POLICY BRIEF

# Rethinking Basic Education Funding in Kenya

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## Key messages

a) The FPE resulted in positive educational outcomes for human capital development. For this reason, the policy deserves continued support.

b) There is need to accelerate education funding in Kenya and to reduce the burden shouldered by the households.

c) More dialogue is needed with stakeholders to depoliticize education support prior to the implementation.

d) It is important that education financing introduces gender and regional dimensions to ensure that those who are likely to lag behind in enrollment, completion and transition are given special attention.

e) There is need to link school support systems with livelihoods support for households so that children do not drop out of school due to hunger and related aspects experienced at home.

# What are the issues?

The introduction of the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy by a new regime in 2003 was done politically. It saw massive access to primary schools for hitherto unenrolled children. IMF (2007) noted that in the first year of the introduction (2003), the gross enrollment rate increased from 92% to 104%. The pupil-to-teacher ratio increased from 1:34 to 1:40 and to some extent 1:100 in marginalized areas and informal settlements. The congestion experienced in schools is hypothesized to have led to poor education outcomes and education quality.

# Why is it important?

The right to education is well articulated in SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) as well as in Articles 43 and 53 of the Constitution of Kenya. In addition, the Basic Education Act 2013 guarantees every Kenyan citizen access to basic education and the legal mechanisms enshrined in the Act should operationalize quality, free and compulsory basic education in Kenya (Mulinya and Orodho, 2015). Despite Kenya being party to these instruments, the country is yet to have this right realized. This necessitates an examination of the situation with a view to accelerating basic education in Kenya.

# Policy options/implications

With FPE funding, enrollment rates improved due to increased funding including more teacher employment and removal of school fees and levies. Learner achievement including literacy rates (https://borgenproject.org/tag/free-primary-education-fpe/) improved but not significantly. It implies the need to combine both quantity and quality aspects during funding and related support to education.

Completion rates did not produce the same positive results at 22% compared to enrolments. However there were gender and regional disparities with some regions and genders having lower rates. This implies the need to pay specific attention to some regions (e.g. marginal areas) and some genders on the reasons behind low completion.

Source: https://borgenproject.org/tag/free-primary-education-fpe/

Transition rate also improved at 9.6% for every year of policy implementation but this was much lower than enrollment and completion. Moreover, the budget and expenditure of the Ministry of Education was important in this respect. How can transition be improved?

# Key policy recommendations

This brief has provided evidence that the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy has had significant effects on primary education outcomes, mainly enrollment, transition, and completion. This has been made possible through substantial investments in physical infrastructure, teacher recruitment, and funding for educational resources such as school levies and books. However, there are still such unfunded items as food, uniforms and other expenses.

Given the positive outcomes, the policy deserves continued support. Second, there is need to accelerate education funding in Kenya and to reduce the burden shouldered by the households. Third, and for smooth implementation and more success of such policies, there is need to have more dialogue among stakeholders prior to the implementation. The dialogue would promote the buy-in by all stakeholders early enough. Fourth, and given the evidence of gender and regional differentials in the outcomes, equity considerations on gender and regional balance are required. Fifth is the need to merge education support systems with livelihoods support for households so that children do not drop out of school due to hunger experienced at home.

# Suggested sources

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