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Balancing Basic and Post-Basic Education; Quantity, Quality and Inequality; Service Provision and Productive Capacity; in Securing Poverty Reduction and Growth in Kenya.[1]

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The title deliberately presents a series of apparent trade-offs since they capture some of the policy complexity facing countries such as Kenya which aspire to use education and training strategically to assist in their national development strategies. This complexity is increased when national policy priorities are increasingly entangled with and influenced by those of particular development partners in Kenya, as well as by the changing consensus at the level of what can be termed the international development agenda.

The term 'apparent trade-offs' is used advisedly to underline the historical tendency in the discourse of international agencies to adopt priorities that suggest that policy choices need to be made between competing options. Thus, for the 15 years since Jomtien, there has been something of a trade-off in some agencies between basic and what has come to be called post-basic education. Indeed the very phrase, post-basic education, is, arguably, a creation of development agencies, and suggests a rather artificial bi-polar educational world. Similarly, there has been a strong agency tendency, from at least the mid-1990s, to justify investment projects and programmes in terms of their alleged impacts on poverty reduction, and for this to be seen as some kind of development alternative to investing for growth. Equally, within education and training systems, there have again been tensions around the targeting of quantitative goals such as the education MDGs, as opposed to concerns with quality.[2] In the process, there have been found to be powerful connections with the emergence of inequity, and not least in the rapid development of private alternatives to the massive expansion of under-funded public schooling. A last trade-off to be considered is that between the delivery of services such as health and education which are closely associated with the MDGs, on the one hand, and the elaboration of strategies which are aimed at production and increased employment.

Using this lens, we shall focus on Kenya's recent policy history, against the longer background of 40 years of national policy development.[3] It is an interesting coincidence that this paper is being presented in Oxford during the very period when the Global Summit, meeting in New York, is

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[1] This is part of a multi-country study on post-basic education and training for poverty reduction funded by DFID. The views in the present paper are those of the author, and may not be attributed to DFID.
[2] See King and Rose 2005, Special Issue *passim*, for many illustrations of the quality-quantity trade-off, particularly through national and international educational targeting.
[3] A longer study, King (2005) 'Post-basic Education and Training for Growth and Poverty Reduction: Towards a history of Policy in Kenya, 1963-2005', and more information on the full project, are available in electronic format from http://www.cas.ed.ac.uk/research/pbet.html

reviewing 5 years of national and international progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. What makes a global review of the world's progress in education additionally complex is that the UN body which originally identified the MDG targets in September 2000 would appear to be changing its stance on how narrowly the achievement of the goals can be interpreted. One result of that shift of the goalposts is that it may become more difficult to determine whether Kenya is really on track to reach the MDGs, since the MDGs are themselves seen to be dependent on much wider changes in development policy and on national and international investment.

From Kenyan Policy to Policy for Kenya?

One of the concerns that lies behind the series of trade-offs just discussed is whether the resulting strategies can be said to constitute Kenyan policy or policy for Kenya. This is much less an issue for countries such as India or South Africa, which are very little dependent on external financing for their recurrent and development expenditures. But with many other countries, including Rwanda, Tanzania, Ghana and Kenya, their dependence on external funding is such that it is perhaps inevitable that they pay substantial attention to the investment priorities of their principal development partners. One of the paradoxes in the analysis of this national policy process is that the donor discourse about the crucial necessity of country ownership of policy has intensified at the very time that some conformity with international policy priorities and processes has become mandatory, e.g. in the requirements surrounding the development of a national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

As far as Kenya's policy history in education and human development is concerned, it is difficult to draw a line between those documents which reflect more national concerns, and those which are more of a national version of what is an international requirement. But there are some pointers to a national policy context that may be noted. One of the sharpest of these is the pre-eminence of the linkage between education and training on the one hand, and their labour market implications, on the other. This education-and-employment focus is captured in the very titles of several of the key conferences and commissions of inquiry (e.g. Sheffield (ed) 1967; Kenya Government 1988). Kenyan policy-makers from the time of even the very first Education Commission of 1964 were pre-occupied by the problem of the 'school leaver' and there was a powerful political tendency, often not shared by their development partners, to think that education should be able to make some direct contribution to labour market absorption. At its most thoughtful, as in this first Commission, it was a vision of education interacting with a whole series of other factors to create an enabling environment in which young people could be productively employed:

> It is obvious, however, that the prospects of the school leaver, at this or any other level, are not soluble by educational means alone. The problem is fundamentally one of economic growth, to which education may make its appropriate contribution, but is, nevertheless, only one of the factors in growth. Other factors, such as the provision of social and development capital, organisation, the growth of markets, transport facilities and commercial institutions, are equally necessary to progress. Education and training interlock with all of these factors and, if neglected at the crucial time, can seriously impede the development of any one, and therefore of the whole. (Kenya Government 1964: 138-9)

We shall note in due course that there are some fascinating parallels between this approach to education-and-employment, which is based on the necessity of intra-sectoral synergies with education, and the position of the UN Millennium Project (2005), the Commission for Africa (2005), and the World Bank's latest Education Sector Strategy Update (2005).[4]

We should emphasise that this Kenyan view is linked to the crucial importance of economic growth. It is not at all based on the kind of correlational research that would become very popular in the World Bank from 1980; this sought to make the case that there was a connection between so many years of primary education and agricultural productivity, as well as greater productivity in urban settings, whether in employment or self-employment.[5] By contrast, Kenyan thinkers associated with the Education Commission saw national development and growth as the keys to the eradication of poverty, ignorance and disease (Kenya Government 1964; 24). There was certainly no particular level of education specially linked to poverty eradication, in the policy discourse; and as far as popular perceptions were concerned, policy-in-practice meant supporting the spirit of self-help (*harambee* in Swahili) which was probably responsible for the construction and organisation of a larger number of community secondary schools than any other part of Sub-Saharan Africa.

If one element in Kenya's national policy has been characterised by a continual linking of education with employment, a closely associated policy priority has been to seek to make the curriculum of schools and colleges explicitly anticipate the world of work. At one point, in the 1960s and 1970s, this local determination to orient education towards the vocational, agricultural or technical would have coincided with the focus of the World Bank and several other external agencies (King 2003). But by the time, in 1984, that Kenya was set to make the whole of its primary and secondary school system more relevant to employment and self-employment in urban and rural areas, the external consensus about the value of what were called 'diversified schools' had dramatically shifted. Kenya policy-makers – like their counterparts in Ghana at the same period – found they were on their own. There was no external support available.

In arguing for this close linkage between education and the labour market, Kenyan policy makers had also taken on board the thinking associated with the ILO's employment mission to Kenya in 1972 which had internationalised the notion of the informal sector (ILO 1972); the Kenyans did not, however, restrict this concept to the urban areas, but saw education-for-self-employment as equally relevant for the rural areas (NCEOP 1976).

These, then, were the red threads of Kenya's local policy discourse, in the first 30-35 years after independence – a powerful concern that education should be oriented to the range of work and employment in both the rural and urban economies, formal and informal; and an equally strong view that since the state could not supply sufficient funding, communities should be encouraged, through self-help, to build additional secondary schools, and later community institutes of science and technology.

It is equally important to underline what was not salient in the national policy discourse of these three decades. There was certainly no focus of attention on a single sub-sector of education such as primary; all the commissions had dealt with the entire education system, including technical and vocational. There was virtually no explicit policy concern with 'quality', although policy makers were aware of the problem of dropouts in both primary and secondary education, and parents and pupils were very conscious of the exact success rates of individual schools in primary

[4] See King 2005b for a more detailed analysis of these synergies.
[5] For a critique of this hugely influential World Bank research, see King, Palmer and Hayman 2005, and King and Palmer 2005.

and secondary leaving examinations.[6] It was not until 1998 and the World Bank's *Sector Review* of primary and secondary education that there were judgements made about education outcomes across the system.[7] Kenya's National Examination Research Council had had all the data necessary to make such analyses for over 30 years, but had been using this to improve examinations rather than stating that, for example, students 'are not even absorbing as much as 10-15% of the curriculum material in subjects such as mathematics, that they are expected to know by the end of their secondary schooling' (World Bank 1998:92). Nor was there a dominant strain in local policy discourse about education's capacity to contribute to poverty reduction or the alleviation of inequality.

But with the arrival of the poverty perspective in the form of the *National Poverty Eradication Plan, 1999-2015* (Kenya Government 1999)[8] and two years later the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) 2001-2004* (Kenya Government 2001), we enter a world where the agenda and its conceptualisation are much more externally driven. It now became mandatory to define the nation in terms of the incidence of absolute poverty across the country (52%). In fact, the argument for 'human and social capital accumulation by low income groups' as 'an essential twin to broad-based economic growth' is well-made. But the focus of education in the *Poverty Eradication Plan* and the PRSP is exclusively with primary schooling. This is a new departure in Kenya. Along with basic health, water and sanitation, these become 'essential social services for low income groups' (Kenya Government 1999: 39).

Nevertheless, the value of the poverty perspective was that it was able to demonstrate that a third of the total cost of primary education and no less than two thirds of the cost of secondary education were coming from parents. This, it was argued, made it much more likely that it would be those from poorer families who would drop out and thus fail to complete Standard VIII, and who would not even be able to register in government secondary schools. Even the bursary system for secondary schools seemed to favour a significant number in the top two quintiles of income. The recognition of these inequities and the continued crisis in cost sharing which resulted in some 1.6 million children in the 6-13 age group not being in school at all made it not far surprising that the new Kenya Government of December 2002 would put on its masthead genuinely free primary education. It could be argued at this point that, in respect of free primary schooling, the perspective of the new national government and that of the principal external agencies coincided, notably the World Bank and DFID.

However, there is evidence that there continued to be a strong concern with the traditions of economic growth, industrial development and employment creation in the new government. One of its key policy texts was the *Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) for Wealth and Employment Creation 2003-2007* (Kenya Government 2003a). There was apparently strong donor pressure to

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[6] Parents were only too well aware also of the impact of emergency initiatives to expand schools with inadequate funding. See the critique of universal primary education in Tanzania (Wedgwood 2005; King 2005c).

[7] Interestingly, for India, Sarangapani (2005:2) has made the following comment about quality in the subcontinent: 'Its appearance in formal discourse is linked with the appearance of the aid and lending agencies including the World Bank, more or less dividing policy discourse into "Before Quality" and "After Quality".'

[8] The Plan had been preceded by *Learning from the Poor: a Participatory Poverty Assessment in Kenya* (Narayan and Nyamwaya 1996).

have this called 'for poverty reduction' as opposed to 'wealth creation'.[9] But this was firmly resisted, as it was argued that 'Rapid economic growth or the baking of a bigger national cake, is (sic) the only assured way of reducing poverty and enhancing gainful employment opportunities in the long run' (Kenya Government 2003a: 31). By contrast with 'poverty reduction', the ERS wanted to put an earlier vision centre stage - that of industrial catch-up: 'Kenya can get no better deal than recapture the initiative we had at independence with the aim of climbing to greater heights in development with the view of becoming part of the First World in the next twenty five years' (Kenya Government 2003a: v).

The new government also continued the national policy focus on employment creation that had run through many earlier commissions and sessional papers, even declaring a target of half a million jobs a year for its first five years. Equally, it retained the policy interest in what had been called the informal sector for 30 years, but boldly reinforced the emphasis on the rural farming enterprise that had been there since the Kericho Report of 1967, and declared that 'small farms are also small businesses' (Kenya Government 2003b: 2). Like the ERS, the *Sessional Paper on the Development of Micro and Small Enterprises* had the addition of *for Wealth Creation and Employment Generation* in its formal title (Kenya Government 2005c).[10] As the bulk of all work and employment in Kenya are in the rural areas, this redefinition of the informal sector massively increases the size of Kenya's micro and small enterprise (MSE) sector to 'over 74.2% of the total number of persons engaged in the country' (Kenya Government 2005c: 6; see also King 2005b).

This expanded concept of an MSE sector could prove important when it comes to rethinking a productive development strategy for urban and rural Kenya, but before leaving this discussion of Kenyan versus external policy, we should note the way the new government sought to privilege a continuing role for skills development , technology and industrialisation in its *Sessional Paper of 2005 on a Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research* (Kenya Government 2005b). The emphasis on a critical mass of Kenyans with technical skills connects to a good deal of earlier policy on exactly this orientation for Kenyan secondary schools:

> A breakthrough in industrialisation can only be achieved through technology. It will, therefore, be [important] to give prominence to technical education at all sub-sectors. While noting that not all students leaving secondary schools will move on to middle level colleges or universities, it is important to ensure that students will be equipped with some technical skills. This will enable them to contribute effectively towards industrialisation. The country needs a critical mass of Kenyans with some technical skills for technological take off and sustainability. In this respect, therefore, it is important to offer some important technical subjects at secondary school level. In view of the high cost of offering some of the technical subjects, it will be done in a controlled manner in order to make it both cost effective and affordable. (Kenya Government 2005a: 27)

Thus when we see, in 2004 and 2005, the new government developing a sector-wide approach (SWAP) with its external partners in the *Kenya Education Sector Support Programme for 2005-2010*(KESSP) (Kenya Government 2005d), it is by no means restricted to the achievement of EFA and the MDGs, even though KESSP is declared to be based on these as its 'overall policy goal' (Kenya Government 2005d: ii). Rather, like all earlier education commissions, KESSP

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[9] The Ministry of Economic Planning felt the term poverty reduction suggested the poor would always be with us; we needed just to reduce it somewhat (personal communication December 2004).

[10] Intriguingly, in terms of what was said about the ERS, the first draft of the MSE session paper included in its title the phrase 'for poverty reduction'.

takes a genuinely comprehensive approach to the entire education and training system. It is noteworthy that secondary and higher education are two of its six key thematic areas, and technical, industrial, vocational and entrepreneurship training (TIVET) is also one of more than 20 investment programmes.

It is too soon to be clear whether KESSP represents a strategic compromise between what might be termed the current MDG, poverty and quality focus of several of Kenya's external partners[11] and its own determination to make the SWAP genuinely reflect the entire education sector and support its aspirations for wealth creation. But it is just possible that Kenya may have been helped in arguing for the crucial importance of expanding both secondary and tertiary education by a series of critical changes in the World Bank's own education strategy. The latter had not only argued, in new policy papers, for the key roles of tertiary and secondary education in accessing the knowledge economy (World Bank 2002; 2005), but had also elaborated a major document on skills development (TIVET) for Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank 2004). This thinking has been summarised in a document whose sub-title nicely captures the need to go beyond the MDGs: *Education Sector Strategy Update: Achieving the MDGs, Broadening our Perspective, Maximising our Effectiveness* (World Bank 2005c).[12]

This is perhaps what made it possible for KESSP to argue for a transition rate of 70% from primary to secondary education, and for a major expansion of the university sector, with a strong focus on students studying science. The plans to double secondary enrolments by 2010 and triple them by 2015 are doubtless legitimated in part by the long-term strategy of 'integrating secondary education as part of basic education' (Kenya Government 2005d: 181-2).[13] The use of the donors' terminology of basic education to claim that both primary and secondary education should be the aspiration of the majority of young people was very similar of course to what Kenyans had stood for since independence – that through self-help every community could aspire to have secondary education.

Where the government had perhaps acceded to donors' concerns with poverty reduction, and with quality and not just access, was that right through the different levels of education there were bursaries for the needy built into the investment programmes.[14] These were particularly for the categories of marginalised young people, and especially girls, in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALS) and in the urban slums. They were the very groups that had been pinpointed in the Society for International Development (SID 2004) publication, *Pulling Apart: Facts and figures on inequality in Kenya*.

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[11] It will be interesting to see how this current MDG focus may shift with some donors as an outcome of the UN Global Summit of September 2005.

[12] The Bank underlined that key features of this broader education agenda are strong support in analysing countries' secondary education sub-sectors, and 'systematic inclusion of tertiary education as an integral part of policy dialogue' (World Bank 2005c: x).

[13] Rwanda had also claimed that primary and junior secondary were part of basic education (see Hayman 2005) and in Ghana, the White Paper of 2004 has expanded the concept of basic education to include 2 years of early childhood education, 6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary (see Palmer 2005).

[14] It looks like there may have been some hard bargaining over the numbers of merit-base bursaries for children from poorer families, including from ASALS. In the January 2005 draft of KESSP, no less than 51,600 needy students were targeted to get KSh. 15,000 for access to secondary, and in TIVET there would be 7,600 bursaries a year with 2000 awarded to female students wishing to enter male dominated careers. In the final draft these figures were substantially reduced.

In addition, there was a great deal of attention given to quality, with the very sub-title of KESSP being *Delivering quality education and training to all Kenyans.* Contrary to what we have suggested, the government sought to argue that quality had been a central concern since independence. Be that as it may, KESSP was able to point to the recent establishment of a Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards, and to its intention to set up a national assessment system that would draw on good practice from existing regional assessments of pupil achievements (Kenya Government 2005d ch. 18 passim). Both in secondary and TIVET, there were investments planned for Centres of Excellence, and a national accreditation system at university level.

In concluding this section on the correspondence between the threads of national policy and the perspectives of the development partners, it does seem that KESSP skilfully straddles the different visions of the main actors in the SWAP. From the donor side, the document is very clearly pro-poor. The requirements of the needy, marginalised, HIV orphans, and girls are given attention in every sub-sector. On the other hand, Kenyan policy makers have held on to their priorities for technical and scientific capacity development right through to university. Claims about the strong links between ICT investment and TIVET investment and economic growth are evident. Indeed the whole investment programme is 'based on the belief that quality education and training contributes to economic growth, enhances equity and leads to the expansion of employment opportunities.' (Kenya Government 2005d viii).

From Policy as Text to Policies in Practice

We are aware that these 40 years of policy as text are only one lens for examining a government's educational ambitions and those of its development partners. Often the sheer detail and scale of what is aspired to may be a long way away from what can possibly be delivered. All policy-makers are aware of this gap, and the more elegant and persuasive the policy text – as these often are in Kenya and South Africa - the more necessary it is to examine the challenges to implementation. We shall examine a few of these in order to illustrate the complexity in practice of some of our key themes – quality, inequality, community self-help, and relevance to the world of work.

The challenge of KESSP's very first target, 'UPE by 2005' seems to be in some doubt (Kenya Government 2005d: x). Despite the extraordinary achievement of enrolling 1.3 million additional children in January 2003 as part of the Free Primary Education (FPE) pledge, it is admitted on the very next page of the KESSP Executive Summary that there are 'about one million school-aged children in the urban slums and ASAL areas who are still not enrolled' (Kenya Government 2005d: xi). Later on, in a chapter on 'Non-formal Schools and Non-Formal Education Investment Programme' (ibid. 30ff), it becomes clear that 'not enrolled' means not enrolled in formal government primary schools; there, the number of school-age children, not in formal schools, is given as 1.5 million, and out of school youth as 200,000. What proportion of the 1.5 million may not be in the large number of non-formal schools and non-formal education centres, but who are genuinely out of school, is not given. Arguably, this latter group, whatever its size, will contain some of the most difficult – and even most expensive - children to enrol and retain, as Williams has argued.[15]

[15] Meeting the needs of "the last ten per cent" will be particularly challenging and expensive. It will require flexible approaches and probably cannot be achieved for all marginal populations by the target date (Williams 2005).

It is perhaps unfortunate to refer to the former group of children as not enrolled when in fact many of them are simply in non-registered types of non-formal schools and non-formal centres. Lauglo (2004: 10) has argued that progressively building upon these non-government initiatives, and taking responsibility for certain recurrent costs is the way for government to go, respecting what are really urban slum and ASAL versions of the long historical tradition of self-help (*harambee*) in Kenya.

But what this points to is the huge challenge of monitoring what has actually been happening to the very large numbers of children from predominantly poorer families who entered government primary schools, some for the first time,[16] in January 2003. We currently, and perhaps not surprisingly, lack a solid statistical account of who these 1.3 million children were. The past tense is used advisedly as it is certain that many have already left the overcrowded classes they joined with their emergency teachers, and may have returned to the non-government classes they were in before, or to no classes at all. Sorting out what may have happened to these children, who were the whole point of the FPE initiative, will now be extraordinarily difficult, some two and a half years later. Yet is was precisely this group for which the planners and agency personnel devised the expanded bursary schemes etc.

This is surely one area where detailed research would be invaluable if it is intended to demonstrate that there has been some clear, pro-poor impact of this enormously expensive endeavour. It would be hugely demanding, methodologically, to do so. For instance, how can one really distinguish, either in Standard I or in later Standards, who were the '1.3 million additional children' who entered government schools in January 2003? What was the mechanism that determined they were 'additional'? How did they differ from those who were not 'additional' but came into Standard I in that same month? It is admitted by policy-makers that many of these FPE children have dropped out since January , but, again, given that their names would have been recorded in the same registers as 'regular' children, it would be impossible to know which children did in fact drop out – those who would have attended school anyway or those who only came because of FPE. Although there is discussion, in the KESSP chapter on Monitoring and Evaluation, of the importance of base-line data, this particular challenge of monitoring what happens to 1.3 million children defies such treatment.

Another area that is hugely problematic is the unintended consequence of declaring that something is free. The policy is taken in Kenya's case to provide a straightforward pathway for poor families to invest in basic education. The judgement was made largely on the grounds that, although public primary schools were nominally non-feepaying, 'cost-sharing' – a whole series of levies and charges made at the level of the school for school improvement, including building and maintenance of classrooms in rural areas – was effectively discouraging poor families from enrolling their children. The edict was taken to mean that parents and the community need make no contribution of any kind to the upkeep of their schools – a tradition that was older than a hundred years in most of the rural areas of Kenya. The impact had not been anticipated: poor parents, as we have seen above, began to move their children out of the non-formal schools with their very low fee levels into the free public sector. The same happened with some children who had been paying low fees to attend early childhood education. Of course the impact on popular

[16] Obviously, a large number of those enrolling in 2003 were not first-timers at all: 'Parents who previously could not afford to pay the fees charged by government primary schools and who therefore paid the lower fees in the private schools serving the poor - or who kept their children out of school, sent their children to government schools in large numbers' (Lauglo 2004: 42).

public primary schools was overwhelming. They had to move from a supplementary financing regime which they could control to one which was dependent on the central government providing so much per child. Again, we have no adequate base-line account of the efficiency of the community fund-raising regime – it differed hugely from school to school. But its replacement by a central per capita amount has not been without its problems, either in terms of the arrival of the moneys, or the restrictions on its use.[17]

Very little is known in any depth of the impact of FPE on community self-help at the school level, but it surely meant that within a broadly publicly funded school system there was a wide variation, including paying teachers additional allowances for extra classes. One result of the ban on most fees and levies is that the public system will lose both some parents who were ready to pay for a higher quality version of public schooling, and some teachers who cooperated in trying to provide this. There has also been a government ban on the very widespread, and potentially divisive use of private tuition by the teachers with those children whose parents could pay. It is doubtful if removing this vital source of income will mean that teachers will dedicate more time to what have become, since FPE, much more demanding, and often over-crowded regular classes.

Paradoxically, therefore, Free Primary Education may actually reduce the disparities within the public primary school system, by reducing the *harambee* factor of local financing. It may actually reduce the reliance of some parents on the low-fee systems of non-formal schools, but encourage other parents to leave the public sector entirely in favour of higher cost private schooling. In fact the judgement of parents about staying in the public system will be determined by the sheer extent of overcrowding and the capacity of often emergency teaching force to handle it. If upwardly mobile pupils and parents judge that their chances of reaching a good public secondary school have been substantially reduced by large groups of 'FPE children' crowding the schools, they will resort to the market of private primary and tuition (Williams 2005).

In other words, the fee element may prove rather a blunt instrument for addressing the multiple reasons that Makau and others argued were responsible for pupils not participating in primary schools in Kenya (Makau et al. in Sawamura 2005). The quality of primary schooling is crucially judged by parents in Kenya according to its success in securing access to the best secondary schools in the country. If it is really true that there are a million plus new children being accommodated in the state sector, and if the many initiatives being proposed by the KESSP are not put into place expeditiously in order to secure school quality, then one of the main beneficiaries of the whole FPE initiative will almost certainly be the private primary school sector.

We are suggesting that reduction of public school quality – at times of sudden unplanned expansion – can translate into major support for private education. Political impact appears rapid and dramatic through quantitative expansion, but the evidence from around East and Central Africa (from Malawi to Tanzania to Uganda) is that the long-term impact on teacher morale, status and commitment of dilution to the profession through emergency recruitment can be devastating (King 2005c). In Kenya in 1999, even before the inevitable dilution of the pupil-to-trained-teacher ratio of the current expansion,[18] it was being reported that the teachers, though allegedly trained, cannot cope, as the majority of them had failed in maths and science (King 2005a: 27). There are at least two further worrying consequences of this deficit in quality. First,

[17] For a fascinating account of these unintended consequences in schools in Narok District, see Sawamura 2005.

[18] In Malawi, the pupil to trained teacher ratio is reported as 123:1, more than 10 years after its massive unplanned expansion of primary education (World Bank 2005a: 12).

at the individual level, it makes it much more difficult for bright children from poor families to make it right through the system to the very top, in the way that was once thought to be the tradition in Kenya. Kilemi Mwiria, assistant minister of Education in the new government, presents a widely-held view of education as **the** pathway from poverty:[19]

> When I joined school in the sixties, education was touted as the main way the poor could experience upward mobility. I would say that, up to the 1970s, this was not merely a theoretical pronouncement. It is because of education that many persons who hail from peasant backgrounds occupy key positions in government and the private sector. Those days unlike today many poor boys and girls could through merit make the leap from a rural primary school to a top national school and eventually to university. And because merit counted for much more than is the case now, they could secure employment in some of the best corporate organisations or in government. (Mwiria 2005:1)

The view that the system of bursaries and other merit-based mechanisms no longer works for the poor is something that KESSP will need seriously to address, as it is a mechanism that is central to their pro-poor policy. We shall return later to this concern with merit in access to good schools and to employment, but apart from this worry about deficits in quality at the individual level, there is a system-wide implication. The much-vaunted claim that investment in primary schooling translates into a whole series of other development benefits – from increased agricultural productivity, to reduced fertility and reduced maternal mortality – will be hollow, if it turns out to be the case that Kenya shares with other East and Central Africa countries the situation that as few as 10% of the children master the intended curriculum (World Bank 2005b: 39). [20]

We have taken just a few examples of policy-in-practice to illustrate how very crucial it will be in determining whether education can indeed be a pathway out of poverty to know how factors like self-help, quality, retention, merit-bursaries are working out in the schools themselves. Preliminary indications are that much more detailed research will be needed if we are to know how these large new populations of children from poor families are actually faring under the Free Primary Education regime. But the prognosis is not entirely promising.

Education and Training and the wider Intra-sectoral Environment

We have talked about how Kenyan policy-makers in education have consistently sought to link education and training with work and employment, being aware of the two-way relationship between education and this most crucial element in the wider economic environment. This seems less the case with KESSP, as it is primarily seen as an investment programme within the education and training sector. However, many of the challenges that KESSP seeks to address cannot be solved within the education silo alone. Thus the widespread search for a second income by teachers – from primary school to university – is inseparable from the view that public sector salaries have fallen in real value, and that the official salary no longer constitutes a living wage. The impact of such a perception on teacher morale and on school quality is incalculable, but it is not narrowly an educational issue. Equally, if access to the better schools and to the better jobs in

[19] Mwiria also presents a very detailed picture of the dominance of the private 'academies' in securing access to much of the best public secondary education (Mwiria 2005).
[20] For evidence that learning outcomes have actually been deteriorating in several Sub-Saharan African countries, see Colclough 2005.

the formal sector is felt to have become increasingly influenced by non-meritocratic criteria, then this too is not an education sector matter.

The World Bank in the current draft of its *Education Sector Strategy Update* (ESSU) makes precisely the same point:

> Rather than concentrate on a particular level of education, it emphasizes a holistic approach that not only addresses needs at all levels, but indeed, recognizes that the challenges of access, equity, education quality, efficiency, financial sustainability, and governance and management are intra-sectoral issues that will never be adequately understood and addressed if they are considered only from the perspective of education levels. (World Bank 2005c: 36)

It is very difficult to judge how far non-meritocratic influences may have penetrated the public sector, and how far they may have affected the calibre of recruitment to different kinds of work in government. But this is almost certainly one of the reasons why the Commission for Africa (2005) felt that 'Weak capacity is a major problem in most African countries. All tiers of government are affected' (Ibid. 135). Though some analysts use 'capacity' and 'capacity-building' almost as a panacea for what should happen in Africa, the Commission is unusual in linking governance and capacity; the very quality of the public service is seen to be a function of good governance. Thus capacity, accountability, transparency and corruption are all treated in the same chapter (ibid. ch.4). The Commission warns that 'Strengthening states, so they are effective and able to deliver is, therefore, the foundation of our report.' Interventions even in major areas like international trade, debt and aid – not to mention education – 'will have only limited impact' if governance and capacity are not resolved (Commission for Africa 2005: 134).

But it is not only the Commission for Africa that that has linked capacity development with good governance. The World Bank's forthcoming *Education Sector Strategy Update* [2005] also links good governance very directly with education outcomes, or, in other words, with one dimension of quality:

> A governance issue that poses a fundamental threat to education outcomes is **corruption.** It is essential that sector assessments identify the problem - whether it occurs outside the education sector (buying and selling of civil-service jobs) or inside (buying and selling of grades or admission to preferred schools) - and remedial options. Education interventions can contribute to higher standards of integrity. (World Bank 2005c: 24, emphasis in original)

What is intriguing is that Kenya's Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) and its KESSP have emerged over the same period that three major international reports have all commented on the Millennium Goals, on the approach to the delivery of education, and on the need for major investment in other key economic sectors if there is to be effective synergy amongst the MDGs, education, and productive capacity. We have commented in detail elsewhere (King 2005b) on this emerging international consensus amongst the Commission for Africa, the World Bank's ESSU, and the UN Millennium Project, *Investing in Development* (2005). But we can derive at least three clear messages from these reports, all of which have a resonance our analysis of Kenya's desire to balance poverty reduction with wealth and employment creation.

First, the education MDGs – of UPE and Gender Parity – cannot be reached by only targeting primary education; only a holistic and integrated approach to education, primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational, can assist in reaching the Goals. But education investments, however integrated, are a necessary but not sufficient condition to reach the Goals. The draft text of the UN Global Summit for September 14-16 2005 makes this abundantly clear.[21]

Second, other social sector investments, e.g. in health, as well as major investments in the productive sectors of agriculture, energy, transport, trade and commerce, need to be encouraged by both public and private sectors, along with substantially increased external aid.[22] These too are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for reaching the Goals.

Third, all three reports judge that good governance, a strong national vision, and a capacity to deliver are critical to the investments in the first and second messages proving to be productive.[23]

In this connection, it is worth noting that the draft text of the UN Global Summit goes far beyond the Millennium Development Goals in urging sustainable economic growth, the development of the productive sectors in developing countries, and a whole series of measures in support of science and technology for development, as recommended by the UN Millennium Project (UN 2005). In this sense, the draft text, if adopted, lays to rest the minimalist approach to the definition of development which was possible from the time of the International Development Targets of the OECD in 1996, and the Millennium Development Goals of 2,000. Instead, it urges the implementation of 'comprehensive national development strategies' to achieve a wider set of internationally agreed development goals and objectives, derived from UN Conferences and Summits, including the Millennium Development Goals. The deliberate use of the phrase, 'including the Millennium Development Goals', on no less than five separate occasions is a clear indication that they could now be seen as just one element of a much larger development conception. Arguably, the UN Millennium Project and the Commission for Africa have succeeded in dramatically expanding the narrow vision of the MDGs. As far as Education, as a sector is concerned, this would mean that the broader vision of education adopted at Jomtien in 1990 and confirmed in Dakar in 2000 should be accepted as the international education agenda, along with the emphasis on secondary, higher, vocational and technical to which we have just alluded.

Education and Training for Productive Development in Kenya

The implications for Kenya of this likely broadening of the world's international development agenda are that the targets of its own *Economic Recovery Strategy* and of KESSP will no longer be seen by development partners as far too ambitious or as going much further than the internationally agreed focus of the MDGs. In this scenario, through a combination of national commitments derived from the *Economic Recovery Strategy* and really major new aid flows,

[21] The current draft declaration at the Global Summit (14-16 September 2005) no longer focuses on basic education, as it did in September 2000: "We emphasize the critical role of both formal and non-formal education as envisaged in the Millennium Declaration, in particular basic education and training for eradicating illiteracy, and strive for expanded secondary and higher education as well as vocational education and technical training, especially for girls and women, creation of human resources and infrastructure capabilities and empowerment of those living in poverty" (UN General Assembly 2005: 8).
[22] It is noteworthy that there are no less than 102 references to the role of the private sector in the current draft of the World Bank's *ESSU* of 138 pages.
[23] The World Bank's *Global Monitoring Report* of 2005 also judges that government weaknesses in accountability, responsiveness and effectiveness of delivery 'are the deepest threat to MDG progress' (World Bank 2005d: 115).

associated with the recommendations from the *UN Millennium Report*, the *Commission for Africa*, the G8 summit, and Global Summit, there could be the beginning of a revolution in the urban and rural environments which the new graduates from KESSP could enter. Instead of there being just several MDG projects, like FPE, emphasising the minimalist goals for education and health, there could be a comprehensive national development strategy in which the MDGs become, not a be-all and end-all, but just one possible entry point for much larger scale investment and wider organisational and institutional change, linked to the new thinking of the UN Millennium Report and the Commission for Africa. Primary, secondary and tertiary leavers would then enter environments that would begin to be reshaped by the doubling of aid, Kenya's version of the African Green Revolution, major investments in infrastructure, and in science and technology for development. At the same time the merit-based schemes of KESSP would connect substantial numbers of bright children from poorer backgrounds to post-basic education and training opportunities; and the recommendations of the micro- and small enterprise (MSE) sessional paper could begin to alter the landscape for both farm and non-farm small entrepreneurs.

But as we have just said, these new horizons are dependent on Kenya being seen by its own people, its policy community and politicians, as well as its development partners, to have dealt with the cancer of corruption. Without this, the seal of 'good governance' and 'capacity to deliver' will be absent. Whether or not Kenya would have aspired to be included as one of the MDG fast-track countries is not known, but what is clear is that 'Bold MDG-based investment programmes cannot be scaled up in developing countries with extremely poor governance' (UN Millennium Project 2005: 231). It is also certain that Kenya will require significant amounts of new foreign direct investment (FDI) as well as hugely increased ODA, if its ambitious plans for recovery are to be implemented.

It is then a matter of concern to note that at the very time that the new plans for education and enterprise are being prepared through their respective Sessional Papers, there continues to be a very serious debate about the extent of corruption in Kenya, even since the new government came to power in late 2002 with its pledges of zero tolerance of corruption. If corruption is indeed as widespread as is claimed by the representatives of several of Kenya's leading donor countries,[24] then it will prove a disabling environment for dramatically increased FDI and ODA, not to mention the operation of large numbers of merit-based education bursaries:

> The unpleasant reality is that corruption in most of its forms is currently rampant in Kenya. It distorts policy formulation, obstructs the delivery of proper services, puts or keeps wrong people in jobs for dubious reasons, diverts scarce resources and loots the public purse. *Sunday Standard 21.11.04*

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We end this paper where we began – with the view that there appeared to be some complex trade-offs between basic and post-basic education; quality, quantity, and equity; service delivery and productive capacity; and poverty reduction and growth. In respect of all of these, however, Kenya's policy community has been adept and persuasive in presenting its own strongly held priorities about human and economic development in ways that have a strong synergy with the emerging wider international development agenda. 2005 could still be a year therefore in which

[24] In a highly unusual intervention, six ambassadors/high commissioners took a full page in the national press to raise concerns about corruption in Kenya (*Sunday Standard* November 21st, 2004, p.29)

it could be said for Kenya that KESSP, its carefully constructed investment plan, could not only be seen as a way of educating and training out of poverty but could be a key element in a more comprehensive national development strategy for sustained economic growth and wealth creation.

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