

# Universal Primary Education in Kenya: Advancement and Challenges

Margaret Ngugi<sup>1\*</sup> Catherine Mumiukha<sup>2</sup> Flora Fedha<sup>2</sup> Beatrice Ndiga<sup>3</sup>

1. School of Education, Laikipia University, P.O. box 1100, Nyahururu, Kenya

2. School of Education, Egerton University, P.O. box 346, Njoro, Kenya

3. School of Education, Marist International University College, P.O. Box 24450-00502, Karen-Nairobi, Kenya

\* E-mail of the corresponding author: [mngugi@laikipia.ac.ke](mailto:mngugi@laikipia.ac.ke)

## Abstract

Universalisation of primary education (UPE) has been a global issue since the early sixties, yet several decades later and even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are still grappling with it. Unlike their counterparts in the developed world, its realisation in developing countries has been faced with a myriad of constraints. Kenya has a long standing commitment to providing educational access to its primary school going children. This has been reflected in the country's Economic Plans, Sessional papers and other development plans. Most importantly, Kenya acknowledges provision of basic education for its citizens as a human right, as is enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya (2010). Furthermore, Kenyan citizens have a right to free and compulsory education as is stipulated in the Basic Education Bill of 2012. Moreover, Vision2030 has acknowledged education as a component of the social pillars. Although the first step towards this was articulated by the Kenyan government immediately after independence in 1963 and later in 2003, little has been done to establish the extent to which Universal Primary Education has been advanced in Kenya. Therefore, there is need to do stock taking of the advancements made towards this goal. Furthermore, examining of the obstacles that have persistently hindered its success over the years is critical for realisation of universal education. This paper will therefore address the extent to which universalisation of primary education has contributed to advancement of access to basic education and the obstacles that have hindered its success.

**Keywords:** Universal Primary Education, advancement, access, enrolments, completion and wastages

## 1. Background Information To The Study

Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Kenya should be seen within the premise of the international context developments. The initial call for primary education everywhere to be compulsory and free was made in 1948 during the adoption of Universal Declaration of Human rights. The 1990 World Conference of Education For All (EFA), further catalysed the spur towards basic education with new recommitment. One of the EFA goals was to enhance universal access to learning. Consequently, the EFA goals were further endorsed by the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) which among other things set targets to ensure that free and compulsory primary education for all will be attained by 2015. Several decades later, from the time when the Universal declaration of Human Rights was made, the progress towards provision of compulsory and free education has been agonizingly slow. However, since education is formally recognized as a necessary component for fulfilment of any other political, economic, social and civil rights, many nations embarked on the call. Kenya's efforts to attain this have a longstanding history since independence. Introduction of Free Primary Education (UPE) was a financial perspective undertaken by the Kenyan government in efforts to meet UPE.

Prior to independence, the responsibility of primary education was almost exclusively in the hands of the communities concerned and non-governmental organisations. It was provided along racial lines and this was characterised with high attrition rates among the small number of African children who went to school in comparison to Europeans and Asians (Sifuna, 1990) The new government therefore, did not only have the responsibility of Africanising the syllabus, but also had to train enough human resource to man their economic and administrative units. Hence, the motivation of expansion of education at the time was politically inclined. It was upon such background that Kenya, like their counterpart African governments that had just gained independence formulated its educational programs (Sifuna, 1990, 1991).

FPE is presumed to be the first step to attainment of UPE. In the Kenyan context, FPE provision is not only for all children of school going age (6-15 years), but also to adults who never had an opportunity. This however, has been the intent of the government of Kenya since independence. Therefore, the need to take stock of the advances made close to six decades after the first inception and assess the prevailing challenges that have affected the realisation of this policy overtime are paramount. In as much as the enrolments soared after the government's declaration of this program and government's spending on education also greatly increased, where is Kenya in terms of the progress towards this noble goal? This paper provides an insight into the advancements made by implementation of UPE and the challenges that hinder its attainment.

The methodology involved a broad conceptualization of UPE and an interpretive policy analysis of the UPE initiatives in Kenya. It entailed a review of literature of UPE in Kenya as well as a review of both

government and international policy documents on UPE in Kenya. The first part of the paper examines the rationale and theoretical assumptions underpinning UPE. The second part of the paper examines advancements and the challenges that hinder the success of UPE.

## **1.2 Progress of Free Primary Education**

### **1.2.1 Primary Education in Kenya**

The primary education cycle is the most critical stage in comparison to other phases of learning in Kenyan education system. It takes the longest time and lasts for eight years. Children enrol at the age of six years and by the end of the cycle they are adolescents. This period marks great milestones in a person's growth and development and therefore necessitates not only ensuring that children of school going age attend school, but also stay on through to the end of the cycle. Therefore, the move to universalise primary education is not only important as a basic human right, but also critical for survival in his interaction with the environment.

The government of Kenya has persistently been committed to universalise Primary Education since independence. The first move towards this direction was the introduction of free primary education in the 1970s. The core objective of FPE was aimed at achieving UPE. However, this was never attained. This saw several decades later, FPE being reintroduced in 2003 with aim of actualising the provision of basic education as a right to every citizen of Kenya. The Children Act (2001) substantially domesticates the rights of the child and provides for the right to free and compulsory education, without any specified measures to be undertaken by the government to ensure that the right to primary education is realised. In spite of this, there has been massive quantitative growth of education sector at all levels from primary through secondary to tertiary level over the years.

### **1.2.2. Free Primary Education and its Universalisation**

Significant progress has been made in primary school enrolments due to school fees waiver. Although Sub-Saharan Africa had been one of the lowest achieving regions in terms of education, going by EFA 2015 movement, there has been considerable improvement. Primary school enrolment rates have increased in most of the countries and drop out ratios from school have reduced significantly. UNESCO (2010) confirms that between 1999 and 2007, the average enrolment rate to primary school had increased from 56 percent to 73 percent. Also out-of-school population has reduced by nearly 13 million from 1999 to 2007. However, UNESCO (2010) notes that 25% of Sub-Saharan region's primary age school children are still out of school which accounts for nearly 45% of the global out-of-school population. But these numbers could be biased since household surveys of Sub-Saharan African countries suggest that there is high level of data underestimation.

Several Sub-Saharan countries have instituted measures aimed at actualising this right to education by eliminating fees in government aided (public) primary schools. However, different countries have used different approaches. Malawi eliminated fees in 1994 prior to which it had instituted it on a grade by grade basis since 1990. Uganda, eliminated all grades simultaneously in 1997, a similar approach was employed in Kenya in 2003. Apart from these, other countries that have instituted this include: - Cameroon, Burundi, Rwanda and Ghana all in 2003 and Tanzania in year 2000.

A critical review of literature reveals that since independence, the Kenyan government has always desired to provide UPE in order to reach and support the underprivileged communities. The goal of universalising of primary education in Kenya was first articulated in the Kenya African National Union (KANU) manifesto of 1963 and further emphasized in the Ominde Report of 1964 and subsequently highlighted in the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1965. Consequently, over the years, the government has emphasized Universal Primary Education (UPE) in all its development plans and Education Commission Reports. The government initially implemented it in phases. To start with, in 1971 there was tuition fee waiver for the districts with unfavourable conditions mainly in North Eastern province and parts of the Rift Valley and Coast province (Sifuna, 1990; Rob et al., 2004). Later in 1973, there was the abolition of school fees for the first four grades (Development Plan 1966-70); followed by standardising of standard V-VII fee to be a uniform fee structure of Kshs. 60 per year (Kenya Development Plan 1974-78).

Muhoro (1975) asserts that with abolition of school fees for standard 1-IV, the enrolments in standard 1 classes rose by a million above the estimated figure of about 400,000. Moreover, the total enrolment figure for standards 1-IV children increased from 1.8 million in 1973 to 2.8 million in January 1974. However, despite this rise, an estimated 1-2 million children of primary school going age were still not attending school in 1974 (Sifuna, 1990). During this era however, lack of proper planning with regards to the necessary teaching learning resources to cater for the high influx children to school was a major threat to its success as pointed out by Sifuna (1990). There were also other charges by schools intended to offset the school fees balance after the government's declarative. Apart from these, the other inputs for teaching learning that the children needed in order to be in school such as text books and uniforms among other items and material tended to make education more expensive than the government had intended. On the other hand, other payments were made through Harambee (community self-help basis) which in the long run made it difficult for children from the poor families

to access schooling.

This paper is of the opinion that the concept of meaningful advancement in universalising Primary Education in Kenya cuts across a wider than ordinary lens on school fees waiver in line with Free Primary education. It encompasses physical access, equity and meaningful fighting of illiteracy. Since education is seen as a tool for transmission of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for meaningful survival, then it is from this premise that it is attributed to positive economic and social development of the society. However, does the Kenyan situation reflect this? Does abolition of school fees at primary school level automatically translate to both quantitative and qualitative improvements? Are there obstacles that have persistently continued to hinder its realisation? These are pertinent issues requiring a keen look into them. Finally the importance of carrying research on ways that UPE can be contextualised to the Kenyan situation is paramount.

### **1.3. Conceptualisation of Universalisation of Primary Education**

#### **1.3.1 Education as a right**

The prominence of basic education in the life of an individual can hardly be overstated. Basic education helps the individual to develop his or her own abilities and to comprehend and communicate with the world in which he or she lives. It is not only important for the state to ensure that everyone gets right to basic education regardless of circumstances, but also ensure this by creating proper educational facilities and by removing all obstacles that might impede the accessibility of the available educational facilities. For Kenya, the state has ensured that decisions taken by individual parents and guardians on behalf of the children do not stand in the way of realisation of this right (Basic Education Act of 2013). Since economic choice might hinder the choice between food for subsistence on the one hand and education on the other, the government is justified to make education not only compulsory but also free.

Although the declaration of basic education as a human right led to the subsequent implementation of primary education as free and compulsory, a declaration does not automate its achievement. In 1990, four decades later after the declaration, more than 100 million children were still not able to access school (UNESCO, 2000). While the numbers of children in school increased, so did the number out of school and the goal was not met. Factors attributed to this are not only poverty related but also adult induced. In a study by Munene and Ruto (2010) on the right to education and domestic labour in Kenya, it was found out that child labour was both poverty induced and adult initiated. Children especially in domestic labour therefore, often skip school and hence their participation in school is low. Other studies (Mwenda, M'muyuri, Muthaa, & Bururia, 2013) have also confirmed that child labour, and poverty levels among the households are a major contribution to school drop outs.

#### **1.3.2. Equality of opportunity**

The most heralded policy in education sector in the world has been FPE. Whereas pupils and parents have been responsible for costs of primary education, the logic for such a change is clear: If the cost of schooling is high, children from poor households will not attend school. Therefore, abolition of compulsory charges will lower the cost of education and increase the number of children accessing school. What is the relationship between policy and practice and in this case, between school fees waiver and access to primary education? These are some of the issues that need to be addressed.

Enforcing the provision of free primary education in itself does not translate to “equality of opportunity”. Government schools are not synonymous with equality of opportunity as is generally perceived. The social class and the geographical location are some of the consideration factors influencing the choosing of place of residence. In addition, parents prefer taking their young children to schools near their place of residence; hence some schools end up with disproportionate numbers of privileged children whereas others receive disproportionate numbers of underprivileged children. In addition, in other cases, school performance is the focus of most parents; some prefer incurring extra cost in terms of cost of transport in order for their children to access far off schools, as long as they are performing well. Hence, though the government provides FPE in order to promote equal access to quality to all, the issue of quality of education also influences the level of equity.

The idea of making education free is geared towards ensuring that the attendance of the disadvantaged children is free. But even with free access to educational opportunities, the question of equality still abound since not all children learn at the same pace or same way. Some children learn faster than their classmates, whereas others, some of whom have various mental, emotional and physical handicaps learn more slowly. The question of whether there is equality in the extent that they participate in education equally is, even with free primary education or not is unanswered (OSSREA, 2010).

Another dimension to the right to education is that education must be made available to learners which entail the provision of schools and qualified teachers. In addition, access to education must be ensured. Education must be economically and physically accessible and must be provided on a non-discriminative basis. In terms of its legal framework, a lot of advancements have been made over time in order to universalise primary education in Kenya. These have been enshrined in the constitution of Kenya and are also highlighted in the

various Sessional Papers, Development Plans including Vision 2030. They are concerned mainly with issues of availability and accessibility.

According to a survey by Uwezo (2010), learning has been compromised to a great extent. This can be explained by the increasing number of children from well to do families enrolling in private schools. This stratification is held more important considering the continued improved performance of private school in comparison to public schools in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). Data from Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) shows that between 2003 and 2007, the private schools have persistently surpassed the public schools in KCPE. Ultimately, this has raised concerns about the rising inequality and stratification.

Under the FPE policy, however, the government provides a total of Ksh. 1020 per pupil. However, due to the deteriorating quality of education level, some parents move their children to schools which have good standing in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination. Some of these schools charge boarding fee of between Ksh.6,000- Ksh.12,000 or even more than this. This still makes it expensive and consequently locks out children from poor families who may not be able to afford quality education. Moreover, apart from the government catering for tuition fee at primary school level, there are other levels still in education sector that are supported by the government. This has translated to very high allocation of the national budget to education sector. Specifically, the largest share of the budget goes to paying salaries, leaving a very small portion for teaching learning inputs. Moreover, part of the budget for free primary education was to come from the donor agencies with their expected conditionalities. This suggests that the government should diversify ways of raising funds to support education. Sawamura and Sifuna (2008) indicate that many schools still tactfully collected levies from the parents to meet the gaps in their budgets. This meant that the fees ended up being too high for whether low, medium or high cost schools. Therefore, even if tuition fee is waived, there are other expenses that are compulsory, hence hindering many children from accessing primary education, consequently making equity and quality pertinent issues of concern.

### 1.3.3. Increased enrolments

Following the introduction of FPE both in the 1970s and in January 2003, enrolments in primary schools all over Kenya have increased a change that is attributed to the intervention. However, the enrolments for boys have been persistently been higher than that for girls as shown in the selected years from 1970 to 2010.

Table 1. Gross primary school enrolment rates 1970-2011(%)

YEAR	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
MALE	72.3	111.9	120.2	101.8	94.16	87.35	111.3	111.2	108.8
FEMALE	51.8	95.9	110.1	96.1	90.21	86.25	88.0	104.0	109.9
TOTAL	62.1	103.9	115.2	99	92.19	86.80	99.6	107.6	109.8

Source: World Bank Africa Database 2001, World Bank; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Statistics Section, 1999; Republic of Kenya, 2012

The above data is further illustrated in Figure 1.

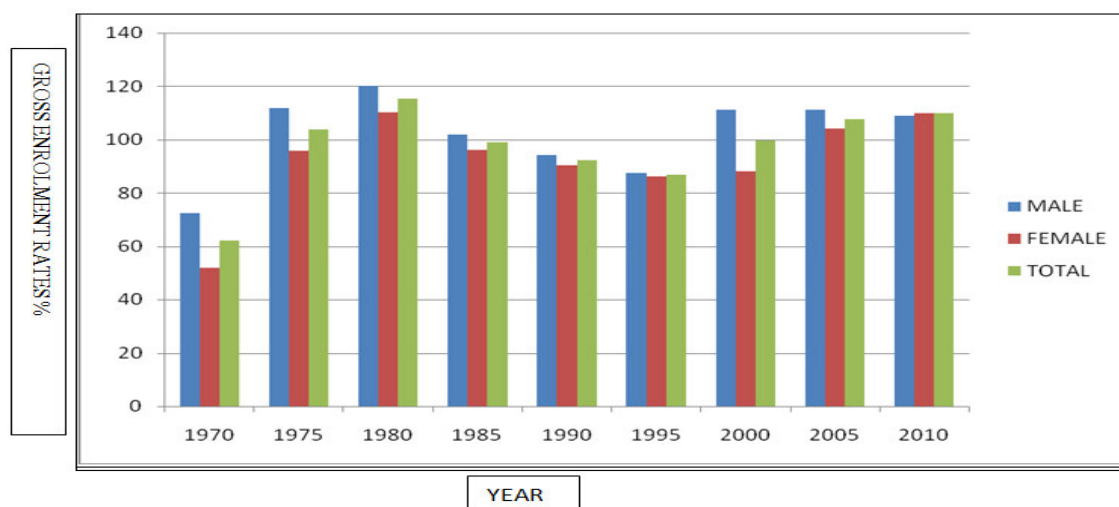


Figure 1: Gross Enrolment Rates from 1970 to 2010

In the years represented in figure 1, except for 1970, 1990 and 1995, in all the other years, the number of males attending school has been over 100%, while that for females, the GER has been below 100% except for 1980, 2005 and 2010. This also means that the gender gap has been wide over the years; thereby creating inequality in terms of access to primary education. Noteworthy however, is the fact that the gender gap has been

reducing considerably over the years which is an achievement. Initially, the enrolments improved gradually in 1970s and early 1980s, before it began to drop towards 1990s, before again increasing from 2000 onwards. Nevertheless, in 2000 the gender gap widened again, before later reducing towards year 2005 as shown in Table 1. These trends can be attributed to parental choices that dictate whether to take a child to school or not depending on the expected returns from attending school. If there are expected returns, it would increase school enrolment and on the other hand if the school inputs are being provided, it would raise enrolments (KIPPRA, 2002). Hence, the initial school fees waiver had increased enrolments in the early 1970s as indicated in the figure 1, but parents were expected to contribute to construction of school through *harambees*, (fund raiser efforts). In addition, they were already buying uniforms and textbooks among other things. This explains why there was a downward trend after 1980 (Ibid.,).

Although cost sharing policy was introduced officially in 1988, parents were already informally experiencing cost sharing as the government was not providing all the necessary inputs for teaching learning as already mentioned earlier. Therefore, the official re- introduction of school levies, explains the decline in enrolments as parents were expected to dig deeper into their pockets to bear the costs of educating their children.

In spite of this GER nationally hitting above the 100 percent mark from year 2005, there still exists regional disparities. The data in itself indicates that those who have enrolled include adults whose age is beyond the school going age of 6 to 15 years. Some parts of the country like the North Eastern which is predominantly occupied by nomadic pastoralists has continuously recorded very low enrolments (Sifuna, 2005). In deed in the same regions the enrolments for girls was at 19 percent while for the boys was at 32 percent in 2003, against the national enrolment rate of 107.6 percent, indicating that overall data may be misleading in terms of equity (Ministry of Education, 2006). This calls for Alternative provisions for Basic Education (APBE) for the marginalised areas and informal settlements. However, there have been improved enrolments in education as indicated in figure 1 and on the other hand the dropout rates have also reduced as shown in the Completion Rates in primary schools in figure 2.

### 1.3.4 Completion rates

Completion rates provide the percentage of enrolled children who reach the final grade of primary education cycle. It indicates the ability of the system to attract and retain students. Table 2 gives a summary of the primary school completion rates in Kenya from 1989 to 1999.

Table 2. Primary completion rate by gender by gender from 1989-1999.

YEAR	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
MALE	47.9	45.7	46.4	44.7	44.5	44.6	43.0	45.4	46.3	46.4	47.7
FEMALE	43.2	40.5	41.6	48.2	42.2	43.0	42.1	43.1	45.8	48.1	47.8
TOTAL	45.6	43.2	44.1	46.4	43.4	43.9	42.6	44.7	46.1	47.2	47.7

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Statistics Section, 2000.

The information presented in Table2 is further presented as indicated in Figure 2.

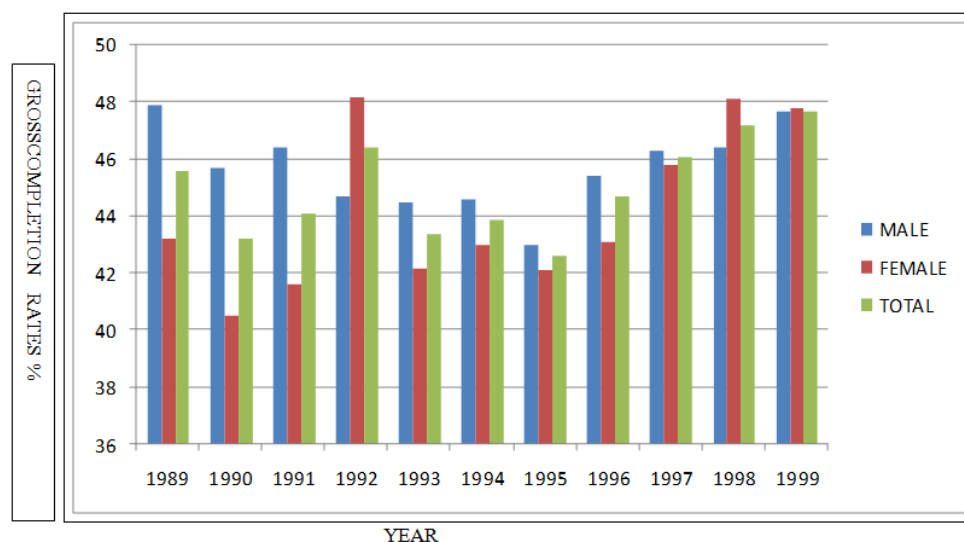


Figure 2: The Gross Completion Rates of primary schools in Kenya from year 1989 to 1999

The national primary school completion rates were below 50 percent from 1989 to 1999. This means that out of the pupils who enrol in standard one, more than 50 percent do not complete standard eight. However, compared to the previous years, there was an increasing trend of national completion rates between 1995 and 1999. The increase reached 47.7 percent up from 42.6 percent.

Conversely, going by gender, the completion rates for boys nationally was higher than that of girls in all the years shown in table 2 except for 1992, 1998 and 1999. This however may have been as a result of other variables beyond the scope of this paper since at the particular time, there was a declining gross enrolment rates and parents bore an increased cost burden of education at the time.

Unlike the previous data indicating the completion rates trends in the 1980s and 1990s, from 62.8 percent in 2002 to 68.2percent in 2003, the completion rates have improved gradually as shown in Table 3. This can be attributed to the introduction of FPE. Table 3 shows the completion rates for primary schools from year 2001 to 2008.

Table 3

YEAR	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
MALE	62.2	60.1	71.3	80.3	82.4	81.6	86.5	85.1
FEMALE	56.8	71.3	65.2	72.1	72.8	71.1	75.7	75.3
TOTAL	59.5	62.8	68.2	76.2	77.6	76.3	81.0	79.5

Source: EMIS School data returns

The information in Table 3 is further illustrated in Figure 3.

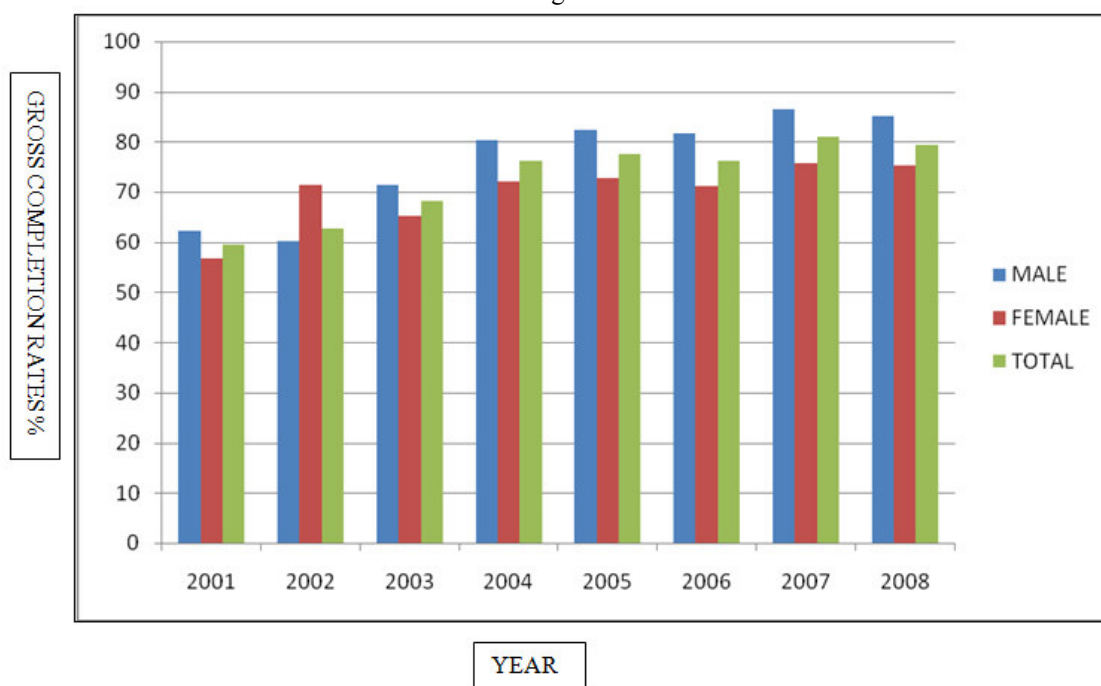


Figure 3: The Gross Completion Rates of primary schools in Kenya from year 2002 to 2008.

However, looking at the selected two time series of between 1989 to1999 and 2001 to 2008, the completion rates have increased to over 50 percent mark from 2001 to 2008 with the completion rates for the males being higher than that for female except for year 2000.

Similarly data from the same years from 2000 to 2008, the completion rates have also improved over the years since the reintroduction of FPE in reference to Figure 3. This can still be attributed to school fees waiver which enabled those children from poor families who would have failed to attend school due to lack of fees to stay in school.

#### 1.4.Obstacles Impeding The Universalisation Of Primary Education

While there has been improved access to education with Free Primary Education as a measure for universalising primary education, a myriad of obstacles have continued to hinder its progress. Among them, is the misappropriation of funds in a major corruption scandal that emerged in 2009 leading to the freeze of aid by DFID and USAID in December 2009. This leaves a number of children out of school. Whenever money intended for FPE is directed to other usage other than what it was meant for, the result is hindrance of children from poor family to access primary education (Aduda,2009).

Although FPE program has increased access to primary education especially among poorer households, additional costs of education (such as school uniforms) continue to hinder the educational attainment of many children. Moreover, the provision of quality education remains a challenge. Studies by Uwezo (2010) indicate that the there are disappointing levels of learning among public primary school children which still persists even

after reintroduction of FPE in 2003. The continued and consistent dominance of private schools in the KCPE has further raised concerns about the rising disparity in quality between public and private schools. Therefore, there is need to design policies that will address the achievement gaps in public primary schools. This will overwhelmingly benefit students from poorer households that are unable to access private schools.

Through FPE, the schools were to be given capitation by the government, and this was not given in time, when the schools needed the funds especially at the beginning of the term. Moreover, it was not sufficient. In addition to this, the money was given uniformly, such that for each pupil, a school was to get Ksh. 1020. This means that the bigger the population of a school, the bigger the grant. Yet if we are to apply economies of scale, this money can translate to varying magnitude in terms of usage. Moreover, the needs of the various schools are different due to the population size, the prevailing level of growth and development of the school and other social economic reasons, hence making equity a challenge (Sawamura & Sifuna, 2008).

More critical was the acute shortage of teachers due to overwhelming numbers as a result of increased enrolments which went along with more classes. Some schools had to do double shift and others had to combine grades which means that teachers had to do with more workload. In the long run, the teachers were no longer motivated due to the increased work load and also for the reason that they could no longer make extra money through the banned tuition. This coupled with the large size of classes made it difficult for effective teaching due to minimal interaction in terms of individual attention to the learners and in consideration that individual learners are unique. Some, for instance, may be slow and others are average learners. This brings the question of quality (OSSREA, 2010).

To counter this however, there is need for more research on the appropriate teaching methods to cater for the large and heterogeneous classes. There is need for further research in areas of incentive methods to be used on learners such as merit scholarships in form of bursaries and cash prizes in order to improve performance. In addition, there is need to come up with ways that can incentivise the head teachers, teachers, or both, so that they can effectively enhance performance of their schools.

While the government offers free primary education, there are other indirect costs such as uniform and travel expenses which may pose as a challenge to poor parents. Moreover, there are those social economic aspects within a child's family that have a bearing on their attending school. Factors such as family background and HIV and AIDS, household chores and wage labour greatly influence the attainment of UPE (OSSREA, 2010; KIPPRA, 2002).

### **1.5. Quality**

Many students' learning has remained inadequate in spite of the fact that FPE has increased enrolments. Going by the outcome of a nationwide survey comprising of over a 100,000 students aged between 3 and 16 in over 2,000 schools, it was found that only 33% of the children in a class can read a paragraph at their level. The survey further found that a third cannot read a word and 25% of class 5 students cannot read a class 2 paragraph (Uwezo, 2010). Consequently, the need to address the quality of education is paramount.

Although this may be attributed to increased pressure on the available inputs with the advent of FPE, the core issues need to be addressed. To start with the quantitative growth in terms of attendance was great. In addition, the different levels of learners as most of them transferred from other schools also contributed to this. Therefore, the large and heterogeneous classes can challenge pedagogy (OSSREA, 2010). In spite of these factors, teacher qualification issues need attention. Training for two years to enable one to teach the seven subjects, which is expected of them, is not adequate to acquire the mastery in subject content and pedagogy skills. In addition, lack of in service opportunities also denies the teachers the chance to build on their skills beyond the two year pre training that they acquired (Mckenzie & Santiago, 2004; Wasanga, Ogle, & Wamabua, 2011).

Although the recurrent expenditure on education is quite high, Kenya spends only 4.2 percent of it on primary education, teaching and learning resources. The bulk of the budget goes to remuneration of teachers (World Bank, 2008). Considering that books and other highly cost effective inputs are necessary for enhancing of the learning process, then quality learning may not effectively take place.

In a snapshot, while the drive to universalise primary education is yet to succeed, there has been massive quantitative growth in primary Education in Kenya since independence. This is because the government recognises the fact that education is one of the main components for economic development and this has been highlighted in many development plans and policies. The number of public and primary schools nationally has increased from 6,058 in 1963 to 28,567 in 2011. Moreover, the enrolments have grown from 892,000 pupils in 1963 to about 9.86 million pupils in 2011. The number of teachers has also grown from 45,427 in 1963 to 174,267 in 2011. This increase has been accelerated by FPE. Table 4 is a summary of performance of a few selected indicators in public primary schools in Kenya.

**Table 4 Some of the indicators for quantitative advancements in primary education**

Indicators	1963	2011
No. of Primary schools	6058	28567
Total enrolments in Public Primary schools	892,000	9.86m
No. of primary school teachers	45,427	174267
Pupil/teacher ratio (Public primary)	**	57:1

Source: Economic Survey, 2011.

### 1.6. Challenges hindering the success of UPE

While free primary education is aimed at improved participation in the full cycle of primary education, this is not guaranteed through primary school fee waiver since majority of those who enrol drop out. In addition, it is also noteworthy that growth in participation is not an indicator of achievement of right to education, if what is on offer has inequity in terms of cost, effectiveness and quality. This is particularly in case of interventions to compensate for the disadvantaged. Social economic factors also lead to inequality in terms of schooling opportunities that are unequally financed and distributed, for instance in the case for migrants, nomads and the displaced groups (Migosi, Nanok, Ombuki, & Metet, 2012). If FPE is intended to provide education opportunity to all, then to this end it has failed since some are still unable to access education such as the nomadic Turkana community where the number accessing basic education is relatively very low (ibid.,). This will lead to a life of inequity.

Although there have been great improvements in terms of enrolments, not all of them are able stay in school through to the end of primary education cycle. Some drop out before the end of the eight years as already indicated earlier in this study. Child labour, poverty, education level of the parents, lack of role model and various social cultural issues are some of the factors contributing to high dropout cases in primary schools in Kenya (Chemwei&Morara, 2013; Mwenda, M'muyuri, Muthaa, &Bururia, 2013).

While the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2003 has enhanced access to education, acquisition of literacy has continued to be low. This implies that issues of equity and equality have not been adequately addressed. Moreover, a myriad of obstacles has continued to affect this sector which include:- high repetition rates, increased number of orphans due to diseases such as HIV and AIDS, inadequate infrastructure, weak governance and financial management, inequitable deployment of teachers, high pupil-teacher ratio, overcrowded classrooms, retrogressive cultural practices, insecurity and conflicts (Chemwei & Morara, 2013; KIPPRA,2002).

### 1.7. Conclusions

The euphoric response to free primary education in 1971 and in 2003 saw massive growth in enrolments. However the enrolments were short lived prompting the question of sustainability of such enrolments. Moreover, though there have been mass improved enrolments, the question of equity and access abound due to regional disparity related issues. Inequality is prevalent due to geographical location, social cultural and social economic related aspects.

As a result of the government's commitment to universalise primary education through abolition of tuition fees, the government spends significant percentage of its Gross National Product (GNP) on education. However, there is strain on the limited available teaching learning resources thereby making efforts driven toward the achievements of UPE counterproductive. These resources range from material inputs such as books, uniform and other infrastructure to teachers. This means that effective teaching learning is therefore, hindered.

Though access to primary education has been made cheaper hence encouraging more children to access education, in terms of costs of other inputs incurred by households such as uniforms and other expenses, it is still costly for some parents from the poor families to access primary education.

Although there has been great improvement in terms of the number of children accessing education, enrolments for some groups remain an issue and for certain groups among those who have access to primary education, attendance is irregular.

In our opinion, there is need to undertake a more comprehensive approach and address all the obstacles both institutional and fiscal that act as barriers in pursuit for universalising primary education. An approach that addresses UPE through systematic and gradual implementation of more sustainable initiatives should be sought.

### 1.8. Recommendations

Universalisation of primary education can be realised through introduction of cost-effective interventions to address the inequalities in access and achievement in primary school. For example there is need to come up with programs that provide remedial education to students who are falling behind. This may be instrumental in improving their performance and hence the quality of education. In addition, school committees could be given such grants and mandate to contract remedial education instructors.



On the other hand, the following areas need to be addressed in order to promote the universalisation of primary education in Kenya:-

- Accelerate the employment of more teachers to meet acceptable teacher-pupil ratio.
- Teacher training programs should be tailored in such a way as to facilitate teaching of all subjects.
- With the inception of devolved government, there is need to contextualise efficient utilisation of learning and teaching resources
- Coming up with piloting of certain intervention measures on small scale before going full scale in as far as universalisation of primary education is concerned.
- Government to come up with ways of expanding the existing schools and where funds allow, they put up new schools especially in hard to reach areas.
- Finally there is need for further research in ways of providing incentives to teachers in order to ensure effective quality teaching is enhanced in primary schools in the face of high enrolments.

## References

- Aduda, D. (2009). Exposed: How officials looted schools' millions. Retrieved from <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/826874/-/vo5w9o/-/index.html>
- Bogonko, S. (1992). *A History of Modern Education in Kenya (1895-1991)*. Nairobi: Evans Brothers.
- Chemwei, B., & Morara, A. (2013). Dropout among Pupils in Rural Primary Schools in Kenya: The Case of Nandi North District, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(19).
- Eshiwani, G. (1992). *Education in Kenya Independence*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- KIPPRA. (2002). *The decline in Primary School Enrolment in Kenya*. NAIROBI: KIPPRA.
- Mckenzie, P., & Santiago, P. (2004). *Improving Teacher Supply and Effectiveness: Raising the Quality of Learning for All. Meeting of OECD Education Ministers Held in Dublin 15-19 March, 2004*.
- Migosi, J., Nanok, D., Ombuki, C., & Metet, J. (2012). Trends in primary school dropout and completion rates. *Universal Journal of Education and General Studies*, 1(10), 331-338.
- Muhoho, G. (1975). "Universal Free Primary Education: the Kenyan experience.". *Paper presented at the Association of African Teachers*. Nairobi.
- Munene, I., & Ruto, S. (2010). The Right to Education for children in Domestic Labour: Empirical evidence from Kenya. *International Review of Education*, 56, 127-147.
- Mwenda, E., M'muyuri, M., Muthaa, G., & Bururia, D. (2013). Dropout among Male Pupils in Primary Schools of Igembe District, Kenya. *Ctive Education*, 4(3), 180-184.
- Ojiambo, P. (2009). Quality of Education and its Role on National Development: A Case study of Kenya's Educational Reforms. *Kenya Studies Review*, 1(1), 133-149.
- OSSREA. (2010). *Free Primary Education in Kenya's Public Schools: Addressing the challenges*. Ethiopia: OSSREA.
- Orodho, A., Waweru, P., Ndichu, M., & Nthinguri, R. (2013). Basic Education in Kenya: Focus on Strategies Applied to Cope with School-based Challenges Inhibiting Effective Implementation of Curriculum. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 10(1).
- Republic of Kenya. (2012). *Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012 on realigning Education and Training to the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Vision 2030 and beyond*. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. Nairobi: Government Printers.
- Republic of Kenya. (2013). *The Basic Education Act 2013 No. 14 of 2013*. Nairobi.
- Sawamura, N., & Sifuna, D. (2008). Universalising Primary Education in Kenya: Is it Beneficial and Sustainable? *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 11(3), 103-118.
- Sifuna, D. (1990). *Development of Education in Africa: The Kenyan Experience*. Nairobi: Initiative Publishers.
- Sifuna, D. (1991). Research in Educational Inequality Issues and Policy Trends in Kenya. *Prospects Vol 21* (2): 281-286.
- Sifuna, D.N. (2005). Increasing Access and Participation of Pastoralist Communities in Primary Education in Kenya. *International Review of Education* (2005) 51: 499-516.
- UNESCO. (2010). *Education For All Global Monitoring Report: Education Marginalisation in Northern Kenya*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Uwezo. (2010). *Kenya National Learning Assessment Report 2010*. Nairobi: Uwezo.
- Wasanga, P., Ogle, M., & Wamabua, R. (2011). *The SACMEQ III Project in Kenya: A study of conditions of schooling and quality of Education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- World Bank. (2008). *National Assessment of Education Achievement Vol.1: Assessing Indicators of Achievement*. Washington D.C.- check from journals or internet?
- Olwande, J.; Mweni, E. Wambugu, S. & Muyanga, M (2008). Free Primary Education: An impact Evaluation using Propensity Score, Methods. Unpublished Report. Research financed by Poverty and Economic Policy Research Network.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

### CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

**Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

### MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Academic conference: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/>

### IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

