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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**ATTAINMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION FOR ALL BY 2015: FROM RHETORIC CHIMERA TO PRACTICE IN KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Despite the commitment of world countries to achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015, many of them, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, are not likely to meet this target by the agreed date. Will Kenya be among the nations likely to achieve this target? Spurred by the current post-2015 debate and signals by the report of the High -Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Agenda of the United Nations (2013) that that there is an education, learning and skills crisis globally, this paper analyzes the current policies, interventions and incentives put in place by the Government of Kenya and profiles the progress made so far towards achievement of the EFA goals. The paper uses a combination of secondary sources from Government documents and other international sources in combination with primary research to examine reality of whether or not the country is on track to achieving EFA by 2015. The analyses use Gross and Net Enrolment ratios (GERs and NERs) by region and gender. The results show that Kenya has made good progress judging by the impressive GERs and NERs at the national level. The NERs are fairly stable and higher than 100%, indicating that EFA has been achieved at this level and hence the country is progressing well. However, when these statistics are unpacked at regional level and examined with a gender lens, then conspicuously wide and severe regional and gender disparities emerge. They show both regional and gender differences as the NERs for females are lower than those for males in some geographic areas, indicating that more males are attending school. The disadvantaged regions are located in the ASAL counties especially among nomadic communities and urban slums. It is recommended that Kenya needs to accelerate the implementation of the adroitly formulated policies and initiatives geared towards eliminating barriers to equity and quality of education, and institute concerted and collaborative approaches directed towards the translation of policies from mere rhetoric chimera to practice in order to achieve the EFA goals by the set deadline of 2015.

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**INTRODUCTION**

**Background information**

Is Kenya on track to meeting the Education For All (EFA) goals, it signed up for, by 2015? Or are the adroitly spelled out free education policies and interventions geared towards achieving EFA by 2015 mere rhetoric and not reality? In 1990, countries of the world, including Kenya, attended a landmark event, a meeting organized by the United Nations in Jomtien, Thailand and they committed themselves to the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Two of these eight MDGs, notably Goal number two and number three, covered education. Ten years later, in 2000, at the World Forum on Education for All (EFA) in Dakar, Senegal, popularly known as the Dakar Framework for Action was unequivocally and unconditionally adopted by 164 Governments (including Kenya), and they committed themselves to expanding educational opportunities for children, young people and adults

and achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) for all by 2015 (United Nations, 2006; UNESCO, 2000; Republic of Kenya, 2012a; Herfkens, 2002). This led many Governments, particularly in developing countries, where provision of education was very low, and the size and complexity of the challenge greatest (Department for International Development, 2001) to make concerted efforts to expand their education systems and improve access to, and the quality of their education so as to achieve this set target (Republic of Kenya, 2012a, 2012b; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). This commitment to EFA became the *political slogan* of the politicians and Governments, and continues to drive the provision of educational opportunities, international discussions, dialogue and action, and the levels and patterns of aid to education, and the planning and investments in education (Parker, 2008 World Bank, 2013; Brookings Institution, 2013; United Nations, 2013).

**State of Art Review Relevant Literature**

In this study, Education for All has been taken as the achievement of universal primary education, where each pupil

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of primary school age group (6 to 12 years in Kenya's case) attends primary school (Odhiambo, 2012; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2012a). EFA in this study has therefore been taken to be the same as universal basic education which spans from Early Childhood and Development Education (ECDE) through primary school to secondary school (UBE). The World Conference of Education for All (WCEFA) that took place in Jomtien in 1990 was a landmark event in that basic education was put on the international development agenda for the very first time. It gave new life and impetus to the idea that education is a right for all children, young people, men as well as women (Herfkens, 2002; UNESCO, 2004; World Bank, 2010). This was followed, ten years later, by the World Forum on Education for All where 164 Governments committed themselves to expand educational opportunities to achieve UPE by 2015 (World Bank, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2000). Available literature alludes to the fact that Kenya is one of the countries within the East African Region that is often held up as a country in Sub-Saharan Africa that has succeeded in the implementation of free primary education which is viewed as the first step towards achieving Education for All (EFA) and some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Oketch and Rolleston, 2007, Oketch and Ngware, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2012a). In Kenya the implementation of free primary education (FPE) policy is leading to new policies for access to secondary education such as the Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) initiative, which has catapulted exponential growth in primary and secondary school enrolment (Odhiambo, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 1997, 2005 2012a, 2012b; Republic of Kenya/ UNESCO, 2012).

Historically, Kenya, as with all other countries that were under colonial rule experienced limited access to education at all levels during the colonial period and hence the country faced educational and literacy challenges following political independence in the 1960s. Kenya declared a campaign for Universal Primary Education (UPE) free of charge as a long-term objective in 1963 following the setting up of the Ominde Commission in 1964 (Republic of Kenya, 1964; 1965). While FPE is often associated with Jomtien and Dakar conferences of 1990 and 2000, respectively, which set the current EFA targets, the idea of UPE in Kenya is traceable to the 1961 Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa, held in Addis Ababa. The main purpose of the Conference was to provide a forum for African states gaining independence 'to decide on their priority educational needs for the promotion of economic and social development in Africa, and in the light of these, to establish a first tentative short and long- term plan for educational development in the continent, embodying the priorities they had decided upon for the economic growth of the region' (Republic of Kenya, 1965, 1970; UNESCO, 1961). Following the implementation of FPE policy in 2003 the net enrolment ratio in Kenya grew by a further 22.3 per cent. However, as in the 1970s, the implementation of free primary education was beleaguered with difficulties. Rapid expansion in enrolment exacerbated problems of teaching and learning facilities, increased classroom congestion and raised teacher-pupil ratios. These problems, again as in the 1970s, led to high drop-out rates and adversely affected the inflow of pupils in the second year of implementation. Districts that registered a 20 per cent increase in enrolment in 2003 hardly recorded more

than 5per cent in 2004 (Muthwii, 2004; Republic of Kenya, 1970, 1974, 1979; OWN and Associates, 2004). While the Kenyan Government raised its education budget in 2003-04 by 17.4 per cent and was strongly supported by donor funding in its free primary education initiative, Muthwii raises questions over the sustainability of the policy. The cost of providing FPE is beyond the scope of the ordinary education budget, economic performance has not been strong and donor finance is often temporary. She concludes that the FPE initiative of 2003, like similar interventions in the past was pursued as a matter of political expediency. It was not adequately planned and resourced and thus had the consequences of increased drop-out and falling educational quality. In view of these challenges, Muthwii considers the attainment of sustained FPE an illusion in the context of Kenya (Muthwii, 2004; Republic of Kenya, 2005).

Mukudi (2004) similarly addresses issues of sustainability with regard to universal primary education in Kenya, including public resource capacity and educational quality in view of what may be considered disappointing economic performance. The study uses secondary data on a variety of economic, educational and demographic factors to explore the costs and other implications of achieving UPE in Kenya based on current per capita spending. Kenya allocates a similar proportion of its national budget to education as developed countries which in 1999-2000 amounted to around US\$82 per student. Expanding access threatens to reduce the per capita figure thereby threatening quality but dilemmas exist in expanding the budget in terms of the available funding for other phases of education and other sectors of social spending. Mukudi (2004) calculates that a further US\$94.5 million would be required to fund universal access at the current quality (i.e. per capita funding) level. A further 2917 schools would be needed to maintain school population sizes. If the education budget was reassigned to meet these costs in primary education, only 4.4 per cent of the budget would remain available for post-primary education. The abolition of fees has meant that the US\$3.2 million previously contributed by parents will be needed from government. Mukudi focuses on the importance of economic growth and explains that while poverty levels remain high; asking parents to contribute to education will reduce access and stall the realisation of UPE. Government funding of education is considered central to access, equity and quality and demand for publicly funded education in Kenya may be considered strong in the light of the rapid access increases following the elimination of fees (Republic of Kenya, 1979; 2010; Republic of Kenya, 2012a, 2012b).

Yet, Kenya's foreign capital based import-substituting economy may not be ideally placed for growth. It is argued that the impediments to growth must be removed and that otherwise the pursuit of UPE may detract from the provision of other services. Without adequate investment however, the synergies between educational access, economic growth and poverty reduction may not be capitalised upon and a vicious cycle may be observed in which global competitiveness becomes elusive with the absence of investment in knowledge creation (Mukudi, 2004; Republic of Kenya, 1979). Vos, Bedi, Kimalu, Manda and Nafula (2004) joined the debate in arguing that given the financial constraints Kenya faces, meeting EFA targets will require a more efficient resource allocation within

the education sector. They examine a number of options. Rapid expansion in access to primary education in Kenya has been beset by problems of resourcing and overcrowding which threaten educational quality. Despite the abolition of school fees there remain other obstacles to enrolment especially among the poor including the need for children to be employed and poor perceptions of the quality and utility of the education on offer. The authors examine intra-sectoral efficiency issues of public spending on primary education in Kenya through a results-based planning approach which compares a number of policy options. Using Bedi and colleagues (2002) study of demand for education, Vos *et al.* (2004) find that the availability of qualified teachers and the direct costs of education are the most significant determinants of demand and they calculate elasticity's which describe the responsiveness of primary enrolment to changes in costs and levels of qualified teachers by household income quintile. They then use educational costs data for Kenya to estimate the costs of reaching an enrolment rate of 85 per cent by 2005/6 with 2002/3 as the base year. For example, they calculate that to increase enrolment by 1 per cent by increasing the share of qualified teachers, a 2.6 per cent increase in qualified teachers would be required at a cost of 588 shillings (roughly U\$8.6) per (additional) pupil per month. Eight budget simulations are constructed assuming a constant teacher-pupil ration of 1 to 33, the starting budget as that of 2002-3, the rate of budget growth of that year and that there is sufficient institutional capacity for expansion. The simulations involve increasing the share of qualified teachers to the level required for the intermediate target of 85 per cent net enrolment, increasing the supply of text books, subsidizing the direct costs of education and a combination of these policy initiatives to achieve the 85 per cent goal. They also consider scenarios whereby 100 per cent net enrollment is targeted for the bottom two quintiles and where the government meets all the costs to households of education (Vos *et al.*, 2004).

Vos *et al.* (2004) aver that given the population growth, an additional nominal 27 per cent increase in the budget will be required to maintain the pupil-teacher ratio between 2002/3 and 2005/6 which, if growth forecasts proved correct would reduce education spending from 3 per cent of GDP to 2.9 per cent. The NER would be projected to reach 79 to 80 per cent on this basis. This is the baseline scenario. To reach a NER of 85 per cent through improving the number of qualified teachers, they find a ten percentage point annual increase in the number of such teachers would be required which would increase the budget by 41 per cent. To reach the target through an increase in the volume of textbooks would be expected to require a 45 per cent budget increase. Both these scenarios would leave the bottom income quintiles with NERs below the target. A policy mix of more teachers, textbooks and direct subsidy is shown to require a 41 per cent increase in the budget but with greater benefit to the bottom quintiles. These scenarios require increases in the budget, which amount to somewhere around 0.1 to 0.2 per cent of GDP and are considered affordable by Vos *et al.* (2004) in the Kenyan context (although beyond current fiscal constraints). When aimed at 100 per cent enrollment for the bottom two quintiles it was estimated to require a further 0.5 per cent of GDP. They (Vos *et al.*, 2004) show that the cost of the government bearing all household education costs would require a 91 per cent budget increase or

0.8 per cent of GDP and result in an NER of 94 per cent make a considerable difference. The education targets of 2005 could be reached with an additional 0.1-0.2 per cent of GDP being spent and the target of 100 per cent enrollment could be approached with an additional investment of 0.8 per cent of GDP. If returns to education are high enough, they could justify borrowing to finance this investment. King (2005) avers that despite targeting the achievement of UPE by 2005, as many as 1.5 million Kenyan children remain out of school, in the formal sense at least. Considerable challenges exist in schooling these out-of-school children who may prove the most expensive to reach (Oketch and Ngware 2012).

Difficulties also arise in monitoring what has happened with respect to the achievement of UPE as although it is claimed that millions of new children have enrolled, little data is available. There are also a number of unintended consequences of providing free primary education in Kenya. King that whilst cost-sharing was excluding the poor, the advent of free education has meant that parents may now take it that they need make no financial contribution, and many have moved children from low-cost informal provision to the state sector. A further corollary of rising numbers and falling quality in the state system may be that wealthier parents prefer the fee-paying private sector. Further issues of declining teacher morale and quality may exacerbate these problems and ultimately make it more difficult for bright children from poor families to succeed. The author reference needed points out that if primary education is to bring development benefits, children must actually master the intended curriculum and notes that there is much evidence to suggest this may not happen (King, 2005). King (2005) further discusses the importance of inter-sectoral factors in the success of educational investment programmes such as KESSP. The need for teachers to find second incomes, the increasing importance of non-meritocratic criteria for employment selection and issues of state capacity, good governance and corruption are important determinants of the results of educational investment whilst being outside the control of the sector. Issues of educational access, equity, quality, efficiency, financial sustainability, governance and management are thus inter-sectoral issues. King suggests that recent policy thinking by the Commission for Africa, the World Bank and United Nations Millennium Project recognises the synergies between these inter-sectoral factors and the MDGs. He concludes that the UPE goals will require a holistic approach, not only a focus on primary education, and indeed educational investment alone will not be enough. He emphasizes the importance of other sectors including agriculture, energy, transport and trade along with the need for strong national vision, good governance and government capacity-building. The minimalist approach to development discernible in the MDGs needs to be broadened and King sees some signs that this is already taking place. In this environment, Kenya's own approach may not be seen as so ambitious and wide-ranging, as the MDGs become just one entry point into a wider perspective on investment and organizational and institutional change (King, 2005; UNESCO, 2004; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The situation on the ground remains rather blurred with contradictory results. While some Ministry of Education

officials and donors claim that EFA has been achieved in the country, or is very close to being achieved, a recent evaluation of education carried out jointly by the Republic of Kenya and UNESCO (2012) in the country reveal that there still many primary school-age children not attending school because of many reasons: poor children who do not have money to pay latent user fees imposed by individual schools or the top up fees on items not covered by the Free Primary Education (FPE) and Free Day Secondary Education(FDSE), those who do not have money to pay for transport to school and for uniforms, who do not have schools within walking distance, children that are kept at home by parents to assist them ,e.g. look after cattle or act as maids, schools that are full and reject pupils who apply for admission, orphaned and vulnerable children with no one to support them, and a host of other bottlenecks ( Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2010, 2012a, 2012b). Yet, the Republic of Kenya joined the other world countries and committed itself to achieving EFA by 2015 (Republic of Kenya 2012a). A key question that arises is: following its commitment, is the country on course to achieving the EFA goals and targets by 2015? Are all eight Provinces of the country on equal level in their development to achieving EFA, or are there any provinces and counties that are lagging behind? Are both males and females on the same level towards achieving EFA, or is there a gender that is lagging behind? And, are the interventions and strategies put in place towards the attainment of EFA yielding desired results as we approach the deadline of 2015? Answers to these questions are presently either lacking or unclear and this does not help the country in planning its education system properly as it does not know if the current rates of development of the education system will lead the country to achieve its targets or not by the deadline of 2015 that is just around the corner (United Nations, 2013).

### **The Purpose and Objectives of the Paper**

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the policies on free primary and secondary education in Kenya and examine the extent to which Kenya is on course to attain education for all (EFA) goals by 2015? This paper has three fold objectives, namely:

1. To find out from existing Government pronouncements, documents, publications, press reports the genesis and development of free education policies aimed at the achievement of EFA in Kenya.
2. To compare eight provinces of the country and the two sexes to determine if there are any regional and gender differences in their achievement of EFA.
3. To examine critical challenges inhibiting attainment of EFA and provide some plausible explanations to the challenges, and make recommendations for the way forward.

To accomplish the objectives, the paper is guided by following two questions: What were the politics and underpinning philosophy surrounding the formulation of the policies in Kenya and have the policies changed over time, and if so why? What are the critical emerging challenges inhibiting the attainment of equity and quality of education in the country?

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The paper is based on a historical research design utilizing two sources of data: secondary data from desk review of literature

supplemented with primary data from studies in North Eastern Province in Kenya. In an attempt to answer the two questions, this paper explores a variety of issues concerning the implementation process including: questions of the supply of school places, the level of social and economic demand and the presence of possible access inhibitors (including the availability of facilities). Access indicators such as pupil flows and rates of retention/dropout, achievement, transition to secondary and participation of excluded groups are sharply focused on. The statistical data derived from these two sources was analyzed by the researcher to determine the enrolment and participation rates using the common indicators of gross and net enrolment ratios. The analysis would further provide information to assess access to primary education and whether EFA has been reached or not.

The Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios were calculated by the usual formulas indicated below:

Gross Enrolment Ratio = Total enrolment in primary school divided by the Number of Children in the population that were between 6 and 12 years (inclusive) Multiplied by 100%.

Net Enrolment Ratio = Total Enrolment in Primary School that is between 6 and 12 years (inclusive) divided by the Number of Children in the Population that were between 6 and 12 years (inclusive) Multiplied by 100%.

The paper also explores main challenges inhibiting effective implementation of the education policies, particularly issues of the institutionalization, replicability and financial sustainability of FPE policies, along with the implications for the poorest groups and subsequently offer a possible way forward.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Evolution of Political and underpinning policies in Free Education**

To reiterate, the first step towards the implementation of UPE in Kenya was the abolition of the racial school system which had existed under the colonial government. The next step was the scrapping the Standard IV examination that made it difficult for Africans to progress beyond four years of schooling during colonial time. The third step was the elimination of school fees in semi-arid areas and their remission for needy cases throughout the country in 1974. This was followed by a policy of the provision of free primary education for the first four years from January 1974 (Bogonko, 1992:25). In 1978, a national policy of seven years free primary education was announced. These changes saw primary education enrolment rise by 23.3 percent from 980,849 pupils in 1964 to 1,209,680 pupils in 1968. 'By 1983, expansion in enrolment had more than quadrupled from 891,553 (or less than 60 per cent of school-age children) in 1963 to about 4.3 million (or nearly 93 percent of primary-age children) in 1983' (Bogonko, 1992:25). But the efficacy of the FPE policy came under question due to a sharp decline in enrolment experienced between 1975 and 1978, Bogonko (1992:26) notes that, 'the charging of fees for Standards. V-VII and non-fee costs levied on parents were responsible for the recession. When free education was provided for Stds. V-VII in 1979, a sharp increase was once again noticed'. After Moi took over as President in 1978 following the death of Kenyatta he declared

full FPE and asked that no levies should be charged. This continued as the national policy until 1988 when cost-sharing was introduced. Cost-sharing required parents to contribute to the education of their children, particularly in purchasing books and equipments and constructing school buildings. This was the main reason behind a decline in what had been an impressive primary GER. When FPE was reintroduced in 2003, the NARC Government declared that all levies should be eliminated for the eight years of Kenya's primary education and the policy was implemented at once for all grades nationwide (Oketch and Rolleston, 2007; Oketch and Ngware, 2012).

King (2005) discusses a number of trade-offs which are emerging between 'basic' and 'post-basic' educational provision in the context of Kenya. These relate to issues of quality, access, and inequality, the provision of other social services, the development of productive employment opportunities, and the evolution of international and donor development policy alongside that of the Kenyan government. He notes that despite a shift in international development thinking towards poverty reduction and UPE in the 1990s, as well as a heavy reliance by Kenya on donor assistance for recurrent education expenditure, Kenya retains its commitment to a broad-based educational strategy which makes reference to links with the labour market, economic growth, wealth creation and the informal employment sector (Republic of Kenya, 1974, 1979). From the 1980s, Kenya's support for 'diversified' schools and their work-orientation had been at odds with international thinking which emphasized high returns to primary education and basic education expansion. The poverty perspective has become evident in Kenyan policy particularly since the externally driven PRSP which focuses on the provision of essential social services, which includes primary education, for low income groups. This agenda has encouraged the identification of inequities in the Kenyan education system particularly concerning cost-sharing and measures such as bursaries for the most disadvantaged in the education system have been put in place. However, moves in the international agenda more recently for education and development towards more comprehensive approaches have brought more coherence between international EFA goals and Kenyan policies. Kenya continues to emphasize wealth creation, the micro and small enterprise sectors, skills and technology. The 2004 and 2005 sector-wide approaches (SWAPS), developed in conjunction with external partners, also make reference to these aspects of a more comprehensive approach and King suggests that the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) may represent a strategic compromise between external and internal development priorities in Kenya (King, 2005).

### **Impact of Free Basic Education Policies in Kenya**

The MoE and its stakeholders designed and developed the KEASSP based on a Sector-Wide Approach to Planning (SWAP). This was developed through a consultative process as the only programme for the sector through which stakeholders would channel their support to education. The first phase of KEASSP was designed to run from 2005 to June 2010. Under this phase, the focus has mainly been on access, equity, quality and relevance of education as well as strengthening sector management. The government has paid special attention on the attainment of EFA and the MDGs. Over the years, enrolment

has been steadily rising from 5.9 million (boys 3 million, girls 2.9 million) in 2000 to 7.2 million (boys 3.7 million, girls 3.5 million) in 2005, to 9.4 million (boys 4.8 million, girls 4.6 million) in 2010. The steady increase, especially since 2003, can be partly attributed to strategies put in place by the Government of Kenya such as the introduction of free primary education and the school infrastructure programme (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). Transition rates over the same period have been slow, with very few children transitioning to secondary schools due to a variety of challenges. However, after the abolition of school fees in 2003 a positive trend has been recorded with transition rates increasing from 43.3% (boys 43.8%, girls 42.6%) in 2000, to 56% (boys 57.2%, girls 54.7%) in 2005, surpassing the set target of 70% by 2010 stand at 72%. The gender parity index was 0.98%, in 2008, in 2009 it was 0.96% and to 1.02% in 2010. GPI has improved and at national level, there is gender parity, but regional disparities remain as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1 shows GER values recorded over the same period. From the year 2000, there was an increase in the Gross Enrolment Rate from 99.6% to 109.8% in 2010, indicating that the system may have either under-age or over-age pupils enrolled, or both. The Net Enrolment Rate indicates that there has been a steady increase since the baseline years 2000; however, the government did not achieve the target of 100% NER by 2010 as depicted in the Table.

The PTR has also been rising steadily since 2003 due to an influx of pupils because of the introduction of free primary education. The observed trends indicate that the country is on course to achieve EFA Goal 2 by 2015 (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). In the secondary level there has been a positive trend. Table 2 shows trends in access equity, completion and gender parity at the secondary school level. Since 2000, secondary school enrolment has been below average. The secondary completion rate also increased, with over 90% of those enrolling in secondary school completing their education.

Data displayed in Table 2 on secondary school indicators in Kenya reveals that, in 2000, the GER was 25.55% (boys 26.6%, girls 23%), in 2005 GER increased slightly to 28.8 % (boys 30.7%, girls 26.9%) and finally in 2010 to 47.85 % (boys 50.9%, girls 46.3%). This could have been a result of the introduction of Free Day secondary Education in 2008. Net enrolment also increased slightly in 2000, from 14.1% (boys 13.9%, girls 14%) rising to 20.5% (boys 21.9%, girls 19.1%) in 2005, to 32.7% (boys 32.4%, girls 32.9%) in 2010 (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). The significant increase in enrolments between 2005 and 2010 may be attributed to the introduction of Free Day Secondary Education in January 2008. The gender parity index at secondary school level has steadily narrowed, except in 2005 when it briefly widened. However, the overall trend has improved and Kenya has almost achieved gender parity at secondary school level. Free Primary Education has made many parents in Kenya of low level households to heave a sigh of relief. Majority of the Kenyan children before the advent of Free Primary Education were not able to access Primary Education due to the escalating cost of education, and they perceived the introduction of free Primary Education (FPE) and Free Day Secondary Education (PDSE0 as a panacea to their problems regarding education.

**Table 1. Primary Gross Enrolment Rate in Kenya 2000-2010**

Year	Boys	Girls	Total	GER/Boys	GER/Girls	GER/Total
2000	3,680,176	2,933,156	6,613,332	111.3	88.0	99.6
2001	3,3002,176	2,939,134	5,941,610	90.8	88.1	89.4
2002	3,073,929	2,988,813	6,062,742	92.9	89.6	91.2
2003	3,674,398	3,485,124	7,159,522	111.1	104.5	107.8
2004	3,821,837	3,575,209	7,397,046	112.0	103.9	108.0
2005	3,912,399	3,690,112	7,602,511	111.2	104.0	107.6
2006	3,896,578	3,735,535	7,632,113	106.4	101.1	103.8
2007	4,258,616	4,071,532	8,330,148	111.8	106.0	108.9
2008	4,440,770	4,284,282	8,725,052	112.2	107.3	109.8
2009	4,643,435	4,433,983	9,077,418	112.8	107.2	110.0
2010	4,751,943	4,629,268	9,381,211	108.8	109.9	109.8

Source: Ministry of Education MoE EMIS Data (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

**Table 2. Secondary school Indicators in Kenya by 2010**

Indicator	Baseline value 2000	Target 2005	Actual 2005	Target 2010	Actual 2010	Gap 2010
Gross Enrolment Rate GER	25.5	100	28.8	100	47.8	52.2
Net Enrolment Rate NER	14.1	100	20.5	100	32.7	67.3
Completion Rate	90.9	100	97.1	100	97.6	2.4
Gender Parity Index	1.01	1.00	.83	1.00	1.02	.+02
% Trained Teachers	97.3	100.0	97.9	100.0	99.80	0.20

Source: Ministry of Education, EMIS Data (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

However, despite these impressive gains at the national level, these policies have been fraught with a myriad of intertwined problems ranging from regional and gender disparities in access to and participation in education to a range of issues related to the quality of education provided in public schools in Kenya (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; Wasanga, Ogle and Wambua, 2011a, 2011b).

At the primary school level, some of the factors which have hindered the attainment of the targets include poverty especially in the urban slums and ASAL areas, insecurity in some areas, especially North Eastern Region due to cattle rustling, and negative cultural practices that affect girls in particular. Such practices include early marriage, child labor in agricultural areas where children are withdrawn from schools to pick tea, coffee, and even Khat (*miraa*), fishing zones, as well as tourist zones along the coastal region of the country which keeps children away from schools. Due to high poverty levels, especially in urban areas, most parents are unable to meet their family's basic needs and hence use their children to supplement their meager incomes (Republic of Kenya, 2010; 2012a). The Government of Kenya has trained all (100%) primary school teachers, but budget constraints that led to a freeze on hiring civil servants have had adverse effects on teacher hiring and deployment. The Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) has improved steadily since the introduction of FPE; however, there are regional variations where PTRs are higher than the national level of 45:1 for instance Coast Province with 53.3 in 2007 and even 60:1 in some schools (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). At the secondary school level in Kenya, one of the key factors constraining growth in enrolment at this level is a lack of adequate secondary schools to match primary schools. In 2003, there were 3,583 public secondary schools and 452 registered private secondary schools, compared to 17,697 public primary schools. Following implementation of FPE there was an increase in demand for secondary education, which was and still is more acute in urban areas, especially urban slums, where over 60% of the total urban population is concentrated. However, with the

introduction of free day secondary education in 2008 enrolment at secondary level increased slightly schools (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012).

At the secondary level in Kenya, there are conspicuous regional and gender disparities as well as low quality of education (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). The two regions identified as having huge disparities in enrolment are Nairobi and North Eastern provinces. In 2002, North Eastern Province recorded a Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in which 16.8% (boys 19.6% and girls 14.1%) of school-age population children were attending school. This implies that 89.4% of boys and 85.9% of girls of school-going age are not accessing education at this level (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). The training has not been well structured or systematic enough to take into account the high turnover of head teachers and school committees. The cascading system employed to reach the officers is not effective and dilutes content by the time it gets to the grass roots level. Limited staffing at the MoE headquarters coupled with inadequate implementation and supervisory field staff, has greatly affected the ministry's programming. The ministry of Education has admitted that it does not have adequate personnel to address emerging issues such as information technology, human rights, environmental issues, guidance and counseling, and governance and accountability, among others (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012).

## Conclusion

It is evident that Kenya has been successful in increasing enrolments although they now face two particular problems, enrolling the remaining 10 to 20 per cent of the relevant school age population at the primary level who tend to be the poorest children, and ensuring that those in school benefit from quality learning. It is also arguable that, even where fees are not factors in preventing access to, and retention in education they may still has a regressive impact. The greater the level of household income inequality, as was the case in the North

Eastern Province of Kenya, the harder it is for the poor to pay fees (Wasanga, Ogle and Wambua, 2011a, 2011b). The experience of Kenya shows that the elimination of fees at the primary level can have dramatic results. Inevitably, increased enrolment has resulted in concerns for deteriorating quality and increased demand for secondary education. On the negative side, low enrolment may reflect a lack of supply of schooling, the opportunity costs of attending school, the perceived low returns from schooling in the labour market or other factors such as the distance to school and for girls the existence of female teachers and separate toilets. Thus, findings reported in this paper support the earlier conclusion by Raja and Burnett (2004) that determinants of enrolment include household income, schooling cost, and presence of schools, community involvement, transportation, education quality and relevance (Wasanga, Ogle and Wambua, 2011a, 2011b). It is also evident that price elasticities of demand for education are often higher for the poor and for girls in Kenya. There is ample evidence and good intuitive reasoning for the idea that enrolments will be lower for the poor and for girls as the household cost of education rises and as a result, reductions in the costs of schooling for these groups will promote equity. However, it is also cautioned that the direct impact of fees on learning and educational quality is more difficult to discern. It is apparent that demand for education is sensitive to quality as well as price so it may be that in some circumstances at least, a trade-off between price and quality exists among some communities in Kenya.

In the Kenyan context, it appears the Government of the Republic of Kenya is banking on community partnership which led to the establishment of *harambee* secondary schools in the 1970s but whether that will work today given the different labour market circumstances is not clear. It is likely that the poor will find it difficult to access secondary education even after completing primary education. This will limit the impact of education on poverty reduction and in meeting the MDGs. It is evident that there is to clearly understand the shift in the factors that might encourage or hinder strong community involvement in the development of basic education and whether the policies outlined by the Government are likely to have any impact. For instance, do these policies address causes of exclusion in higher levels of basic education among the poor? Given that governments of Kenya is offering free education and yet some regions are still lagging behind in access to, and quality of education, the unanswered question is : Is it lack of adequate facilities (supply-side factor) that is causing low enrollment in semi arid areas or is it a lack of interest (demand-side factor) in further basic education? Or which other factors are inhibiting access to higher levels of basic education? Will FPE work for the poor in terms of helping them advance to some form of secondary education which has been made part of basic education in Kenya?

This study found high and impressive gross and net enrolment ratios for Kenya. What is of concern though is the fact that although the NER has been fairly high, this picture is rather blurred by the hidden conspicuously wide regional and gender disparities. Although specific measures have been put in place to bridge these gaps especially by introducing mobile schools, low cost boarding for girls in hard to reach areas, and bursaries for girls in marginalized communities, the impact of these

strategies is minimal and rather slow in arresting the situation. The finding confirms UNESCO's (2004) assertion that although considerable progress has been made by many countries in SSA, the pace is slow. The recent observations by United Nations (2013) that globally, there is an education, learning and skills crisis. They document that some 60 million primary-age children and 71 million adolescents do not attend school (United Nations, 2013). Even in countries where the overall enrolment is high, significant number of children leave school early (Brookings Institution, 2013). So it is not only unique to Kenya, as other SSA countries have experienced this slow pace and stagnation. It is of concern that gender disparities continue to exist in the primary school system despite its expansion of access. There is therefore no equal access on the system and girls are being left behind and thus violating goal number 3 of the MDGs. It is further worrying that about 6% of the primary school age population in sub-Saharan Africa is not attending primary school, why?. Is this the case in Kenya, particularly with the females? If it is, what should be done? Are there other constraints on top of the financial ones? Further research is required on this.

### **Recommendation**

The study set out to find out if Kenya is on track to achieving the EFA target by 2015. What the study has found and recommends is that:

1. Despite the country having achieved high and impressive gross and net enrolment ratios, the NERs are still less than 100% in some counties in Kenya. They further remain constant and are not rising as expected and desired. This means that there are still a large number of 6 to 12 year olds who are not attending primary school. It is recommended that drastic measures including legal steps to be taken against parents and /or guardians who do not take advantage of the free and compulsory education as enshrined in the Basic Education Act (2013) that should, hopefully, result in accelerated progress for these rates in the disadvantaged regions to increase to 100%. Unless these measures are implemented the country is unlikely to achieve the EFA target by 2015.
2. At the theoretical and rhetoric podium there are several government pronouncements, documents, and interventions that have indicated that achieving the EFA targets/goals are the major policy of the Government of Kenya and the Ministry of Education. More education stakeholders and development partners need to emulate the innovative strategies being done by USAID through EMACK in North Eastern Province of Kenya and joint efforts by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF to accelerate education intervention strategies in marginalized communities. Some of these initiatives date as far back as at the time the country gained her political independence in 1963. Despite this rhetoric chimera, however, this paper contends that officers on the ground at county level of Government should know that UPE in their areas of jurisdiction still has not been achieved, and will not be achieved in all regions of the country and some gender genders by 2015 with the current rates of growth.
3. The results of this study indicate that on account of education equity and quality as well as retention in school by

region, Kenya is not on track to achieving EFA targets by 2015. In fact, there seems to be gender differences in accessing primary schools, with the females lagging behind and the males having larger access to primary schooling in Coast and North Eastern Provinces and the situation reversing to the disadvantage of boys in some counties in Central, Eastern and Western Provinces. This study's findings, therefore, show no similar trend in regional differences as regards the NERs and GERs. So, all the eight provinces do not seem to, and have similar challenges regarding equal access to basic education which has been declared free and compulsory as a basic human right. The USAID initiative in North Eastern Province (NEP) is Education for the Marginalized Children of Kenya (EMACK), carried out in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Agha Khan Foundation. In NEP, for instance, MACK is involved in the training of school management, provision of mobile schools to follow pastoralists with their livestock, and teacher development initiatives. In addition, there is strong NGO presence in the province to try and arrest the situation of gender disparity by supporting girls in staying in school. Their specific initiatives include the Girls Forum Initiative that was started in 2006. Through this initiative more toilets for girls have been built and sanitary towels provided. However, sooner than later, efforts will have to be shifted towards addressing the emerging *boy-child problem* in some counties within certain provinces in the county. This notwithstanding, with these adroitly articulated and implemented initiatives, North Eastern and Coast Provinces have not shown the expected impact given that the provinces lags behind other provinces in all education indicators of access, equity and quality education. It is likely that many socio-economic and cultural as well as political factors may be the reason for this sorry state and more research is urgently required.

4. Finally, is the original question regarding whether or not Kenya is likely to achieve the EFA goals by the fast approaching date of 2015. The foregoing discussion provides enough evidence to reach the contentious verdict that in reality EFA will not be reached in Kenya by 2015 when current trends of regional disparity, gender inequality in access to, and participation in education is anything to rely on. To achieve EFA, these trends have to change, even if it means shifting the deadline to 2030 to coincide with the deadline of Vision 2030. The tough choice is that Kenya must take unpopular mechanisms to eliminate all barriers to basic education, enforce constitutional punitive measures to parents and/or guardians who keep school -age going children at home, overburden learners with unnecessary domestic /and or household chores or still practice retrogressive and outdated cultural practices that keep children, particularly girls, out of school. These drastic policy orientations and implementation mechanisms may seem harsh but should be boldly applied to ensure a really *Big Push* to have all the 6 to 12 year olds to attend school in line with the Kenya Constitution and the Basic Education Act (2013). As it is currently, the achievement of EFA targets by 2015 is mere rhetoric chimera and not reality.

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