

Assessing the Impact of Community Teachers in Kenyan Schools

Summary

The Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE) at Oxford University is collaborating with the Kenyan Ministry of Education, World Vision Kenya and the University of Nairobi on a new initiative to improve primary school results in Kenya. The CSAE will:

- Evaluate the impact of over 250 newly hired community teachers in schools across the country; and
- Assess whether school results improve when communities get involved in hiring teachers.

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Policy context

In 2003, Kenya abolished all fees in government primary schools. Previous research by the CSAE, carried out jointly with the Kenyan Ministry of Education and National Bureau of Statistics, showed that this reform increased access to primary education, particularly in poorer districts. However, teacher hiring did not keep pace with increased student numbers, and some state school test results fell. In the same period, enrolment in private schools started going up.

Project description

The CSAE has launched a new study of student performance in Kenya. The CSAE is evaluating the Kenyan Education Ministry's new initiative to recruit over 250 new community teachers across the country. The study is run jointly with the Education Ministry, World Vision Kenya and the University of Nairobi.

The new initiative is designed to be scaled up across Kenya if it is proven to be successful. The initiative aims to improve school results by:

- (i) providing more support to primary school teachers by hiring community teachers, and
- (ii) involving communities by encouraging local monitoring of teacher selection.

By the end of 2009, World Vision, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, is planning to recruit 256 new community teachers and place them in 128 schools across Kenya. All 128

schools will be tracked through surveys of head teachers, schools' management committees, parents, teachers and students.

The key outcome of interest is students' academic achievement. This will be measured by their performance in national exams and in special literacy and numeracy tests developed by the Kenya Institute of Education. 64 schools without interns will also be tracked, to provide a basis for comparison. Initial results from the project are expected in January 2010.



Overview of school and students. Kenya. Photo: © Curt Carnemark / World Bank

A key question the study asks is how different contracting arrangements for community teachers affect student grades. To investigate this question, the 256 community teachers will be recruited and paid in different ways. Some teachers will receive higher salaries; and some will be recruited locally rather than from the central Teacher Service Commission queue.

Others will be paid directly by the project rather than by the school. These differences will allow CSAE researchers to measure the relative importance of salaries, job security and community involvement for community teacher performance.

Timelines

June – November 2009: Community teachers will be placed in schools.

November 2009: Second round of testing.

January 2010: Preliminary results will be available.

For more detailed information

- 2009: “Free Primary Education in Kenya: Enrolment, Achievement and Local Accountability” presented at the CSAE annual conference. Available at <http://www.iig.ox.ac.uk/output/presentations/pdfs/12a-randomized-eval-policies-kenya-presentation-01.pdf>
- 2009: Forthcoming book chapter on “Public Service Delivery: Education”, in Adam, Collier and Ndung’u, Kenya: Policies for Prosperity.
- 2009: Forthcoming chapter on “Primary School Enrolment and Achievement under FPE” for the 2003-2007 EMIS Booklet.
- iiG Briefing Paper 03: ‘Lessons from Kenya’s introduction of free primary education’. Available at <http://www.iig.ox.ac.uk/output/briefingpapers/pdfs/iiG-briefingpaper-03-kenya-primary-education.pdf>

Information about the researchers

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Mwangi Kimenyi is former director of the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) and currently a Research Fellow at the Brookings Institute in Washington D.C.

Germano Mwabu is Professor of Economics at the University of Nairobi. He has served as Director of the Public Goods Project at the UN University WIDER and co-Director of the African Economic Research Consortium project on Poverty, Income Distribution, and Labour Markets in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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Students tend to local crop. Kenya. Photo: © Curt Carnemark / World Bank

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