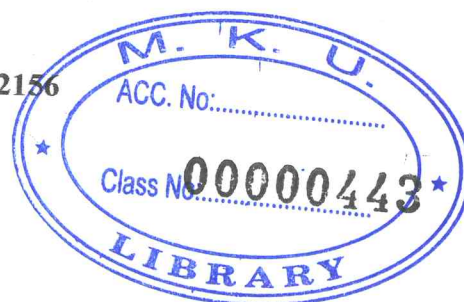


**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE INTRODUCTION OF FREE  
PRIMARY EDUCATION ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MUKURWE-INI  
DISTRICT, NYERI COUNTY-KENYA**

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## ABSTRACT

Mukurwe-ini district has in the past excelled exemplary well in education posting some of the best results in the country since Kenya attained independence. However, since the introduction of the free primary education in 2003 the performance in the Kenya National Examination Council (KCPE) for the district as a whole has drastically dropped. The purpose of this study therefore was to assess the effect of the introduction of free primary education programme on academic performance of government run primary schools in Mukurweini district. Using a descriptive survey design, the study targeted all the 455 TSC teachers teaching in public primary schools in Mukurweini district. Employing a simple random sampling, the study arrived at a sample of 65 teachers from whom data was collected using a structured questionnaire alongside an observation checklist. On the effect of free primary education on the schools' performance, the study found that performance of public schools had dropped with the coming of the free primary programme. Majority (63%) of the schools had a mean score below 250 which is 50% of the total score, while only 37% of the schools in the study had a mean score of between 251 and 300. On the effect of free primary education on teacher's workload, the study found that teachers in public primary schools were burdened. Majority (48%) of the schools in the study had between 251 and 500 students while schools with more than 500 students made up 44%. However, most (43%) schools in the study had between 7 and 9 teachers while 28% of the schools had between and 4-6 teachers. On the impact of free primary education on resources, the study found that the schools' resources had been stretched. Data analysis revealed that the books, classrooms, desks and toilets were short by at least 30%. On the impact of the free primary education on the quality of education, the study found that the quality had been brought down. 80% of the teachers in the study disagreed that free primary education had improved the quality of education. The researcher concluded that the decline of school's performance cannot be solely pinned on free primary education. However, the FPE program has brought with it ills which promote poor performance. Overcrowded classes in understaffed, underequipped schools made it hard for even the most ambitious managements to produce good results. It is recommended that more teachers should be employed to ease the workload which is currently enormous and that existing schools should be well equipped in terms of vital resources such as books and desks.