Education System Brief: Kenya

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Education System: Overview ................................................................................................................ 3
   1.1. Structure ............................................................................................................................................ 3
   1.2. Examinations .................................................................................................................................... 3
   1.3. Curriculum ........................................................................................................................................ 5
2. Education System: Regulatory Framework & Provision ................................................................. 6
   2.1. Governance ...................................................................................................................................... 6
   2.2. Quality Assurance ........................................................................................................................... 8
   2.3. Private Sector .................................................................................................................................. 9
3. Education System: Performance And Challenges ........................................................................... 10
   3.1. Participation ..................................................................................................................................... 10
   3.2. Teaching And Resources .............................................................................................................. 10
   3.3. Learning Outcomes ...................................................................................................................... 12
   3.4. Equity ............................................................................................................................................... 13
4. Education System: Trends And Direction ....................................................................................... 14
   4.1. Past Trends And Developments .................................................................................................... 14
   4.2. Policy Direction ............................................................................................................................ 14
5. References ............................................................................................................................................. 14
1. EDUCATION SYSTEM: OVERVIEW

1.1 STRUCTURE

Pre-Primary Education

Age: 3-5

Early Childhood Education is mandatory and free since the 2017 curriculum reform. The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) was 77.2% in 2018 with large regional disparities: access was particularly low in rural and semi-arid areas (e.g., 18% in Mandera County).

Primary School

Grades: 1-8 Age: 6-13

Free primary education was introduced in Kenya in 2003. Net Enrolment since rose to 91%. However, direct costs (e.g., school meals, uniforms, etc.) and indirect costs (e.g., long travel times) pose significant barriers to entry.

Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE)

Grades: 9–12 Age: 14–17

Secondary education is optional, and the NER increased from 38.5% to 53.2% between 2013 and 2018.

Technical Secondary Education

Alternatively, students can pursue technical education at the secondary level. Since 2010, graduates from technical schools also qualify for university courses.

West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE)

Higher Education

Higher education has expanded significantly in recent years. Enrolments doubled within just two years between 2012 and 2014.

Bursary support is quite broadly available for both private and public universities: 30,492 students received financial support in 2015 (about 7% of total student enrolment in universities).

Vocational Training (TVET)

The TVET sector has also grown: the number of institutions increased from 701 in 2012 to 874 in 2015.

However, the poor reputation of TVET, lack of qualified staff, and inadequate infrastructure pose significant challenges to the sector.

1.2 EXAMINATIONS

Examinations are conducted by the Kenya National Examination Council. There are two centralized high-stake assessments: The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) after the completion of Primary School and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) after the completion of Secondary Education.
KCPE examinations are held in October or November and cover Kiswahili, English, Maths, Science, Agriculture, and Social Studies. Students can reach a total of 500 marks. Although progression to secondary education is guaranteed by the government, competitive national schools require high scores. Students who attain above 400 marks are automatically admitted to government-sponsored national schools. Poor-performing students usually attend district or provincial-level schools or community schools (Harambee) for upper-secondary education.

KCSE Examinations are held in November or December. Candidates are assessed in at least 7 subjects. All candidates scoring C+ or above qualify for public universities. In previous years, this amounted to around 20% of all candidates.

In addition, the Kenya National Examinations Council coordinates two low-stake examinations: The National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) for Primary three and the Monitoring Learner Achievement (MLA) for form two. These examinations serve to monitor overall learning outcomes.
1.3 CURRICULUM

Currently, Kenya is in the process of rolling out a new competency-based curriculum which is laid out below in more detail. Core competencies include communication and collaboration, self-efficacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving, creativity and imagination, citizenship, digital literacy, and learning to learn.

The new curriculum aims to prepare learners for the skills needed in the labor market and reduce pressure on learners by diversifying assessment methods. Centralized exams will constitute only one assessment pillar whilst formative assessments spread throughout the years will also impact students’ grades.

Pre-Primary

Pre-Primary Learning Areas
- Language Activities
- Mathematical Activities
- environmental Activities
- Psychomotor and Creative Activities
- Religious Education Activities
- Pre Braille-Activities

Primary

Lower Primary Learning Areas
- Literacy Activities / Braille Literacy Activities
- Kiswahili Language Activities / Kenya Sign Language for deaf learners
- English Language Activities
- Mathematical activities
- Hygiene and nutrition Activities
- Religious Education
- Movement and Creative Activities

Upper Primary Subjects

Core
- English
- Kiswahili or Kenya Sign Language
- Home Science
- Agriculture
- Science and Technology
- Maths
- Religious Education
- Creative Arts
- Physical and Health education
- Social Studies

Optional
- Foreign languages
- Indigenous Languages
- Kenyan Sign Language
- Braille Literacy
2. EDUCATION SYSTEM. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK & PROVISION

2.1. GOVERNANCE

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is headed by Cabinet Secretary. Under the Cabinet Secretary, four Principal Secretaries are leading the state departments for Early Learning and Basic Education (also including teacher education), vocational education and technical training, university education, and post-training and skills development.

The MoE outsources several responsibilities to semi-autonomous and autonomous government agencies such as the Department for Quality Assurance and Standards, the Kenya National Examination Council, and the Teacher Service Commission. The Teacher Service Commission is an independent constitutional commission responsible for registering, recruiting, allocating, and promoting teachers.

Kenya’s education system has seen increasing decentralization to county and institutional levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institution:</strong> National government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• education policy and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum and examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Universities, tertiary educational institutions, institutions of research, and higher learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• primary schools, special education, secondary schools, and special education institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• promotion of sports and sports education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While public spending on education increased in absolute terms, it decreased as a proportion of GDP. With education expenditure amounting to only 14.4% of GDP (2016) and 5.31% of total government expenditure (2018) Kenya barely meets the education spending targets set out by the world education forum in the Incheon Declaration.
2.2. QUALITY ASSURANCE

School inspections are carried out by the Department for Quality Assurance and Standards and serve both as a source of data collection and quality enforcement.

Pre-service teachers’ education takes place at universities and diploma colleges (secondary school teachers) or Primary Teacher Training Centres. Qualifications reach from Primary education certificates (2-year training at teacher training college) and diploma qualifications (3 years at teacher training college) to Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Ph.D. degrees. All qualified teachers must register to be allowed to teach. In-service training is available in training centers around the country.

Teacher salary depends on qualification. The 2018 new grade and salary scheme of service introduces in 2018 improved promotion prospects for teachers to address incentivization problems.
Until recently, 3-year diplomas in Basic Education were sufficient to qualify as a teacher. However, recent reforms aimed at increasing the quality of teaching require a four-year Bachelor of Education for teachers from 2018/19. The government has also introduced a new teacher education curriculum framework which puts 4 pillars at the heart of pre-service training: subject and curriculum knowledge, language proficiency, pedagogic knowledge and supported teaching (through teaching assessment, guidance, etc.).

2.3. PRIVATE SECTOR

Kenya has a relatively small share of private schools most of which have religious affiliations. However, the number of low-cost private schools has risen rapidly since 2003 as these schools offer attractive advantages, e.g., lower student-teacher ratios. Surveys among parents reveal that low-cost private schools are associated with twice the cost of public schools.

At a secondary level, community-run Harambee schools exist next to public and private institutions.

Private schools must be registered with the MoE. To be approved, private schools must be consistent with the needs of Kenya and the economical and efficient provision of public education. They must also be located in adequate and suitable premises and prove the suitability of their manager. The MoE remains in the position to close private schools where they fail to meet the necessary standards.
3. EDUCATION SYSTEM: PERFORMANCE AND CHALLENGES

1.1 EFFICIENCY

Although Kenya has relatively high levels of enrolment and survival rates, it is still far from its goal of universal education: 15% of students do not transition to secondary school, and high repetition rates, especially in Standard 7 and 8 (cumulative repetition rate of 20%), cause efficiency concerns.

Out of 1000 children...

| 830 complete primary education (Survival Rate: 91.2%) |
| 578 finish secondary education (survival rate: 82%) |

910 enter primary school (NRE: 91.2%)

705 transitions to secondary education (transition rate: 85%)

1.2 TEACHING AND RESOURCES

Student-teacher ratio (average)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Schools</th>
<th>Private Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Violence

Corporal punishment is common and broadly accepted in Kenya: the 2019 violence against children survey indicates that almost half of the youth aged 18-24 agree that corporal punishment by teachers is necessary.

Teacher Absenteeism

On average, over 10% of teachers are not present during on spot checks.
Resources and Infrastructure

Textbooks

The Kenyan Government was able to ensure a 1:1 student textbook ratio in primary and secondary schools after distributing 60,000 textbooks to basic education institutions in 2019.

Student toilet ratio (average)

In an average primary school, 30 students share 1 toilet. In secondary schools, it is 20 students on average.

Electricity

Nearly 20% of primary schools and 13% of secondary school lack access to electricity.
1.3 LEARNING OUTCOMES

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) – 2018

Percentage of students who could not read a single word of a connected text:
(Average percentage in comparable east African countries: 49%)

- **Kiswahili**
  - 19%

- **English**
  - 12%

SAMEQ III -2007

- **8%** of Grade 6 students lack basic reading skills.
- **11.12%** of Grade 6 students lack basic numeric skills.

**Uwezo Kenya Sixth Learning Assessment Report - 2016**

Reading
Proportion of Grade 3 / Grade 8 students that are unable to do Grade 2 work in English

- **Grade 3**
  - 66.1%

- **Grade 8**
  - 3.8%

Mathematics
Percentage of Grade 3 / Grade 8 students who are unable to solve Grade 2 problems in Mathematics:

- **Grade 3**
  - 52.9%

- **Grade 8**
  - 5.5%
1.4 EQUITY

Gender

There are barely any disparities in access to education between genders.

Mean years of schooling

Performance – Uwezo Kenya Sixth Learning Assessment Report 2016:
47.43% of female Grade 3 students can solve Grade 2 problems compared to 41.3% of male ones.

Rural vs Urban

Differences in enrollment are evident once children reach Grade 6 and widen as they progress to Secondary School.

Mean years of schooling

Close to 7 out of 10 children from the poorest quintile are likely to transit to secondary education compared to 9 out of 10 children from the richest quintile.

Performance – Uwezo Kenya Sixth Learning Assessment Report 2016:
40.7% of urban Grade 3 students can solve Grade 2 problems compared to 25.1% of rural students.

Socio-economic

Mean years of schooling

Close to 7 out of 10 children from the poorest quintile are likely to enter to secondary education compared to 9 out of 10 children from the richest quintile.

Performance – Uwezo Kenya Sixth Learning Assessment Report 2016:
34.26% of Grade 3 students of the poorest quintile can solve Grade 2 problems compared to 52.6% of top quintile students.
4. EDUCATION SYSTEM: TRENDS AND DIRECTION

1.1 PAST TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Introduction of Free Primary Education: increase in NER from 70.1% in 1999 to 91.2% in 2017

Decentralization reform: responsibility for pre-primary education, village polytechnics, home craft centres, and childcare facilities moves to counties

1961

2008

2010

2017

Introduction of Free and Affordable Secondary Education

Introduction of new competency-based curriculum

1.2 POLICY DIRECTION

The country’s long-term development goals are set out in Vision 2030, which aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by 2030. The development goals also include the ambition to provide a “quality and inclusive education, training and research for sustainable development”

The specific policy programs for the 2018-2022 period are set out in the Education Sector Strategic Plan. The development of the sector plan was coordinated by the MoE through a steering committee led by the Cabinet secretary and the principal secretaries of the different departments. The Teachers Service Commission, development partners, civil society organizations, and research institutions were also integrated into the process. The strategic plan aims to push forward the following goals:

1. access and participation.
2. equity and inclusiveness.
3. quality and relevance.
4. governance and accountability.
5. REFERENCES:

- https://kenyayote.com/breakdown-kenyas-new-2-6-6-3-education-curriculum-framework-subject-taught/
- https://wenr.wes.org/2015/06/education-kenya
- https://www.knec-portal.ac.ke/
- https://kenyadmission.com/kcse-grading-system/
- https://www.knec.ac.ke/nasmla/
- https://kicd.ac.ke/curriculum-reform/basic-education-curriculum-framework/
- https://www.tsc.go.ke/
- https://cems.nab.gov.gh/
Education System Brief: Kenya

- https://wenr.wes.org/2015/06/education-kenya