

Free Primary Education in Kenya: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

On 6th January, 2003 the government of Kenya, in its attempt to boost access and retention in primary education thereby attain Universal Primary Education (UPE) and ultimately Education For All (EFA), rolled out 'Free' Primary Education (FPE) programme in all public primary schools in the country. But twelve years later, during the launch of the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015 in Nairobi, the Cabinet Secretary for Education admitted that there were over two million children in the country who were not in school. This revelation was a curious one given that the function was organised to mark the 2015 deadline for the attainment of EFA goals. Besides, Kenya's legal framework provides for 'free and compulsory' primary education, better known as 'Free' Primary Education (FPE). Further, there have been concerns about the quality of education offered in public primary schools following the introduction of FPE, which has led to an increase in low-fee private schools. Consequently, this paper subjects the concept 'free education' as used in the context of Free Primary Education in Kenya to a critical analysis with the aim of attaining conceptual clarity thereby dispel parents' and other stakeholders' uncertainty as to whether the government provides free or fee education.

Keywords: Education For All, Free Primary Education, Liberating Education, Quality education, Universal Primary Education, Unregulated Education.

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