPE benefits all schools, some schools, or no schools. These impacts can be assessed to show whether or not they distorted the performing capacity of schools, leading either to more equality or inequality in the public primary education system.

## V. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Kenya's Educational Inequalities

Karibu Kinyanjui discusses Kenya's educational inequalities in his paper, The Distribution of Educational Resources and Opportunities in Kenya. He states that the "desire for equal distribution of educational resources is not necessarily accompanied by the perception that an equally important change is needed in the quality and content of the education to be shared."<sup>39</sup> In his study he looks at disparities in the education systems between provinces and in the rural-urban divide. He outlines the problems of primary schools in rural areas, showing with data that fewer students attend school, start at a young age, can afford school fees, and qualify with KCPE scores to secondary schools than urban students. The same can be said looking at provinces with political connections; the central province benefits from the best education and the northeast province suffers from the worse. National educational aid is provisioned equally through central organizations like the Teachers Service Commission and the Kenya Schools Equipment Scheme, but wealthier areas like cities are able to subsidize their schools in addition to this. Rural areas still have to build school facilities, pay for transportation, and are more susceptible to environmental disasters. Kinyanjui shows that even if aid is distributed fairly, regional inequalities can still be exacerbated due to preexisting conditions.

Kinyanjui's analysis is important because his comparison of education systems between Kenyan provinces is also useful in comparing wealthier and poorer areas in the urban setting. Schools situated in slums have similar problems as schools situated in rural areas. They also do not have the resources to get an early start on education or afford school fees, resulting in poorer KCPE performance that does not qualify them for higher education.

---

<sup>39</sup> Kinyanjui, Karibu. The Distribution of Educational Resources and Opportunities in Kenya. Discussion Paper No. 208. U of Nairobi, 1974. Nairobi: Institute for Development Studies. 1.

People living in slums do not have political representation or connections to donors who might help their situation. Wealthier areas are also able to subsidize their education in addition to FPE, allowing for inequalities in the amount of learning resources provided to students. Kinyanjui's quote is particularly important to acknowledge, as Kenyans have accused the quality level of FPE to be so low that it renders equal access ineffectual. Even though this report was written thirty years before FPE was implemented, it provides insight for the issues schools face today.<sup>40</sup>

## **B. An Assessment on FPE Efforts in Kenya from 1974-2000**

The Kenyan government has made many attempts before 2003 to make access to the primary education system more equal. Margaret Njeri Ngugi assessed its efforts to implement FPE during the period between 1974-2000.<sup>41</sup> The history of FPE policies shows that they were only proposed during eras of political transference or instability to gain public support. As a result, these policies were laden with implementation issues and poor planning. Instead of achieving their goals of higher enrolment and completion rates, they promoted attrition in attendance and education quality. Enrolment and completion rates actually decreased and dropout rates increased. A lack of commitment and funding on the part of the government led to chaotic and sometimes non-existent implementation of FPE. 76% of people surveyed answered that FPE was completely ineffective. Not only did previous FPE policies have malignant effects on the quality of education, but they also failed to increase and sustain enrolment.

It is just as important to look at assessments of previous FPE policies as it is to look at those of the current. In Ngugi's report, many of the quality problems that surfaced as a result of FPE policies from 1974-2000 are the same problems schools face today. Class size

---

<sup>40</sup> Kinyanjui.

<sup>41</sup> Ngugi.

increased, facilities became congested, and teachers became overworked. Ngugi's report shows that the government is repeating history. Had it learned by example, it could have preempted some of these issues that affect the quality of education in schools today. On the other hand, the current government has been much more responsible ensuring that FPE stays in service. Also, approval of the 2003 program is much more widespread. The dropout and completion issues that characterized the 1980s and 1990s have been alleviated by FPE. Despite its many problems, the 2003 FPE policy has achieved much more than the previous ones. This sheds an optimistic light on the current program and suggests that it will be able to improve on itself over time.

### **C. Assessments on FPE in Kenya from 2003**

In March 2005, UNESCO filed a report that assessed the implementation of Kenya's FPE program in its first two years. UNESCO carried out this study with the assistance of MOEST and evaluated 162 Kenyan primary schools. Data was gathered in the form of questionnaires and observations from each of these 162 schools. UNESCO determined that FPE was a popular policy, reducing dropout rates and increasing the number and quality of learning materials provided to the children. In some ways, this had led to increased performance since students could take books home to do work and have reference materials readily available. It also means parents can become more involved in education without the pressure of school levies and by following their children's studies through textbooks. Yet, other factors have also led to the decline in performance, such as "lack of a motivated teaching force, large and congested classes, ban on extra tuition and indiscipline."<sup>42</sup> To address problems of quality, UNESCO suggests frequent assessments of education and the

---

<sup>42</sup> United Nations.

increase of number inspections by the MOE. The report also called for the hiring of more teachers and compensation to motivate them into producing good students.

The paper did a good job of compiling the different facets and opinions of FPE into a single document. It looked at both benefits and detriments of the policy, as well as varying perceptions of the program from different actors. It was also encouraging to see the list of recommendations for FPE reforms. However, the report was irresponsible in that it did not differentiate any variation in its results. It assessed 162 schools in Kenya, yet did not account for district or regional dissimilarities. It is not fair to say that FPE has affected every school in Kenya in the same manner; not every public primary institution has problems of overcrowding, enrolment of older students, or indiscipline. Thus, not all of UNESCO's recommendations apply to all schools, nor can it be said that those suggestions would be beneficial to them. Although this report is essential to the broader understanding of FPE and how various actors play into the program, in order for there to be effective policy recommendations for primary schools, a more local and in-depth approach is needed.<sup>43</sup>

MOE's Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) department also did an assessment of FPE's impact on quality of education. The department put together a booklet of Kenya's educational statistics from 2003-2007. It collected census data from the MOE, TSC and KNEC, and covered all facets of the education. In Chapter 13, EMIS focused on assessing the impacts of FPE on primary education enrolment and achievement. It responded to some of the most widespread criticisms of FPE—first, that increased enrolment resulted in poorer academic performance, and secondly, that poorer districts experienced the most severe challenges of FPE. Statistics prove that from 2003-2007, there was indeed an upward trend of enrolment. However, KCPE data over this same period illustrate that there has been no substantial drop in scores at the national level, putting into question the argument that FPE

---

<sup>43</sup> United Nations.

has deteriorated quality of education. District comparisons also support this by demonstrating the lack of direct correlation between high increases in enrolment and lower KCPE scores. On the other hand, statistics do show that growth in class size is directly related to a decline in scores. EMIS also responded to the second criticism with skepticism. Districts with higher percentages of individuals living in poverty also faced higher enrolment and a milder increase in class size. Conversely, statistics illustrated a minor incline of growth KCPE scores as poverty levels rise, implying that disadvantaged areas are (very) slowly catching up in educational standards. EMIS acknowledges that the difference was not statistically significant, but could also be used to contradict the second criticism. All in all, the report concludes that FPE has generally acted in favor of disadvantaged people because of the increase in access to education, the gradual catching up of these districts to the rest of the nation, and the lack of decline in overall KCPE scores.<sup>44</sup>

It would be more accurate to say that FPE has led to benefits for poorer districts than to claim it is a pro-poor policy. Even though data shows that KCPE scores have not declined while enrolment has gone up, this does not mean that inequalities have not been exacerbated by FPE. This phenomenon could be a result of richer schools performing better and poorer schools performing worse, which would balance out scores. The relationship of poverty to increased enrolment, poverty to growth in class size, and growth in class size to lower academic performance as shown by EMIS' data suggests that poor areas have suffered in quality of education under FPE. The rate in which poorer districts are 'catching up' with their growth in KCPE scores is almost negligible, and is not strong enough to refute the argument about inequality exacerbation. Although the data EMIS collected is both impressive and well put-together, data on a smaller level might have been more useful in drawing conclusions. As with the example of the lack of fluctuation in national KCPE scores, the information is too

---

<sup>44</sup> Kenya. Ministry of Education.

broad to form any real conclusions about what caused these statistics. EMIS' argument that FPE is a pro-poor policy might have been more effective had it compared schools within a district that differed in economic background rather than one district to another (as every district has areas of wealthy and poor people). While these statistics are useful to observe, their problem is that they don't take into consideration subtleties, alternative explanations, or external factors.

### **C. The Effect of FPE on Inequalities at the National Level**

The Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity put together a review of the literature on the policies of free primary and secondary education in East Africa. The monograph looked at the history of education policies in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, comparing their efforts to implement FPE since independence. In particular, the authors focused on the problem of access in primary education and whether or not policies broadened or restricted that access. The monograph discovered that the three main factors motivating the institution of an FPE policy were competitive politics, a high demand, and faith in education. Due to the high demand of free education, FPE was frequently used as a political incentive to keep or elect new leaders into power. A review of the literature on FPE reveals its issues in implementation and sustainability. Since NARC used the FPE policy to win over the supporters in 2003, it led to massive problems in Kenya's public primary education system. These have severely decreased the quality of education in primaries. The government is also currently heavily dependent on international donor funding, who CREATE predicts will stop donating to FPE in a few years. In terms of benefits, CREATE shows that access to primary education in Kenya has increased significantly (rising by 23%) and inequities have been eased. Removing school fees means that the most disadvantaged—the poor, girls, and orphans—now can attend school. Additionally, cost-related dropouts (the

main cause for dropouts) have disappeared, and the urban bias present in 1992 has also ceased to exist.<sup>45</sup>

While CREATE did not hold back on its criticisms of the implementation problems of FPE, it did an excellent job in establishing the connection between abolishing school fees to increasing equity in the school system. It shows through the example of the three countries that increased enrolment has led to deteriorating quality of education and increased demand for higher education. The report implies that quality of education needs to be sacrificed in order to incorporate disadvantaged peoples into the education system, but does not make any conclusions as to whether this access outweighs the decline in quality. In terms of a developmental point of view, this research is significant because if primary education expands the spectrum of available economic opportunities for individuals, then inequalities in wealth can slowly be alleviated. Perhaps this is not advantageous for Kenya on the global level, but on a national level, problems like poverty might improve over time.

---

<sup>45</sup> Oketch.



## **VI. METHODOLOGY**

This study's methodology aims at collecting data from a number of sources in order to gain a full picture of how FPE has affected quality of education. The research design consisted of a series of formal interviews and participant observations. The compilation of both quantitative and qualitative information was essential in trying to determine if there was a direct correlation between FPE and a school's learning environment, and the learning environments and academic performance. The quantitative data was meant to support qualitative findings. Thus, only numerical data from 2001 to 2009 was requested in order to analyze the impact of FPE in 2003 on various statistics.

Formal interviews were conducted with the director of FPE at the MOE, and at nine public primary schools within the Nairobi province. . No informal interviews were carried out due to the fact that all school and MOE visits required official authorization from the Director of City Education. Participant observation occurred on site before and after the formal interviews at schools by taking notice of the appearance of the school, the condition of its facilities, and the management of students in a classroom.

As the main source of information was derived from the Nairobi primary schools, interviews that were conducted at the MOE were done so in a more casual manner. Instead of providing the interviewee with a questionnaire, the format of the meeting was much more conversational. Quantitative data-- specifically KCPE scores, enrolment rates, completion rates, drop out rates, average class size, percentage of qualified teachers, amount of funding allocated per child, additional funding allocated towards other sectors-- was also requested from the MOE, which was provided in the form of a statistical booklet. Information provided by the MOE was used primarily to gain a deeper understanding of how the policy works and what changes occurred on the national level.

The nine Nairobi primary schools sampled were chosen with the assistance of the Chief Advisor to Schools of the Nairobi City Education Office. Her knowledge of the primary schools in Nairobi endowed her with the ability to select nine schools that were diverse in student body, establishment, economic status, donor support, and performance. All schools visited were coed, public, and not boarding schools. The schools selected were distributed over the three Nairobi divisions (Nairobi East, West and North). In Nairobi East, Buru Buru Primary School and Bidii Primary School were surveyed. In Nairobi West, Olympic Primary School, Aga Khan Primary School, Farasi Lane Primary School and Kinyanjui Primary School were surveyed. In Nairobi North, Daniel Comboni and Nduru Runo Primary School were surveyed.

At each of these schools, meetings with headteachers were arranged ahead of time with the assistance of the Chief Advisor to Schools. An official letter from the Office of City Education was also presented upon arrival, which validated the visit. Interviews were only conducted with headteachers due to the fact that schools were on Easter holiday and most of the staff and students were not present. However, headteachers were the best individuals to talk to because of their responsibilities in school administration, financial management, and classroom management. At each of the interviews, a standard questionnaire was adhered to, but the interviewer also allowed the conversation to follow new directions as well. After the questionnaire was finished, the researcher requested enrolment rates and KCPE scores from 2001-2009

All information collected from the MOE and the nine primary schools aimed at addressing the research questions of this study. By surveying a diverse selection of public primary schools in Nairobi, the researcher was able to compile all the data to review trends in the education system in order to answer the questions and make conclusions of how FPE has impacted educational quality.

## **VII. ASSUMPTIONS**

Several assumptions were made in the execution of this project:

- The learning environment is a key factor in influencing academic performance.
- FPE aims to reduce educational inequalities by providing more access to the primary education system.
- Access to education leads to development, and equality in access to education leads to the alleviation of economic disparities.

## **VIII. LIMITATIONS**

There were several limitations in the execution of this project that may have prevented it from providing a deeper analysis of the situation on the ground. The greatest limitation was that this study was conducted in April, when all primary schools were on Easter break. Avoiding the holiday was impossible; the research period began when students were already on holiday and only overlapped one week when students started their new term. Thus, it was difficult to organize meetings with headteachers. Most of them were either at home on holiday or attending required educational workshops. While the selection of schools surveyed was diverse and sufficient for answering the research questions, the assortment of primaries the researcher was able to choose from was greatly reduced due to the holiday.

The holiday also put other restrictions on the research. The initial design of this project was to survey a variety of actors affected by FPE. In addition to headteachers, teachers, parents, and even students were going to be interviewed to provide the study with a complete range of perspectives. Headteachers were the best respondents to survey because of their comprehensive knowledge of the primaries, but it would have also been helpful to gain a

first-hand account from teachers, students, and parents of the difficulties they faced, and their opinions on whether or not quality of education has suffered under FPE.

The fact that classes were not in session also meant that participant observation was not as possible. The researcher was able to observe the condition of school facilities, but class visits were only made at three schools due to the time constraints. The inability to personally observe the class situation put a lot of weight on the responses of headteachers.

Time also acted as a limitation in this project. If a longer amount of time had been allotted, not only would it have been possible to visit schools in session, but also to visit a greater number of schools. What has been produced in this study is only part of the picture; it would have a more complete assessment of FPE had the study surveyed a larger number of schools in Nairobi to see if the policy had affected other kinds of schools in different ways. Time constraints also made it impossible to do a district or rural-urban comparison of schools, which also would have added perspective to the study.

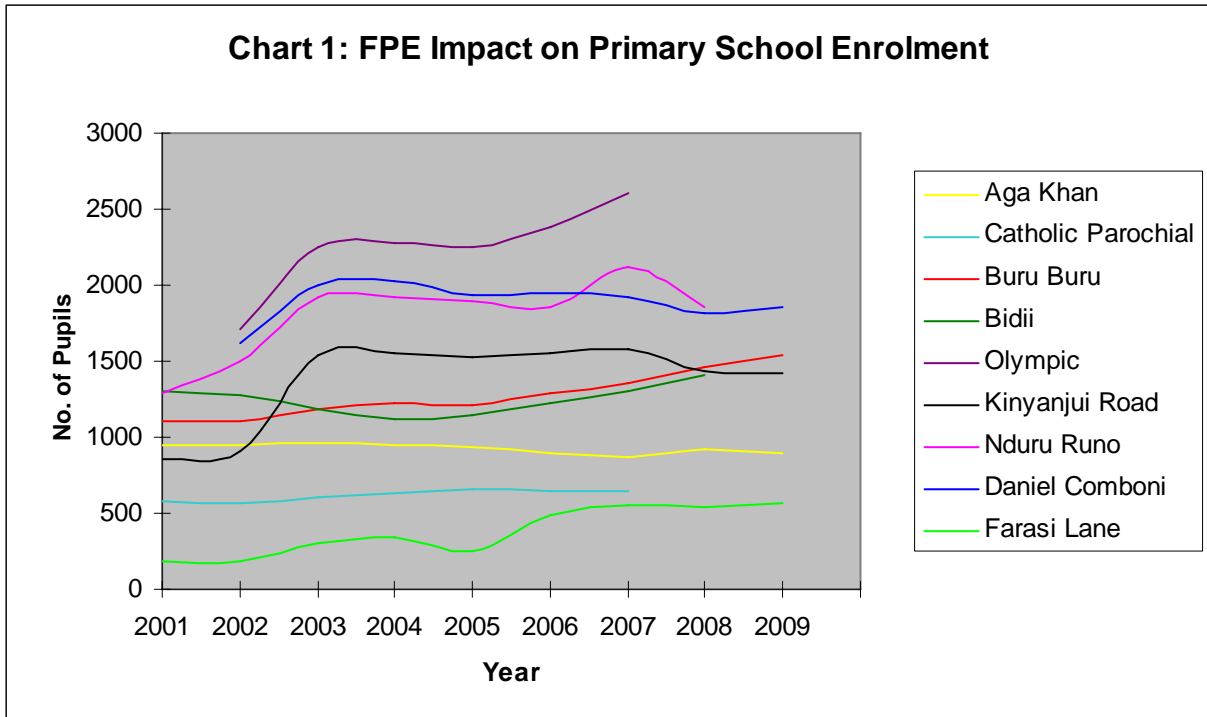
Transportation acted as a deterrence in this project. Due to the fact that the researcher had no personal transportation, it was difficult commuting from school to school on *matatus*, especially having no prior knowledge of the area or where these institutions were located. As a result, some schools were crossed off of the list because they were too difficult to arrive at. The choice of schools partly depended on how easy it was to locate the school from a *matatu* route or a main road.

Finally, obtaining quantitative records from primary schools was a difficulty. All the schools visited did not keep annual records of things like dropout, completion, or transition rates. Moreover, quantitative information was kept on paper, which was sometimes lost. This forced the researcher to gain a qualitative understanding of these issues without backing it up with the numbers. It also limited the analysis of quantitative data to only student-teacher ratios, enrolment, and KCPE scores.

## **IX. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The nine schools surveyed all had different characteristics. Buru Buru Primary School is located in Buru Buru, thirty minutes east of the city center. Most of the people living in Buru Buru are middle-class, but the school also draws a considerable number of its students from three nearby slums. Bidii Primary School can also be found in Buru Buru and has a similar constituency of students. Both were known for their high academic performance prior to FPE. Olympic Primary School, founded in 1980, has a long history of excellent academic performance despite its locality. It resides in the middle of Kibera and draws its students from the slums. Aga Khan Primary School is situated in Westlands (one of Nairobi's wealthier districts) and is a part-government school, part-sponsored school. It requires its students to pay school fees of 5,000 Ksch per year to finance its high-costing facilities. Kinyanjui Primary neighbors Kawangare slums, where it gets all of its students. Although not all of its pupils can afford uniforms and some of the classes are held in temporary classrooms made of tin sheets, it is a decently performing institution. Farasi Lane Primary School, located in Parklands, draws its constituency from the nearby children of parents that primarily work as janitors or security guards. In 2002, the school was dysfunctional as supplies were constantly stolen through broken doors and windows. Farasi Lane was also highly underenrolled due to the inability of parents to pay school fees. Daniel Comboni is located in Korogosho Slums and most of its students come from disadvantaged families living in those areas. Nduru Runo resides near Daniel Comboni, sitting on the outer edge of Korogosho. Nduru Runo has a better reputation than Daniel Comboni for academic performance, despite drawing from a similar constituency.

### **Analysis of Enrolment**



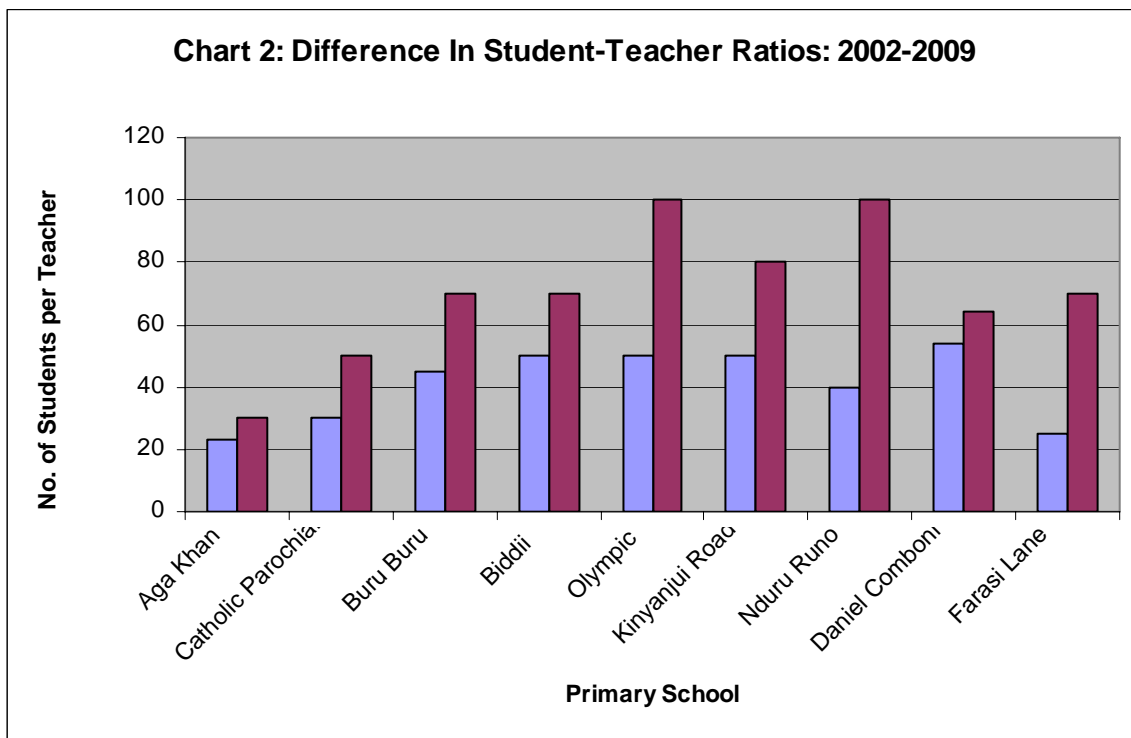
*Source: Primary School Interviews*

Contrary to data from the national level, not all schools experienced a significant rise in enrolment after the implementation of FPE in 2003. While enrolment trends show that numbers have increased overall, only a few schools were subject to a sharp incline in 2003: Olympic, Kinyanjui, Daniel Comboni, and Nduru Runo. Buru Buru and Farasi Lane display a small increase in numbers, while Aga Khan and Catholic Parochial have relatively been able to maintain their enrolment. Bidii Primary on the contrary, actually decreased in numbers when FPE was implemented. Explanations of these trends may include the fact that Olympic, Kinyanjui, Daniel Comboni, and Nduru Runo are situated in or on the exterior of slums, meaning that areas where parents could not previously afford an education for their children experienced the greatest surge of students. Farasi Lane also is situated in an area where parents were unable to send their children to school prior to FPE. Buru Buru and Bidii report that while they did get an increase of students after FPE, there were also parents that withdrew their children from those public schools for fear that the quality of education would

be heavily impacted by the new policy, balancing out the numbers. The increase after 2005 in both schools can be explained by parents' observance after two years that the quality has not declined, readmitting their children into these cheaper public schools. Aga Khan was able to curb its enrolment with school fees. Catholic Parochial, situated in the city center and sharing its facilities with the local church, had physical restrictions on its ability to accept more students and turned them away. These enrolment trends have implications on the degree in which FPE has affected these schools.

**Factors that Influence Performance**

**Availability of Effective Teaching**



Source: Primary School Interviews

The student-teacher ratio has increased for all nine schools, but they differ in scope. Aga Khan and Daniel Comboni have the smallest increases of 6 and 10, then Catholic Parochial and Biddii with 20, Buru Buru with 25, Kinyanjui with 30, Farasi Lane with 45,

Olympic with 50, and Nduru Runo with 60. With the exception of Daniel Comboni, increases in class ratios reflect increases in enrolment. In Chart 1, Daniel Comboni faced a decrease in enrolment of students after a surge of numbers resulting from FPE, showing that students are either dropping out or transferring schools. The headteacher attributed things like post-election violence to the decrease in class size, but anticipated the return of students over the next few years as things settle down. For the most part, poorer schools have faced largest increases in student-teacher ratios. It is important to note that schools in the middle range of class ratios like Buru Buru, Bidii and Catholic Parochial also received these increases gradually instead of having a surge in 2003, therefore being more able to prepare and adjust for more students.

All schools except for Aga Khan (who barely experienced any increase in student-teacher ratios) reported that the greater number of students has created additional stress for teachers and has allowed for less individual student attention. Although most schools try to engage their students as much as possible, the increase in numbers has made it difficult. Some schools have been more successful than others, due to variations in the discipline of students. Aga Khan was the exception, saying that neither curriculum nor lesson format has really changed since 2003. Bidii also has not faced significant modifications, but organizing classes are harder. Olympic used to carry out their classes with a variety of teaching styles, from group work to lectures to interactive activities, but the number of students has forced them to limit student-participation opportunities. Buru Buru has adopted a method where students teach each other the lessons, taking stress off of the teachers. Kinyanjui, Farasi Lane, Catholic Parochial and Nduru Runo report that large efforts to involve pupils in lessons are not always successful.

The percentage of qualified teachers has not significantly changed in the case of all schools. The national report filed by the MOE shows that the presence of unqualified teachers



in schools has gone down immensely, and most if not all teachers are government-hired and qualified, as seen with the reports from schools for this study. However, all schools except for Aga Khan reported a severe need for more teachers. Many of the schools accepted huge increases of students without a corresponding hiring of teachers. The teachers at Catholic Parochial, Olympic, Kinyanjui, Daniel Comboni, Nduru Runo, and Farasi Lane are especially overworked and cannot handle their current class sizes. While FPE has decreased the number of unqualified teachers, it also has not hired enough qualified teachers to balance out the increase in enrolment.

### **Availability of Learning Resources**

FPE provides textbooks for all public primary students every year. There are textbooks for each core subject: Kiswahili, English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Religious Studies. The policy's provision of textbooks is widely regarded as one of the policy's major achievement.<sup>46</sup> The program has aimed at achieving 1:1 textbook ratios with every student, but loss of books has prevented this from happening at certain schools. For schools whose parents could afford to buy textbooks prior to FPE, this program has had little effect. Numbers at Aga Khan and Kinyanjui have remained the same. Numbers at Buru Buru, Nduru Runo, Daniel Comboni, and Farasi Lane have all improved since they had students whose parents could not afford them before. Catholic Parochial, Bidii, and Olympic's numbers have declined because whereas parents ensured that each child had their own book before, the loss of books and lack of government funds to replace them has caused two or three children to share one. This has implications on performance because students have either more or less difficulty in finishing their homework or reading ahead for the next lesson.

---

<sup>46</sup> United Nations, 7.

FPE also buys twelve exercise books and pencils per annum for all primary students. Across the board, the schools have verified that this amount is not sufficient to last an entire school year, as exercise books are quickly used up and pencils are lost everyday. Some schools have other sources of funding that cushions the impact of these shortages. Aga Khan has no problem with school supplies since it is partially sponsored and parents can afford to buy them for their children. Similarly, parents of students at Catholic Parochial, Buru Buru and Bidii can also replace lost items. Nduru Runo, Kinyanjui, Daniel Comboni, and Farasi Lane face more problems because their only source of school supplies comes from government funding. However, in terms of supplies, FPE has shown the most positive impact on these schools since most students could not afford to own these things at all. Catholic Parochial is the only school that reported less exercise books and pencils due to inadequate government funds and parents' ability but reluctance to purchase them. All schools also report an increase in learning materials at their schools as a result of FPE (things like maps, charts, posters) and Daniel Comboni has also been able to add several blackboards to classrooms.

### **Availability of An Accommodating Curriculum**

In all schools, the core curriculum of six subjects has been able to be maintained. What has changed is the availability of elective classes outside the core curriculum. These classes include things like music, PE, art, peer guidance, and computer classes. Aga Khan, Buru Buru, Bidii, Nduru Runo, Daniel Comboni have been able to maintain the same curriculum of elective classes whereas Catholic Parochial, Olympic, and Kinyanjui had to cut back due to the government's emphasis on the six core classes and/or the lack of finances to support as many elective classes. Wealthier schools have been able to maintain financing their elective classes, whereas poorer schools that could not afford to provide them before

still face financial constraints. The middle-tier schools were the ones that had to cut back on elective classes. Farasi Lane on the other hand, has been able to expand its number of elective classes by adding a computer class, which they have been able to afford because of FPE funding for electricity.

None of the schools have a multishifting structure where one group of students comes in the morning for class and a different group comes in the afternoon. All schools have been able to either maintain or expand their extra-help opportunities by either coming to school early in the morning or staying later. These services were also offered prior to the implementation of FPE. Schools that faced large increases in enrolment have to accommodate for the children that learn slowly or miss a lesson. So schools also run remedial classes in the afternoon, especially for lower primary. There are no advanced or special help classes for slower learners, but teachers have learned to divide students into groups that learn at different paces, which was also true of classes before FPE. In most cases, SNC are incorporated into regular classes but receive more attention from teachers than the other students. Only Buru Buru had a special class for SNC, which they started in 2008.

The amount of homework assigned every night has decreased for most of the schools because of the inability of teachers to mark 70-100 students' homework every night. The reduction of textbooks also contributes to the assignment of less homework, but this is only an issue for Catholic Parochial, Bidii, and Olympic. Only Aga Khan has given the same amount of homework due to their minimal increase of class size. Farasi Lane has actually increased the amount of homework assigned due to the increase in book ratios and the school curriculum was extremely lacking prior to FPE. On the whole, FPE has caused less homework to be assigned to students.

### **Availability of Learning Facilities**

Expansions in the number of classrooms have not increased for most schools. Aga Khan has kept its 32 classrooms, Catholic Parochial its 14, Nduru Runo its 27, and Farasi Lane its 16. For the case of Aga Khan and Farasi Lane, no classrooms needed to be built. Catholic Parochial did not have the school grounds to accommodate more construction and Nduru Runo lacked the funds to do so. Buru Buru and Bidii faced enrolment expansions but are still managing with their facilities despite the problem that classrooms are cramped. Olympic has added 4 classrooms from 33 to 37. Kinyanjui has 32 classrooms and continues to utilize its 10 temporary classrooms made of tin sheets, which were built before FPE. Daniel Comboni is currently building 1 to reach a total of 32. Overall, the expansion of classrooms also has not reflected the expansion in students. However, the ability to increase the number of classrooms shows no favoring towards wealthier or poorer schools.

In terms of electricity and water, the sponsored schools (Aga Khan and Catholic Parochial) have had no problem and no change. For unsponsored schools, the amount the government budgets for electricity and water is insufficient. The situation for Bidii has gotten better despite inadequate government funding because when parents were responsible for electricity and water bills, it created disagreements between them and the school. Buru Buru was in a similar situation requesting money from parents. Kinyanjui has water and electricity problems, but the situation has not gotten worse than before. Nduru Runo has not had water issues but has lost electricity as a result of FPE funds not being received on time. Daniel Comboni still cannot afford electricity or water, but Farasi Lane has been able to install the former and set up computers. Electricity has allowed Olympic to power a borehole which they have purchased since FPE, providing the school with clean running water.

Since FPE does not cover food fees for students, the lack of a lunch service has been a huge problem for schools. Aga Khan and Catholic Parochial were both able to provide their own independent lunch service where students can bring money from home to purchase food

at school. For the children at Catholic Parochial who cannot buy food, they are also allowed to bring food from home or have it dropped off by their parents. The school absorbed lunch fees from students who did not have any of these options (such as orphans) by charging other students slightly higher costs. For most of the other schools, the students cannot afford the price of lunch that Aga Khan and Catholic Parochial students pay. The World Food Program and Feed the Children has ensured that every school is provided with food. The schools are responsible for running a kitchen and hiring cooks, which students finance by paying around 50 Ksch per month. Before this feeding program was available, children would sit in school hungry, having eaten nothing that entire day. Others would go home for lunch and not return. The lunch program has increased retention and attendance in primary schools. Even though FPE had no affect on lunch services for students, most of these non-profit programs were instituted after FPE, helping with performance from students.

Overall, there is general disagreement between schools as to whether or not FPE has made maintenance of facilities more difficult. Aga Khan once again has had no issue. Catholic Parochial mentioned a mild difficulty, using the example of a lack of “shiny floors.” The rest of the schools have initially reported much more difficulties in maintaining facilities, although the infrastructure fund FPE began in 2007 has also helped things immensely. Farasi Lane has experienced a complete turnaround since 2007, with repaired windows, doors, painted walls, and electricity. Daniel Comboni has also been able to benefit from this fund, but also has a donor that assists with facility maintenance. Kinyanjui is the only school that does not qualify for infrastructure support because a German NGO was supposed to have given it money to build more classrooms four years ago, which has not been actualized. Therefore, Kinyanjui’s facilities have suffered under FPE and it is uncertain when they will receive an assistance to start repairing their school.

## **Performance**

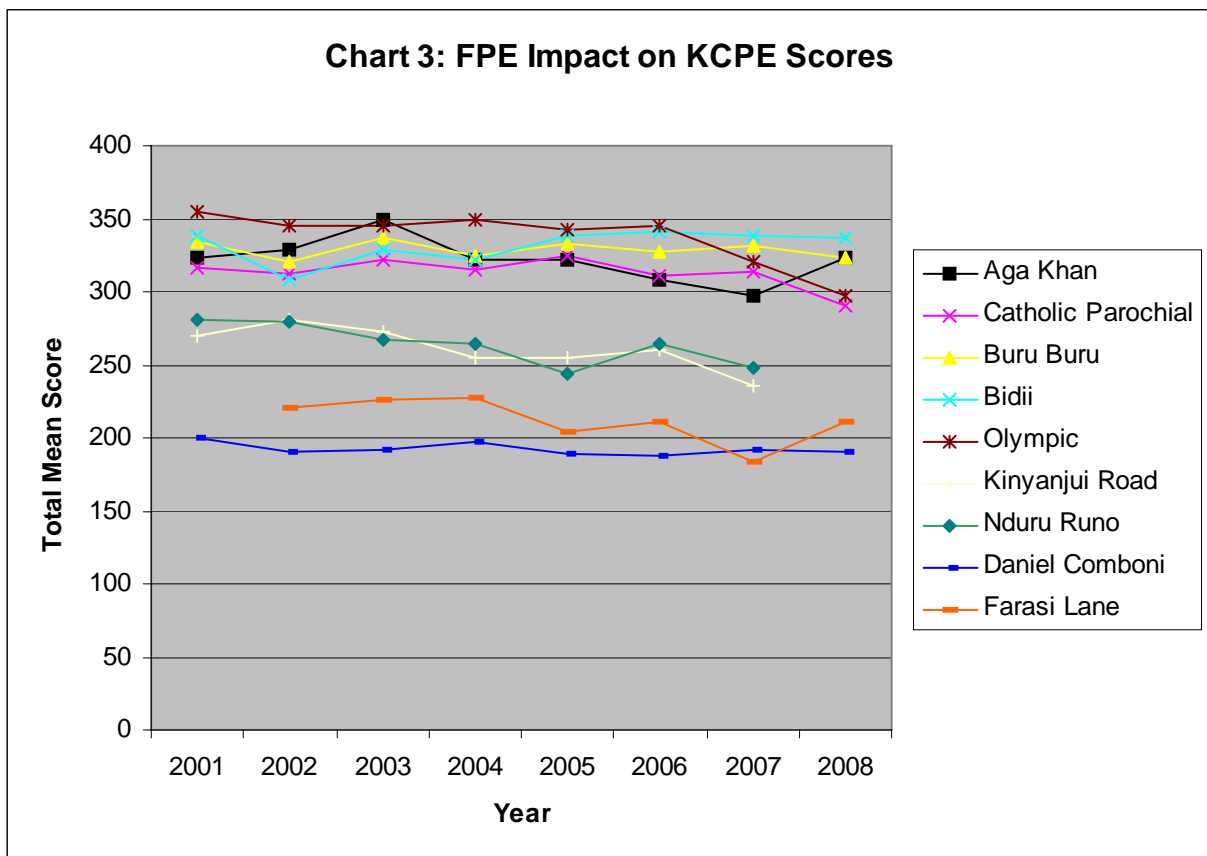
### **Daily Performance Evaluation**

The change in attention spans, enthusiasm, and discipline has received varied reports in schools. Aga Khan, Bidii, Buru Buru, Nduru Runo and Daniel Comboni have not seen significant changes in these three factors, but Catholic Parochial, Olympic, and Kinyanjui have reported that they have deteriorated since 2003. The middle-tier schools have experienced a noteworthy difference. Aga Khan did not receive large changes in student-teacher ratios, implying that the classroom environment also has not changed significantly. The increase of students at Buru Buru and Bidii has also been gradual, allowing these two schools to control the situation. Nduru Runo and Daniel Comboni faced extreme surges in enrolment, but explained that the performance of their students is more likely to be dependent on their home environment (for example, living in slums) than on any changes FPE has made. Attention and discipline have always been problems for these two schools, despite students being generally enthusiastic to attend school. For students at Catholic Parochial, Olympic, and Kinyanjui, changes in the classroom environment has affected their performance significantly. At Catholic Parochial, students are still enthusiastic but discipline and attention has declined due to larger classrooms. Olympic and Kinyanjui reported that conditions have gotten worse in all three categories. Farasi Lane is the only school that responded that daily behavior has improved as a result of students becoming enthusiastic about attending school since it was remodeled in 2007.

Even though the majority of headteachers answered that less homework had been assigned, they were also asked if the percentage of students that turned in homework everyday has stayed the same. For Aga Khan, Catholic Parochial, and Daniel Comboni, nothing has changed. For the rest of the schools, homework returns had gone down. A few schools like Olympic attributed this to the lack of ability of teachers to mark everyday,

meaning there were more loopholes children could jump through to avoid doing homework. Having to share books also makes it difficult to turn in things on time. Performance on tests and quizzes more or less followed the same pattern as homework, with most schools besides Aga Khan, Buru Buru, and Bidii reporting that scores have more or less gone down. For the latter two schools, performance has improved due to the fact that test scores have remained the same despite increases in enrolment. They attribute administrative efforts and constant student counseling and guidance as being responsible for this. Farasi Lane’s performance has also gone up due to the presence of new educational materials and facilities.

### Annual Performance Evaluation



Source: Primary School Interviews

As seen by Chart 3, most schools' KCPE scores have declined except for Daniel Comboni, Buru Buru and Bidii. Many schools attributed the recent 2007 and 2008 drop in scores to post-election violence and hunger issues in Kenya, but this does not explain the rise in scores at this time for Aga Khan and Farasi Lane. The headteacher at Daniel Comboni commented about how performance is more influenced by the environment of the children than FPE, although Nduru Runo made this same claim and has experienced a slight decline. The performance of Buru Buru and Bidii has actually increased despite growing numbers, contrary to the trend in national data. This shows that administrative efforts are still able to curb the effects of FPE to maintain and even improve performance. Overall, these scores do not show a direct correlation between FPE and a decline in performance. Aga Khan, Nduru Runo, Farasi Lane and Olympic show instability and gradual decline after 2003, despite the fact that Aga Khan was impacted the least by FPE and the other schools the most. Solely by looking at these results, it would be incorrect to conclude that FPE implementation has caused a decline in KCPE performance.

Dropout rates have decreased in all schools due to the fact that FPE eliminated the issue of not being able to afford an education, which was the leading cost of dropouts prior to 2003. For Aga Khan and Catholic Parochial, dropouts were never an issue. For schools like Nduru Runo where a dropout is still a problem, the headteacher attributed this to drug issues or unstable homes, not FPE. As a result, completion rates have also increased across the board except in the case of Catholic Parochial and Nduru Runo who said that the number has stayed the same. Reports concerning transition to secondary schools varied. Aga Khan, Buru Buru, Bidii and Farasi Lane reported more transitions, whereas Catholic Parochial and Daniel Comboni reported the same amount. Olympic, Kinyanjui and Nduru Runo reported less. This has implications on the quality of education offered at these various schools, but also could be attributed to parents' inability to pay for secondary school fees despite high performance.



## **X. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Schools that are partially sponsored did not experience significant impacts from FPE. Aga Khan seemed to be relatively unaffected by FPE despite its drop in KCPE performance, and although Catholic Parochial reported decreasing quality in teaching environment, these changes were mild compared to the situation of other schools. In the case of Catholic Parochial, any deterioration that occurred was a result of the withdrawal of parents' financial contribution and their current reluctance to pay for what the government cannot afford. Had these schools experienced a more significant increase in enrolment, FPE might have shown more of a negative impact. Overall, Aga Khan benefited from the additional government funds and Catholic Parochial, despite having class size grow, was able to handle the situation because of money coming from other sources.

Schools situated in middle-income areas with a reputation of being able to provide a high quality education actually saw a rise in academic performance. Buru Buru and Bidii both saw an influx of students as a result of FPE. However, this increase was gradual due to parents transferring their children out of these primaries into private schools while more students were being admitted. This allowed Buru Buru and Bidii to make administrative changes to adjust for the new students. The situation has become more stressful for teachers, but the disciplined students and strong infrastructure of the two schools has made the situation easier for them. These schools refute the argument that FPE has led to the decline in quality of education, showing that determined students and a strong administration is able take advantage of the resources that FPE provides.

Schools in the poorest areas were hit hardest with FPE but also reaped the greatest benefits. While they struggled like all other schools in providing their students with effective teaching, the government-provided learning materials and facility maintenance funds

improved the learning environment significantly. Parents in these areas were too poor to afford an education for their children, let alone pay for books or facility maintenance.

Kinyanjui is the only school that did not receive infrastructure funds and still maintains poor facilities. Conversely, Farasi Lane is an example of a school in such a dilapidated condition that FPE has resuscitated it into a functioning school. The simple remodeling of the school in 2007 has greatly increased the attitudes and performance of the students.

However, schools located in slums have continued to face difficulties and have even had them exacerbated. The situation for Daniel Comboni has not drastically changed, which could be seen as a positive thing that FPE has provided education for more students without a decline in quality, or a negative thing that inequalities between schools has not been alleviated since Daniel Comboni has still not been able to catch up. The schools that have had an overall negative impact from FPE are schools situated in poor areas that were well performing before FPE: Olympic, Kinyanjui, and Nduru Runo. Olympic was even ranked no. 1 in KCPE scores from 1995 to 2002. However, as soon as FPE was implemented, marks declined to put them at a position of no. 8 in 2007. These schools have faced incredibly high expansions in class size. The reputation these schools have built for themselves prior to FPE that have enticed parents to enroll and transfer their children into these institutions, putting major pressures on the institutions. The schools differ in how FPE has impacted learning resources, but all three agree that facilities have deteriorated since 2003. Daily performance, transitions to secondary schools, and KCPE scores have also suffered, although the number of dropouts has decreased.

In conclusion, FPE affects the learning circumstances of schools in different ways, depending on their individual profiles. The experience of these nine schools shows us that well-performing schools in slums have had the most negative impact with the largest surges of enrolment, while sponsored schools have had the least impact. Other public schools

situated in middle-income areas have faced a gradual but substantial increase. And schools that were previously dysfunctional are now properly operating under FPE.

However, to address the study's second research question, it is unclear whether these changes have directly influenced academic performance. For instance, Aga Khan was least impacted by the policy and still declined in KCPE scores. Whereas Bidii and Buru Buru experienced considerable increased in class ratios but have improved their performance. Even Olympic, that has suffered a decline in KCPE scores did not have this occur until 2006, three years after the policy's implementation. Nduru Runo and Kinyanjui follow this trend but this is only two out of the nine schools surveyed. Based on this data, the argument that FPE leads to the deterioration of education quality at primary schools is unfounded. If any conclusions were to be made, it is that FPE has improved annual performance by decreasing dropout and increasing completion rates.

Overall, even though the educational quality of schools has been affected by FPE, this does not mean it has to materialize in academic performance. Buru Buru and Bidii primaries are the best examples of how schools can control the challenges of the policy through administrative strength and high levels of communication between teachers, students and parents. Their situation is easier than that of schools situated in slums because of the gradual enrolment and high socio-economic status of students, but this does not mean that slum schools' situations are uncontrollable.

Nonetheless, poorer schools' circumstances are deteriorating more than they are improving. The gap in quality of education at public primary schools is expanding as even the schools that were well performing despite being situated in slums have faced the most difficulty. Soon, public primaries may be divided into good schools and bad schools, limiting the opportunities of children in slums to attend good institutions. Thus, the transition to

secondary schools and university would be limited only to wealthier children, expanding the income gap that already exists in Kenya.

If FPE wants to be a pro-poor policy, it needs to make some administrative adjustments. First of all, all funding must be distributed on time. Since the institution of FPE, more schools have become completely dependent on government aid and cannot function without it. In particular, the more disadvantaged schools should be provisioned aid first since better-off schools have other alternatives to turn to for financing. Secondly, sponsored schools should receive less or no government aid at all. Aga Khan receives funding from both its sponsor and the school fees it requires parents to pay. There is no need for government assistance. Thirdly, one of the reasons why Buru Buru is a successful school is because it creates its own revenue on the side. The headteacher pointed out a small passion fruit garden owned by the school (which the students help to garden) that they can eat or sell from. She also said that they hire as little staff as possible to save funds for other things. Instead, the students help with cleaning the school. Schools should be encouraged to become as self-sufficient as possible and to engage in fundraising activities, which would also benefit the students and lead to community-building exercises. If these activities could also involve students' parents, it might also lead to more involvement by the parents in their children's education.

## APPENDIX A: MAP OF NAIROBI AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS



Source: [http://www.tt-messe.de/ict-africa/old/images/map\\_nairobimap.jpg](http://www.tt-messe.de/ict-africa/old/images/map_nairobimap.jpg)

## **APPENDIX B: LIST OF INTERVIEWS**

### **Interview with the Director of FPE, MOE**

Barasa, Lawrence. Personal interview. 20 Apr. 2009.

### **Interviews with Headteachers**

Aga Khan Primary: Wasike, Gideon. Personal interview. 23 Apr. 2009.

Bidii Primary: Makau, Pauline. Personal interview. 5 May 2009.

Buru Buru Primary: Matu, Lydia. Personal interview. 5 May 2009.

Catholic Parochial Primary: Otieno, Mary Anyango. Personal interview. 28 Apr. 2009.

Daniel Comboni Primary: Mangoli, Pamela. Personal interview. 28 Apr. 2009.

Farasi Lane Primary: Owaka, Joan. Personal interview. 24 Apr. 2009.

Kinyanjui Road Primary: Muguti, C. Personal interview. 23 Apr. 2009.

Olympic Primary: Namulundu, Ruth. Personal interview. 23 Apr. 2009.

Nduru Runo Primary: Kabuka, Linah. Personal interview. 29 Apr. 2009.

## APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADTEACHERS

### Factors influencing performance

1. Teaching Environment
  - a. Has class size increased, decreased, or remained the same? By how much? Is this still a manageable number for teachers?
  - b. What have been the pros or cons of teaching with these new numbers?
  - c. Is there enough teacher-student individual attention?
  - d. How many qualified teachers are there? How many unqualified teachers are there? Does the government hire them all?
  - e. How do teachers conduct their lessons everyday? Are they lecture-style or seminar-style? Are there opportunities for students to participate or ask questions?
2. Teaching Materials
  - a. How many books are in a classroom? How many students must share one book?
  - b. Are there exercise books for every student?
  - c. Are there writing tools the students can use?
  - d. Does each classroom have a blackboard and chalk?
  - e. Are there available reference materials/ additional classroom objects/ posters in the classrooms?
3. Curriculum
  - a. What classes does this school offer? Are there elective classes available? Have they changed since 2003?
  - b. Do you have a multi-shifting structure?
  - c. What kind of homework do you assign? How much?
  - d. Are there extra-help of afterschool tutoring services available?
  - e. Are there advanced or slower classes for children learning at different levels?
4. Facilities
  - a. How many classrooms are there? Is this more or less than before 2003? Were any built?
  - b. Do you have blackout issues? Can you afford electricity?
  - c. Is there clean water available for the children?
  - d. Do you have lunch services available? Is there a cafeteria?
  - e. Have facilities/ services improved, sustained, or deteriorated?

### Performance

1. Daily
  - a. Do children pay attention in class? Are they engaged? Are they sitting and listening or talking and moving around?
  - b. Has discipline become more or less of an issue since 2003?
  - c. Are students enthusiastic to go to school, willing to contribute, and volunteer to do things?
  - d. Are students expected to turn in homework daily? How many do? What are the punishments for not turning it in? Have homework returns increased or decreased?
  - e. Have students' test and quiz scores improved or weakened since FPE?
2. Annually
  - a. Have KCPE scores improved or declined since FPE?
  - b. Do more or less students transition to secondary schools?
  - c. Have dropout rates increased or decreased?
  - d. Have completion rates increased or decreased?

### Additional Questions:

1. If the government were to retract its FPE aid, what would be the effect on your school?
2. Overall, has FPE been more beneficial or harmful for your school?
3. What improvements would you make for the policy?

**APPENDIX D: LETTER OF VERIFICATION FOR FPE RESEARCH**



## REFERENCES

- Banda, Tim Kamuzu. "Kenya; Kenya Makes Great Stride in Education." The Nation. (16 Jun 2007). 8 May 2009. <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200706160037.html> >
- Barasa, Lawrence. Personal interview. 20 Apr. 2009.
- Ford, Neil. "Overwhelming demand for free schooling. (Kenya)." African Business. (April 2003): 50. Academic OneFile. Gale. Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 18 Apr. 2009 <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.middlebury.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>.
- Hill, Martin. Self-Help in Education and Development: A Social-Anthropological Study in Kitui, Kenya. 1974. 38. Bureau of Educational Research, University of Nairobi.
- Kenya. Ministry of Education. "Chapter 13: Primary School Enrolment and Achievement under FPE." Education Statistical Booklet 2003-2007. By Educational Management Information Systems. Nairobi. 2008. 64-74.
- Kigotho, Wachira. "Kenya: History is Repeating Itself On Free Education" The East African Standard. 16 May 2007. <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200705160998.html>>
- Kinyanjui, Karibu. The Distribution of Educational Resources and Opportunities in Kenya. Discussion Paper No. 208. U of Nairobi, 1974. Nairobi: Institute for Development Studies.
- Murphy, John. "Free education hits hurdles in Kenya" BBC News World Edition. 7 May 2003. 20 Apr 2009. <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/crossing\\_continents/3006889.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/crossing_continents/3006889.stm)>
- Mushtaq, Najum. "Kenya: Failing Grade For Primary Education?" Inter Press Service. 2008. 9 May 2009. <<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=44303>>
- "Nairobi History & Facts." Nairobicity.com 8 May 2009. <<http://www.nairobicity.com/history-facts.php>>
- Ngugi, Margaret Njeri. "Impact Assessment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) Policy in Kenya Between the Years 1974-2000." MA thesis. U of Nairobi, 2003. Nairobi.
- Oketch, Moses O., and Caine M. Rolleston. Policies of Free Primary and Secondary Education in East Africa: A Review of the Literature. Ed. Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity. Research Monograph 10. CREATE. June 2007. UK Department for International Development. 8 May 2009 <[http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf\\_documents/PTA10.pdf](http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/PTA10.pdf)>.
- "Resources and infrastructure: Education." Economist Intelligence Unit: Country Profile: Kenya. Economist Intelligence. (2002). Academic OneFile. Gale. Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 18 Apr. 2009 <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.middlebury.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>.

United Nations. United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Challenges of Implementing Free Primary Education in Kenya. Mar. 2005. UNESCO Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Capacity-Building of Human Resources. 8 May 2009 <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001516/151654eo.pdf>>.

Wax, Emily. "Too many brains pack Kenya's free schools" Washington Post Foreign Service. 9 October 2003. 20 Apr 2009. <<http://www.laborrights.org/stop-child-labor/560>>

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Aduda, David. "Kenya; Education Takes Lion's Share of Budget." The Nation. (14 June 2007). 8 May 2009. <<http://www.propertykenya.com/news/476197-education-takes-lions-share-of-budget.php>>

Ahn, Amy and Jonathon Silvers. "Kenya: Free Primary education brings over 1 million into school." United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 22 Jul 2005 ReliefWeb. 20 Apr 2009. <<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/HMYT-6EJPVX?OpenDocument>>

"BBC Monitoring quotes from the African press 30 Dec 05." BBC Monitoring International Reports (Dec 30, 2005). Academic OneFile. Gale. Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 18 Apr. 2009 <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.middlebury.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>.

"Kenya disputes UNESCO report on education programme." BBC Monitoring International Reports (Nov 19, 2005). Academic OneFile. Gale. Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 18 Apr. 2009 <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.middlebury.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>.

"Kenya: More teachers needed to meet universal primary education goal - UN." BBC Monitoring International Reports (April 27, 2006). Academic OneFile. Gale. Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 18 Apr. 2009 <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.middlebury.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>.

Kenya, Paul. "The Kenya Free Primary Education Policy (FPE): An Assessment on the Impact and Sustainability of Free Primary Education in Migwani Division." MA thesis. Oxford Brookes U. 2008.

Mathooko, Mbatha. "Actualizing Free Primary Education in Kenya for Sustainable Development." The Journal of Pan African Studies, 2.8 (2009). 18 Apr 2009. <[http://www.jpanafrican.com/docs/vol2no8/2.8\\_ActualizingFreePrimaryEducationInKenyaForSustainableDevelopment.pdf](http://www.jpanafrican.com/docs/vol2no8/2.8_ActualizingFreePrimaryEducationInKenyaForSustainableDevelopment.pdf)>

Musalia, Florence G. "Challenges Facing Headteachers in Implementing FPE in Suba East Division, Migori District, Nyanza Province of Kenya." MA thesis. U of Nairobi, 2005.

Nkinyangi, John. "Impact of Government Policies on Primary School Repitition and Dropout Rates in Kenya, 1970-1978." MA thesis. U of Nairobi, 1980.

"Resources and infrastructure: Education.(Geographic Overview)." Economist Intelligence Unit: Country Profile: Kenya. Economist Intelligence. (2007). Academic OneFile. Gale. Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 18 Apr. 2009  
<<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.middlebury.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>.

Saitoti, George. "Education in Kenya: Challenges and Policy Responses." Paper Prepared for Presentation at the Council on Foreign Relations. Apr. 2004. 8 May 2009  
<[http://www.cfr.org/content/meetings/CUE%20Meetings/CFR\\_Saitoti\\_Presentation\\_April\\_2004.ppt](http://www.cfr.org/content/meetings/CUE%20Meetings/CFR_Saitoti_Presentation_April_2004.ppt)>.

Sifuna, Daniel N. "The Challenge of Increasing Access and Improving Quality: An Analysis of Universal Primary Education Interventions in Kenya and Tanzania Since the 1970s." International Review of Education. 53(2007): 687-699.

"World Bank gives Kenya 80m dollars for free primary education programme." BBC Monitoring International Reports (Dec 5, 2006). Academic OneFile. Gale. Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. 18 Apr. 2009  
<<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.middlebury.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>