



# **Dynamics of Low-Fee Private Schools in Kenya:**

## **Governmental Legitimation, School-Community Dependence, and Resource Uncertainty**

D. Brent Edwards Jr.  
Drexel University

Steven J. Klees  
University of Maryland, College Park

Janet Wildish  
Trocaire

**September 2015**

Cover Photo:

Schoolyard scene, Nairobi, Kenya © 2013 Reporters / Caters

**Dynamics of Low-Fee Private Schools in Kenya:  
Governmental Legitimation, School-Community  
Dependence, and Resource Uncertainty**

September 2015

D. Brent Edwards Jr.  
Drexel University

Steven J. Klees  
University of Maryland, College Park

Janet Wildish  
Trocaire

# Abstract

Low-fee private schools (LFPSs) are increasingly receiving attention from scholars and policymakers around the world, particularly as the latter, together with a range of international actors and organizations, look for ways to extend educational access to children in the poorest and hardest to reach areas. While literature on LFPSs has grown in recent years, the majority of studies on LFPSs tend to look at isolated outcomes and impacts without exploring the dynamics of how LFPSs operate in practice and, specifically, within a context of governmental support. In the present paper, we take these dynamics as our central focus within the case of Kenya, where in 2005 the government not only began to recognize LFPSs but also to provide grants for instructional materials, conditioned on enhanced supervision and parental involvement in school management. We zero in on how government officials, LFPS representatives, parents, and students interact and influence one another. That is, we illuminate the multiple ways in which these stakeholders connect and are constrained (and with what consequences). In so doing, we reveal trade-offs that result from the combination of official support, increased legitimacy, parental demand and oversight, and resource uncertainty. We also reflect on the advisability of governments further engaging LFPSs to provide educational services.

# Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1	Low-Fee Private Schooling .....	6
<b>3.</b>	<b>Methods</b> .....	<b>12</b>
3.1	Data Collection .....	12
3.2	Data Analysis .....	15
<b>4.</b>	<b>Context</b> .....	<b>16</b>
4.1	Slums .....	16
4.2	Enrollment .....	16
4.3	LFPS in Kenya .....	17
<b>5.</b>	<b>Findings</b> .....	<b>20</b>
5.1	Theme 1: Governmental Support, Legitimation and Regulatory Inconsistency .....	20
5.2	Theme 2: School Management Committees, Fee-Setting Dynamics, and Mutual Dependence .....	25
5.3	Theme 3: Enrollment, Resources, and Expectations .....	28
<b>6.</b>	<b>Discussion and Implications</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>References</b> .....	<b>37</b>



# 1. Introduction

The promise of urban prosperity continues to draw thousands of people into already congested cities in low-income countries. However, the anticipated advantages of urban living, such as greater access to employment or education and health services, are often found to be illusory and many unfortunate people are reduced to living in informal settlements, commonly known as slums, where conditions are reported to have fallen below those of rural areas (Mugisha, 2006). In Africa, approximately 72 percent of the urban population is estimated to be living in slums (Cohen, 2006 in Merkel & Otai, 2007), and this density of people, along with the lack of any planned infrastructure or development planning, severely tests the provision of public services in these areas.

In response to the high parental demand for school places in the informal settlements, a demand that is heightened by government promises of “free” primary education, and in the face of a limited supply of quality schools from the government, many cities in low-income developed countries have seen a “mushrooming”<sup>1</sup> of growth in the non-state provision of primary education. Much of this growth has been in the form of community or private initiatives to establish schools within informal settlements, schools in which low fees are levied, and which are referred to in the international literature under the broad terms of “non-state providers”, as “low-cost private schools”, and as “private schools for the poor” (Motala, 2009; Rose, 2006; Steer, Gillard, Gustafsson-Wright, & Latham, 2015; Tooley, 2009). As explained in the next section, we use the label low-fee private schools (LFPS) in the present paper.

The provision of primary education by LFPSs is not without its controversy (Rose, 2009). Concern centers around issues such as: whose interests are best-served by private provision; how educational quality can be ensured; how LFPSs are to be regulated; and whether public funds should be invested to support this non-public provision. These questions are all the more poignant when pupils come from families living on, or below, the poverty line and whose interests should be of central concern to the government. For these reasons, LFPSs and the way they engage with the government and with communities deserves greater scrutiny, especially when the government engages directly with LFPSs and uses public funds to support what can be construed as a commercially-driven and profit-oriented endeavor.

In the present paper, we contribute to the above questions by discussing research from the case of Kenya. Here, since 2005, the government has initiated a new level of engagement with LFPSs by providing a policy framework, direct support in the form of grants for the purchase

---

1 ‘Mushrooming’ is the term used throughout the literature (Watkins, 2000, p. 229; Rose, 2002, p. 1; Caddell & Ashley, 2006; Tooley, 2008, p. 450) to describe the increasing and unregulated growth of ‘low-cost, private schools’ in the urban slums of less developed countries since the early 1990s.

of teaching and learning materials, and systematic verification and validation of LFPSs, the majority of which are located in poverty-stricken and over-populated urban slums (Wildish, 2011). While the Ministry of Education (MoE) investment program to support LFPSs is housed within the Department of Non-Formal Education, these schools are essentially para-formal in nature (Carron & Carr-Hill, 1991). They offer the chance for children to complete primary school (and less often some secondary schooling) through an alternative to public schooling—a complementary channel wherein school managers or head teachers levy fees.<sup>2</sup> Yet it should be noted that the schools of focus in this paper are not for-profit in the sense that they are preoccupied solely with earnings. Rather, as explained further in the context section, they are more accurately thought of as community-based schools in that they are often founded by community members, have a close association with the community, and are motivated to provide education services to the local, disadvantaged students.

Specifically, our purposes are to explore the Kenyan government's engagement with LFPSs that began during 2005-2010 under the Kenya Education Sector Support Program, to document and assess the impact of governmental support on the behavior of LFPSs, and to clarify key actor perspectives and responses within the context of this arrangement. Importantly, and uniquely, in this research we present findings that show the dynamic interaction and the delicate equilibrium within which government officials, LFPS representatives, parents, and students not only interact but also influence one another. That is, we illuminate the multiple ways in which these actors connect and are constrained (and with what consequences) within the context of official government support. By taking this focus, more than responding to the need for "a better understanding of the dynamic between [the state and non-state] sectors ... to ensure effective education planning" (Bangay & Latham, 2013, p. 244), we also show, for example, the ways that LFPSs and the surrounding communities are mutually dependent, in addition to unpacking the dilemma of resource uncertainty faced by LFPSs, among other findings.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial because a range of prominent researchers and institutional actors continue to explore and to promote LFPSs as a viable option for achieving universal access to basic education in low-income countries. These include United Nations organizations (e.g., World Bank; the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization), bilateral aid organizations (e.g., the United States Agency for International Development, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom), international corporations (e.g., Pearson Corporation), think tanks (e.g., the Brookings Institution, CATO Institute), and venture philanthropists, to name a few (Ball, Junemann, & Santori, 2015; Curtis, 2015; Dixon, 2013; Genevois, 2008; Heyneman, Stern, & Smith, 2011;

---

2 See the methods section for more on how we define the LFPSs that we examine in the present study.



LaRoque, 2010; Niemerg, 2013; Riep, 2015; Steer, Gillard, Gustafsson-Wright, & Latham, 2015; Tooley & Dixon, 2005c). The emphasis on LFPSs can be seen as part of the push for education policies that attempt to improve educational access and quality not through the strengthening of public education but rather through the establishment of public-private partnerships, and often without fully grasping or considering critically the dynamics of how these schools operate, as discussed further below.

The remainder of this paper proceeds, first, by reviewing relevant literature on LFPSs. This is followed by discussions of methods, context, and findings. The penultimate section then engages with implications, while the final section offers a brief conclusion.

## **2. Literature Review**

There are many varieties of LFPSs within the larger category of non-state providers. In part, this variety stems from the multiple purposes they serve. As Rose (2009) explains, there are three main roles for non-state actors: meeting excess demand by filling the gap in poor quality government provision, which has deteriorated as a result of rapid expansion; providing access to those unable to access the government system because of insufficient or inappropriate supply; and meeting differentiated demand, such as specific cultural or religious preferences. Non-state providers of education encompass a wide range of players such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, community-based providers, and private, for-profit agents. Since the 1980s, in developing countries, NGOs have become particularly active in providing education to out-of-school children and often focus on underserved and hard-to-reach areas (Sutton & Arnove, 2004). Churches and faith-based organizations have long-since been active in providing education in many different contexts, often offering a differentiated education provision, and they continue to play an important role in the provision of schooling in developing countries. Community-based providers, for their part, are best known for their local approaches to education provision, and for-profit providers, who are more commonly (though certainly not exclusively) associated with serving domestic elites, are now extending low-fee private schooling to poorer parts of the population (Rose, 2009). In the present paper, we are concerned with the kinds of low-fee schools operated by these latter two groups.

Along with the increasing presence and prominence of LFPSs in many low-income countries, research on this phenomenon has started to emerge more regularly since the mid-2000s, with most of it focused on sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (see, e.g., Day Ashley et al., 2014;

Heyneman, Stern, & Smith, 2011; Macpherson, Robertson, & Walford, 2014; McLoughlin, 2013; Srivastava, 2013a; Srivastava & Walford, 2007, UNESCO, 2015). In what follows, we review the evidence on LFPSs generally (in terms of key debates) and then with attention to the evidence on the governmental support for LFPSs.

To clarify, in this study, and in accordance with Kitaev (2007), a school is classified as private “if it is controlled and managed by a non-governmental organization (e.g. church, trade union, business enterprise, etc.), or if its governing board consists mostly of members not selected by a public agency” (p. 92). As can be seen, this definition focuses on control and management—not the presence of fees. We choose this definition because, often, in low-income countries, government schools also charge fees (Akaguri, 2013; Stern & Heyneman, 2013), an issue to which we will return later. Additionally, while this definition implies that all the non-state providers mentioned above are necessarily private in nature, it does not imply that they are low-fee, though this is often the case, especially in low-income countries. The literature reviewed in what follows is specific to private schools with low-fees, which, generally, can be defined as follows: “independently funded through comparatively lower tuition fees (relative to elite or higher-fee private schools), financially sustained through direct payments from poorer or relatively disadvantaged households (though not necessarily the poorest or most disadvantaged), and independently managed and owned by a single owner or team, usually comprising family members” (Srivastava, 2013b, pp. 11-12).

## **2.1 Low-Fee Private Schooling**

### ***Key Debates***

James Tooley and his colleagues at the University of Newcastle are widely-published advocates of LFPSs. In a proliferation of research publications based on studies in countries including China, Ghana, India, Kenya and Nigeria, they (Dixon & Tooley, 2005; Tooley, 2013; Tooley & Dixon, 2005a/b/c, 2006, 2007; Tooley, Dixon, & Gomathi, 2007; Tooley, Dixon, Shamsan, & Schagen, 2010; Tooley, Dixon, & Stanfield, 2008) make a range of assertions. They describe how low-cost private schools have been serving the needs of the poor for many years and were largely unacknowledged by the education authorities in many countries until the early 2000s (Tooley, 2009).

On all the contentious issues, Tooley and his colleagues (Tooley & Dixon, 2006) stand in favor of the expansion of low-cost private provision. Based on academic testing of pupils in private and public schools in urban slums, they claim that the low-cost private schools offer higher quality teaching inputs and learning outputs than public schools.

For example, in a study of English, Math and Kiswahili, testing approximately 3,000 children, Tooley (2005) found that in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya, the pupils in public and low-cost private schools were scoring at about the same level as each other. However, pupils in private schools are reported to have performed significantly better in both Math and English when the researchers controlled for background variables (Tooley, 2005). Other studies have found that LFPSs do not outperform public schools in terms of achievement when parental income was taken into account (Watkins, 2004). Not surprisingly, the debate over the academic quality and performance outputs of LFPSs is highly contested (Bray, 2004; Day Ashley et al., 2014; Rose, 2006; Sarangapani & Winch, 2010; Tooley & Longfield, 2015; Watkins, 2004).

Studies are consistent in that they find LFPSs poorly constructed and inadequately resourced, and the general school environment below normal standards relating, for example, to regulations around class size, school environment, distance from sewers, etc. Based on a study in the slums of Nairobi, researchers from the international NGO Dignitas list the challenges as: "polluted environment and dilapidated facilities, dilapidated textbooks, [and] overcrowded classrooms" (Cheng & Kariithi, 2008). This characterization has been echoed by Stern and Heyneman (2013), who describe LFPSs in Kenya as "generally housed in small rented buildings or semi-permanent structures, electricity being an uncommon luxury, and facilities are not up to the standards of public primary schools" (p. 111). Moreover, Srivastava (2013b) not only indicates that this characterization holds for other countries but also finds that these schools generally lack trained teachers and teaching and learning resources. In these ways, LFPSs represent schools of low quality.

Parents, for their part, do not generally have access to academic studies of student performance and often form their judgment of school quality based on their personal experiences and observations (Cheng & Kariithi, 2008; Fennell & Malik, 2012; Härmä, 2013; Srivastava, 2007; Tooley, Dixon & Stanfield, 2008). A few pro-LFPS studies report that parents see encouraging evidence in LFPSs of teachers' planning and discipline of students, pupil time well spent, and academic progress in the subjects (Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezeh, & Epari, 2010; Tooley, Dixon, & Stanfield, 2008). Others refer to children performing better in the examinations (Cheng & Kariithi, 2008). Yet other research contrasts with these explanations of parental behavior in that they reveal that social capital (or the lack thereof), gender, geography, and income are serious constraints on parental choice, though it should be noted that the ways these factors combine to influence family choice vary greatly by context (Akaguri, 2013; Fennell & Malik, 2012; Lewin, 2007; Nishimura & Yamano, 2010; Ohba, 2013; Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, & Ezeh, 2010; Srivastava, 2013b).

Clouded parental perceptions are often perpetuated by the fact that “private sector institutions have much to gain by maintaining a sense of competition between the government and private schools: perceptions of government failure fuel private school enrollment” (Caddell, 2006, p. 476). Parents and students may not have accurate perceptions of the benefits of various types of schooling, as private providers can “feed on and promote” unrealistic hopes (Caddell, 2006, p. 467) or can otherwise engage in branding or service differentiation (Fennel & Malik, 2012). Of course, projecting an image of superior quality is made easier by the fact that governments in low-income countries have been inadequately funding their public education systems for decades, often as the result of recommendations or borrowing conditions from international organizations such as the World Bank (Klees, 2008). Within this context, this study focuses, in part, on the question of how changes in the government’s support for privately provided schooling are being experienced at the local and school-based level, the level at which parents are making difficult decisions in a context of severely limited resources.

With respect to costs, Tooley and colleagues portray low-cost private schools as being “within reach of many of the poor” with fees that are less than 5–10 percent of the “absolute poverty” figure (Tooley, Dixon & Stanfield, 2008, p. 467; see also Tooley & Dixon, 2006), though this assertion has been challenged (Akaguri, 2013; Härmä, 2011; Lewin, 2007; Nishimura & Yamano, 2013; Srivastava, 2013b). Ultimately, while Tooley (2004b) argues that poor people are demonstrating their willingness to pay by sending their children to low-cost private schools, Srivastava (2013b), in her review of multiple studies, finds that LFPSs are not accessible by the poorest of the poor. In a review of household survey data from 23 sub-Saharan countries, Lewin (2007) concludes that the bottom 20 percent of families—or the “ultra-poor”—cannot afford LFPSs and are thus prevented from obtaining an education, though, again, the relationship between poverty and LFPS participation is context dependent. For example, the only schooling available to students in slums may be LFPSs, since slums are seen as illegal settlements by governments and public schools are built outside their borders (Stern & Heneyman, 2013). In these contexts, the need to pay exacerbates inequalities and competes against other basic needs: “education costs divert resources needed to maintain nutrition, address health problems, maintain shelter, invest in production or to provide a buffer against future emergencies” (Watkins, 2004, p. 9).

On equity, Tooley (2004b) provides data reflecting gender-parity in enrollment and asserts that the providers of low-cost private schooling display philanthropic behavior by providing concessions or free places to those who cannot afford fees: in India he

finds an average of 15 percent of places being awarded on a concessionary basis. Tooley and Stanfield (2004) also assert that low-cost private schools are much more accountable to parents and the community than government schools, with Tooley (2004b) concluding—on the basis of market logic—that poor parents “want private schools” (p. 7), that they are making their preferences clear by “voting with their feet, en masse taking their children out of the state system into private education” (p. 6), and, controversially, that assisting poor people in the choices they are making in favor of private education would be a “beneficial way forward for equity, justice and educational achievement” (2004a, p. 16; see also Tooley, 2013). While additional research is needed on how LFPs award concessionary spots, the equity claims made by Tooley and colleagues are often contradicted by existing research. In a review of studies on LFPs, McLoughlin, (2013) writes: “Concerns that the growth in [LFPs] is exacerbating or perpetuating existing inequalities in developing countries ... are widely found in the literature” (p. 1).

Although cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability are rarely addressed in the research (Day Ashley et al., 2014; McLoughlin, 2013), Tooley, in his most recent endeavor has claimed that LFPs are more efficient, meaning that they can serve a large number of students at the lowest possible cost (Riep, 2015). In a chain of LFPs begun in Ghana by Tooley with support from venture capital through Pearson, the claim is being made that these schools—known as Omega schools—can offer education to the poor students “at the lowest cost on an unprecedented scale ... [through a] business model [that] leverages scale, reducing costs to a level that can dramatically extend access and improve quality” (Omega Schools, 2014, as cited in Riep, 2015, p. 14). Crucially, however, to the extent that this claim is true, it is because Omega schools allow high teacher-pupil ratios and employ untrained high-school graduates as teachers and pay them “a fraction of what professionally trained and qualified teachers receive in the public sector” (Riep, 2015, p. 15). Research elsewhere has similarly concluded that the cost of education delivery in LFPs is lower because their teachers receive much lower salaries (Day Ashley et al., 2014; Srivastava, 2013b).

To be clear, Tooley (2008) does not call for private agents to be the sole provider of education but has called for private education to be “embraced” as a way forward in reaching the Education for All goals. He recommends demand and supply-side reforms to support the expansion of private provision. However, as Lewin (2007) points out, for the marketization of private education to result in more efficient and effective service provision, certain conditions need to be met, including: “informed choice, transparent accountability, adequate regulation, and effective legal frameworks” (p. 3), most of

which are not evident in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia. Moreover, and crucially, reliance on LFPSs to expand educational access ignores the long-standing arguments around education as a public good with beneficial externalities for society as a whole (Haveman & Wolfe, 1984).

### ***Registration, regulation and facilitation***

The discussion in the preceding section shows that the majority of literature on LFPSs tends to look at isolated outcomes, impacts or issues without exploring the interplay between different features of LFPSs. The literature on government registration, regulation and facilitation (defined as purposeful government support) provides a few insights in this regard, though studies in this area still tend to be limited in the extent to which they investigate the tentativeness of student participation in LFPS contexts. On one hand, LFPSs frequently operate independently of the state and have expanded in an unplanned and unregulated manner (Ohara, 2012; Rolleston & Adefeso-Olateju, 2014; Tooley & Dixon, 2006). On the other hand, Rose (2006), in her overview of government support for non-state provision of basic education in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, notes that the most common examples of government-initiated engagement with LFPSs are associated with registration and regulation, with fewer examples of government proactively supporting LFPSs financially. She notes, however, that where governments do facilitate LFPS provision it is mostly in the areas of "indirect support from the government in terms of curriculum design, training of teachers, and sometimes textbook provision" (Rose, 2006, p. 225).

Government registration, which can be with several ministries other than the MoE, confers recognition status on LFPSs. The process frequently entails compliance with certain establishment criteria and minimum operating standards—requirements which have been described as cumbersome, complex, and costly (Heyneman & Stern, 2013; Srivastava, 2008; McLoughlin, 2013), not least (in this last case) because recognition often involves the paying of bribes so that officials overlook noncompliance with various legal stipulations (McLoughlin, 2013; Stern & Heyneman, 2013). Successful registration, however, may confer a direct benefit, such as in India, where, "gaining recognition allows pupils to take state examinations within their institutions and provides them with certificates allowing transfer between schools" (Dixon, 2004, p. 31). Alternatively, registration may lead to other benefits such as the exemption from business trading licenses, as in Kenya. Official registration is frequently a minimum requirement for further government support.

India provides an example of the complexities of government regulation of private schools and the limitations in compliance (Dixon & Tooley, 2005). Private schools are prohibited from making profit from education or from “commercializing” the service. In practice, however, schools do make a profit and, according to Dixon (2004), use it to improve facilities and raise standards. There are also many written laws and rules concerning the licensing of private unaided schools. These regulations cover the establishment and running of private schools but, again, can be circumvented through the bribing of officials (Srivastava, 2008; Stern & Heyneman, 2013). Likewise, private schools are supposed to receive an annual inspection, rectify any shortcomings that are recorded and maintain proof that these improvements have been carried out, but regularly fail to do so (Dixon, 2004). Official regulation of low-cost private schools does not, necessarily, safeguard or improve standards, in practice.

Dixon (2004) compares the “on paper” rules provided by the Indian government with the “extra-legal” rules that apply in practice and finds that even though the government regulations exist, they are not enforced (Dixon, 2004). As a result, “thousands of private schools operate in Hyderabad, competing with one another, making profits and with the ‘on paper’ regulations waived” (Dixon, 2004, p. 36; see also Dixon & Tooley, 2005).

In a multi-country study in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malawi, Nigeria and South Africa, Rose (2006) notes that collaboration between governments and LFPSSs is closest when different forms of engagement interact. For example, when governments are facilitating or contracting education services among alternative providers greater regulation is needed, which can lead to closer involvement in policy dialogue. However, at the same time, these more intense forms of engagement can result in tension, mistrust and even antagonism. This is particularly likely where dominant but ineffective centralized MoEs attempt to maintain control over the sector, even when they are unable to support public provision effectively. In order to strengthen their voice and liaise with government, LFPSSs frequently form associations that advocate on their behalf, though their membership “mainly comprises better-resourced private schools which have initiated the establishment of the association to strengthen their voice” (Rose, 2006, pp. 221-222).

In her 2006 survey of experiences of government support for LFPSSs, Rose (2006) notes that examples of government-initiated involvement with LFPSSs beyond registration and regulation are limited and identifies only three examples of government facilitation in South Africa, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Facilitation in South Africa demonstrates the blurring of public-private partnerships as the system allows

public schools to charge fees to supplement public funding (Motala, 2009), as well as providing state subsidies to non-profit service providers (Rose, 2006). In Bangladesh, Registered Non-Government Primary Schools are eligible for a range of government interventions including the "construction and maintenance of school buildings, training of teachers, payment of 90 percent of teacher salaries, provision of free textbooks and inclusion of eligible students in the government's primary education stipend programme" (Rose, 2006, p. 226). Although these schools do not receive the same level of support as public schools, they are constrained by substantial regulations and this gives rise to considerable tension. In Pakistan, under the Community Supported Rural Schools Program, schools receive government loans. However, these loans have fallen in value and the program has changed to one in which the government provides grants that match the value of the schools savings. Schools in poor areas find it particularly difficult to raise sustained excess funds to generate savings. While the studies discussed above provide valuable insights into the nature of governmental support in relation to LFPSs, it is noticeable that they do not extend their analyses to explore how that support affects such issues as fee-setting, student enrollment, and school-community relationships, as we attempt to do in the present paper.

### **3. Methods**

A qualitative, case study approach was adopted for this research because the aim, in part, is to "understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Mertens, 2005, p. 12). That is, as Yin (2003) writes, case study methods allow one to investigate "contemporary phenomena in real-life context" (p. 13) without sacrificing "holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p. 2). Merriam (1998) further presents case study research as particularistic, (focuses on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon); descriptive, (the end product of a case study is a rich, "thick" description of the phenomenon under study), and heuristic (it informs the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study). Moreover, as with the present research, "the interest [in case study] is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

#### **3.1 Data Collection**

Data for the study were gathered over the course of eight weeks during May and June of 2010 in one of the urban slums, called Mathare Village, in Nairobi, through



document collection and review, through the conduct of 35 interviews, and through school visits. These strategies were engaged across two stages of data collection, described in what follows.

Stage one, based on document reviews and in-depth interviews, entailed searching for the objectives, assumptions, and expectations that have underpinned government support for LFPSs in Kenya. Documents were related to policy documents<sup>3</sup> (e.g., to the policy texts themselves and to the associated work plan and budget), to reports on LFPSs, and to education sector studies. Eight interviews were conducted with key actors at each level of the education system, including—within the MoE—the Director of Basic Education, LFPS supervisors, and provincial- and city-level representatives, among others. Participants were chosen on the basis of the positions they held. Interviews in both stages were conducted in English. All interviewees were given the option to speak in Kiswahili, though this option was declined.

Stage two focused on data collection within Mathare Village. This slum was chosen in accordance with the sampling method for this study—i.e., typical case sampling. The purpose of typical cases is to “describe and illustrate what is typical to those unfamiliar with the setting – not to make generalized statements about the experiences of all participants” (Patton, 2002, p. 236). That is, we present what is common without claims of applicability to all members of the schools or communities included here.

Two LFPSs were chosen (one from the east and one from the north) for in-depth data gathering; both derived from the MoE database of LFPSs. The sites were screened to eliminate other key factors which may have distorted their experiences. The selection criteria included the following: (a) both sites had to be located within one slum, Mathare; (b) both sites offer up to eighth grade (known as Standard 8 level); (c) both sites charged fees that were less than the maximum monthly fee the MoE considers “low-cost” (500 Ksh, or \$6.76);<sup>4</sup> (d) both sites received MoE grants for the purchase of instructional materials (explained further below); and (e) neither site received significant financial support from a long-term donor (e.g. NGOs, religious groups, international charity or other international organizations). Additional key characteristics are summarized in the table below.

From both sites, school management records (relating, e.g., to school management structures and procedures as well as school budget usage) were collected and

---

3 The relevant policies are specified and discussed further in the findings section.

4 These limits are according to a key interviewee from the MoE. Note also that Kenyan shillings (Ksh) are converted to US dollars at a rate of 74:1 in this paper.

investigated. These documents were complemented by 27 interviews. Participants from the schools included one school director (only one of the schools had a director), two head teachers (both of whom had received post-secondary training as primary school teachers), teachers (all four of whom had completed only high school), parents from the school management committees, and pupils. Other key informants from Mathare included representatives from NGOs familiar with LFPSs (for more details, see Wildish, 2011).

<b>Table 1. Summary of School Site Characteristics</b>		
<b>School Aspect</b>	<b>LFPS 1</b>	<b>LFPS 2</b>
<b>Location</b>	North Mathare	East Mathare
<b>Enrollment</b>	844	518
<b>Staff</b>	16 teachers (including head teacher), 1 school director	14 (including head teacher), no school director
<b>Rooms</b>	Eleven classrooms in each: One for each grade class (i.e., Standards 1 through 8) and one for each of the three pre-school classes of baby class, nursery and pre-unit. Each school had a Head teacher's office, an area for a secretary, and a teachers' preparation room.	
<b>Grades offered</b>	1-8	1-8
<b>Fees (per month)</b>	350 Ksh (\$4.73)	400 Ksh (\$5.40)
<b>General description</b>	As is typical of community-based LFPSs the two surveyed schools are housed in rented property, which lies in amongst the shops and residences that make up the informal settlement. In both cases a number of rented rooms form the center of the school and includes the head teacher's office and additional rooms are rented nearby as classrooms. Classrooms are typically made with dirt floors, and have walls and a roof made out of wooden posts and corrugated iron sheets. Doors and windows are frequently unprotected openings in the walls and may be covered with plastic at times. The classrooms are furnished with narrow wooden desks, which form a combined table and bench, each intended to seat four pupils.	
<b>School leadership</b>	School founded and overseen by the school director, who also liaises with the government; a head teacher manages the school on a daily basis and fulfills the role of principal	School founded by group of parents and head teacher, latter of whom acts as school principal.
<b>Other</b>	Fees paid also include a mid-day meal.  The school director opened a secondary school in a cluster of nearby rooms and the School Director and Head teacher play the same roles in both the primary and secondary units.	No feeding program.
Source: Authors.		

## 3.2 Data Analysis

Following Miles and Huberman (1994), analysis was continuous throughout the research process from before data were collected through to the writing of the research findings. The three major types of activity that took place were: data reduction, data display and verification. Data reduction or condensation refers to “selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming data by writing up field notes, coding data, making notes or identifying themes” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Data was displayed in ways that grouped information from memos and interviews around certain actors and dimensions of LFPS support by the government. To be specific, based on school visits, classroom observations, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, we explored the context, experiences, reactions and influence of teachers, parents, pupils and the MoE within the formal support provided through the Policy on the Alternative Provision of Basic Education (which incorporated the Instructional Materials Grant program, see findings section for more info). Given the purpose of this study, and the fact that LFPSs respond to the constraints in their settings, we were particularly careful to attain a deep level of context knowledge, in order to identify and then map through data analysis the relevant aspects of the context and the ways that these aspects interacted. Our attention to this area can be seen in the level of detail provided in this paper in the context section.

The specific actor experiences in which we were interested included: official LFPS interactions with education offices and other government departments; school/ community policy dialogue with the MoE; changes in structures in school management and parental involvement at school level; adoption of new financial management processes; experiences with the selection, distribution and use of textbooks purchased with government funds (through the Instructional Materials Grant); and changes in the school environment or learning circumstances experienced by LFPS pupils. As with the context generally, the purpose in looking at these areas was to trace the key actors and elements in order to understand the ways that these pieces fit together and with what consequences, with attention to the role of government support. After repeated interrogation, the data related to these actors and dimensions were grouped according to the over-arching themes that emerged. The findings section below is organized in line with these themes.

However, more than simply reporting on over-arching themes, in our analysis we were careful to also consider the implications of our findings for the policy itself. That is, during analysis we not only reviewed the relevant policy documents and interviews to uncover the theory of action that accompanied the policy, but we also assessed the

extent to which policy provisions (and their related mechanisms) were operationalized in the schools and communities examined (Pawson, 2006). While the findings section presents the theory of action of the LFPS policy, the discussion section addresses the implications of our findings for this theory. It should be noted, though, that our intention here is not to assess the functionality of each policy provision; the present study, rather, explores the operation of LFPSs in practice and uses the findings to raise issues in relation to those mechanisms that function (or should function) at the level of schools and communities, as opposed to focusing on the larger impacts of the policy at the systemic level.

Finally, in terms of analysis, verification involved checking or triangulating findings after “noticing regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 50).

## **4. Context**

### **4.1 Slums**

Urban informal settlements, or slums, are reported to house more than 50 percent of the population of Nairobi and yet occupy only 5 percent of the residential land area of the city (Dignitas, 2008b). This statistic alone reflects the key feature of this environment: dense populations settled in areas that were not intended for human residence. As such, slums frequently lack access to water and electricity and are characterized by extreme poverty, unsanitary conditions and high levels of crime. Quantitative data for these areas are often inconsistent. For example, the official 2003 census gives a population of 90,000 people living in Mathare (the slum of focus in Nairobi for this study), while community-based organizations and local leaders estimate a total population of anywhere between 600,000 and 900,000. Rough estimates indicate that up to 300,000 school-aged children live in Mathare (Cheng & Kariithi, 2008). The public provision of schools is one of the many services that people living in slums lack. For example, Mathare’s large population is served by only three government primary schools within its borders.

### **4.2 Enrollment**

From a national perspective the primary school gross enrollment rate in Nairobi is the second lowest in the country, at 51.8 percent, leaving approximately 48 percent

of primary school-age children in the Nairobi area outside of any public or registered private school (GoK, 2007). While collecting accurate and consistent demographic data specific to informal settlements remains a challenge, the presence of a persistent and large out-of-school population is consistent with Härmä's (2009) study, in which she estimates that at least half the sample in her study of Indian slums cannot afford to send their children to the LFPSs.

In Kenya, it was hoped that efforts to eliminate tuition fees from public schools in 2003 as well as government direct support for running and equipping primary schools would provide access to all those out-of-school, though government schools still charge fees (Stern & Heyneman, 2013).<sup>5</sup> While actions to eliminate tuition fees were followed by an initial influx of an additional 1.3 million pupils into the existing public schools, there remained an estimated 1.6 million out-of-school children in 2007 (Dignitas, 2008b). Large numbers of unenrolled students have created a market for LFPSs. For example, in the period between 2003 and 2007 the MoE reports an increase in private schools in the Nairobi area from 94 to 1,044, while public school provision, in the same period, reduced from 195 schools to 191 serving the city (GoK, 2007).

### 4.3 LFPS in Kenya

LFPSs in Kenya are poorly-resourced, fee-charging, para-formal schools established and (typically) run with limited engagement with the government. They are severely lacking in terms of school infrastructure and facilities, trained teachers and adequate teaching and learning resources. LFPSs operate within the same constraints as households living in the slums and, therefore, have little or no security of tenancy, lack space or sanitation facilities and are vulnerable to the insecurity and conflict that pervades these densely populated and volatile environments. Not only are the conditions for studying poor, but the provision of textbooks is highly inadequate, with one book for the teacher only or only two books for a whole class of 18 to 20 pupils being the common situation (Cheng & Kariithi, 2008). Pupils who are excluded from formal schools by a myriad of factors such as location, socio-economic disadvantage and the impact of HIV and AIDS, and yet whose families can afford to pay for school, attend LFPSs. Parents pay tuition fees for LFPSs at an average of 3-5 USD per month (GoK, 2009).

The MoE recognizes a range of LFPS providers, including those who register their schools as "private" institutions, those established and managed by churches,

---

5 As Stern & Heyneman (2013) note, "free public education in Kenya is not necessarily free of private cost. To be admitted, a child needs to have shoes, uniform shirt, socks, tunic and shorts, and donate a desk and chair, all of which cost an estimated Ksh 4500" (p. 117).

and those who register their schools as “self-help groups” and are considered community-based organizations. LFPSs generally have a close association with the local community, particularly since they tend to hire teachers from the community, and tend to be established by “community members who [want] to provide a much-needed service to the community” (Stern & Heyneman, 2013, p. 117). One study found that 18 percent of LFPSs are operated by community groups, 67 percent by individual proprietors, and 15 percent by religious groups (EKW, 2004).

Regardless of status, the MoE recognizes that the head teacher plays a central and leadership role, translating and implementing the MoE requirements at school level. Although not addressed explicitly, the MoE requirements that LFPSs adopt the same management, financial, and procurement procedures as public schools implies an expectation that head teachers will be in a relationship with the MoE similar to that of head teachers who work in public schools. Head teachers in Kenya are known as principals in other parts of the world.

LFPSs tend to begin as small, often nursery level, schools to serve the children in the community and expanding the number of classes as the pupils grow either in years or number. Despite the informal nature of the development of these settlements, urban slums represent long-standing and permanent residential areas. As a result, a large proportion of children enter LFPSs in the “baby” or pre-school classes at the age of three and, if a full range of classes are offered, can continue up to eighth grade at about 14 years of age.

While organizations who work in the slums have been aware of these schools since the early 1970s (Dignitas, 2008b), if not the 1960s (Stern & Heyneman, 2013), an apparent increase in their number has attracted the attention of education commentators since the early 1990s. LFPSs in Kenya offer access to the formal primary and, to a lesser extent, secondary curricula, since the great majority do not offer classes after eighth grade. Relatively few schools are recognized as exam centers, but their pupils are able, at a cost, to register to sit the national school-leaving examinations as private candidates in formal schools.

Tooley, Dixon and Stanfield (2008), in their research in an informal settlement in Nairobi, report the costs of one child attending a LFPS to represent somewhere between 4.7 percent (for nursery level) and 8.1 percent (in upper primary classes) of a household’s monthly income.<sup>6</sup> However, this assertion of affordability overlooks the

---

6 These percentages are not necessarily accurate and vary across studies. Wildish (2011), for example, found that parents who enroll their children in a LFPS at primary level spend between 8.75 and 11.6 percent of average monthly income of families in the informal settlement.

fact that household income in informal settlements is typically insufficient to cover all the household's basic needs and the majority of families operate on a negative budget (i.e., live in debt or are behind on payments such as rent on a regular basis). Based on an average monthly income of Ksh 3,000 – 4,000 (\$40.5 – 54.05), estimated monthly rent of Ksh 1,000 (\$13.5), and a subsistence-level monthly food budget of Ksh 3,000 (\$13.5), it is unclear how families still manage to pay Ksh 200 – 500 (\$2.70 – 6.76) in monthly school fees (per child) to LFPSS (Dignitas, 2008a). Dignitas (2008a) confirms that income is spent on rent, food and education, in that order of priority, which suggests that other needs such as water, fuel for lighting, transport, medical care, clothing, etc. either go unmet or are met on an ad hoc and opportunistic basis. Thus, children attending LFPSS either come from families earning more than the average income in the informal settlements or do not pay all the school fees.

Dignitas (2008a), in their work on Mathare slum, report an unemployment rate of 80 percent. Of the 20 percent employed adult population, the majority are employed as casual laborers in construction work or washing clothes, or "hawking"—selling vegetables, second-hand clothes, etc. Another group is engaged in illicit brewing or drugs, leaving only 2 percent of the slum population engaged in formal employment. The forms of employment identified by Dignitas (2008a) are characterized by their irregularity and lack of permanence. This picture suggests that the vast majority of the population is unable to afford any kind of school fees, however low. The families accessing LFPSS are, first and foremost, among the 20 percent of employed people and, secondly, from within a higher earning bracket of that employed group, earning above the average monthly income of Ksh 4,000 (\$53) on a consistent basis.

As noted, teachers in LFPSS are frequently untrained (GoK, 2007), and it is common for them to stay at a school for one term (three months) and sometimes as little as a month (Cheng & Kariithi, 2008). This is especially the case where the teachers are working on a voluntary and unpaid basis. One study on the Nairobi slums sums up the nature of the teaching force as having low pay, few benefits, no job security, poor self-perception, low commitment, inadequate preparation and minimal opportunities for additional training (EKW, 2004). The salaries paid to teaching staff vary across a wide range, but EKW data show that only 22 percent of the teachers receive a salary above Ksh 3,000 (\$40) per month, which places the majority at or below the average monthly income of other slum residents.<sup>7</sup> To go along with poor compensation, teacher-pupil ratios are unacceptably high, with LFPSS teachers in Mathare having between 60-90 students in one class (Cheng & Kariithi, 2008).

---

7 From 1st July 2010, government teachers received an increase in salary, giving a first grade teacher a monthly salary in the range of 14,310 – 17,108 Ksh (\$193-231).

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Theme 1: Governmental Support, Legitimation and Regulatory Inconsistency

#### *Governmental support*

Starting in 2005, the MoE extended some of the same financial support (for instructional materials) to LFPSs that it had begun to offer to public schools in 2003. It did so initially through the first sector-wide plan developed by the MoE, known as the Kenya Education Sector Support Program. This support came through the Instructional Materials initiative, in which schools began to receive funding each academic term to pay for teacher and pupil instructional materials, such as chalk, erasers and books. The amount allocated per pupil was intended to equip schools with key textbooks on a shared basis of one book for every two children.

The stated aims of this program are: to address inequitable access to schooling opportunities by supporting forms of provision that serve the needs of the most vulnerable learners, and to strengthen the coordination of this subsector by providing guidelines to enhance the management of LFPSs (GoK, 2010). In addition to extending access, the government intended for this program to contribute to such objectives as increasing retention, improving the quality of basic primary education, reducing costs to parents, and enhancing competition between LFPSs and public schools.

The official policy, known as the policy on Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training, launched in February 2011, specifies a number of ways that the government engages with LFPSs, including: registration of LFPSs by the MoE; supervision of schools for purposes of quality assurance and ensuring minimum standards; provision of guidelines relating to school management; access to grant funds; collaboration in the management and training of teachers; and, where long-term land ownership can be determined, support for infrastructural development (GoK, 2010).<sup>8</sup> Table 2 summarizes the four relevant provisions (discussed further below) of the policy for

---

8 The MoE made slow progress in developing and formalizing a policy for LFPSs. An initial draft was prepared in 2004 but was repeatedly delayed. Some of this delay was brought about by changes in which forms of education should were to be covered by the policy. Initially, forms of education provision intended for pastoral communities, i.e., mobile schools, were covered within the draft policy, along with traditional forms of non-formal education, but these were removed and the needs of pastoralist and nomadic groups were addressed in a separate policy. Another delay was caused by internal structural changes, whereby the Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) Department became more formally associated with the MoE, rather than the Ministry of Higher Education; ACE provision is now incorporated within the policy. The policy provisions on which we focus pertain to LFPSs (known as Non-Formal Schools in Kenya), important to note since the policy also covers other forms of non-formal education.



LFPSs. As can be seen, the government’s thinking in relation to how LFPSs function mirrors that of its proponents generally, in that the policy reflects assumptions about market dynamics, particularly with regard to the policy’s presumed ability to induce dynamics of accountability (through community oversight), efficiency (due to reduced wastage in spending the school budget), and competition (by enhancing competition between LFPSs and public schools).

<b>Table 2. Policy Theory: Governmental Support for LFPSs in Kenya</b>			
<b>Policy provision</b>	<b>Mechanism(s)</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>LFPS registration</b>	Recognition	↑ Government sanctioned access ↑ Number of primary completion exam centers (LFPSs eligible to become exam centers)	↑ Indicators of primary and secondary enrollment
<b>Management Requirements</b>	School Management Committee, School Instructional Materials School Committee  Idea: parental monitoring of LFPSs, parents involved and invested in school	↑ Accountability (for school decisions and for use of school funds) ↑ Quality (due to compliance)	↑ System efficiency (e.g., less wastage of funds) and effectiveness
<b>Supervision</b>	Verification, monitoring through school visits, document checks	↑ Accountability (for school decisions and for use of school funds)	↑ System efficiency (e.g., less wastage of funds) and effectiveness
<b>Instructional Materials Grant</b>	Funding for materials (e.g., books)	↓ Fees for parents ↑ Number of LFPSs (due to subsidy for materials) ↑ Quality (better inputs, books serve as teaching aids)	↑ Completion of primary and retention to secondary education ↑ Competition with public schools
Source: Authors.			

With regard to resources, the policy identifies registration as a prerequisite for access to any resources allocated by the government (GoK, 2010).<sup>9</sup> Apart from registration, two other requirements are key. The first is the process of verification and validation. This annual process, by which MoE officers visit and assess LFPSs (e.g., on classroom size, acreage, management processes, safety and sanitation standards), forms the basis for the Ministry's initial and ongoing interaction with LFPSs and includes the completion of a school survey. The verification and validation exercise is central to the supervision and quality assurance role the MoE plays. To that end, the outcomes of the December 2008 verification and validation exercise show that 12 percent of previously funded LFPSs were considered no longer eligible and were removed from the disbursement list.

Second, there are the required management structures in order to be eligible for government grants. Specifically, these are a School Management Committee (SMC), which includes the head teacher, an elected chair, and a parental representative from each class; as well as a School Instructional Materials School Committee (SIMSC), which is composed of teachers and two elected parents representatives.<sup>10</sup> Parents, by participating in these forums, are thought to act as a watchdog over school managers (e.g., by defending parents in relation to finance and by holding these managers to account for procurement). Detailed procurement and recordkeeping systems are also prescribed by the MoE and LFPS records are audited in the same manner as public schools. Formally, it is through these two committees that parents and teachers become involved in the management of the school, though other, more informal, means of influence will be discussed in what follows.

Over time, the number of LFPSs eligible to receive grants has increased (from 59 in 2004 to 410 in 2009). However, due to financial constraints not all eligible LFPSs receive funds at every round of disbursement. In addition, the per-capita rate allocated to LFPSs for enrolled pupils has varied over time. Prior to 2005 the MoE provided no support to the LFPSs and the introduction of any grants to this group represents an improvement in the allocation of resources. However, even though the amount allocated per child for books (through the Instructional Materials grants) in both supported LFPSs and public primary schools is the same, i.e. 650 Ksh (\$8.78), the MoE is no longer providing LFPSs the grant of 370 Ksh (\$5) per child to cover other general items. A total of approximately \$3.5 million was recorded as having been distributed among the 410 verified LFPS by mid-2009. The level of variability and unpredictability

---

<sup>9</sup> See Stern and Heyneman (2013, p. 120) for more.

<sup>10</sup> There is also a School Instructional Materials Bank Account for which one elected parent serves as a signatory along with the head teacher and the SMC chairperson.

in the allocation of these funds limit the extent to which LFPSs can make or execute plans for improvement.

## ***Legitimation***

Responses from head teachers confirm that a new relationship between the MoE and their LFPSs has been created since the MoE expanded its engagement through the Instructional Materials Grant program. These teachers refer to greater recognition of the sub-sector, as well as better understanding of their work by MoE officers since financial support has been provided to their schools. Physical visits to schools (uncommon before) inform MoE officers' knowledge and create a better foundation for communication. The relationship has also extended beyond the officers in the Non-Formal Education Department<sup>11</sup> (with which LFPSs must register in order to be recognized as a community-based, as opposed to private, organization, and therefore eligible to receive grants) at the national headquarters to include those working in the national exams council, in the secondary schools department, in the recently formed District Education Offices<sup>12</sup>, and with external partners such as publishers. These secondary relationships have developed because the Instructional Materials Grants are used to purchase textbooks and because official recognition allows these schools to become exam centers (for the required exams to transition to secondary school), for example.

Thus, visits from the MoE, which are known to the whole community because MoE officers arrive in marked cars, as well as the receipt of grants, act as a form of legitimation of a supported LFPSs in the eyes of parents and teachers. As one head teacher explains:

*Before 2003, we could see an officer from the Ministry and people could close down the school and run away. There was not that friendliness, there was not that cordial relationship, and now you find that was a challenge, like they (the MoE) used to close down sometimes schools. They come and say this is not fit for education, they close down. But now from the year 2003-2004, we have been friends. They come, particularly from the City Council. .... That relationship has affirmed, has confirmed to the parents that what we are doing, the government is aware. For example, when they come, they come with their vehicles, they spend like 2 hours in school and everyone knows. .... These are their*

---

11 The Non-Formal Education Department is housed within the Ministry of Gender, Children's and Social Services.

12 Previously, Nairobi was divided into Divisions in a structure that differed from all other Provinces. Since late 2009 the structure operating in the rest of the country, one which is based on District units, has been established. There are many more Districts in Nairobi than there were Divisions, which means that District Education Offices are more closely situated to schools than under the Divisional structure.

*vehicles, written Ministry of Education or City Department Education, we find that people are believing in us and what we have offered, it is enough (HT1).*

When parents see that the government is investing in a supported LFPS—with that support evidenced by the presence of textbooks, for example—they have more confidence in that school and its managers, and consequently the parents are more willing to add their own support, for example by contributing to the cooking and provision of a mid-day school meal. The head teacher for one of the schools also believes that government contributions increase parents' determination to make their own financial contributions, even if they cannot afford the full fees, though such assertions require verification through further research.

### ***Regulatory Inconsistency***

Despite formal MoE support and the legitimization benefits it has created, the relationship between LFPSs and the government continues to suffer from regulatory inconsistency. This is because the MoE itself is a large institution and LFPSs in Nairobi are subject to the authority of the central MoE, Provincial Education Offices and the City Education Department. In addition, LFPSs in Nairobi are answerable to other government departments related to health, safety and trade.<sup>13</sup> The fact that LFPSs can be registered as private businesses or community-based self-help groups gives rise to ambiguity which results in situations in which the stronger and more positive relationship with certain departments in the MoE cannot resolve other areas of conflict. For example, the LFPSs are frequently asked by non-MoE arms of the government to buy business licenses (a requirement from which LFPSs are exempt), and LFPS providers have to go to court to challenge these demands. MoE Officers claim they are unable to step in and help resolve the conflict. Thus, this regulatory inconsistency can lead to a loss of financial resources and administrative capacity—costs which can trickle down to the community as LFPSs have to expend their limited time and money to defend themselves, the result of which can be a negative impact on the quantity and quality of inputs and of the overall educational experience for students.

---

13 See Stern and Heyneman (2013, p. 119) for more.

## 5.2 Theme 2: School Management Committees, Fee-Setting Dynamics, and Mutual Dependence

### *School Management Committees*

The LFPSs in this study are able to mobilize their communities to provide one elected parent representative per class and to hold regular meetings, at least once per term, of the SMCs. School minutes confirmed that such meetings had been held. Parents report being involved in management processes and problem solving, even to the extent of monitoring the behavior of teachers,<sup>14</sup> despite a number of challenges in establishing effective parent representation on the SMC (e.g., the difficulty of mobilizing men to attend meetings, though those who did attend often take on leadership roles; apprehension amongst parents about taking on the role, which leads to some members remaining on the SMC for more than the recommended one year; repeated induction or training of new SMC members; negativity of some parents; general lack of knowledge about quality education and running a school; and a significant power differential between the head teacher and parents). In the words of one involved parent:

*When the money is spent we, as the committee of the school, the parents from the various classes, we have to know, we have to come in during the spending. We have to come in, if it is during the giving out of the exercise books we have to count the exercise books and we have to see the money from the government which came, how many books have been bought, just be satisfied that all the money has been spent. And we have to make sure that they have been given to all children and they are no longer there and there are none left. So when the spending is being done we have to be part and parcel to make sure that the money has been spent well. It is all of us, it is not only [the head teacher] who can sign, the class representatives must be there (P1).*

Additional issues that the SMC is able to raise and/or address relate to concerns about poor teaching, how to deal with children whose parents are unable to pay fees, how to handle the selection of new enrollees, and how to respond to children who stop attending school. Lastly, it was found that, while both schools identify three types of pupil in terms of payment (i.e., those who pay in full, those who do not pay at all and those who pay partial fees), only the SMC, head teacher and school director (where present) are aware of this differentiated scale of payments. The head teachers are careful not to make it known to the wider group of parents.

---

14 Teachers in LFPSs are not unionized.

## ***Fee-setting Dynamics***

It is clear that the issue of fees is a constant element in the dialogue between the LFPS head teacher<sup>15</sup> and the SMC. SMC members may try to avoid meetings for fear that fees are an item on the agenda or because parent representatives may raise the issue of why schooling in the LFPS is not free. That said, there is no evidence to suggest that, in practice, parents can, or even expect to be able to, exert sufficient pressure over the head teacher to reduce fees or demand that school fees be used to pay for trained teachers, for example. Rather, unless an increase in fees is directly related to an additional benefit, such as a feeding program, the more practical constraint of the actual capacity of a typical family living in the informal settlement to pay an increased fee level is the factor that sets the limit on the LFPS fee level. Head teachers in the LFPS are acutely aware of the ability of the parents to pay and maintain a fine balance between both fee levels and the ratio of full, partial and non-payers.

In contrast with the hopes of the government, there is no evidence from this study to suggest that fee levels charged to parents have reduced (or increased) in response to government support. The MoE expectation that costs to parents would be reduced through government support was based on the assumption that parents were previously buying books and that this burden had been removed. However, the evidence suggests that only very few parents were buying a few books and that most schools were simply operating without teaching and learning materials. This suggests that the supported LFPSs are now offering more educational resources, and therefore education with a higher perceived value, for the same or similar fees. The reports that the majority of parents were not previously buying books and the indication that fee levels have not gone down also suggest that the net financial benefit from government grants goes to the school bank account. Essentially, the money that school managers were previously taking from parent fees to buy a few books is now saved at the same time that more books are being provided and enrollment figures are, as a result of the teaching and learning resources, increasing, though the exact impact on enrollment figures and on head teacher income is difficult to ascertain since record keeping is haphazard and since enrollment is not only constantly shifting but is also subject to multiple forces.

Paying school fees remains a struggle and parents are frequently unable to pay even though they identify school fees as a priority, following after the survival needs of

---

15 In LFPS1, the school director sets the fees and the head teacher collects them, while in LFPS2 it is the head teacher who both sets and collects the fees.

shelter, food and fuel. A high level of empathy among other parents and tolerance on the part of the school management is needed for children to stay in school in the face of low and unpredictable incomes. That is to say, more than formal adjustment in the fee level charged by the LFPSs, the fees experienced by families depend on the family's situation, and, ultimately, show the mutual dependence of the LFPSs and the families of enrolled students.

## ***Mutual Dependence***

The LFPSs need a certain number of parents to pay a minimum fee level on a regular basis in order for the school to function and for the owners to have a source of employment, while the parents want their children to have access to what they perceive to be higher quality academic education for their children, despite their limited economic means. Thus, according to LFPS managers, the maximum fee level is determined by the limits of what their parents can afford to pay. In the words of a head teacher:

*If you charge more they will still not pay (laughter) because of where they are coming from, there are many things dictating the limits and all that. These parents are poor, the community that is coming here is so poor so like .... some just go there everyday to do the washing and after doing the day's washing they are getting, they are being paid. So you get that they are paid a Ksh 100 (\$1.35) or so a day, or Ksh 200 (\$2.70) so when it's done, [the money] has to cater for food, it has to cater for rent and other basic necessities, so if you tell these parents, I'm [charging too much], then you remain with empty classes. So that ... also dictates how far we are going (HT2).*

At the same time, parents from the community defend one another so that students are not left out of school. Even those parents who pay consistently are sensitive to difficulties of covering school fees. When asked how parents feel when there are five or ten students in a class who have not paid, one parent responded:

*We [parents] know that getting money is hard. So we have to be there [to support the others]... we have to even talk with the owner of the school. Tell him not to chase away the children because it is not the problem of the pupil, it is the problem of the parent and maybe he was working, he's been sacked, there's no job. So it is hard but we don't feel so bad because maybe him, he has been sacked and he has been a parent for 5 years and you know, you are sure he doesn't have a job or she doesn't have a job, so it's such like, just forgiving each other, as a community (P1).*

In the end, being responsive to the income constraints of parents, is in the best interest of the school. In particular, this is because the school at least maintains a bit of stability in its student population and in its relationship with the community. The alternative, as one teacher explained, is to lose students in what becomes an endless cycle of replacing students who cannot afford to pay on a consistent basis:

*Most of the parents come from the slums, so even paying school fees is a problem. Even a person comes, he pays a little amount of money, when you send the children home (for not paying) they don't come back. So they just look for another school where they can go. So they are replaced by others who also do the same, so it becomes a problem (T4).*

In a similar fashion, the relationship between the head teacher and the MoE is also finely balanced with the MoE needing the LFPS to meet certain minimum requirements in order for them to be able to legitimately disburse funds and the head teacher needing to deliver certain standards and features in order to access the grants that will strengthen the financial stability of the school. Importantly, the dynamics of LFPS operation extend beyond the SMC and the setting of fees to also impact such issues as enrollment.

### **5.3 Theme 3: Enrollment, Resources, and Expectations**

#### ***Enrollment***

Immediately following the government's efforts in 2003 to eliminate fees from public schools, enrollment in LFPSs decreased, only to then again increase once parents became dissatisfied with public schools' severe lack of resources and extreme teacher-pupil ratios, as high 1:150. This trend has been strengthened due to greater demand for spots in LFPSs now that they are receiving the instructional materials grants and are seen as more legitimate by parents. Thus, enrollment figures in LFPSs have been increasing overall since 2005, when the instructional materials grant began.<sup>16</sup> One of the head teachers explained this phenomenon and its effects:

*It reaches a time there's no capacity and there's not room for expansion for double streams [(i.e., multiple sections of the same grade)] ... But the parents are really willing to continue bringing the children. They would like to bring more but you tell them now it is to*

---

16 National elections took place in December 2007, which resulted in widespread civil unrest. In Nairobi the informal settlements were sites of violence and destruction. Many people were killed and properties destroyed. Both during and after the post-election violence, many people left their homes and resettled elsewhere. This movement of people was reflected in a large but temporary drop in enrollment figures between 2007 and 2008.



*capacity. As much as there is congestion, we do admit them, with that congestion and all that. If we go by specification maybe you see like a class of 46, a class of 50, and that is also exceeding the par (HT2).*

However, enrollment is not always automatic. Admission is granted at the discretion of the head teacher, and LFPSs conduct interviews for new pupils that act as an assessment and selection process. This process is used to determine whether a pupil is ready to enter the class they have requested, but it also allows schools to target students who exhibit higher academic potential or who come from households with higher incomes. Such a barrier to entry also suggests that a child who was previously out of school for any length of time would find some difficulty in entering a class that is consistent with their age.

From the parental perspective, the decision to seek enrollment in LFPSs depends on multiple factors. This is because parents view the provision of schooling not as a dichotomy of public versus private provision, but rather as a spectrum of providers who vary in terms of cost and educational value. The amount parents can afford to pay is determined by their economic means, while the educational value placed on a type of school provision is related to evidence around exam performance (discussed in what follows) and a parent's own experience of schooling and subsequent school expectations. Within this decision-making process, an element of opportunism exists as various school providers such as NGOs, church bodies and LFPSs offer some sponsored or concessionary places, meaning that a child can attend while paying either a reduced fee or no fee at all. A child from an informal settlement could, therefore, secure a place in a private school, which levies much higher fees than the family could ordinarily afford. Additionally, it should be remembered that parents in the informal settlements do not consistently experience public schooling as free (while tuition fees have been removed there are still costs associated with uniforms, exams and levies for special projects), and thus make their decisions about paying for LFPSs based on their perceptions of the costs of other alternatives, including public schools. As one parent recounted: "Public school is too expensive, though I tried for one child of mine, but when it reached the time of 'fee-free public education' (in 2003) the pupils were too many in one class, so it was a problem for a teacher to reach some of them. That is why I preferred the [LFPS]" (P2).

## **Resources**

When LFPSs increase their enrollment levels, they do not make additional investments in more classrooms or teachers. As the school running costs tend to be unresponsive to enrollment jumps (except in extreme cases where additional physical space or an additional section and teacher are added), an increase in enrolled pupils means that a school is in a stronger financial position and, at most, is more likely to be able to retain its current teachers and other staff members for longer. One reason LFPSs do not add more teachers when enrollment increases is because of the inconsistency of enrollment, and in order to ensure that enrollment and resources (and thus the number of teachers, not to mention the salary of the head teacher and the owner's income) do not decline, LFPS operators try to motivate teachers to ensure that all students perform well each term in class (since a student's academic performance is public). The words of a head teacher explain this dynamic well:

*For example if I have 20 children, [and if] next year I have 10, it means I'm going to reduce the number of staff, because they are paid through the amount we get. So, what we do with the teachers is we sit down in a meeting and we say what are we going to do now, strategy number one, let us improve, work hard, make sure that the weaker child performs well. That is it. The last child, has very good marks, that is it. So, comparing to a teacher who is in a public school, his pay slip, whether he has come or not is guaranteed, but with us, it is not guaranteed (HT1).*

It is because of these same dynamics—wherein a substantial proportion of parents may suddenly not be able to pay fees on a regular or prolonged bases—that LFPSs believe they can only afford to hire untrained teachers, since they are the least expensive.

At the same time, the provision of concessionary spots—also dependent on school resources—does not function as the literature would suggest, in the sense that parents are specifically offered a place in the school at a fixed lower fee level or for free (Tooley, 2004; Härmä, 2009). In practice, concessions are less formal or official and are more a function of the ongoing, dynamic relationship already explained between the school and the parents. Within the context of this relationship, the likelihood of the school tolerating a delay in payment or non-payment increases or decreases based on the school and community perception of the ability of the family to pay and the pupil's academic strengths, since academic potential is valuable to the school for its implications for exam performance and thus the school's future enrollment. Based on the schools in this study, there is a high tolerance level for those who cannot pay,

those who pay in installments, those who pay late and those who pay but then have the money returned.

## ***Expectations***

In contrast to the financial resources contributed by the community, which pay teacher salaries and other essential running costs, those provided by the government in the form of instructional grants are used to procure needed inputs. The instructional grants also have the effect of indirectly raising expectations, both on the part of parents and teachers. This is because the provision of books has strengthened the ability of teachers to plan their teaching in a more comprehensive and methodical way, in addition to providing children with an independent means of studying (though the books are not typically taken home, but rather are used at school after school hours, or the students copy relevant sections in their notebooks). The importance of these learning materials becomes even more apparent when one recalls that LFPS teachers tend to be untrained, and thus depend heavily on the guidance of textbooks. Teachers and parents thus have higher expectations that these resources, accompanied by textbook-assisted instruction, will result in better exam scores, the latter of which are prominently advertised by schools when students score well, even if it is an extreme minority of the student population.

Relatedly, MoE engagement with LFPSs is also associated with greater opportunities for pupils to sit the exam for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), because more schools have achieved exam status (which requires enrollment of at least 15 students) and because the exam fees have been reduced by half to the same level as public exam centers (a byproduct of recognition by the MoE). One result of serving as an exam center is that the schools are now under additional pressure from parents to show that their students perform well on the KCPE, the score for which is the basis for admission to secondary school—though this (i.e., demonstrating achievement) may be all the more difficult in the context of increasing LFPS enrollment (which has accompanied MoE recognition and legitimation) and, thus, increasing student-teacher ratios. Nevertheless, as teachers reported, not only are parents immediately “looking from school to school ... [for those] that are performing well” when “the results are up” (H1), but they are, more specifically, looking for those where more students attain scores on the KCPE that are considered to provide a better chance of admission to secondary school. The problem that arises, however, is that while parents are interested in securing a good education for their children, their understanding of quality is influenced by the absolute number of students above or near 400 (considered to be a good score) on the KCPE.

## 6. Discussion and Implications

If one thing is clear, it is the precarious position of LFPSs and the delicate equilibrium within which they operate. Moreover, that equilibrium, to the extent that it is maintained, is the result of multiple, counter-balancing forces. While these forces—ranging, for example, from governmental support to school director prerogatives to SMC involvement—were explored in the previous section, a number of points need to be made regarding their intersection and consequences, both anticipated and not. That is, in highlighting the points below, we draw attention not only to the ways in which the experience of the LFPSs examined here reflected the theory of action contained within Kenya’s LFPS policy but we also draw attention to unexpected issues and relationships that emerged. Note, though, that the issues highlighted here are not meant to be exhaustive but rather are meant to reflect the prominent aspects of the experiences of the schools and communities included in the present study.

A first issue is the relationship between LFPSs and the government under the policy of support, as well as the consequent side effects. More specifically, *in addition to positively impacting indicators of educational access, LFPSs, by registering with and being supervised by the government, achieved a newfound level of legitimacy in the eyes of community members. Subsequently, in a chain reaction that has not been addressed in the literature, and which was not anticipated in the theory of the LFPS policy, this study suggests that this newfound legitimacy puts upward pressure on enrollment, which, in turn, puts downward pressure on quality (as student-teacher ratios rise) while also increasing the personal income of school operators.* In that these last two issues are in tension, they represent a key blind spot that deserves more attention from researchers and policymakers. This is particularly so given that the tension is heightened by the approval and support of LFPSs by the government through the policy on Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training.

A second issue relates to the SMC and the influence that parents have in school processes and decision-making. Although parental involvement is thought by LFPS proponents to occur when parents vote with their feet (or dollars, as it were), in the cases examined here, an additional and central form of parental involvement is through the SMC, due to requirements in the government’s LFPS support policy. As shown, there is evidence to suggest that the SMC has contributed to increased accountability for spending (in the sense of verification but not in the sense of parental control of procurement processes or decisions). Thus, in this arrangement, rather than the school being concerned about how parents spend their money (e.g., by choosing to send their children to a LFPS), it is the parents who are concerned with the spending practices of the LFPS. Yet, *despite the value of ensuring that “the money has been spent well”—i.e., in accordance with the purposes set forth by the government, such as purchasing textbooks—it could*

*be argued that the SMC plays a more influential and important role in terms of financial decisions when they pressure head teachers and school directors to retain students who either cannot afford to pay or who cannot pay the full amount of the school's fees.* Because this dynamic is one that has not been addressed in the literature and was not expected by the Kenyan government, it is all the more important to underscore, as is the fact that this form of parental pressure—rather than LFPS benevolence—seems to be the source of concessionary spots. That is, in the case study schools, compassion by parents for their neighbors, combined with outspoken engagement through the SMC, led to concessionary spots being awarded unofficially by LFPS leadership to those students who could not regularly afford to pay the school's fees. By extension, an implication of this finding is that LFPSs, it would seem, are not accessible by the poorest of the poor, as has been suggested (Tooley, 2008; Tooley & Dixon, 2006), except in exceptional circumstances and as a result of support from those on the SMC. Indeed, *when LFPS operators act in isolation, there is evidence that they exacerbate inequity, as when they screen applicants by interviewing them and thus creating an opportunity to deny admission* to students who have low ability, who are particularly poor, and who have been out of school for a period of time, for example.

Third is the issue of fee setting. On one hand, *although the government hoped (as indicated in its policy theory) that support for LFPSs through the Instructional Materials Grant would result in reduced fees for parents, this was not the case in practice. This is because, prior to receiving the grant for textbooks, the LFPSs in the study were simply spending very little on learning materials, with the implication being that the grant funds from the government did not significantly reduce LFPS costs (savings which could be passed on to the consumer) but rather added to LFPS expenditures, in the form of books.* On the other hand, *it was found that fee setting is neither a straightforward reflection of average salaries in the community nor a simple reflection of a desire for short-term profit maximization, since LFPS operators have to take into account that a certain (and often unknown) percentage of the families of admitted students will not be able to pay.* Exacerbating this form of uncertainty is the fact that, as described, there is additional uncertainty when it comes to the disbursement of governmental support, since, over time, the amount of funding has shifted along with the group of schools that benefit from it, due to the inability of the government to fund all those LFPSs that register and qualify. The ability to navigate this situation speaks to the business acumen of LFPS operators (Stern & Heyneman, 2013) and to the fact that decision-making around fee setting and resource usage is more closely related to their personal interest in keeping the school in business long-term, which is dependent on community perceptions of educational quality, and in remaining with a salary in a context of high unemployment.

The fourth issue pertains to LFPS quality, which is supposed to result from SMC oversight, from governmental supervision, from better inputs (i.e., textbooks), and from competition

with public schools. In the end, however, the suggestion that LFPS have increased in quality is tenuous at best, based on the findings of the present study. This is precisely because of the trade-offs and tensions inherent to the position and constraints of the LFPSs, noted above: As enrollment increases and class sizes swell, quality is adversely affected in the sense that the learning experiences for the average student deteriorates. Thus, *while LFPSs receive additional resources in the form of textbooks, while the procurement process for acquiring those books is overseen by parents, and while under-prepared teachers (who have only completed high school) feel more confident in their abilities when they can follow said books, these aspects of the LFPS arrangement under the government's policy of support can be negated by the fact that the demand from additional students outstrips the school's resources, to the point that there are more students than desks and, ironically, more students than the recently acquired textbooks can accommodate.* Ideally, when making school choice decisions, these dynamics and the influence they have on quality would be more clear to—and would be taken into account by—parents, who currently place a premium on advertised exam results. The announcement of high scores from individual students can “feed on and promote” unrealistic hopes related to their children’s future (Caddell, 2006, p. 467), to the extent that parents may even have their children repeat the final year of primary school multiple times on the chance they will earn a score of 400 on the KCPE, which is thought to secure entry to a public secondary school.

The fifth and final issue relates to efficiency. Given that both LFPS proponents and the Kenyan government tap into the concept of efficiency, a couple of points need to be made. The first is that individual LFPSs are not run in a way that is concerned with efficiency, in that operators are focused primarily on survival and on personal profits, and not with graduating or passing along students for lowest possible cost. Second, on a systemic level, the issue of efficiency needs to be called into question. As other research has concluded (Riep, 2015), more students *might*, for example, move through primary education in a Nairobi LFPS for a lower cost compared to the government; however, to the extent that this is the case, it is likely because the government is contributing fewer resources than they contribute to public schools (recall that an additional grant is given to public schools for instructional materials that is not given to LFPSs), with additional yet still insufficient resources being contributed by LFPS parents, that is, those who are already too poor to meet their basic needs. Additionally, to the extent that costs might be cheaper, it is likely only because LFPS operators are reluctant to cap enrollment in accordance with a school’s capacity (due to uncertainty regarding students’ continued attendance), thereby driving down unit costs, as well as because LFPSs hire inadequately trained teachers and treat their pay as optional if enrollment (or, rather, fee collection) is insufficient to support it after the school director and/or head teacher receive their pay first. In such a context, one wonders what efficiency means. LFPS proponents focus on costs when making efficiency arguments (Riep, 2015), but even “low costs” have high prices for the impoverished parents who pay the fees

and for the teachers who are tentatively employed. Moreover, from a societal perspective, and from the perspective of education as a public good, the long-term costs associated with this kind of severely unequal and low-quality schooling arguably should not be considered efficient, in the sense of the being best use of scarce resources for optimal outcomes in the interest of all concerned.

## 7. Conclusion

While the policy platform of achieving universal access is powerful and pervasive, the beliefs and assumptions that inform the strategies it generates are frequently taken for granted by those who design and implement such policies. Knowledge of the practical operation of these policies calls many of the fundamental assumptions and implied theories of action into question. The potential for educational strategies to be effective in ensuring universal access to basic education, for example, is undermined by a lack of detailed information on the processes and dynamics that characterize the implementation of policies in practice.

Beyond the fact that many excluded groups still require, deserve, and have a right to access quality education, blind faith in unexamined assumptions can come at a high cost in low-resource settings. As Samoff (2007) emphasizes, unless we look critically inside the black box of education, which conceals the processes that translate inputs into outputs, we run the risk of squandering scarce funds on strategies that do not bring the intended results. This issue is pertinent in Kenya as the MoE has committed substantial funds to supporting LFPSs. Consider, for example that the government invested \$3.5 million during 2005-2009 alone.

But even beyond the immediate context of Kenya, it is important to emphasize the relevance of the dynamics highlighted in the preceding sections. This is so because the debate in the literature around LFPSs tends to focus on comparisons of indicators and outputs as well as on the market mechanisms, such as competition, that *should*, in theory, emerge in relation to the operation of LFPSs. In the case of Kenya, the policy theory was presented in Table 2. As has been shown, we have reason to believe that LFPSs do not function in practice as in theory, and, crucially, that there are inherent trade-offs, tensions, and unexpected dynamics in operation that have serious consequences for such issues as quality and equity, even when supported by formal government policy designed to address these aspects. Thus, these aspects and consequences need to be understood and incorporated into discussions around LFPS policy, particularly as a range of philanthropic, corporate and bi-/multi-lateral organizations are increasing their support for such schools (Ball, Junemann, & Santori, 2015), with this last group

contributing \$260.6 million in financing to extend these initiatives around the world during the brief period of 2007-2011 (Niemerg, 2013).

However, as we saw in the literature review, the question of government support for and even the very existence of LFPSs are contentious issues. There is some consensus among critics that for-profit schools and the commercialization of education are problematic (Singh, 2015). While the schools studied here were private and fee-charging, the government attempted to improve their quality by officially recognizing them, by requiring parental participation, and by subsidizing textbooks. Yet, overall, as the critics point out, LFPSs produce an uncertain effect on quality and a negative impact on equity, exhibit poor treatment of teachers, show antipathy to teacher unions, and tend to siphon resources away from public schools; in addition, that LFPSs give legitimacy to charging fees is an affront to education as a human right (Klees, 2013; Srivastava, 2013a).

As is abundantly clear, the existence of LFPSs is a fact of life, and most agree they should be regulated. But whether or not they should be supported by the government is an open question. In our view, government resources should go to public schools, not private ones. If public schools are improved in reach and quality, and are made truly free, then LFPSs will disappear. This important point is particularly salient as new U.N. Sustainable Development Goals will soon replace the previous Education for All and Millennium Development Goals. The effort to achieve the very ambitious Sustainable Development Goals will increase the pressure for governments in Kenya and elsewhere to legitimate and to subsidize private sector ventures in education—and thus the tasks of better understanding LFPS effects and the role that they should play—if any—are of great importance.



## 8. References

- Akaguri, L.** (2013) 'Fee-free public or low-fee private basic education in rural Ghana: How does the cost influence the choice of the poor?' *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 44 (2), 140–61.
- Ball, S., Junemann, C., & Santori, D.** (2015). Following policy: Global education policy networking: The case of low fee private schools. The Leverhulme Trust.
- Bangay, C. & Latham, M.** (2013). Are we asking the right questions? Moving beyond the state vs non-state providers debate: Reflections and a case study from India. *International Journal of Educational Development* 33, 244-252.
- Bray, M.** (2004). Sharing the burden of financing: Government and household partnerships for basic education, *Economic Affairs*, 22-26.
- Caddell, M.** (2006). Private schools as battlefields: Contested visions of learning and livelihood in Nepal. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 36 (4), 463-479.
- Caddell, M., & Day Ashley, L.** (2006). Blurring boundaries: Towards a reconceptualisation of the private sector in education, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 36 (4), 411-419.
- Carron, G., & Carr-Hill, R.A.** (1991). Non-formal education: Information and planning issues. Paris, UNESCO-IIEP.
- Cheng, T. K., & Kariithi, S.** (2008). More than one struggle: Ensuring quality education for the next generation in Mathare Valley. Nairobi: Dignitas.
- Curtis, M.** (2015). Profiting from poverty, again: DFID's support for privatizing education and health. Global Justice Now: London.
- Day Ashley, L., C. Mccloughlin, M. Aslam, J. Engel, J. Wales, S. Rawal, R. Batley, G. Kingdon, S. Nicolai & P. Rose.** (2014). The role and impact of private schools in developing countries: A rigorous review of the evidence. London: Department for International Development.
- Dignitas** (2008a). Community scoping report: Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya. Nairobi: Dignitas.
- Dignitas** (2008b). Community profile research report: Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya. Nairobi: Dignitas.
- Dixon, P.** (2004). The regulation of private schools serving low-income families in Hyderabad, India: An Austrian economic perspective. *Economic Affairs*, 24 (4), 31-36.
- Dixon, P.** (2014). International aid and private schools for the poor: Smiles, miracles and markets. *Comparative Education Review*, 58 (3), 539-541.

- Dixon, P. & Tooley, J.** (2005). The regulation of private schools serving low-income families in Andhra Pradesh, India. *The Review of Austrian Economics* 18(1), 29-54.
- EKW** (2004). Rapid assessment of non-formal basic education in informal settlements in Nairobi. Nairobi: Elimu Kwa Wanavijiji Coalition.
- Fennell, S. & Malik, R.** (2012). Between a rock and a hard place: The emerging educational market for the poor in Pakistan. *Comparative Education* 48(2), 249-261.
- Genevois, I.** (2008). Can and should public private partnerships play a role in education? Working document. Paris: UNESCO-IIEP.
- GoK.** (2007). Educational statistics report. Nairobi: Government of Kenya, Ministry of Education.
- GoK.** (2009). Status of non-formal education institutions: Initial analysis of funded sites. Nairobi: Government of Kenya, Ministry of Education.
- GoK.** (2010). Policy for Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training. Nairobi: Government of Kenya, Ministry of Education.
- Härmä, J.** (2009) Can choice promote education for all? Evidence from growth in private primary schooling in India, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 39(2), 151–65.
- Härmä, J.** (2011). Low cost private schooling in India: Is it pro poor and equitable? *International Journal of Educational Development* 31, 350-356.
- Haveman, R. & Wolfe, B.** (1984). "Schooling and Economic Well-Being: The Role of Nonmarket Effects." *Journal of Human Resources*. 19(3), 377-407.
- Heyneman, S. P., Stern, J. M. B., & Smith, T. M.** (2011). The search for effective EFA policies: The role of private schools for low-income children. Washington, D.C.: United States Agency for International Development (USAID/EGAT).
- Kitaev, I.** (2007). Education for all and private education in developing and transitional countries. In P. Srivastava & G. Walford (Eds.), *Private schooling in less economically developed countries: Asian and African perspectives*. (pp. 89-109). Oxford: Symposium.
- Klees, S.** (2008). A quarter century of neoliberal thinking in education: Misleading analyses and failed policies, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 6(4), 311-348.
- Klees, S.** (2013). What's wrong with low-cost private schools for the poor? Education in Crisis. Education International. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.educationincrisis.net/blog/item/904-whats-wrong-with-low-cost-private-schools-for-the-poor>
- LaRocque, N.** (2010) *Non-state providers and public-private partnerships in education for the poor*. Bangkok: UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office.

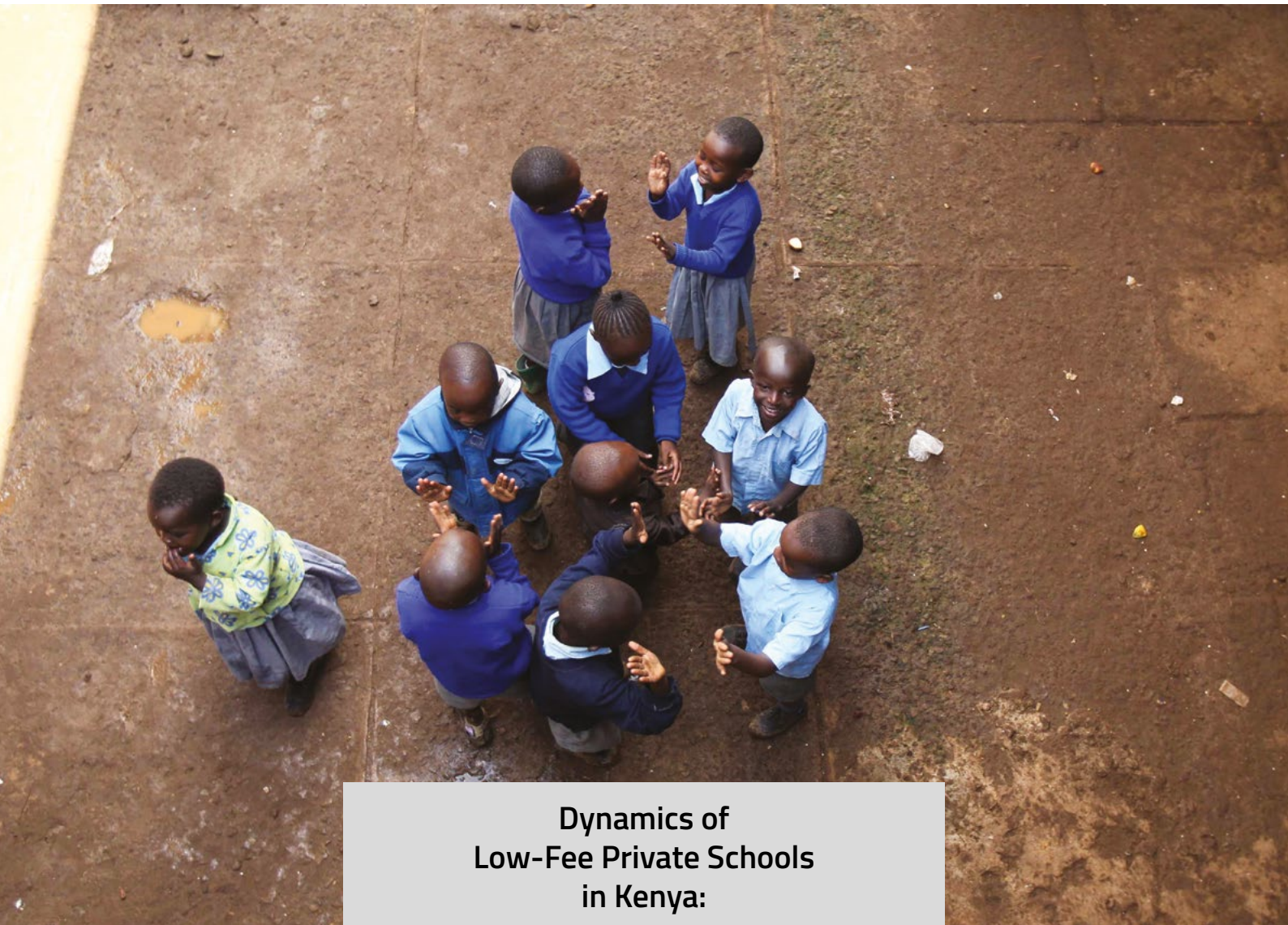
- Lewin, K. M.** (2007). The limits to growth of non-government private schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa. CREATE Pathways to Access, Research Monograph No. 5. Retrieved from: [http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf\\_documents/PTA5.pdf](http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/PTA5.pdf)
- Macpherson, I., Robertson, S. & Walford, G. (eds.)** (2014) *Education, privatization and social justice: Case studies from Africa, South Asia and South East Asia*. Oxford: Symposium Books.
- Mcloughlin, C.** (2013). Low-cost private schools: Evidence, approaches and emerging issues. Economic and Private Sector Professional Evidence and Applied Knowledge Services (EPS PEAKS). Retrieved from [www.enterprise-development.org/download.ashx?id=2260](http://www.enterprise-development.org/download.ashx?id=2260)
- Merkel, S., & Otai, J.** (2007). Meeting the Health Needs of the Urban Poor in Informal Settlements: best practices and lessons learned Nairobi, JHPIEGO.
- Merriam, S. B.** (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. California, USA, Jossey-Bass.
- Mertens, D. M.** (2005). Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A.M.** (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mugisha, F.** (2006). School enrollment among urban non-slum, slum and rural children in Kenya: Is the urban advantage eroding?, *International Journal of Educational Development* 26, 471-482.
- Niemerg, M.** (2013). International support to low-cost private schools. Chicago, Illinois: IDP Foundation, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.idpfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Funding-Paper-FINAL.pdf>
- Nishimura, M., & Yamano, T.** (2013). Emerging private education in Africa: Determinants of school choice in rural Kenya. *World Development* 43, 266-275.
- Ohba, A.** (2013). Do low-cost private school leavers in the informal settlement have a good chance of admission to a government secondary school? A study from Kibera in Kenya. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 43 (6), 763-782. doi: 10.1080/03057925.2012.733536
- Ohara, Y.** (2012). Examining the legitimacy of unrecognised low-fee private schools in india: Comparing different perspectives. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 42 (1), 69-90.
- Oketch, M., Mutisya, M., Ngware, M., & Ezeh, A. C.** (2010). Why are there proportionately more poor pupils enrolled in non-state schools in urban Kenya in spite of FPE policy? *International Journal of Educational Development* 30, 23-32. doi: 10.1016/j.ijedudev.2009.08.001
- Oketch, M., Mutisya, M., Ngware, M., Ezeh, A. C., & Epari, C.** (2010). Free primary education policy and pupil school mobility in urban Kenya. *International Journal of Educational Development* 49, 173-183. doi: 10.1016/j.ijer.2011.01.002

- Patton, M.** (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Pawson, R.** (2006). *Evidence-based policy: A realist perspective*. London: Sage.
- Riep, C.** (2015). Omega schools franchise in Ghana: A case of “low-fee” private education for the poor or for-profitteering? *Privatisation in Education Research Initiative, ESP Working Paper Series*, No. 63. Retrieved from <http://www.periglobal.org/sites/periglobal.org/files/WP63%20Omega%20Schools%20Franchise%20in%20Ghana.pdf>
- Rolleston, C. & Adefeso-Olateju, M.** (2014). De facto privatization of basic education in Africa: a market response to government failure? A comparative study of the cases of Ghana and Nigeria. In I. Macpherson, S. Robertson and G. Walford (Eds.) *Education, Privatization and Social Justice: Case Studies from Africa, South Asia and South East Asia* (pp. 25–44). Oxford: Symposium.
- Rose, P.** (2002). Is the non-state education sector serving the needs of the poor? Evidence from East and Southern Africa. Paper presented at ‘Making Services Work for Poor People’ World Development Report Workshop 2003/4, November 4-5, 2002, Oxford.
- Rose, P.** (2006). Collaborating in education for all? Experiences of government support for non-state provision of basic education in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. *Public Administration and Development* 26, 219-229. doi: 10.1002/pad.420
- Rose, P.** (2009). Non-state provision of education: Evidence from Africa and Asia. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 39 (2), 127-134.
- Samoff, J.** (2007). Education Quality: the disabilities of aid. *International Review of Education*, 53, 485-507.
- Sarangapani, P. & Winch, C.** (2010). Tooley, Dixon and Gomathi on private education in Hyderabad: A reply. *Oxford Review of Education* 36 (4), 499-515.
- Singh, K.** (2015). Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Human Rights Council, United Nations General Assembly. Retrieved from: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/120/82/PDF/G1512082.pdf?OpenElement>
- Srivastava, P.** (2008). The shadow institutional framework: Towards a new institutional understanding of an emerging private school sector in India. *Research Papers in Education*, 23 (4), 451-475. doi: 10.1080/02671520701809783
- Srivastava, P.** (Ed.) (2013a). *Low-fee private schooling: Aggravating equity or mitigating disadvantage?* Oxford: Symposium.
- Srivastava, P.** (2013b). Low-fee private schooling: Issues and evidence. In P. Srivastava (Ed.), *Low-fee private schooling: Aggravating equity or mitigating disadvantage?* (pp. 7-35). Oxford: Symposium.
- Srivastava, P. & Walford, G.** (2007). *Private schooling in less economically developed countries: Asian and African perspectives*. Oxford: Symposium.

- Steer, L., Gillard, J., Gustafsson-Wright, E., & Latham, M.** (2015). *Non-state actors in education in developing countries*. Background Paper to the Annual Research Symposium of the Center for Universal Education. Brookings, Washington, DC.
- Stern, J. M. B., & Heyneman, S. P.** (2013). Low-fee private schooling: the case of Kenya. In P. Srivastava (Ed.), *Low-fee Private Schooling: aggravating equity or mitigating disadvantage?* (pp. 105-130) Oxford: Symposium.
- Sutton & Arnove.** (2004). *Civil society or shadow state? State/NGO relations in education*. USA: Information Age.
- Tooley, J.** (2004a). 'A Luta Continua' (The Struggle Continues): rejoinder to Watkins. *Economic Affairs* 24 (4), 12-16.
- Tooley, J.** (2004b). Private education and 'education for all'. *Economic Affairs* 24 (4), 4-7.
- Tooley, J.** (2005). *Private Schools*. *Education Next (Fall)*, 5 (4). Retrieved from: <http://educationnext.org/privateschoolsforthepoor/>
- Tooley, J.** (2009). *The beautiful tree: A personal journey into how the world's poorest people are educating themselves*. Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute.
- Tooley, J.** (2013). Challenging educational injustice: 'Grassroots' privatisation in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. *Oxford Review of Education* 39 (4), 446-463. doi: 10.1080/03054985.2013.820466
- Tooley, J. & Dixon, P.** (2005a). An inspector calls: The regulation of 'budget' private schools in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India. *International Journal of Educational Development* 22, 269-285.
- Tooley, J., & Dixon, P.** (2005b). Is there a conflict between commercial gain and concern for the poor? Evidence from private schools for the poor in India and Nigeria. *Economic Affairs* 25 (2), 20-26.
- Tooley, J. & Dixon, P.** (2005c). *Private education is good for the poor: A study of private schools serving the poor in low-income countries*. Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute.
- Tooley, J., & Dixon, P.** (2006). 'De facto' Privatisation of Education and the Poor: implications of a study from Sub-Saharan Africa and India. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 36 (4), 443-462.
- Tooley, J., Dixon, P., & Gomathi, S. V.** (2007). Private schools and the millennium development goal of universal primary education: a census and comparative survey in Hyderabad, India. *Oxford Review of Education* 33 (5), 539-560. doi: 10.1080/03054980701425664
- Tooley, J., Dixon, P., & Stanfield, J.** (2008). Impact of free primary education in Kenya: A case study of private schools in Kibera. *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership* 36 (4), 449-469.

- Tooley, J., Dixon, P. Shamsan, Y., & Schagen, I.** (2010). The relative quality and costeffectiveness of private and public schools for low-income families: A case study in a developing country. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice* 21 (2), 117-144. doi: 10.1080/09243450903255482
- Tooley, J., & Longfield, D.** (2015). The role and impact of private schools in developing countries: A response to the DFID-commissioned 'rigorous literature review.' Pearson. Retrieved from: <https://research.pearson.com/articles/role-and-impact-of-private-schools.html>
- Tooley, J., & Stanfield, J.** (2004). "Education For All" through privatisation. *Economic Affairs* 24 (4), 2-3.
- UNESCO**, 2015. Education for all 2000-2015: Achievements and challenges. Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.
- Watkins, K.** (2000). The Oxfam Education Report. Bath: Oxfam.
- Watkins, K.** (2004). Private education and 'education for all: Or how not to construct an evidence-based argument: a reply to Tooley. *Economic Affairs* 24 (4), 8-11.
- Wildish, J.** (2011). Government support for "private schools for the poor": A case study in Mathare informal settlement, Kenya. Doctoral dissertation. University of Maryland, College Park.
- Yin, R. K.** (2003). *Case study research: design and methods*. California, USA: Sage.





**Dynamics of  
Low-Fee Private Schools  
in Kenya:**

**Governmental Legitimation,  
School-Community Dependence,  
and Resource Uncertainty**

September 2015