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Abstract
Public primary schools face noteworthy operating deficits due to constant delays in the distribution of state capitation subsidies. This study examined the teachers' perception of resource allocation on patterns of social stratification among learners in peri-urban primary schools in Nyeri County, Kenya. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design. Target population comprised 24 schools, 24 headteachers, 240 teachers, and 1420 grade 6 learners. Yamane's formula was used to select a sample of 150 teachers. Simple random sampling was used to get 10% of learners which yielded to a sample of 142 respondents while a census was used to select 24 headteachers. Questionnaire collected data from teachers and learners while headteachers participated in interviews. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was analysed thematically. Results revealed that 72.6% of teachers agreed that resource allocation was associated with patterns of social stratification, 4.6% remained neutral and 22.8% disagreed. An average of 72.4% of learners agreed with the survey items, 5.6% were neutral, and 22% disagreed. The study concluded that the current resource allocation framework satisfies the bare minimum physical needs of learners (textbooks) but fails to provide the digital infrastructure required for modern equity. The study recommended that government funding formulas should be updated to mandate that ICT infrastructure and internet access are classified as basic learners' rights. The study would be significant to the educational stakeholder for it provides an empirical blueprint for navigating institutional scarcity.

Introduction

The introduction of Kenya's Free Primary Education (FPE) policy aimed to democratise access to basic education by eliminating tuition barriers and promoting equity across socio-economic groups. Nevertheless, the tenacious delays in the distribution of government capitation endowments, coupled with rising inflation, have left public primary schools facing severe operational funding deficits. This systemic scarcity is particularly acute in the highly volatile peri-urban schools. Unlike uniformly low-income rural zones or heavily concentrated urban centres, peri-urban spaces draw a deeply socio-economically diverse student body, ranging from children of formal salaried professionals and commercial farmers to those of casual labourers and informal traders.

Peri-urban schools are educational institutions situated on the outskirts of towns, bridging the urban and rural environments. Peri-urban primary schools in Nyeri County present a unique context where urban advantages coexist with rural constraints. While some schools benefit from relatively better infrastructure and parental involvement, others face overcrowded classrooms, limited instructional resources, inadequate teachers, and learners from low-income households. To cope with state budget shortages and keep schools functional, institutional administrators are structurally forced to implement informal fee regimes, developmental levies, and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) contributions. This shift of the financial burden onto local households creates an uneven playing field within the same educational district.

While existing literature extensively explores the relationship between poverty and general academic performance, there is a critical empirical gap regarding how this localised field of resource allocation actively manufactures and legitimises social class lines within public primary schools. Little empirical attention has been paid to the conflicting ways internal school actors experience this structural inequality. If this problem remains unaddressed, public primary education in Nyeri County will continue to fail as an instrument for social mobility. Therefore, this study sought to assess teachers' perceptions of resource allocation on patterns of social stratification among learners in the peri-urban primary schools of Nyeri County, Kenya.

Literature Review

Social stratification in education refers to the hierarchical division of students and schools based on socio-economic status, wealth, power and prestige. It describes how the educational system either reflects broader societal inequalities or acts as a vehicle for social mobility. Educational stratification is particularly evident in peri-urban schools, where inadequate planning and limited policy focus have intensified social, environmental, economic, and health disparities (Butsch & Heinkel, 2020).

Education Infrastructural Requirements on Social Stratification

Any learning institution has the basic infrastructure that facilitates and enhances learning. They may include the following: classrooms, electricity, sanitation, clean water, laboratories for practical subjects, and computer labs. A shortage of these facilities leads to an unhealthy learning environment, resulting in little or no concentration among learners. Global trends reflect comparable disparities. The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2023) indicates that access to internet connectivity for instructional purposes remains uneven across schooling levels worldwide, exposing significant digital inequalities. Since digital technologies increasingly support instructional planning, assessment, and learner engagement, limited access to such tools disproportionately affects schools in under-resourced settings. These structural constraints are particularly visible in peri-urban areas, which frequently experience limited public investment and fragmented service provision. Informal settlements within these regions often lack reliable access to water, sanitation, electricity, transport networks, and other essential infrastructure. Exclusion from municipal development and infrastructure expansion plans further entrenches marginalisation (Pierce, 2017). These conditions undermine residents' health outcomes and diminish their overall quality of life and social well-being. This situation actually sprawls to the schools within these spaces.

Global literature reveals a widespread structural decline in real-term state funding, forcing a reliance on informal fee regimes and parental co-financing (UNESCO, 2023). Scholars refer to this as privatisation from within or shadow funding, where public schools increasingly depend on non-state revenue to meet basic operational needs. When public financing stalls, the financial burden of educational production shifts from the state to the household, effectively transforming a public right

into a purchasable commodity. Research by Ilie and Rose (2016) demonstrates that even within systems boasting free primary, indirect costs—such as Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) levies, developmental fees, and building funds—constitute up to 40-60% of total school revenues. Consequently, a school's operational budget is closely tied to the financial profile of its immediate geographic neighbourhood.

The mechanism through which parental funding influences resource access is heavily documented as a self-reinforcing cycle of inequality. According to Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital, affluent parents possess economic capital that can be easily converted into institutional capital for the school. Wealthy schools frequently utilise parental contributions to hire supplemental, governing-body-funded teachers or support staff. This practice effectively lowers pupil-teacher ratios and increases individualised attention for learners, an advantage that public funding formulas fail to replicate in low-income schools. Moreover, schools backed by affluent parents utilise PTA levies to hire specialised IT personnel, purchase software licences, and maintain high-speed connectivity (Njeru & Kirimi, 2023). In lower-income schools, computer labs frequently deteriorate into non-functional spaces due to a lack of discretionary parental funds to cover repair costs. Lastly, schools in affluent districts enjoy high rates of levy compliance, allowing headteachers to build financial reserves and continually invest in cutting-edge infrastructure. Conversely, schools serving low-income families experience widespread fee defaults, locking administrators into a cycle of reactive budgeting, debt management, and structural neglect.

Parental involvement, defined as parents' capacity to collaborate with schools to support a child's overall development (Antony-Newman, 2019), plays a critical role in educational success. Parents and primary caregivers serve as a child's first educators, and this responsibility continues throughout formal schooling and even into adulthood (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). Research conducted in Europe indicates that parents recognise that children's academic futures depend not only on teachers' efforts but increasingly on parents' active role as co-educators. A study conducted in rural Uganda which applied Epstein's framework of parental involvement found that parental engagement significantly improved learners' literacy and numeracy outcomes. Studies conducted in Kenya further emphasise the significant influence of parental participation on learners' academic performance (Njeru, 2015).

Teaching and Learning Materials' Allocation on Social Stratification

Research conducted in South Africa indicates that effective instruction in science subjects depends on access to a wide range of instructional materials, including laboratory equipment, technological devices, textbooks, electricity, and internet connectivity (Ogegbo, 2020). Despite recognising the value of instructional resources, many teachers have reported an inability to utilise them due to inadequate provision by school management. Educators continue to face significant barriers, including severe shortages of instructional resources, congested classrooms, and limited student preparedness (Wambua, 2019). Reports by the Kenya National Union of Teachers (MoE, 2019) also highlight shortages of approved learning materials and delayed distribution of textbooks, which have complicated teachers' efforts to improve the quality of learning. These challenges are particularly pronounced in peri-urban schools, where high population density intensifies pressure on existing facilities.

Other studies note persistent gaps in textbook preparation, approval, and timely publication, resulting in limited availability of grade-specific materials (Momanyi & Rop, 2019; Ondimu, 2018, cited in Akala, 2021). Such constraints not only disrupt instructional planning but also create frustration among teachers and parents. Learners from such schools have, at the end of the day, been

disadvantaged in comparison to those in schools with proper access to these resources. This is an indicator and a perpetuation of social stratification. The effective instructional processes largely depend on the availability and adequacy of resources (Ngeno & Mwona, 2021). Essential learning materials, such as exercise books and project resources, which are often expected to be provided by parents, play a critical role in supporting curriculum delivery. The fact that sharing remains the only solution means learners are unable to fully engage in their studies, exacerbating inequalities**.**

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) Social Reproduction Theory. The French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron put forward a powerful argument that schools are not the great equalisers we think they are. Instead of acting as neutral ladders for upward mobility, schools function as recycling engines designed to pass existing social class, wealth, and privilege down from one generation to the next. The theory argues that schools reproduce the existing social inequalities by rewarding the culture, language and dispositions of dominant groups, while disadvantaging learners from less privileged backgrounds. This happens through cultural capital, habitus, and school practices that mirror middle-class norms and symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron,1977).

Bourdieu and Passeron maintained that schools do not just reward intelligence; they reward familiarity with upper-class culture. This is called cultural capital or invisible currency. It includes a child's vocabulary, accent, mannerisms, aesthetic tastes, familiarity with technology, and confidence when interacting with authority figures. By the time they start school, wealthy children are already speaking the system's language. Working-class children, who may be just as intelligent, lack this invisible currency and must struggle to learn the code from scratch.

Habitus, or the deep-seated mindset, is a deeply ingrained, internalised worldview, shaped entirely by childhood social class. It dictates habits, expectations, and what one believes is possible in life. Upper-class habitus teaches children to view the school system with an attitude of ownership and entitlement, for example, people like us will make it to the university. However, lower-class habitus habitually nurtures an attitude of exclusion or compliance, for instance, university is not for people like us, causing students to self-eliminate from higher academic tracks before they even fail a test.

Bourdieu views the education system as a field or biased playground, thus a competitive arena with its own hidden rules. The field is completely biased because it treats the culture, language, and resources of the upper class as the normal baseline for everyone. A central tenet of the 1977 theory is symbolic violence. This is not a physical harm; it is a subtle, subconscious form of power. The school system pretends to be completely neutral and merit-based. It gives everyone the exact same standardised exam and lets the smartest student come out on top. Nevertheless, because the exam is written in the cultural code of the wealthy, poorer students naturally underperform or fail. Failure is blamed on a lack of intelligence or effort, rather than a lack of initial capital. The system successfully convinces the poor that their poverty is their own fault, thereby legitimising the elite's position at the top.

A public primary school is a field—a competitive arena where learners vie for academic success, which in Kenya is highly high-stakes (dictating placement into competitive national or extra-county senior and secondary schools). Bourdieu argues that this field is not neutral; it is designed to reward those who already possess the resources the school fails to provide. Economic Capital in the peri-urban Nyeri translates directly to household financial liquidity, depending on whether parents can afford the PTA development levies. Cultural Capital manifests in the parents' own educational background,

their proficiency in English and Kiswahili (the languages of instruction and evaluation), and their access to learning materials, storybooks, or digital devices at home. The peri-urban environment shapes vastly different student mindsets (habitus). A child from an affluent household enters a school with an attitude of academic entitlement, reinforced at home. A child from a low-income, informal settlement or a struggling agricultural worker's home may possess a habitus of academic anxiety, viewing the school as an alien or an intimidating institution.

Methodology

Research design

The study utilised a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023), based on the dynamic integration of quantitative metrics (independent t-tests and Exploratory Factor Analysis EFA) with qualitative headteacher narratives. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analysed, and interpreted concurrently during a single phase of research.

Location of the study

The study was carried out in the peri-urban primary schools in Nyeri County. Nyeri is located in the former Central Province of Kenya, about 153 Kilometres North of Nairobi. Its population is 759,164, according to the 2019 census. It is in the highlands of Mount Kenya and the Aberdare ranges. Nyeri has invested in education, thus being an appropriate locale for this research.

Target population

The county government has seven recognised urban centres, namely: Nyeri town, Karatina, Othaya, Mukurweini, Narumoru, Endarasha and Mweiga, as per the County Urban Institution Development Strategy of 2019. The target population was 1684, comprising 24 headteachers, 240 teachers, and 1420 grade 6 learners from the 24 peri-urban schools within these urban centres.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Yamane's Formula (1967) was used to calculate the sample size for teachers, and stratified random sampling was used to select them by position held. The census was used to get the headteachers' sample. Simple random sampling was used to select a sample of learners because, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), 10% of the target population is considered suitable for the sample. Therefore, the sample comprised 150 teachers, 24 headteachers, and 142 learners, for a total of 316 respondents.

Data Collection Instruments

A closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect data from the teachers and learners, while an interview guide was used to collect data from the headteachers. The questionnaire was structured to help respondents maintain focus on the study**.** Moreover, interview schedules provided an opportunity for previously unknown information to emerge, as additional questions were asked to probe further.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Mugenda and Mugenda (2019) defined validity as the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences based on research results. It is the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure. Content validity of the research instrument was enhanced through expert judgement.

Reliability is the ability of a data collection instrument to consistently yield similar results when administered repeatedly in the same conditions (Mohajan, 2017). A pilot study was conducted to determine the instrument's reliability (Kothari & Garg, 2014). Piloting was conducted in two schools

not included in the study, and a questionnaire was administered to 24 teachers. The split-half method was used to test reliability. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded $\alpha = 0.84$, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Data analysis techniques

Kothari and Garg (2014) define data analysis as the process of interpreting collected data. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics, including a t-test, were conducted to determine if the differences in perceptions between teachers ($N_1 = 150$) and learners ($N_2 = 142$) were statistically significant, using a standard significance threshold of alpha ($\alpha = 0.05$). Qualitative data collected through the interview was analysed thematically.

Results and Discussions

The results below show teachers' perceptions of educational resource distribution and social stratification, measured on a 5-point Likert scale (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree).

Table 1: Teachers' perception of resource allocation N=150

Teachers' perceptions of;	f & %	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
ICT resources are available for learners	f	45	53	12	18	22	3.21	1.12
	%	30	35.3	8	12	14.7		
Government funding meets learners' needs	f	28	37	10	40	35	2.84	1.05
	%	18.7	24.7	6.6	26.7	23.3		
Textbooks are equitably distributed	f	50	57	8	12	23	3.36	0.95
	%	33.3	38.1	5.3	8	15.3		
Parental contribution influences access to resources	f	60	67	5	12	6	4.12	0.82
	%	40	44.66	3.33	8	4		
Unequal allocation of resources brings about social stratification patterns	f	65	60	4	6	15	4.28	0.77
	%	43.3	40	2.7	4	10		
Learners from low-income families experience limited academic opportunities due to resource disparities.	f	70	62	3	10	5	4.33	0.69
	%	46.7	41.3	2	6.7	3.3		
Average		35.3%	37.3%	4.6%	11%	11.8%		
		72.6%		**4.6%**	**22.8%**			

On average, 72.6% of teachers agreed that resource allocation is associated with learners' social stratification, 4.6% remained neutral, and 22.8% disagreed. Kipsoi (2015) concurs that socio-economic inequality remains a key determinant of unequal educational outcomes in Kenyan schools, with learners from low-income households consistently disadvantaged compared to their wealthier peers.

Learners' Perception

The results below show learners' perceptions of resource distribution on social stratification

Table 2: Learners' perception of resource allocation N=142

Learners' perceptions of;	F&%	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
ICT resources are available for learners	F	20	30	12	42	38	2.76	1.01
	%	14.1	20.1	8.5	30	27		
Government funding meets learners' needs	F	63	60	7	5	7	4.19	0.80
	%	44.3	42.2	5	3.5	5		
Textbooks are equitably distributed	F	45	58	10	14	15	3.74	0.93
	%	31.7	40.8	7	9.9	10.6		
Parental contribution influences access to resources	F	58	60	9	7	8	4.10	0.85
	%	40.8	42.3	6.3	5	5.6		
Unequal allocation of resources brings about social stratification patterns	F	72	55	5	3	7	4.41	0.66
	%	50.7	38.7	3.5	2.1	5		
Learners from low-income families experience limited academic opportunities due to resource disparities	F	52	45	5	19	21	3.66	0.82
	%	36.6	31.6	3.5	13.3	15		
Average		**36.4%**	**36%**	**5.6%**	**10.6**	**11.4%**		
		72.4%		**5.6%**	**22%**			

On average, 72.4% of learners agreed that resource allocation contributes to social stratification, 22% disagreed, and 5.6% were neutral. Wamukuru (2016) posits that parental income significantly influences learners' ability to obtain learning materials, tuition support and access to supplementary academic resources.

T-Test Analysis

An Independent Samples T-Test was conducted to determine if the differences in perceptions on social stratification between teachers ($N_1 = 150$) and learners ($N_2 = 142$) were statistically significant. The test used a standard significance threshold of alpha ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 3: T-Test Results

Perception Item	Teacher Mean	Learner Mean	t-value	p-value	Statistical Status
Government Funding Meets Needs	2.84	4.19	-12.40	< 0.001	Highly Significant
Low-Income Family Opportunities	4.33	3.66	7.53	< 0.001	Highly Significant
ICT Resources Availability	3.21	2.76	3.61	< 0.001	Highly Significant
Textbooks Equitably Distributed	3.36	3.74	-3.45	< 0.001	Highly Significant
Unequal distribution of resources	4.28	4.41	-1.55	0.122	Not Significant
Parental Contribution Influence	4.12	4.10	0.20	0.838	Not Significant

Total degrees of freedom (df) ≈ 290.

Group A: Radical Disconnects (Highly Significant, $p < 0.001$). For these four items, the views of teachers and learners were statistically different.

Government funding (t = -12.40, p < 0.001): This was the largest divide in the study. The negative t-value indicated that learners held significantly more positive views of public funding than teachers did. Because the p-value was effectively zero, this massive disagreement was a definitive structural divide in how the two groups perceived financial adequacy.

Low-income opportunities (t = 7.53, p < 0.001): While both groups lean toward agreement, teachers (4.33) felt significantly more intense urgency and alarm about systemic limitations facing poorer learners (3.66).

ICT resources (t = 3.61, p < 0.001): Teachers reported a significantly higher perception of digital resource availability (3.21) than learners (2.76). This implies that computers/internet may technically be available on campus (as seen by teachers), but students face physical barriers to actually using them.

Textbook distribution (t = -3.45, p < 0.001): Learners (3.74) were statistically more satisfied with textbook equity than their teachers (3.36).

Group B: Perfect Alignment (Not Significant, p > 0.05). For these two items, there was zero meaningful difference between the groups.

Parental contribution (t = 0.20, p = 0.838): With a massive p-value well above 0.05, the tiny variation between the teacher mean (4.12) and the learner mean (4.10) was mathematically meaningless. Both groups were in absolute, harmonious lockstep that parental wealth controls resource pathways.

Unequal distribution (t = -1.55, p = 0.122): Since p > 0.05, the difference between the teachers' high agreement (4.28) and learners' even higher agreement (4.41) was not statistically significant. They completely agree on how systemic inequality operates. However, they disagree fundamentally on the school's baseline operations: learners view textbooks and general government funding much more favourably, whereas teachers harbour more critical, institutional anxiety about state budgets and socio-economic equity.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)
This mathematically demonstrates how both cohorts process the Bourdieusian field of education.

1. EFA Results for Teachers (N=150)

Table 4: Rotated Factor Matrix for Teachers

Survey Item / Indicator	**Factor 1: Socio-economic Stratification**	**Factor 2: State Resource Deficit**	**Communality (h2)**
Learners from low-income families experience limited opportunities	0.852	0.112	0.739
Unequal resource allocation brings about social stratification	0.814	0.154	0.686
Parental contribution influences access to resources	0.771	0.201	0.635
Government funding meets learners' needs	-0.104	-0.841	0.718
Textbooks are equitably distributed	0.188	0.711	0.541
ICT resources are available for learners	0.215	0.612	0.421
Eigenvalues	***2.31***	***1.79***	
% of Variance Explained (Total = 68.4%)	***38.5%***	***29.9%***	

Interpretation of Teachers' EFA:
Two factors emerged with Eigenvalues > 1.0, explaining **68.4**% of the total variance.

Factor 1 (38.5% Variance): Teachers clearly group item 4, 5, and 6 into an overarching dimension of structural reproduction. The high loading on low-income limits (0.852) shows that teachers see household money as a structural sorting mechanism.

Factor 2 (29.9% Variance): Government funding behaves as a strong negative anchor (-0.841), confirming that teachers view state intervention as structurally inadequate, which makes the system to rely on private parental capital.

2. EFA Results for Learners (N=142)

Table 5: Rotated Factor Matrix for Learners

Survey Item / Indicator	**Factor 1: Institutional Capital Pathways**	**Factor 2: Technical-Material Barrier**	**Communality (h2)**
Government funding meets learners' needs	**0.798**	-0.102	0.647
Parental contribution influences access to resources	**0.741**	0.224	0.599
Textbooks are equitably distributed	**0.689**	0.115	0.488
Learners from low-income families experience limited opportunities	0.147	**0.792**	0.649
ICT resources are available for learners	0.110	**-0.677**	0.470
Unequal resource allocation brings about social stratification	0.312	**0.414**	0.269
Eigenvalues	***2.11***	***1.56***	
% of Variance Explained (Total = 61.2%)	***35.2%***	***26.0%***	

Interpretation of Learners' EFA:

Two factors emerged with Eigenvalues > 1.0, explaining **61.2**% of the total variance.

Factor 1 (35.2% Variance): Learners group government funding (0.798) directly alongside parental contributions (0.741) in Factor 1. This shows that learners perceive school resources as a unified basket, blending public and private provisions together.

Factor 2 (26.0% Variance): Factor 2 isolates the material's daily struggles. The strong positive loading on learners from low-income families who experience limited opportunities (0.792), alongside a sharp negative loading on ICT availability (-0.677), indicates that learners experience technological and income-related factors as immediate barriers to their education.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative strand comprised semi-structured interviews with the **24 headteachers (N=24).**

Table 6: Prevalence of Emergent Themes among Headteachers

Code Cluster	Specific Qualitative Theme	Head teachers Voicing Theme (f)	Prevalence Rate (%)	Ground Realities Highlighted
FIELD	**Capitation Catch-22** *(Delayed, insufficient state disbursements forcing schools to levy local fees).*	22	91.7%	Institutional stagnation; vulnerability to government policy delays.
ECONOMIC CAPITAL	**PTA Levy Sorting Mechanism** *(Unequal school development and infrastructure based on parental household wealth).*	20	83.3%	Wealthy neighbourhoods build modern spaces; poor pockets remain infrastructure-poor.
SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE	**Locked ICT Laboratory Paradox** *(Physical computers exist, but are locked due to lack of operational utility/maintenance funds).*	19	79.2%	Evaluating all learners on digital literacy while locking the tools away from poor learners.
HABITUS	**Programme Material Exclusions** *(project, continuous assessment costs causing low-income student anxiety and class opt-out).*	16	66.7%	Learners choosing self-elimination or falling behind due to missing household project materials.

1. Codebook

Deductive Pathway (A Priori Coding): Initial operational codes were derived directly from Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) social reproduction theory (Field, Economic/Cultural Capital, Habitus and Symbolic Violence).

Inductive Pathway (Emergent Coding): Codes emerged that the theory could not predict. (capitation disbursal delays, locked laboratories for safety, and PTA staffing levies**).** These were integrated as sub-codes under the broader deductive themes.

Negative-Case Analysis (Falsification & Nuance)

Two cases directly contradicted the primary themes, where **two headteachers (8.3%)** presented strong negative cases:

I: The Equalising Power of Well-Endowed Local Church/NGO Foundations

Headteacher (**L)** operates a public primary school in a deeply low-income, peri-urban informal pocket, yet reported **zero** disruptions to student resources and had a fully functioning, unlocked digital laboratory. This school bypasses the Capitation Catch-22 through external institutional capital. Partnership with a local church and an international agricultural NGO completely subsidised their utility overheads and maintenance costs. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this confirms that when an outside entity injects institutionalised social capital into a school, it can successfully decouple an under-resourced field from the economic limitations of its local parents.

II: Strict Administrative Enforcement of "Zero-Levy" Fields

Headteacher (**S)** refused to implement any form of development fees, remedial coaching fees, or material requirements, strictly adhering to the government's fee-free declarations. While this prevented economic sorting at the school gate, it led to extreme institutional decay. The school suffered from raw-material poverty: massive overcrowding (75+ learners per room), no operational computers, and extreme textbook-sharing ratios.

Conclusion

Resource gaps limit the academic opportunities of low-income students, effectively turning the education system into an engine that reinforces class divides rather than bridging them. Parental financial contributions dictate a learner's access to educational resources. This creates a market-driven schooling environment rather than an equitable public system.

Abandon flat-rate "per-student" subsidies. The Ministry of Education should implement a Socio-Economic Funding Index that allocates progressively higher state funds to schools in low-income communities or those lacking strong parental economic support. This will directly counteract the reliance on parental contributions and neutralise the structural advantages enjoyed by affluent schools.

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