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Teachers in the marketisation of education

A labour geography perspective on the expansion
of low-fee private primary schooling in Kenya

Sara Falkensjö



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

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ABSTRACT

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In many parts of the world, marketisation processes in welfare sectors like education are mobilised and legitimised through a discourse professing how market competition will bring about accountability, quality, and efficiency. In much of the Global South, the growth of so called low-fee private schools (LFP schools) is part of such marketisation processes. LFP schools are non-government run and charge a relatively low fee. Scholarly focus has mainly concerned LFP schools' impact and growth, with regards to pupils, families, policy makers and edu-companies. Teachers have received little attention as subjects and actors in this literature, however. This is despite the importance accorded to teachers in national and international policy, and the many reports in passing about exploitation and de-professionalisation in LFP schools. This thesis explores Kenyan primary school teachers' needs, challenges and agency in their everyday work lives, within the marketisation of education in low-income contexts. Through a labour geography lens and qualitative methods, teachers are centred as socially embedded, knowledgeable actors with their own interests. Findings reveal both LFP- and public-school teachers as dependent on social relations in- and outside school, for fulfilling their material needs and desire to do a good job. Further, all teachers were affected by market competition. However, where LFP-school teachers faced job-insecurity, low wages and market steering, public-school teachers rather struggled with failing recognition. Remaining employed was prioritised, if more precarious for LFP-school teachers. This meant that the teachers acted mainly in accordance with employers' demands, while trying to heed their desire to do good for their pupils and their, at times differing, professionalism. This thesis contributes empirically to the LFP schooling literature, arguing that teachers in the Global South need to be recognised as knowledgeable actors, who do not only have utilitarian goals. It also contributes to labour geography, by tracing the complex moral geography navigated by socially embedded professionals in marketised resource-poor contexts.

Key words: primary school teachers, marketisation, low-fee private schools, public schools, essential interests, social relations, agency, Kenya

SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

Den här avhandlingen handlar om grundskolelärares erfarenheter och agens när utbildningssystem i det Globala Syd marknadsieras. Marknadsiseringsprocesser innebär att marknader skapas, ofta inom socialt inbäddade välfärdssektorer såsom skolan. Marknadsieringen rättfärdigas och motiveras med att konkurrens och valfrihet leder till ansvarstagande, kvalitet och effektivitet. Dessa processer och argument kan ses runt om i världen. I det Globala Syd har så kallade *low-fee private schools* (LFP-skolor) vuxit i snabb takt på senare år och ses som del av den ökade marknadsieringen. Dessa är icke-statliga skolor med relativt låg skolavgift, som vänder sig till fattiga familjer. LFP-skolorna har fått mycket uppmärksamhet i den akademiska debatten, men då främst med fokus på hur marknaden vuxit fram och hur skolorna fungerar. Det är elever och andra intressenter såsom stater, internationella organisationer och utbildningsföretag har stått i centrum för den forskningen.

Hur marknadsieringen i det Globala Syd påverkar lärare, och hur lärare agerar i relation till marknadsieringen har dock knappt fått någon uppmärksamhet. Detta trots att lärare har pekats ut som helt centrala i nationella och internationella utbildningspolicier, samt att lärares kvalitet och anställningsvillkor ofta används som slagträn i debatten om LFP skolornas vara eller icke-vara. Det som återkommande omnämns, om än i förbifarten, i litteraturen som är kritisk till de nya skolorna, är att lärarna där har väldigt låga löner, långa arbetsdagar, otrygg anställning och ofta inte är behöriga. Kritiker påpekar även att större kedjor av LFP-skolor använder sig av manuskript för lärarna att följa ordagrant, vilket i kombination med de dåliga arbetsförhållandena och obehörigheten pekas ut som en risk för en avprofessionalisering av yrket. De som är mer positiva till LFP-skolor antyder snarare att offentligt anställda lärare har för hög lön och anställningstrygghet, samtidigt som de inte presterar lika bra som LFP-skolelärare. Det är ofta passiva bilder som ofta målas upp av lärare: som exploaterade offer, respektive lata och oengagerade.

Det finns däremot många studier med fokus på lärare i marknadsieringen av skolan i Globala Nord, som visar att lärare både påverkas av marknadsieringen och agerar i den på olika sätt. Utgångspunkten för den här avhandlingen är att lärare i det Globala Syd förtjänar samma fokus, om vi ska förstå marknadsieringen av skolan i det Globala Syd på ett mer helhetligt sätt, samt förstå de olika lärarna som subjekt och aktörer.

Syftet med den här avhandlingen är att undersöka och analysera grundskolelärares erfarenheter, samt hur de utövar agens i sitt dagliga arbetsliv för att uppfylla sina behov, när utbildningen marknadsieras. Studien är utförd

i LFP- och statliga skolor i låginkomstområden i Kenya. Tre forskningsfrågor formulerades för att uppfylla syftet. Den första undersöker lärares behov – deras essentiella intressen – i sina yrkesliv, och vilka sociala relationer de beror av för att uppfylla dessa i olika skolor och geografiska kontexter. Den andra frågan fokuserar på vilka utmaningar som finns för de olika lärarnas sociala relationer och behov i det marknadsierade utbildningslandskapet. Den tredje och sista frågan rör hur lärarna navigerar dessa utmaningar, samt vad som formar deras agerande.

Studien bygger på ett arbetsgeografiskt teoretiskt synsätt, där arbetare ses som sociala och geografiska aktörer i samhället. För att förstå lärares essentiella intressen har jag vänt mig till utbildningslitteraturen, där dessa kan kopplas till externa, inneboende och altruistiska motiv. Uppfyllandet av dessa behov beror av sociala relationer, vilka har en geografisk förankring. Utmaningar uppstår när de sociala relationerna som lärares behov beror av undermineras. Hur lärare navigerar dessa utmaningar kan förstås som *resilience*, *reworking*, *resistance* eller *collaboration*. De tre första begreppen kategoriserar agerande som sker i förhållande till ett identifierande av strukturella utmaningar som orättvisa. Dessa kan ses som på en skala från överlevnad till motstånd. Det sista begreppet, *collaboration*, är snarlikt *resilience* i att agerandet ofta reproducerar de strukturella utmaningarna, men bygger på en syn på dessa som berättigade snarare än orättvisa.

Studien bygger på kvalitativa intervjuer med 35 lärare i två områden: ett tätbefolkat informellt bostättningsområde i Nairobi, och ett ruralt samhälle i ett glesbefolkat område cirka tre timmars bilresa från Nairobi. En jämn könsfördelning, samt blandade åldrar, anställningsformer och utbildningsnivå efterfrågades för att få olika lärares perspektiv på marknadsieringen.

Resultaten visar att lärare i LFP- och statliga skolor i stort hade liknande externa behov av trygghet och inkomst för att kunna ta hand om sig själva och eventuell familj, samt en vilja att ses som professionella. De hade även inneboende och altruistiska essentiella intressen, som att vilja arbeta med barn och lära ut, samt en vilja att göra gott för sina elever och landet, något som inte fått så mycket uppmärksamhet i tidigare litteratur. Lärarna berodde även av liknande sociala relationer med elever, föräldrar, kollegor, föreståndare på skolan, arbetsgivare och det vidare samhället för att uppfylla dessa behov. Fler lärare än väntat i LFP-skolor var utbildade lärare och avsåg att fortsätta undervisa, med framtidsutsikten att efter flera års väntan få en mer eftertraktad statlig tjänst som lärare. Redan här kunde lärarna urskönjas som aktörer, vilka skapade relationer och såg fram emot att skapa framtida, mer stabila, välbetalda och utvecklande relationer.

Vad gäller lärares utmaningar fanns både skillnader och likheter i de olika lärarnas erfarenheter. Framförallt var det LFP-skolelärarnas anställning och materiella välfärd som stod på spel i pressen att leverera goda provresultat, på vilket skolans attraktionskraft vilade. Trots den prekära anställningssituationen upplevde dock inte alla LFP-skolelärare fokuset på provresultat och konkurrens som fel, utan kopplade sin professionalitet till dessa. De LFP-skolelärare som mest kände att deras professionalitet var underminerad var lärarna i LFP-kedjan Bridge International Academies (BIA), som förväntades ordagrant följa manuskript i klassrummen. De offentligt anställda lärarna hade anställningstrygghet och bättre lön, men med väldigt stora klasser och, i lärarnas mening, elever med sämre förutsättningar, upplevde de att de inte hade samma möjligheter som LFP-skolelärare att uppnå önskade resultat. Gemensamma utmaningar var bland annat den höga rörligheten av elever mellan skolor, vilket påverkade lärarnas undervisning och relationer till elever. De flesta lärarna jämförde dessutom sig och sin situation med 'den andra sortens lärare', vilket ledde till att de ofta talade på ett sätt som underminerade varandras professionalism. Detta identifierades som en risk för lärares sammanhållning som grupp.

Lärarnas agerande i relation till de utpekade utmaningarna kan främst kategoriseras som *resilience* eller *collaboration*. Oavsett om lärarna såg yttringarna av marknadseringen som orättfärdiga eller inte, agerade de ofta i enlighet med dessa, då det var prioriterat att fortsätta arbeta som lärare och behålla sin inkomst. Som ett exempel var många lärare kritiska till fokuset på provresultat, men de fokuserade ändå själva mycket på dessa i sitt arbete. Det mest anmärkningsvärda var BIA-lärarnas *reworking*, när de helt frångick manuskripten och utövade sin professionella autonomi för sin egen och elevernas skull, trots risk för repressalier. Agensen utövades främst lokalt – inom skolan eller klassrummet – och individuellt eller med stöd av kollegor eller administrativ personal. Detta gällde även av de fackligt anslutna offentligt anställda lärarna. Även om lärarnas agens var kringskuren av krav, resursbegränsningar och regler var dock lärarna inte passiva. De arbetade på och försökte stärka sig själva och/eller sina elever genom sina handlingar.

Den här avhandlingen bidrar empiriskt till LFP-skolelitteraturen, och påvisar att lärare i det Globala Syd behöver ses som både subjekt och aktörer i dessa marknadseringskontexter. Den bidrar även till arbetsgeografien, genom att skissera den komplexa moraliska geografi som socialt inbäddade professionella inom välfärden i resursfattiga områden navigerar.

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Abbreviations

APBET	Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training
B.Ed.	Bachelor's degree in Education
BIA	Bridge International Academies
BoM	Board of Management
CSO	Curriculum Support Officer
DEO	District Education Officer
EI	Education International
FPE	Free Primary Education
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KES	Kenyan Shilling
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KNEC	Kenya National Examinations Council
KNUT	Kenya National Union of Teachers
LFP	Low-Fee Private
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
QASO	Quality Assurance and Standards Officer
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
TTC	Teacher Training College
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USD	United States Dollar
UT	Untrained Teacher

1 Introduction

1.1 A new educational landscape

This thesis focuses on primary school teachers as social beings and actors in times of marketisation of education in low-income settings in the Global South.¹ My interest in this research stems from an overarching interest in the neoliberal restructuring of socially embedded welfare sectors, such as education. Specifically, I am interested in how marketisation affects workers in such sectors, and in how those workers are able to act on what is important to them in their work lives within such processes.

Marketisation processes mean market-making, often in public welfare sectors such as healthcare and education.² They are “systematic process[es] [...] extending the principles of market transactions into more and more aspects of public life” (Dicken, 2015, p.186). This is done by the public sector mimicking the business sector, and/or through the involvement of private actors. Adopting market principles does not make education markets into regular markets, however. Rather, they are quasi-markets, in which the ‘good’ – education – is generally heavily regulated by the state, and is mandatory (Walford, 1996).³ Marketisation processes are mobilised and legitimised through a discourse professing that market competition and consumer choice will bring about

¹ I use the term ‘Global South’, for lack of a better one, to broadly signify regions and nation-states of the world that largely suffer the negative consequences of colonialism and capitalism, (see Potter et al., 2018, pp. 38–48). I omit subaltern spaces and peoples in rich countries (see Mahler, 2017), which have more often the attention of scholarship on teachers in the marketisation of education (see, e.g., Brogan, 2013).

² In this dissertation I use the term ‘welfare sector’ to denote sectors such as education, healthcare, and care, as these pertain to the welfare of the public, although it may not be an altogether public sector – even though one could argue that the services of those sectors are, or should be, public goods.

³ While recognising that education markets are not altogether like regular markets, I will use the terms ‘education markets’, ‘markets’ and ‘quasi-markets’ interchangeably.

accountability, quality, and efficiency (Birch & Siemiatycki, 2016). This discourse is common in debates about education, both in the Global North (e.g., Cohen & Lizotte, 2015), and in the Global South (e.g., Heyneman & Stern, 2014).

The marketisation of public welfare sectors is thus not something that just happens; rather such processes are set in motion – and can be counteracted – by their myriad stakeholders, near and far (Berndt, 2015; Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Verger et al., 2017). This is important to recognise, in order to understand teachers’ agency in relation to social structures and other actors, with varying resources and power to command (see Giddens, 1984). What I am interested in, such as many scholars focusing on teachers in the Global North, are the implications for the work life and agency of workers in professions like teaching, who are both subjected to, and tasked with implementing, marketisation processes and logics (see, e.g., Bocking, 2017; Brogan, 2013; Parding et al., 2012).

In several countries in the Global South, among them the Republic of Kenya (henceforth “Kenya”), so-called low-fee private schools (LFP schools) have grown significantly in number in recent decades, and enrol increasing shares of pupils from poorer population segments (see, e.g., Andrabi et al., 2008; McLoughlin, 2013; Srivastava, 2016; UNESCO, 2021).⁴ These schools are non-government run and relatively low-fee, and can be found in low-income, predominately urban, areas (Härmä, 2016). The growth of these private schools is increasingly reflective of a marketisation process. What started off as growing numbers of individual private schools in areas with inadequate public provision, appears to have become “the strategy of design” (Srivastava, 2010, p. 524; see also Oduor-Noah, 2021) for policy makers, and has attracted capital from transnational corporations, philanthropists, and donors (Verger et al., 2017).

With regard to LFP education in the Global South, there is much research and debate. The focus has largely been on the actions of actors on the policy and delivery side (e.g., governments, international organisations and private providers) and on demands, effects and rights on the user side (e.g., pupils, families and communities) (see, e.g., Crawford et al., 2023; Heyneman &

⁴ By some also referred to as Low-Cost Private Schools (LCP schools).

Stern, 2014; Härmä, 2010, 2016, 2019; Riep, 2017; Srivastava, 2010, 2016; Tooley et al., 2008). In-depth analysis of teachers as subjects and actors in education markets involving LFP schooling is still scarce, however. This is despite the findings in previous literature indicating that teachers are very much affected by the way LFP schools and education markets involving LFP schools operate), and despite the importance accorded to teachers in policy (UNESCO, 2014b; UN, n.d.b).

In one of the few papers focusing on LFP-school teachers, a literature review covering lower-income countries, Locatelli (2018) concluded that LFP-school teachers' low-paid and insecure work is exploitative and may affect the status of teachers and teaching. Furthermore, she concluded that LFP-school teachers have poor qualifications, and little autonomy and policy influence, which poses a risk of de-professionalising teaching. McKay et al. (2018), in a study of LFP-school teachers in South Africa, found that the teachers wanted funding, resources and better supervision and management for LFP schools. More collaborative supervision and management of education was similarly wanted by Kenyan LFP- and public-school teachers in Kenya, as found in a study by Abuya and Ngware (2016). The teachers in that study also experienced difficulties teaching as pupils frequently changed schools in the market. Singh (2021), in a quantitative study comparing LFP and public-school teachers in Ethiopia, India and Vietnam, found that working conditions and teachers' qualifications were worse in LFP schools than public schools. She did however also note that neither group of teachers enjoyed ideal working conditions, and that serving pupils and society was important to teachers in both types of schools. Härmä (2021b, pp. 145–156) pointed to LFP schools' and teachers' questionable actions to achieve high test scores, as that is largely how the schools compete for pupils in the market. Such reports suggest that LFP schooling, and mounting competition between schools, can increase the pressure on teachers. This may affect their work environment and well-being, as well as their professional identity and status, as has been found in research conducted in the Global North (Bocking, 2017; Hall & McGinity, 2015; Hill, 2005; Parding, 2007).

Still, rather than engaging in depth with the experiences and actions of public- and LFP-school teachers, the LFP schooling literature largely conveys quite simplified and passive images of teachers. Public-school teachers are often portrayed as uncaring in their secure tenure (e.g., Dixon, 2012; van der Berg et

al., 2017), and LFP-school teachers as exploited and with little autonomy (e.g., Locatelli, 2018; Riep, 2017; Srivastava, 2013). To deepen and nuance our understanding of public- and LFP-school teachers in the context of marketisation in the Global South, beyond such deficient and victimising discourses (Tao, 2013; Tikly et al., 2022), I use, and want to contribute to, a labour geography perspective on the work lives and agency of teachers. Labour geographers aim to analyse and bring to the fore workers' role in shaping society and the economic landscape, by acknowledging them as economic and social actors with lives, needs, and emotions, without disregarding the structures and constraints of their reality (see, e.g., Dutta, 2020; Jordhus-Lier, 2013; Ruwanpura, 2016).

Like Dutta (2016), I want to move “beyond the lens of exploitation or emancipation, [...] to understand the meaning of work and relations that develop around it” (p. 2). In that vein, in this study, terms like ‘work life’, ‘teacher’, and ‘worker’ involve the recognition of teachers as complex human beings, with social relations and essential interests both inside and outside of work. Such interests may pertain both to material needs, and to a sense of meaning (see Cox, 1998b). My reason for focusing on the Global South is that teachers in the marketisation of education in the context of LFP schools have received insufficient attention as subjects and actors. In particular, I focus on the marketisation of education in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where many countries have seen marked increases in the private sector since the early 2000s (see Locatelli, 2018).

My thesis thus addresses how the marketisation of education affects teachers' work life, and how teachers act in relation to marketisation in turn, by looking at teachers in the marketisation of primary education in Kenya. Before I introduce the specific objectives of this thesis, I will go into more detail as to why the growth of LFP schools is emblematic of marketisation, and expand on what is known about teachers in relation to these schools. After this I introduce the aim and research questions, followed by brief introductions to the theoretical framework used, to the method, and to Kenya as a case, as well as some major delimitations, and the outline of the thesis.

1.2 Marketisation and a changing educational landscape in the Global South

1.2.1 Low-fee private schools as part of the marketisation of education

Around the world, parents, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), religious groups, and local entrepreneurs have, over the years, tackled shortcomings in public education through community and private initiatives (see, e.g., Hanson Thiem, 2007; Ngau, 1987). What has happened more recently is that private segments of education provision have grown to become substantial parts of national education systems. In the Global North, this is largely because of political decisions to deregulate and liberalise education, beginning in the 1980s (Dahlström, 2009). In the Global South, the reasons for the growth of LFP education are in many cases rather a combination of increased demand for education, increased supply from private actors identifying such a demand, liberalised education systems (sometimes as a result of external pressure), and states' 'abdication' of their obligation to provide quality, free education to their citizens (Oduor-Noah, 2021; Srivastava, 2010; Verger et al., 2017).

While private education has existed in some form for a long time, scholars point to specific events as significant for the increase in LFP schools, which I will go through here in brief. In the last two decades of the 20th century, debt-ridden countries were pressured to adopt more neoliberal policies, with privatisation and user fees in education to lower government spending. This approach was part of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Muasya, 2012). This policy caused enrolment numbers to drop, hitting poorer families the hardest (Närman, 1995; Sifuna & Oanda, 2019). In the 1990s and early 2000s the international policy winds changed, and primary education was made a priority through pledges to introduce free, compulsory primary Education for All (EFA), and the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) (Oduor-Noah, 2021; UN, n.d.a). Many scholars point particularly to the abolishing of fees and the drive for increasing enrolment as a starting point for the surge in private education since the early 2000s (see, e.g., Härmä, 2016; Srivastava, 2016). This may seem counter-intuitive, but as fees were removed there was a large influx of pupils to public schools. As resources to public schools did not keep up with the number of pupils, many

parents who were able to do so sought better alternatives in the private sector. Private schools for families with low income have increased greatly since, though the number is hard to gauge, as they often operate without being registered with the government (see, e.g., Andrabi et al., 2008; Mcloughlin, 2013; Nishimura & Yamano, 2013).

The next step in the growth of LFP schooling has been a ‘second wave’ of LFP schools that has emerged even more recently, in countries such as Kenya, India, Pakistan, Ghana, Liberia, the Philippines, Uganda, and South Africa (Srivastava, 2016). These for-profit schools, often chains ranging from a few to several hundred schools, have seen investment from major companies, ‘philanthro-capitalists’, the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group, and even domestic and/or foreign governments (Srivastava, 2016). It has thus been argued that what used to be a more *ad hoc* response from communities to inadequate public provision of education has been identified by ‘edu-companies’ as a potentially profitable market opportunity (Srivastava, 2010, 2016; Verger et al., 2018). It should be noted, however, that many LFP schools may be run for-profit, without (yet) actually making profit, as their margins are very small (see Härmä, 2021b, p. 138).

LFP schooling exemplifies marketisation in education in several ways, and the rationales of the market may affect both LFP and public schooling in these contexts. The growing private markets (e.g., in Kenya, India, Pakistan, and Ghana) and/or public-private partnerships with voucher systems (e.g., in Liberia, India, Pakistan, and Uganda) involve, at least in theory, market dynamics of choice and competition (Srivastava, 2016; Verger et al., 2017). Marketisation in practice often entails a higher level of quantification of information aimed at increased accountability, supposedly facilitating choice and the ability of ‘customers’ to ‘vote with their feet’ (Apple, 2000). Touting test results is a major way by which LFP schools promote themselves (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 145–156). While the schools may have started growing ‘from below’ in response to a need, as with other marketisation processes they are now often instigated, or at least acknowledged, by the state and/or non-state providers of education with the argument of increased efficiency, lower costs and making services better respond to ‘customer’ preferences (Edwards et al., 2015; Srivastava, 2010, p. 524). Several scholars argue that the proliferation of for-profit LFP schools is largely driven by proponents such as international organisations, aid agencies, individual consultants, and private foundations

(Fontdevila & Verger, 2019; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 121–126). However, opponents of the marketisation of education, including national and international organisations and aid agencies, scholars, and teachers’ trade unions, have acted to counteract the marketisation process, for example, through lawsuits, media attention and policy recommendations (ActionAid International et al., 2022; Monk, 2019; Verger & Novelli, 2010).

In some development circles, markets are touted as the silver bullet to fix poverty through win–win business ventures (see Berndt, 2015). The idea is that companies that figure out what ‘the bottom of the pyramid’ desires can profit, while helping people achieve their aspirations (Pralhad, 2004). Proponents of LFP schools argue that they yield better results, mainly because of the greater effort and accountability of the teaching staff, are more cost-efficient, and provide families with what they want, such as instruction in a desired language, the positional advantage of having a *private* education, and/or a school closer to home (see, e.g., Gray-Lobe et al., 2022; Tooley & Dixon, 2006). Those more critical, on the other hand, report that private schools selectively admit better performing children, leaving more disadvantaged pupils in public schools, teach to the test,⁵ do not allow pupils in class if their parents have not paid, thus disrupting their education, that edu-companies do not follow local regulations, etc. (see, e.g., Härmä, 2021b; Riep & Machacek, 2016). A concern voiced by opponents is that increased private involvement in education risks leading to governments relying on the private sector, and not investing sufficiently in public education, further undermining international goals of free quality education for all (Oduor-Noah, 2021). As stakeholders scramble for shares of the market based on measurable results, such as test scores, rather than on hard-to-measure overall quality, there are risks regarding equity and well-being, as well as the ‘de-skilling’ of a profession that society relies on for its welfare (Srivastava, 2013; UNESCO, 2017, pp. 41-83).

1.2.2 Teachers in low-fee private school contexts

Several scholars, as well as the international teachers’ trade union Education International (EI) and the Kenyan National Union of Teachers (KNUT), point

⁵ ‘Teach to the test’ denotes a narrow curricular focus, based on exams and their structures, rather than broader conceptual learning (Au, 2011; Härmä, 2021b, p. 153).

to risks of the exploitation of teachers and teaching staff working in LFP schools, as well as a more general de-skilling and de-professionalisation of the teaching profession (see, e.g., EI & KNUT, 2016; Locatelli, 2018; Riep & Machacek, 2016; Srivastava, 2013). One of the most imminent and intractable problems that schools and education systems around the world face is a lack of qualified teachers, often because too few desired candidates enter and/or remain in the profession. In many African countries, the problem is reportedly not necessarily a lack of certified teachers, as there may be many officially unemployed teachers, but rather a lack of funds for teacher salaries (Crawford & Pugatch, 2020; UNESCO, 2014b). As teachers are the largest post in most education budgets, teachers' wages and work are continuously under debate and pressure (see UNESCO, 2014b, for an overview; see also Evans et al., 2022).

With LFP schools needing to keep their costs at a minimum to be able to charge fees low enough to be competitive in low-income areas, their teachers' salaries are reportedly only a fraction of public-school teachers' pay in many African countries, as well as in India and Pakistan (Chudgar & Sakamoto, 2021; Day Ashley et al., 2014; Edwards et al., 2015; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 30–35). Staffing schools at low pay has in many cases been made possible by employing untrained youth from the local community (Andrabi et al., 2008). This has further been facilitated in some chains of LFP schools by having their staff trained in-house and closely following detailed lesson scripts on e-readers (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 30–35, 127–130; Riep & Machacek, 2016).

It has also been shown that there are pressures on teachers in these schools to 'produce' competitive results so that the school can attract pupils, sometimes by means such as narrowly teaching to the test, or even cheating (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 145–156). As job security is reportedly very poor or non-existent in LFP schools, compared to that of public-school teachers, LFP-school teachers failing to produce results may be let go on the spot (Lange et al., 2021; Riep & Machacek, 2016). On the flip side, discontented teachers in LFP schools may decide to leave their position just as abruptly, meaning that they can affect their own lives, if not the system (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 30–35). It has also been indicated that public-school teachers are affected, too, for example, by parents moving their children between public and LFP schools in the education market (Abuya & Ngware, 2016).

Furthermore, teachers in the larger chains of LFP schools are reportedly under close surveillance and evaluation, mainly through e-readers and mobile phones (see, e.g., Kwauk & Perlman Robinson, 2016; Riep & Machacek, 2016). The ‘para-skilling’ practice of using scripted lessons in some LFP schools, for example, in Bridge International Academies (BIA), the world’s largest chain of LFP schools (Srivastava, 2016), has similarities with the scientific management of Fordism and Taylorism. In such labour processes, workers are divided into different functions, the execution function being highly standardised, and subjected to strict supervision (Au, 2011; Dicken, 2015, p. 101), in contrast to the upper echelons working with conceptualisation (see Massey, 1995, pp. 32–33).

These issues have repeatedly been pointed out in the academic literature on LFP schooling (e.g., Härmä, 2021b; Nambissan, 2010; Srivastava, 2013; Verger et al., 2017), even though they rarely have been the focus of systematic investigation in their own right. Several questions have thus remained largely unanswered in LFP schooling contexts. What do the reported low pay and insecure employment mean for the teachers’ work lives? What is it like to work in LFP versus public schools in a highly marketised educational landscape? What do teachers need in their work lives, and is the increase in LFP schools perceived to put those needs at risk? How is teachers’ agency, i.e., their capability to act, affected by the marketisation of education in a low-income context with limited employment opportunities?

Some research outside the LFP schooling literature points to the salience of these questions. The relationship between the marketisation of education and the everyday work experiences of those labouring in education in the Global North has been in focus in work and organisational studies, the sociology of education and education studies (see, e.g., Au, 2011; Ball, 2016; Brennan, 2009; Parding et al., 2012). A few geographers have also highlighted teachers in educational restructuring in North America as actors and “socially embedded workers” (Bocking, 2018, p. 1673; see also Brogan, 2013; Sweeney, 2013). This research has found that teachers in those settings were affected in different, but profound, ways by changes making their work adhere more to market mechanisms, acting by adopting them or finding them problematic and even resisting them. Such findings point to a need to also capture how teachers fit into the marketisation of education in contexts in the Global South. In other

words, there is a need for empirical research into teachers in the marketisation of education in the Global South, as socially embedded agents in *their* context.

1.3 Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is *to explore and analyse primary school teachers' experiences, and how they exert agency in their everyday work lives to fulfil their needs, within the marketisation of education in Kenyan low-income contexts.*

Fulfilling this aim is done by studying Kenyan primary school teachers' work lives in relation to the expansion of LFP schooling, a phenomenon primarily found in low-income areas. Some initial clarifications are needed. Both public- and LFP-school teachers are included in the term "teacher", to learn about the experiences of primary school teachers more broadly in this context. Untrained teachers are also included, as they are actors sharing space with certified teachers in the education market. Experiences are operationalised as the interplay between the teachers' needs and challenges to those. 'Needs' are what the teachers identify as their essential interests: material needs and feelings of purpose (see Cox, 1998b). "Challenges" signify external changes or pressures within the marketisation context that risk undermining the teachers' ability to fulfil their essential interests (see Cox, 1998b). This operationalisation has two purposes. First, focusing on what the teachers describe as essential interests and challenges means engaging with teachers as subjects, learning about their everyday work lives from their vantage point in the new educational landscape. Second, the teachers' essential interests and their perceptions of challenges are what the teachers have to make sense of and act on, as subjects and actors embedded in social relations and structures. Thus, to learn about how the teachers exert their agency – agency in this study taken to mean their capability to act in their circumstances – we need to learn about what they want to act on and why. The hope is that this study will make an important empirical contribution to the LFP schooling literature, through its focus on teachers as actors in LFP schooling markets. I also hope to contribute to the labour geography field, by adding to the knowledge of work in socially embedded welfare sectors.

Three research questions (RQs) are addressed in fulfilling the aim, and have guided the ordering of the results chapters:

RQ 1: In different schools and geographical settings, what are the teachers' needs in their work life, and what social relations do they depend upon to fulfil them?

The purpose of the first research question is to deepen our understanding of Kenyan teachers' lived experiences, by avoiding making assumptions about what is important to them as physical and social beings working in the marketisation context. Here, social relations are the relations through which the teachers can fulfil their essential interests in their work lives, be they material or pertaining to meaning. By identifying the teachers' needs, which I, using Cox's (1998b) terminology, refer to as their essential interests, together with the social relations that these depend on for fulfilment, the teachers' experiences in the marketisation of education are put in their broader geographical, social and economic contexts. To say something more widely about primary school teachers in the marketisation context, I explore their needs and social relations in different schools, which I broadly categorise as public schools and LFP schools. I also explore this in two different geographical settings, one rural and one urban.

RQ 2: What are the challenges to the different teachers' social relations and needs in the marketised education landscape?

What is identified as a challenge involves the risk of undermining the social relations through which the teachers can fulfil their needs. However, a challenge is not necessarily perceived as negative by all teachers, as structures are simultaneously enabling and constraining of certain behaviours. By "different teachers", I mean teachers in public versus LFP schools, and in rural versus urban areas. The literature suggests several challenges to teachers' professionalism and well-being in the LFP schooling market. Here, the purpose is to learn about those challenges in relation to the teachers' essential interests and social relations, and to learn whether there are challenges that have thus far been overlooked, because teachers have not sufficiently been the subject of investigation in LFP schooling contexts.

RQ 3: How do different teachers navigate challenges to their needs in the marketisation context, and what shapes their actions?

The purpose of this research question is to recognise that teachers are both subjects and actors, but without overstating their ability to affect the challenges that they perceive. Thus, this question links the teachers' essential interests, and their challenges, with the enabling and constraining social relations of their varying circumstances. As the theoretical entry points suggest, the teachers' actions may be shaped both by how their interests are challenged, and by the relations that they find themselves (un)able to draw upon.

1.4 Analytical framework

1.4.1 Labour geography

Labour geography is “both *of* and *for* the interests of workers” (Hastings, 2016, p. 307). It is a field that recognises that workers and their interests are involved in shaping the world (Bergene et al., 2010). In recent years, scholars in labour geography have further broadened their theorisation of agency beyond unionised struggles, for example, by including accounts of less successful or spectacular ways that labour acts, inside and outside the workplace (Hastings, 2016). There have furthermore been calls from feminist labour geographers to understand workers as social beings who, rather than constituting a homogenous group with the same experiences and interests, are shaped by social and economic relations both in work and the reproductive sphere (see, e.g., Dutta, 2016; McDowell, 2004). In a similar vein, I want to explore, rather than take for granted, what teachers experience and how this affects their agency. To structure this inquiry into teachers' actions and agency, and into what relations motivate, enable, and restrict their actions, Cox's (1998b) concepts ‘spaces of dependence’ and ‘spaces of engagement’ are deployed. These overarching concepts are aided by theoretical concepts closer to the teachers, deployed to understand their essential interests as teachers as *extrinsic*, *intrinsic*, and/or *altruistic motivations* (Han & Yin, 2016), and their actions as forms of *resilience*, *reworking*, *resistance* (Katz, 2004), or *collaboration* (see Gough, 2010; Nyberg & Sewell, 2014).

1.4.2 Connecting needs, challenges, and actions

The concepts ‘spaces of dependence’ and ‘spaces of engagement’ were introduced by Cox (1998b) to capture the content and form of spatial politics. Spaces of dependence are made up of the localised relations we depend on “for our material well being [sic] and our sense of significance” (Cox, 1998b, p. 2). Relatedly, spaces of engagement are the networks of social relations through which we seek to defend and secure our spaces of dependence against perceived threats or challenges.

Actors, such as education companies, teachers, and state agencies, create spaces of dependence that are made up of localised relations that cannot be readily substituted elsewhere. These spaces are, however, not necessarily ‘local’ in an absolute understanding of the term, or as discrete and bounded territories (Cox, 1998a). Examples could be a certified teacher depending on the labour market for teachers, or a private school depending on its reputation and connections to enrol enough school-age children in the local area to make ends meet. Actors can have several overlapping spaces of dependence connected to the fulfilment of their interests, such as teachers depending on their employers and wider society for extrinsic motivations such as pay and status, but also for working conditions enabling intrinsic and altruistic motivations, such as educating pupils (Han & Yin, 2016). Different actors can have different spaces of dependence, such as the labour rights of the teacher and the administrative connections of the school, but they can also be shared or overlapping, such as both teachers and schools needing pupils and infrastructure to be able to go on earning income and educating children.

By finding other actors with the same or overlapping essential interests, actors can join forces to meet challenges to their space of dependence, for example, teachers and parents acting together, and perhaps engaging local or national media, to try to prevent school closures (Brogan, 2013). These spaces of engagement, where alliances are sought and the fulfilment of essential interests is defended, are often of a network character and “may be at a more global scale than the space of dependence, as per the idea of “jumping scales” (Cox, 1998b, p. 2), but not necessarily so. Where organising and scale jumping are not possible, it is helpful to categorise actions as resilience, reworking, and

resistance (Katz, 2004, pp. 238-59). These categories can be seen as ranged on a continuum extending from getting by to trying to overthrow identified injustices. There may also be instances in which workers do not regard their circumstances as unjust, and instead collaborate in demands based on market rationales (see Gough, 2010; Nyberg & Sewell, 2014).

1.5 Qualitative research in Kenya

Kenya, like several other countries in the Global South, and especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, struggles to fund education for a growing population. Its history of colonialism is an important backdrop to later foreign involvement through loans, SAPs, and aid, and more recently in the form of edu-companies looking to get in on the education market. I wanted to study teachers' experiences and agency in Kenya, as the dynamics of education markets are relatively well documented, and the operations of LFP schools are largely independent of government involvement there. This would allow a focus more specifically on teachers working in different types of schools, and with different employers. Kenya is prevalent in the literature on LFP schools, and has a significant LFP schooling market, involving the growth of LFP schools and of the second wave of LFP schools (see, e.g., Dixon & Tooley, 2012; Edwards et al., 2015; Oketch et al., 2012; Srivastava, 2016; Tooley & Dixon, 2006). That BIA, the highly contested 'Starbucks of education' chain of schools has its origin, base, and hundreds of schools in Kenya was another important factor.⁶ This second-wave type of LFP schools takes the marketisation of education one step further in incorporating business practices, via a spatial division of labour using scripted lessons (see BIA, n.d.c; Fenn, 2014). That was something I wanted to know teachers' perspectives on.

To get primary school teachers' perspectives, I conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers in both public and LFP primary schools. The interviews centred on themes concerning their work life, private/public

⁶ According to BIA's own website on 30 October 2019, there were 295 BIA schools in Kenya (BIA, n.d.c). The site does not make a distinction between pre-primary and primary schools, so how many are one or the other or both is unclear. After data collection and during the Covid-19 pandemic, on 4 April 2022, this figure had dropped to 111 schools, according to their website (BIA, n.d.b).

education, and agency. All but one of the interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and coded into themes using NVivo. I also interviewed key informants from the KNUT, EI, and national lobby groups, as well as former BIA employees. Key informant interviews and secondary data, such as policy documents, have served to give a better understanding of different stakeholders and their aims in affecting the marketisation of education in Kenya, but were not analysed as data.

In selecting low-income areas in which to interview teachers, there needed to be both public and BIA schools within the same geographical setting. BIA was interesting in its own right, but also served as an indicator of there being an LFP market. The choice to conduct interviews with teachers in two geographical settings, one urban and the other rural, was decided on as factors such as population density, size of the labour market, closeness to an administrative centre, and access to services could be presumed to differ, and influence how attractive the areas would be to work and live in for teachers. Poverty incidence was also used (Wiesmann et al., 2016, pp. 106–107), as low-income areas struggle the most to staff their schools with qualified teachers (Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 87–108), and these are where LFP schools are generally found (Härmä, 2016). Furthermore, based on the finding that education markets are less developed in rural areas (Härmä, 2016), the expectation was that LFP schooling would stand out more in such contexts. This turned out to be a partially faulty assumption, as there were several private schools in the more rural location chosen as well, which surfaced in interviews.

To keep BIA interviewees anonymous, I will only disclose here that one area was an informal settlement in Nairobi and the other a small rural town. I chose the area outside of Nairobi based on BIA's map of its school locations (BIA, n.d.c), and compared this with a population map (Wiesmann et al., 2016, p. 33), to locate a more sparsely populated area. The town chosen is small and sparsely populated, situated along a paved road, approximately three hours from Nairobi by car – hence, I refer to it as a rural town.

1.6 Delimitations

This thesis focuses on teachers' work life and agency in the marketisation of education. There are some closely related matters that are beyond this scope.

A detailed mapping of the education markets in the chosen areas, in terms of number of primary schools, fees charged, class sizes, staff characteristics, children in and out of school, etc., has not been done. Such a mapping would have been interesting, but would have done little to substantiate the teachers' stories beyond what is shown existing studies.

While I problematise the use of scripted lessons to supplant qualified teachers and how this affects those teaching, I do not delve into pedagogy or curricular content. It is of interest how teachers regard their work inside and outside of the classroom, and the content that they teach, but this is not an evaluation of 'what works'. Neither will I focus on parents' perceptions of the quality of different schools (see, e.g., Härmä, 2016; Lindsjö, 2017), or children's experiences and geographies insofar as they are not related to the teachers' experiences (see, e.g., Mills & Kraftl, 2016), as these topics have been more well explored. In my research, teachers are the focus.

Some geographical delimitations were made, due to issues of safety and scope. Areas along the Kenyan coast, farther north in Kenya and along the Somalian border were not recommended to visit by the Swedish embassy in Kenya. These are areas of conflict mainly due to Kenyan–Somalian relations, where non-local teachers reportedly suffer harassment, some even having been killed when at work. Many Somalian families and children also live in the large Dadaab refugee camp in the region, where there are few teachers or other educational resources (Flemming, 2017). Teachers' experiences and agency in such contexts are of importance considering the spatially unequal production of education, but schooling in areas of conflict and for people fleeing conflict is beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.7 Outline of thesis

This monograph proceeds as follows. First, I outline previous research on the geographies of markets, marketisation in education generally and in the form of LFP schooling specifically, as well as what we know about marketisation and teachers, and LFP schools and teachers (Chapter 2). This helps establish that the voices of teachers in relation to LFP schools are largely absent from scholarly analysis, as is engagement with teachers as actors in the marketisation of education in the Global South. From this conclusion in the literature review, we move on to the theoretical entry points and framework guiding the project and data analysis (Chapter 3).

The perspective on teachers as workers and people with agency stems from labour geography. To draw out teachers' needs and actions and put them in relation to one another, the terms 'spaces of dependence' and 'spaces of engagement' are used as an overarching frame. To understand teachers' agency and actions, the terms 'extrinsic', 'intrinsic' and 'altruistic' motivations, and 'collaboration', 'resilience', 'reworking' and 'resistance' are used. A methodology chapter then follows (Chapter 4), in which method chosen, questions asked, and analysis conducted will be disclosed and reflected on. After this comes a chapter about education and teachers in Kenya (Chapter 5), with a focus on drawing up how the current situation of LFP schooling has come to be, and how it may express itself in urban informal settlements and rural towns. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 contain the main findings and analysis. In Chapter 6, I focus on teachers' essential interests in their work life, and through what social relations they may fulfil these. In Chapter 7, the focus is on challenges that teachers face in relation to the marketisation of education in Kenya. In Chapter 8, I focus on teachers' courses of action, and on what motivations as well as enabling and hindering factors have shaped their agency. Finally, in Chapter 9, I conclude this monograph and discuss the findings in relation to the aim, research questions, and previous literature.

2 Literature review: teachers in the marketisation of education

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I take a deeper look into the literature that informed and motivated the problem formulation of this project. Teachers and the marketisation of education have been of interest in many research fields, although not always in combination, and rarely in human geography or research in the Global South. From this review of the literature, we can understand the marketisation of education as a process with certain rationales that is driven, reproduced, and challenged by various actors; we can also understand teachers in the Global South as actors in this, even though such a perspective is lacking in the literature focusing on LFP schooling.

For transparency, I first outline the process of searching for relevant literature. Then, I start with the term ‘marketisation’, which keeps emerging in the LFP schooling literature. Here, I conceptualise and distinguish marketisation from other closely related processes affecting education. After doing so, I focus broadly on the literature concerning the marketisation of education, often in the Global North, which has been more extensively researched and has resonance for this study. I then concentrate on how we can understand LFP schooling as one of many marketisation processes, at times relying on the literature concerning primary schooling more generally in low-income settings in the Global South. I end that section with what has, and has not, been said about teachers in LFP schooling, aided by the more general literature on primary school teachers in the Global South. I then turn to the vast literature on the marketisation of education and teachers in the Global North, as well as the literature that centres teachers as subjects and actors, both affected by and affecting such processes. That literature further points to a knowledge gap

regarding teachers in LFP settings in the Global South, indicating that teachers in contexts with LFP schooling need to be acknowledged as complex actors within that specific context.

2.2 A transdisciplinary searching and piecing together

The readings for this dissertation formed several ‘circles’. I set out with an interest in LFP schooling and teachers’ agency in the Global South. I quickly gave up on finding literature on LFP schooling and teachers in human geography.⁷ In parallel, I searched for literature on LFP schooling and teachers in the Global South, regardless of the academic discipline.⁸ In doing so, I realised that teachers were everywhere except for in the focus of analysis. I tried to grasp what aspects of LFP schools and their settings could focus the inquiry with regard to teachers and their agency: what processes and structures shaped the teachers’ work lives, and what appeared to cause the ‘symptoms’ related in the literature?

What stood out in the literature was that LFP schools operate in an increasingly competitive market. While many LFP schooling researchers use the term ‘privatisation’, the logics of market competition were very much present in the literature. Those logics were helpful in pinpointing the processes and pressures that teachers are both subjected to, and part of. Searches on teachers and the marketisation of primary education in the Global South gave some results: primarily studies of LFP schooling, or conceptual texts referring to LFP schooling, but generally lacking a focus on teachers. Thus, I had to widen the searches beyond LFP schooling and the Global South. Comparing what I read about LFP schooling and teachers with texts on the marketisation of education and teachers more widely (predominately in the Global North) gave me a sense of having found the frame of the jigsaw puzzle: in other contexts, teachers had been found both to be affected by and to be actors in marketisation processes.

⁷ Ansell (2015) is an exception, who touches on teachers as she also discusses LFP schooling.

⁸ Combining search terms such as ‘low-fee private*’, ‘low-cost private*’, with ‘teacher*’, ‘educator*’.

However, lest I drown in texts, I had to be selective in my reading.⁹ Below, I sum up the often-parallel circles of searches and readings to ‘fill in’ the frame, as well as supplying some delimitations:

- To understand and try to differentiate between marketisation and related processes, I read key texts on the neoliberal restructuring of public services, predominately education.
- To understand marketisation processes as a geographer, I included geographical studies and key conceptual texts on marketisation processes, as well as on marketisation and other types of workers and professionals (more on that in Chapter 3).
- The geographically sensitive studies of marketisation cautioned me that marketisation processes and circumstances differ between contexts. This led me to:
 - scour texts on LFP schooling for the rationales of marketisation (primarily competition, choice, and accountability) and their effects for teachers, even though the authors stated a focus on privatisation; and
 - search for texts written about primary school teachers as subjects and actors in the Global South more generally, to avoid assumptions about teachers in the Global South based on teachers in the Global North.
- Texts written from a less critical perspective rarely use terms such as ‘marketisation’. Such texts were instead found through references or through searches containing terms such as ‘competition’, ‘school choice’ and ‘accountability’ instead of ‘marketisation’. However, as I had an interest in teachers as people and actors, I limited my readings of texts that primarily concerned the management of teachers, and/or lacked teachers as primary sources.
- As a labour geographer interested in teachers’ agency and reasons for acting, I favoured texts that also connected teachers to their lives outside of work.

⁹ For searches I have used Scopus, ProQuest Education Database and Social Sciences, ERIC, Education Research Complete, JSTOR, AfricaBib, IlissAfrica, Connecting Africa, African Journals Online, as well as Google Scholar. Where no advanced search options, sorting or filters were available to narrow down or order the hits, the top 100 titles were scanned for relevance. I have also followed references and recommendations.

- I also read selected texts on pre-primary education, secondary education, higher education, and adult education, when these were written by geographers, concerned the Global South, advanced my conceptual understanding and/or had a strong focus on teachers.

Before we get into LFP schooling and how we can understand the phenomenon as part of the marketisation of education, I will explain marketisation and the marketisation of education more generally, drawing largely on conceptual texts, often, but not exclusively, written from a Global North perspective.

2.3 Marketisation and related concepts

While marketisation is a word that is often used to describe the LFP school phenomenon and its growth, choosing marketisation over other related concepts requires some explanation and justification. In the literature on public sector restructuring and education policy, terms such as ‘neoliberalisation’, ‘marketisation’, ‘privatisation’, ‘commodification’, and ‘commercialisation’ are not always used in clearly defined ways, at times being used interchangeably. These concepts are connected, however, and may overlap. The closest I have come to a consensus definition of their broad meaning and connection is the following. *Neoliberalisation* is a term for the overarching process in which the other processes, and not least marketisation, with historical and local variations, play part (Hill, 2005, pp. 261–263). Neoliberalisation is signified by moves towards less state interference, yet involves active political reforms to regulate and “facilitate privatisation and marketisation of ever-wider spheres of social and environmental life” (Castree, 2008, p. 142). *Commodification* means the packaging of goods and services, such as education, into tradable commodities “foremost in terms of exchange value instead of a kind of (intrinsic) use value” (Simons et al., 2013, p. 419). According to Birch and Siemiatycki (2016), commodification is one prerequisite for commercialisation, privatisation, and marketisation to be able to take place. *Commercialisation*, broadly speaking, means bringing a commodified good into the market to be bought and sold. This means for-profit and commercial involvement, for example, in and around education. Simons et al. (2013) described commercialisation in education as “‘selling to schools’, ‘selling in schools’ or ‘selling of schools’” (Molnar, 2006, pp. 621–622, as

cited by Simons et al., 2013, p. 420). *Privatisation* means increasing private involvement (e.g., through contracting out and public–private partnerships) and/or private ownership in the public sector (Birch & Siemiatycki, 2016), for example, in education.

These concepts are relevant to how we can understand what is happening in education systems globally, as well as with regards to LFP schooling and teachers. For example, it should be noted that ‘privatisation’ is commonly used in the literature on LFP schooling, but market rationales are always present (see, e.g., Tooley & Dixon, 2006). While privatisation has an impact on the fabric of education systems and on teachers’ employment options (Lange et al., 2021), what the term *marketisation* does, which the above concepts do not quite do, is focus our attention on markets as competitive arenas, shaped by, and shaping, the rationales and realities of the various actors involved, not least teachers (see Parding et al., 2012). This focus appears particularly salient in understanding the everyday experiences and agency of teachers in LFP schooling markets, as we return to below.

Put simply, marketisation means market-making – a process of “designing, implementing and reproducing” (Berndt, 2015, p. 1869) markets. We need to talk of marketisation in the plural, however, because, as scholars have shown, and as we may recognise in our daily lives, markets are made and look different: different things are bought and sold at different prices, there are different buyers and sellers in different places of exchange, etc. (see, e.g., Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Doogan, 1997; Ouma et al., 2013). There are also similarities, however, which makes it possible to talk about ‘markets’ and ‘marketisation processes’. By ‘markets’, geographers Berndt and Boeckler mean “arrangements of people, things and socio–technical devices – that format products, prices, competition, places of exchange and mechanisms of control” (p. 9). The arrangements that are markets organise the distribution of economic activities through market exchange, rather than through, for example, bureaucratic, or redistributive means.

It should be noted here that, for example, Walford (1996) argued that education markets may be referred to as ‘quasi-markets’ rather than markets in a classical sense (see also Ball & Youdell, 2007).¹⁰ This is mainly because education is

¹⁰ Education markets may also be referred to as ‘pseudo-markets’ or ‘market proxies’ (see, e.g., Birch & Siemiatycki, 2016)

generally considered a human right, may be seen as a public good, mostly is mandatory for the ‘consumers’, and is quite strictly regulated by the state.¹¹ Local and national governments may, for example, have to ensure places of exchange (i.e., schools) within reasonable distance from consumers (i.e., students). Still, Walford (1996) also saw similarities between education markets and ‘classic’ markets, in that there is competition in many places and a “local hierarchy of desirability” (p. 8) regarding schools, as families are looking to make a good ‘purchase’. If we consider that teachers have been identified by both policymakers and researchers as central to the quality of education, one can begin to discern that competitiveness is something that involves teachers and their work (see, e.g., Parding et al., 2017)

While Berndt and Boeckler (2012), drawing on the work of Çalışkan and Callon (2010), defined marketisation broadly, including examples ranging from the creation of financial markets to agricultural markets, what is often referred to with the term ‘marketisation’ is the introduction of market forces of competition and exchange in the provision of public services. This is of particular interest in this project. The marketisation of public services can be done by constructing markets with competing entities within the public sector, and/or by involving actors from the private sector (Birch & Siemiatycki, 2016). Such processes are facilitated by more market-oriented discourses surrounding public services and the individual, invoking a language of (in)efficiency and accountability, making market logics more acceptable and a matter of ‘common sense’ (Berndt & Boeckler, 2012; Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Thompson & Parreira do Amaral, 2019). We shall return to the marketisation of public services as we look more closely at the marketisation of education below.

Markets may be set in motion by firms, states, trade unions, banks, hedge funds, international organisations, or consumers – to cite some of Çalışkan and Callon’s (2010) examples. Çalışkan and Callon (2010) stressed the agency of a multiplicity of actors in the market, also including regulatory agencies, experts, and research centres. These actors may deploy ‘things’, or ‘devices’, in the market, such as rules and conventions, metrological systems,

¹¹ That there is debate as to whether education is a public good has to do with whether it can be considered both non-excludable and non-rivalrous, as a public good by definition is. The international discourse around education essentially says that it should be a public good (Locatelli, 2019, pp. 15–32).

infrastructures, discourses, and scientific knowledge, which also shape the market and the agency and actions of actors in the market (Berndt & Boeckler, 2012; Çalışkan & Callon, 2010). With the arrangement of many actors and ‘things’, markets are spaces of contestation and power struggle. That does not mean that different actors have equal power or are affected equally in the market, however. Power, according to Çalışkan and Callon (2010), relates to the calculation of values, i.e., some actors have a greater say in how the products in the market should be valued and what they are worth.

Three main take-aways from the marketisation literature for my purposes are that: a) markets do not make themselves, but rather various actors in space and time are involved in their shaping; b) the agency and actions of people in markets are affected by the arrangement of the people and ‘things’ that constitute the market; and c) the rationale for the marketisation of public services is that competition and choice will bring about accountability, quality and efficiency. This leads to what I wish to do in this thesis: focus on the everyday workings of the market for workers in the market, i.e., how the marketisation rationales in public and LFP schools affect teachers and their agency as part of the marketisation context in Kenya. This also facilitates understanding the growth of markets involving LFP schooling as a result of consumer demand, commercial interests, and government policy, as has been done in the literature (see Edwards et al., 2015; Riep, 2017).

2.4 A broader overview of the marketisation of education

2.4.1 The core rationales

Anglophone literature on the marketisation of education covers different geographical contexts, mainly focusing on students in the USA and the UK (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Geddie, 2012; Hall, 2015; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2017), and in some highly marketised countries such as Chile and Sweden (Nylund et al., 2017; Thelin & Niedomysl, 2015; Zancajo, 2018). There is also a comparative and conceptual literature with a more global scope, often with a focus on policy, and with some reference to LFP schooling (Komljenovic & Robertson, 2017; Verger et al., 2017). Before

I get into the specificities of LFP schooling, it is important to grasp this extensive literature on the marketisation of education, to see why LFP schooling may be seen as part of such a global move, and to recognise that contexts differ.

The marketisation of education has in many parts of the world been in the making since the 1980s, when there was a neoliberal shift in policy making (Apple, 2004; Cohen & Lizotte, 2015). The explicit idea of the marketisation of education is to improve education systems' quality and/or efficiency, through the more implicit idea of making them more business-like, either by the public system emulating business, or by bringing private business into education (Ball, 2016). According to Simons et al. (2013):

The notion of marketisation is generally used to address the process of organising market forces (for instance, school choice or competition) in education instead of hierarchical (bureaucratic) modes of coordination and provision by local or national governments. (p. 419)

Simons et al.'s (2013) observation ties in well with the above understanding of marketisation as market-making: market forces are being *organised* to change the way education is being provided. The core rationales for the marketisation of public services, such as education, were delineated by Birch and Siemiatycki (2016) to be value for money, (in)efficiency and accountability. States, taxpayers, and other financiers want value for their money. States' bureaucratic ways are framed as inefficient in achieving such an objective. In contrast, actors in a market are seen as more efficient, as competition and consumer demand incentivise delivering what consumers want at a lower price – a matter seen as more prudently handled by private actors than by the state (Birch & Siemiatycki, 2016). The focus on value for money thus gears states towards the private sector, either by emulation or outsourcing, making state objectives and discourses more economic (Birch & Siemiatycki, 2016).

Simons et al. (2013) also mentioned two key features of the marketisation of education: school choice and competition. School choice means that students and their families choose schools in a market, rather than being assigned them

according to catchment areas.¹² The underlying idea is that families know best what they want, and that their choices will make bad/undesirable schools lose out to better/more desirable ones (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015). This is one manifestation of the aforementioned ideological shift towards the individual as free and, ultimately, responsible for her/his own life, with students and their families as responsible consumers of education (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Holloway & Kirby, 2019; Webb & Gulson, 2015), and education as an economic investment for the future of the individual and society (McGrath, 2018, pp. 57–82). The second key feature that Simons et al. (2013) mentioned, competition, means that actors in the market – be they self-governing public schools or private schools – need to strive to be schools of choice and meet certain standards to stay open and/or receive funding (Bonal, 2019; Brogan, 2013). Along with these market logics comes a considerable focus on standards and measurability, most notably in the form of standardised tests, for authorities and consumers to keep providers accountable and compare them in the education market (Au, 2011; Ball, 2016; Rezai-Rashti & Lingard, 2021; Zancajo, et al., 2021).

Proponents of a market-oriented education system, some of whom we consider below, often put forward efficiency and quality as reasons for making education more business-like (see Verger et al., 2016, pp. 15–32). This tendency may represent desires ranging from opening up education to for-profit interests, to enabling the opening, and choosing, of schools with different pedagogies and minority-inclusive education (Härmä, 2021a; Verger et al., 2017). If we consider the importance attributed to quality education by society and individuals – being important enough to be made mandatory – we can understand why it is an area that is under constant pressure to improve from many stakeholders, and also why private actors regard education as a large (potential) market (Thelin & Nedomysl, 2015; Verger et al., 2017).

¹² Several countries, such as Chile, Sweden, and the USA, have put in place voucher systems, whereby students are funded by the government, regardless of whether they choose a public or subsidised private school. The idea behind vouchers is to enable choice and access to desired schools even for low-income students, although this does not play out in reality (Muench et al., 2023; Zancajo, 2018).

2.4.2 Actors in context

Market-making in education generally involves changes in state policy, such as deregulation, creating latitude for more autonomous and/or alternative actors, and re-regulation, reshaping education according to the logics of the market (Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Dicken, 2011, p. 180; Thelin, 2019, pp. 42–44). Not only national governments are involved in shaping the marketisation of education, however. Sub-national governments, transnational organisations and lending agencies, edu-companies, philanthro-capitalists, think-tanks, policy entrepreneurs, media, researchers, and civil society organisations, such as trade unions and NGOs, are also involved (Bocking, 2017; Knutsson & Lindberg, 2017; Verger et al., 2016, pp. 137–157). These actors may strive to promote, design, implement, and reproduce, or to resist and question, the marketisation of education, but they do not do so in an ahistorical vacuum. Institutional factors, such as nations’ openness to private interests and capacity to provide education as well as the strength of teachers’ unions shape what is possible at a given time (Verger et al., 2017). As Thelin and Niedomysl (2015) argued, in the case of Sweden, what is possible continuously changes as ideas and discourses change, such as the increased belief in free markets following the capitalist side winning the Cold War (see also Tomasevski, 2003, pp. 86–92).

Furthermore, not all actors have the same power to affect market-making, nor are they all affected by it in similar ways. Perhaps in accordance with Çalişkan and Callon’s (2010) suggestion that those who calculate value in markets have more power, many scholars focus on the networks and actions of actors such as edu-companies, international education organisations, and governments (see, e.g., Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Knutsson & Lindberg, 2019; Riep, 2014; Verger et al., 2017). There has also been some research on teachers’ unions with regard to the marketisation of education (see, e.g., Brogan, 2013; Verger & Novelli, 2010), a matter to which we will return below. Through the scholarly focus on powerful actors, we have learned much about how they contend and/or collude with one another to hype, design, implement and resist education markets. With regard to research on micro-level actors, how they affect the marketisation of education is often connected to the effects of students’ power as ‘consumers’, and/or to how schools and their principals/managers implement and reproduce market-making (see, e.g., Boterman et al., 2019; Lubienski, 2005; Taylor, 2001; Wennström, 2019).

More often, however, there is a focus in the literature on the effects of market-making *on* micro-level actors, such as schools and students, alongside effects on societies and education more generally.

2.4.3 Effects and critiques

The efficiency of markets in lowering public expenditure has been contested (Birch & Siemiatycki, 2016), or is at least debatable (Dicken, 2011, pp. 180–181). The latter appears to hold true for education as well, as efficiency varies with how programs and studies are structured, and with what is measured, according to a review by Waslander et al. (2010). In research on how well education markets work, as in studies of whether LFP schooling is better than public schooling, there is commonly a focus on test results as a proxy for learning outcomes (Waslander et al., 2010; see also Gray-Lobe et al., 2022; Jabbar et al., 2022).

As Jabbar et al. (2022) have acknowledged, however, other effects of school choice and competition are also important to assess. This ties in with much of the critique of the marketisation of education. For example, scholarship has shown that, for many students, school choice is not really a choice, even with voucher programmes and free education. Educational opportunities are unequal between different geographical locations and for different ‘customers’ in the market (Dovemark & Nylund, 2022; Huff, 2013; Lindberg, 2005; Taylor, 2001; Webb & Gulson, 2015, pp. 95–97). In a recent paper on segregation in education, Perry et al. (2022) argued that when schools have to compete by showing ‘good’ results, they are incentivised to select ‘good’ students. ‘Good’ students are generally also cheaper to educate, serving as another inducement to be selective, especially for for-profit schools. ‘Bad’ performance can lead to dropping enrolments, as well as budget constraints, lay-offs, and/or school closures, even though this may harm local communities and force students to travel farther to school (Brogan, 2013; see also Parding & Berg Jansson, 2022). Needing to be competitive has also led some schools to spend more time and money on marketing, rather than solely directly on educational input (Hogan & Thompson, 2019). Furthermore, while most would agree that a focus on quality, and raising quality, in education is a good objective, school competition and the associated focus on tests have been

criticised for leading to a standardization and slimming-down of the curriculum to what is being measured through tests (Au, 2011).

To sum up this overview of the marketisation of education, marketisation is prominent in education systems globally, advocated with reference to the notion that school choice leads to better efficiency, accountability, and quality, as schools compete for students in school markets. Not only do students' choices affect the education market, however, as many actors, ranging from policy makers to private companies, schools, and unions, are involved in the process. While quality measured in the form of test results in marketised education systems is problematic, and turns up differently in different studies, there is also critique with regard to the segmentation and selection of students, and the narrowing of curricula. These changes have also had profound effects on teachers' work and the teaching profession, as teachers become part of the competitiveness and need to perform according to set standards to be 'professional' (Falabella, 2014), as I will return to in the end of this chapter. First, I will focus on how LFP schooling can be seen in the light of marketisation.

2.5 The marketisation of education in the Global South

2.5.1 Markets involving low-fee private schooling

Before I get into how and why education markets involving LFP primary schools have developed, a brief reminder of what LFP schools are may be needed. These schools were dubbed low-fee private schools by Srivastava (2005).¹³ It is a heterogeneous category, however, and its definition has been debated in the literature (Acholla, 2021; Srivastava, 2007, 2016). Different definitions, often based on whether the schools are operated for profit, and on their affordability, make comparisons and generalisations about the

¹³ LFP schools are by some scholars referred to as low-cost private schools (LCPS/LCP schools) (e.g., by Dixon, 2012; Heyneman & Stern, 2014), or are included among non-state provided schools (NSP schools) (e.g., by Rose, 2006), although the latter category may also include elite/high-fee schools. The focus here is on primary education, but there are LFP schools for pre-primary and secondary education as well (Srivastava, 2008).

phenomenon and its effects difficult (Acholla, 2021).¹⁴ Acholla (2021) favoured a broad definition, i.e., of schools not run by government and charging relatively low fees, compared with medium- or high-fee schools catering to the better-off segments of society. However, she argued for a framework that differentiates between schools according to whether they are run by a single proprietor, as a cooperative, or as a corporate chain, paying attention to their operational scale, management, financial activity, affordability, and accountability mechanisms. In some cases, governments may contribute to LFP schools in the form of books, school meals, etc., and some countries have state funded voucher systems. However, if management and control are not with the government or board members selected by a public agency, the schools are considered private (see, e.g., Acholla, 2021; Edwards et al., 2015). As Edwards et al. (2015) have written, government schools often also impose fees, while not all LFP schools impose fees, if they are sponsored by an NGO, for example. Still, by most, and in this study, the term ‘LFP school’ is used to capture the segment of schools that charge a relatively low fee and are not government run.

Growth, actors, and rationales

Private schooling is not a new phenomenon in the Global South. However, according to Srivastava (2008), private schools in low-income areas used to be more of an *ad hoc* response from parents, communities, religious congregations, and NGOs that found the public provision of education lacking and/or private education a better alternative (see also Härmä, 2021a). The growth in LFP schools did thus not so much start ‘by design’ in many countries, but rather, by and large, it started out as marketisation ‘from below’ or as ‘de facto’ marketisation (see Verger et al., 2017; Tooley & Dixon, 2006). A later factor contributing to the growth in LFP schooling is that the

¹⁴ Tooley and Longfield (2016) tried to define what ‘low-cost’ and ‘affordable’ mean, using estimates such as 10% and 5% of families’ total expenditures to cover all schooling costs and fees, respectively (see Acholla, 2021, for other examples of attempts to define ‘low-fee’). Whether this should be seen as ‘affordable’ or fair, just because many families pay such fees, I am not sure I agree with. I would rather consider it a measure of what people may just about manage when all other options fail (see Härmä, 2021a, for a similar assessment). Some scholars, such as Verger et al. (2018), exclude schools run by NGOs and communities, on the basis that they are not run for profit. That does however exclude a large proportion of schools operating in the LFP market.

international commitment to free and compulsory education from the beginning of the 2000s has been, and still is, a financial struggle for many governments in the Global South. With education being free and mandatory, as well as education being touted as a way out of poverty and an investment in the future for both individuals and nations, demand for education rose (Ansell et al., 2020; Oduor-Noah, 2021). The dropping of fees and subsequent influx of pupils, without matching additions of resources, left public schools overcrowded and under-resourced (Abuya & Ngware, 2016; Tooley & Dixon, 2006).

This mismatch between families' demand and (government) supply plays a part in why even low-income families that can barely manage to do so turn to private schools (Tooley & Dixon, 2006; Verger et al., 2018). In recent years, the need for schools and the willingness of parents to try to provide their children with quality education have been identified by entrepreneurs and ed-companies as a large market to tap into (Prahalad, 2004; Srivastava, 2016; Verger et al., 2018). Thus, many countries in the Global South have seen a surge in LFP schools targeting poor families (Srivastava, 2016; Tooley & Dixon, 2006). This 'second wave' of LFP schooling is characterised by ed-companies aiming for financial returns through high levels of standardisation and economies of scale (Srivastava, 2016). Such strategies have involved starting LFP school chains, such as BIA and Omega schools, using scripted lessons and attracting pupils through marketing (see, e.g., Riep, 2017; Verger et al., 2018).¹⁵ With the second wave of LFP schools, the already heterogeneous category of LFP schools in some countries has become even more so, as community schools, schools run as sole proprietorships, small chains of schools, and corporate-backed chains of schools intermingle in the market (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 21-40). This step, beyond individual proprietors and community schools, is what predominately critical scholars of LFP schooling have recognised as a marketisation of education (Härmä, 2010; Verger et al., 2017).

¹⁵ In 2020 BIA rebranded itself as NewGlobe, to "to more accurately represent its diverse and growing portfolio of programming" (NewGlobe, n.d.a). In 2023, the company ran education programs in several African countries, as well as in India, with technical and support staff in the UK and the Netherlands, and teams overseeing academics, print, measurement and evaluation stationed in the USA (NewGlobe, n.d.b).

Muzaffar and Sharma (2011) have argued, in the case of the marketisation of education in Pakistan, that without a strong public sector to begin with, the growth of LFP schooling is, or perhaps was, not to be understood as a shift from ‘government to governance’, as marketisation may be in Western contexts. Rather, the growth of private education in many developing countries “is likely to be shaped by the logic of unfettered neoliberalism” (Mukhtar, 2009, as cited by Muzaffar & Sharma, 2011, p. 11), as it lacks strong discourses of ‘public’ and social justice to counter the concept of ‘private’. The supply and demand type of argument presented thus far is not enough to explain the marketisation of education in many countries in the Global South.

While LFP schools as marketisation of education is often discussed in the literature as a response to government failure, such marketisation does not just happen (see Tooley & Dixon, 2006; Verger et al., 2018). As the phenomenon of LFP schools has grown and become acknowledged, similarities in marketisation processes between different countries in the Global South, and between the Global South and the Global North, can be found in a discourse of efficiency, competition, choice, and accountability (Srivastava, 2016; Verger et al., 2018). It is important to highlight that powerful non-state actors, such as the World Bank, edu-companies and philanthro-capitalists, affect policy (see, e.g., Srivastava, 2010). For example, ‘affordable’ private schooling has been promoted by sections of the international aid community as part of a needed push to reach globally set education goals (Ansell, 2015; Srivastava, 2020; Verger et al., 2017), as well as to increase accountability and quality in education systems (Srivastava, 2010). On this note, the increased courting of low-income countries’ governments struggling with providing basic education (Srivastava, 2016), with edu-companies and chains of schools competing for public–private partnerships, appears to me to be a next step, or a ‘third wave’, in the marketisation process in the Global South (see also Verger et al., 2017, for a similar sentiment).

Furthermore, that the growth of LFP schooling is ‘unfettered neoliberalism’ does not mean that the state is not involved in the creation of these markets. Education markets involving LFP schooling, such as education markets in the Global North, are made possible through some level of governmental legitimisation, if not support or governance (Edwards et al., 2015; Srivastava, 2010; Verger et al., 2017). Many countries where LFP schools are a major phenomenon already had fairly liberalised education systems, in part because

of the SAPs and the Washington Consensus (Edwards et al., 2021; Verger et al., 2017), matters to which I return in Chapter 5. Furthermore, governments everywhere are looking for value for money. With smaller education budgets in the Global South, this becomes increasingly important. Sanctioning, rather than governing, LFP schooling has become a strategy to increase schooling in hard-to-reach, poor communities, according to Edwards et al. (2015; see also Muzaffar & Sharma, 2011). As with the marketisation of education in the Global North, the argument for LFP schools is that the competition and school choice will ensure that ‘good’ schools are favoured, and ‘bad’ schools will be forced to leave the market if too few pupils attend them (Dixon & Tooley, 2012). However, with the rapid expansion of LFP schools in many countries, governments have been struggling to keep up in terms of regulating these markets, and many schools remain unregistered, making enforcement, as well as information gathering, difficult (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 157–172; Ngware & Mutisya, 2021; Verger et al., 2017).

Mixed evidence, and concerns

As mentioned above, LFP schools are commonly funded independently, or receive only partial support from the state. This means that public spending can go farther, as proponents argue, but at the expense of parents and/or organisations (Verger et al., 2018). One risk that scholars recognise is that governments in this way eschew their obligations to provide fee-free education (Verger et al., 2018). Another risk that Heyneman and Stern (2014) recognised with LFP schools’ funding is that it is difficult to depend on, as margins are generally very small, and parents may be unable to pay consistently. While many schools are run for profit, it is not likely that many actually make much profit or have a financial buffer (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 29–39; Heyneman & Stern, 2014). This means that schools may struggle to pay salaries and risk having to close down. While this is how the market is ‘supposed to’ work, with ‘inefficient’ schools having to close, it may have adverse effects on pupils and staff.

The argument that competition and choice lead to much desired improvements in quality is something for which there is mixed evidence (Day Ashley et al., 2014; Srivastava, 2010). Although research is inconclusive, some studies have

shown that LFP schools can have positive effects on learning outcomes, generally measured as test scores (Day Ashley et al., 2014; Dixon, 2012). An often-cited reason for this is that LFP schools keep teachers accountable, which reportedly leads to lower levels of absenteeism and more time spent teaching (Andrabi et al., 2008). Other explanations for LFP schools' somewhat better results include biased selection of students, either by entrance tests or by 'self-selection' according to students' socio-economic background (Bold et al., 2013). It should, however, be noted that Härmä (2021b) has repeatedly concluded that neither public nor LFP schools are giving the quality education they should to the most vulnerable pupils.

As with the marketisation of education more generally, there are concerns with the focus on test scores, and the related narrowing of curricula and teaching to address mainly that which can be measured (Falabella, 2014; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 145–156). This is the doing of many actors in education markets, including researchers, policy makers, schools, and parents. For example, test scores are used by schools as a way to promote themselves to families, and by scholars, governments, and parents to judge schools. Highly data-driven and standardised edu-companies, such as Pearson and BIA, have also played a large role in this development (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 146–152). On one hand, BIA has been applauded for its use of technology and for providing underserved communities with education (Kwauk & Perlman Robinson, 2016). On the other hand, the innovativeness and quality of their technology and pedagogy have been severely questioned (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 121–144; Riep, 2019; Riep & Machacek, 2016). BIA collects huge amounts of data daily, as teachers and managers use mobile phones and e-readers that log everything from payments to time spent on specific tasks. Beyond using this for the analysis of 'what works', test scores are a main part of their large-scale marketing strategy towards families, governments, and investors (Riep, 2017; see also BIA, 2022).

Part of the issue with LFP schools from an (in)equality perspective is the profit-making and investment by large edu-companies and philanthro-capitalists based in the Global North. The issues are, among other things, the exploitation of families and teachers, neo-colonialism in the form of disregarding national laws and/or court rulings in the countries where they are active, as well as access to human rights (ActionAid, 2019). Concerns have been raised that, although LFP schools are supposedly pro-poor (see, e.g., Tooley & Dixon,

2006), fees still impose a major expense and a hindrance for many families, calling into question how equitable the schools are and whether they are compatible with the notion of education as a human right (Aubry & Dorsi, 2016; Härmä, 2011). This is not only a matter of corporate chains of LFP schools, however, but concerns education markets in general. As in fee-free marketised education systems, school ‘choice’ appears to be segmenting pupils based on status, ability to acquire information, and parental education (Bonal & Bellei, 2018, pp. 1–20). In LFP school markets this may, however, be exacerbated by who is able to pay what fees – if they are able to pay at all (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 83–101; Verger et al., 2019). Another effect of this is that public schools often have more disadvantaged pupils, who on average tend to perform more poorly in school (Day Ashley et al., 2014). Furthermore, Härmä (2021b) suggested that there is little competition between public and private schools, as:

[...] government schools continue to run essentially in a silo, while private schools are competing around them, with no real impact on government schools (except perhaps a drop in enrolment). (p. 86)

The market rationale that school choice improves the general quality of education by weeding out ‘bad’ schools may thus fail to impinge on public schools, as they are attended, regardless, by those unable to pay for private education.

The scholarly focus on the workings, reproduction, and challenging of LFP school markets has largely concentrated on students, families, and schools, on one hand, and on policy makers, edu-companies and academic debates, on the other (see, e.g., Dixon, 2012; Härmä, 2021b; Riep & Machacek, 2016; Srivastava, 2010). However, those working *in* the education market involving LFP schools have received much less direct attention as actors and stakeholders in the marketisation process.

2.5.2 Teachers in education markets involving low-fee private schools

Teachers and their work environment are seldom in focus in their own right in the literature on LFP schools (Singh, 2021). Still, there are many findings concerning teachers' work conditions, which have been repeatedly reported on. As teachers are the most expensive post in education budgets, this is where most potential savings can be made, some scholars have argued (Bau & Das, 2017; Bold et al., 2017). In the LFP schooling sector, cutting teacher costs is integral to charging fees that are low enough to be competitive and attract low-income families (Andrabi et al., 2008). As Birch and Siemiatycki (2016) posited, cutting costs through fixed-term contracts and lower pay may be more acceptable, or at least feasible, for the private sector, making contracting out attractive to governments. The low pay of LFP-school teachers is perhaps the most prominent finding in the literature, as their pay can be a fraction of that of a state-employed teacher (Andrabi et al., 2008; Edwards et al., 2015, Härmä, 2021b, pp. 21–40; Stern & Heyneman, 2013). Some scholars nuance this picture by considering how LFP-school teachers' pay compares to the low earnings in the communities where the teachers work (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 73–75), whereas others argue that it is instead public-school teachers who are over-paid (Bau & Das, 2017).

Furthermore, in LFP schools there is reportedly little or no job security or social security, such as pensions, and pay may be irregular as it is often directly linked to the fees coming in (Heyneman & Stern, 2014; McKay et al., 2018). This makes the teachers financially vulnerable both immediately as well as in the long term (Riep & Machacek, 2016). Irregular pay is, however, also a problem for public-school teachers in many countries, negatively affecting their morale and the attractiveness of the profession (Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 93–94). Teacher turnover in LFP schools is reportedly high, partly attributed to schools having to let teachers go because of an inability to pay their salaries (Maluccio et al., 2018; Riep & Machacek, 2016; Simmons Zuilkowski et al., 2017). The high turnover is also reportedly because teachers move onto better opportunities, as the lack of job security also affects the schools, with teachers having no obligations to stay (Achieng Omindo et al., 2020; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 30–39; McKay et al., 2018).

When comparing easy-to-measure, physical aspects of working conditions, such as infrastructure, availability of learning materials and class sizes in LFP and public schools, findings are mixed (Singh, 2021). This may reflect geographic variations, the fact that many LFP schools are unregistered and difficult to find, and the absence of a single clear definition of what an LFP school is. In the literature on the Sub-Saharan African context, it at least appears more common to find impermanent structures and lack of space in the many, smaller LFP schools, and bigger classes in public schools (Edwards et al., 2015; Heyneman & Stern, 2014; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 11–40).

The argument used by proponents of LFP schooling is in part that LFP-school teachers are more efficient, as non-permanent contracts, close supervision, and hiring of local youth in some studies have been shown to have positive effects on learning because of higher teacher accountability and presence (Andrabi et al., 2007; Tooley et al., 2008). It has also repeatedly been pointed out that trained teachers' knowledge is generally wanting (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 103–119). While the quality and engagement of teachers are important to address, concerns have been raised regarding the exploitation of teaching staff in LFP schools, as well as the use of uncertified teachers de-professionalising the teaching profession and potentially creating inequity of learning (Locatelli, 2018; Riep, 2017; Srivastava, 2007, 2013). Teachers having to do non-teaching chores such as marketing and the use of scripted lessons in some LFP schools have also been pointed out as risking teacher professionalism and autonomy (Riep & Machacek, 2016). The spatial division of labour within certain LFP schools, such as BIA schools, involves detailed scripted lesson plans being created centrally by the Instructional Design Department in Boston, Nairobi, Hyderabad, and Lagos (BIA, n.d.a), with local staff, reportedly generally untrained, executing the script in class. This has raised concerns regarding teachers' professional status and autonomy (Riep, 2017; Riep & Machacek, 2016).

Two texts with an explicit focus on teachers are reports by Locatelli (2018) and Singh (2021), which give a good overview of the limited available evidence on teachers' working conditions in LFP and public schools, as well as insight into what these conditions may mean for teachers, individually and collectively. In her literature review, Locatelli (2018) found that LFP-school teachers' professional status, training, autonomy, and ability to influence education policy were low, and that the increase in such jobs may negatively

affect the teaching profession. This is because of the unfavourable working conditions and pay, the hiring of untrained teachers, the use of scripted lessons, as well as the little political leverage that precarious and non-unionised teachers have. Singh (2021), in her quantitative study, focused on attracting new teachers and retaining existing teachers. After a review of previous literature, she analysed data on teachers' working conditions in India, Vietnam, and Ethiopia, finding that overall working conditions were "significantly inferior" (Singh, 2021, p. 28) for temporary staff in non-state schools, compared with those of state school teachers. She also found that self-fulfilment by contributing to children's and society's development was the biggest motivating factor for both groups of teachers, and that a steady career path was important as well. Few LFP-school teachers are unionised, making it difficult for them to demand better working conditions and pay (Olmedo, 2016), but, as Härmä (2021b, pp. 30–34) pointed out, the communities in which many of them work would not be able to pay higher fees in any case.

Two articles focus more on teachers' own narratives regarding the marketisation of education in the Global South, albeit from two different angles. One concerns LFP-school teachers' perspectives on LFP schools in Johannesburg, South Africa (McKay et al., 2018), and the other teachers' reflections on the implementation of Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya (Abuya & Ngware, 2016). McKay et al. (2018) made some interesting findings from their small (N = 42) questionnaire including some open-ended questions, which go beyond the often-stated findings above. For example, they found that social ties likely mattered for LFP-school teacher recruitment, and that teachers wanted more state involvement in the financing, supplying of learning materials, and supervision of LFP schooling. Abuya and Ngware (2016) found, through focus group discussions with teachers, that teachers in public and LFP schools similarly wanted state inspections, and that they felt that inspecting officers did not listen to them when they spoke of the challenges they faced. Furthermore, the teachers struggled with a lack of parental support, overcrowding, especially in public schools, and high pupil mobility in the market.

In Singh's (2021) analysis, teachers' experiences and well-being are primarily connected to relations in school. McKay et al.'s (2018) and Abuya and Ngware's (2016) analyses go partly beyond the school, however. They found that the teachers' experiences are connected to authorities, the labour market, other schools in the education market, and parents, as well as to the well-being

and motivation of their pupils. As Bocking (2018) put it, teachers are “embedded within particularly complex power relations at scales from the classroom to the local district and the state or nation” (p. 1670). If we look at findings regarding teachers’ working conditions in LFP schools in the previous literature, we can at least discern teacher relationships with pupils, parents, colleagues, managers, school owners, and school inspectors. These relationships affect the teachers’ work life, as teachers affect their pupils’ learning.

The above literature highlights two particularly interesting aspects of the growth of LFP schools that appear to affect teachers: the growing *private market* meaning a shift towards private, less regulated employers, and the influence of the *market principle* of competition affecting teachers’ work and working conditions. The studies of teachers achieved new insights into the functionings of education markets, pointing to a need to acknowledge teachers as knowledgeable subjects in education systems in the Global South. It was also pointed out that teachers’ autonomy and professionalism are at risk in LFP school settings, yet analysis of teachers’ actions and agency in the LFP school context is wanting. In the case of teachers in LFP schools, or public-school teachers who work in areas with LFP schools, teachers’ experiences and roles in the market and the competition between schools are not widely explored. Rather, teachers tend to be portrayed in quite passive terms, as either victims or self-interested ‘drones’, in much of the literature on LFP schooling. If we look at the literature concerning teachers in educational restructuring more widely, we may begin to form an understanding of what is lacking in the literature on teachers in relation to LFP schooling.

2.6 Teachers’ working conditions and agency

2.6.1 Teachers in marketisation

Regarding teachers in marketisation contexts, research has been conducted in several academic fields, differing in their approach to teachers, geographical focus, and the degree to which education and its ‘components’ are placed in relation to their context. Educational economists often focus on the correlation between teachers’ incentives, such as wages and employment contract types,

and pupils' performance (see, e.g., Bau & Das, 2017; Bold et al., 2017; Glewwe et al., 2010). Economic research on teachers also seems to focus more on the Global South, touching on LFP schooling, than does research in other fields. This geographical focus is welcome, and the quantitative methods used by economists tell us about the state of (some) things, and that some factors, such as pay and contract type, affect teachers' behaviour and pupils' test results. Economists also highlight matters of corruption and misbehaviour among education authorities, administrators, and teachers (see, e.g., Bold et al., 2018). However, many scholars in educational economics may be involved in pushing the marketisation logic in the Global South, by, for example, arguing for the efficiency of employing teachers on short-term contracts, as in the LFP sector (Bold et al., 2017). This is done rather than seeking causes and effects connected to teachers' work life circumstances more broadly, as Tao (2013) has suggested. Again, as Härmä (2021b, pp. 195–197) wrote, even though some studies have found LFP-school pupils to perform a little better on tests than do public-school pupils, the improvement is not enough to represent a solution. There is a need to raise teacher quality and motivation in many places (UNESCO, 2014b), but attempting to do so with limited consideration of teachers as subjects inside and outside of work is detached from their reality, and de-validates them as both people and professionals (see Tao, 2013; Tikly et al., 2022). I discuss ways to remedy this problem below.

Compared with economic scholarship, in several other social sciences teachers are more often paid attention as subjects. For example, there is a growing literature on how teachers, primarily in the Global North, are affected on a professional level by marketisation. Sociologist Ball (2003, 2016) wrote of how the increased measurement of performance has changed the nature of teachers' work, and how being 'un/professional' has become more closely linked to measurements of performance (see also, e.g., Falabella, 2020). Similarly, in relation to high-stakes testing and scientific management, educationalist Au (2011) found that US public education is essentially steering teachers towards teaching to the test, as this has become one of the main ways that schools and teachers are being measured. Other educationalist scholars with a large focus on teachers, Holloway and Brass (2018), have found that teachers not only increasingly show acceptance of accountability measures, but that the measurement, and ensuing consequences/rewards, have shifted teacher subjectivities towards a "marketized, managed, and performative teacher" (p. 379). In work and organisational studies, Parding et al. (2012) explicitly tried

to go beyond the victimisation of teachers by focusing on how market-oriented changes were implemented by teachers. Like Holloway and Brass (2018), they found that teachers' professional identities and ideologies were becoming diversified as teachers had different ways of resisting or adapting to market logics in their work (see also Fredriksson, 2009). This was further identified as something that could negatively affect teachers' collective identity and power (Parding et al., 2012).

2.6.2 Placing teachers in their wider social context

Scholars in geographies of education, such as Lindberg (2010), Collins and Coleman (2008), and Hanson Thiem (2009), have shown, albeit often with a focus on pupils, that the school is by no means an isolated entity. However, in the field of geographies of education, teachers are by and large missing as subjects, despite the importance accorded to them (theoretically, at least) in relation to pupils and 'structures of power' (Helfenbein, 2019). Rather, in geographies of education, teachers are partly there as a 'factor' in students' experiences, for example, by pushing for higher aspirations and the social mobility of learners, thus contributing to the individualisation of society (Ansell et al., 2020; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011). They are also at times lumped together with schools and/or education systems more generally (Collins & Coleman, 2008), rather than being recognised as both having power and having to answer to others with power (Brogan, 2013).

It appears that the relatively few geographers paying attention to teachers as subjects with agency can instead be found in the nexus between economic geography and geographies of education. For example, Cohen and Lizotte (2015) found that teachers' trade unions played a role in resisting the marketisation of education, being vilified by its proponents, some of whom were also teachers. Furthermore, some studies within the sub-discipline labour geography have engaged more directly with teachers as subjects facing marketisation processes in their work, such as competition between schools and the increased measuring of results. Sweeney (2013), Brogan (2013, 2016), and Bocking (2018, 2019) have highlighted teachers as workers and professionals, building an understanding of how teachers engage in labour struggles and/or strive to affect policy in North America. They have shown that

teachers are both affected by, and may affect, education on scales ranging from the local to the transnational, for example, through community unionism (Brogan, 2013) and transnational coalitions (Bocking, 2020) – striking deals, making concessions, politicking, and protesting. Similar work has also been conducted in the sociology of education, with Verger and Novelli (2010) finding that teachers’ and their trade unions’ struggles in the face of the neoliberalisation of education have invoked spatial strategies, working to affect policy on whatever scales they could find most leverage with policy makers.

Finally, one welcome recent addition in geography, which takes us back somewhat closer to the everyday subjectivities and agency of teachers, was made by Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2021) in their study of private tutors in the UK. While studying entrepreneurship in ‘shadow education’ (see Bray, 2009), rather than schooling, their study shows how teachers may be affected by, yet have some agency, in education markets. They found that the trained teachers among the tutors had decided to start tutoring in part to escape the stressful working conditions in the marketised UK education system, which put their physical and mental well-being at risk. Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2021) also found different attitudes towards working in the private tuition market, with many, although not all, tutors referring to intrinsic motivations for educating children and youth, eschewing the image of the go-getter entrepreneur.

2.6.3 Teachers as subjects with needs and agency

By largely failing to acknowledge teachers in LFP schooling contexts in the Global South as subjects of interest, the LFP schooling literature also largely fails to recognise why teachers may act in certain ways in the labour market and in their work. There are many studies, often conducted in the Global North, of what teachers need in their work life, for example, from the perspectives of what makes them stay at or leave their current school/the profession, and what motivates them in their work. Teacher turnover and low motivation negatively affect teachers, schools, pupils, and the work environment (Kelchtermans, 2017), making retention and motivation important to understand. In a meta-

analysis of factors affecting teacher turnover,¹⁶ Nguyen et al. (2020) looked at factors relating to individual teachers, to schools, as well as to policy and labour market conditions. They found that teachers who were more satisfied with their jobs and worked in schools with better facilities and teaching resources, teaching the subjects they had trained for and having fewer problems with discipline in their schools, were less likely to leave. Administrative support, in-service professional development, positive evaluations, and merit pay were also important for retention, as were pupils' attendance and positive outcomes. Finally, they found that increased pay had a small effect on teachers' decisions to stay, as did union membership.

Looking at teacher motivation in another meta-analysis of the literature,¹⁷ Han and Yin (2016) found that teachers' motivation is related to factors concerning individual characteristics, to the teacher's relations in school, and to factors on the systemic/societal level. They found that altruistic and intrinsic factors, such as working with children and self-efficacy, extrinsic factors, such as working conditions, pay and life-fit, as well as indirect motivating factors, such as autonomy and working relationships, were all significant for teachers' motivation to work as teachers. What is important to note in these meta-analyses, is that to understand teachers' work life, there are several factors relating to the teachers and their working conditions that matter.

One of the most interesting contributions is Tao's (2013) study of Tanzanian teachers, as it was conducted in a context similar to that of the present study, and it connects what teachers need with what they do. Tao found that enabling and constraining factors in and beyond the school were linked to teachers' decisions, and whether they could do what they valued. For example, teachers' desires to help students learn were often hampered by a lack of materials and over-crowded classrooms, resulting in lower levels of learning, which teachers were aware of but had little ability to change. Not being able to achieve what they desired could in turn result in negative feelings and behaviours. Tao did not focus on marketisation or educational restructuring, as did Parding et al. (2012), cited above. However, her study similarly points to the validity of conducting research on teachers in a manner that centres them as subjects in their context. In doing so, she actively refrains from painting teachers in the

¹⁶ Albeit with most studies reviewed studies originating from the USA.

¹⁷ Also predominately based on studies from the Global North.

Global South as villains or victims, instead arguing for understanding the interplay between structure and agency.

The LFP schooling literature points to many similarities to better-researched processes of market-making in other contexts. The rationales of competition, choice, and accountability can be seen in the literature on LFP schooling – rationales that in other contexts, predominately in the Global North, have been found to affect teachers and their agency. What that literature suggests is that a focus on teachers as people with professional and personal lives, needs, and wants in a real, geographical context will contribute to a fuller picture of teachers as stakeholders in the marketisation of education, also in the Global South. As labour geography is a sub-discipline with a foundation of regarding workers as actors, not victims (Peck, 2013, p. 109), this makes for a potentially fruitful engagement, and it is to labour geography that I turn in the next chapter.

3 Theoretical perspectives and key concepts

3.1 Introduction

In human geography there has been little in-depth engagement with teachers overall, and yet geographers are well equipped to analyse workers as interconnected social and economic beings in the world. One way of making sense of teachers' interactions with marketisation in their work life is through a labour geography perspective sensitive to teachers' moral geographies and structural conditions. In this chapter, I will argue for the need to understand teachers' experiences (i.e., their practical, lived knowledge of the phenomenon) and agency (i.e., their capability to act) in tandem, to understand why and how they act in certain ways to navigate their work lives in the marketisation of education.

I begin by introducing labour geography and a relational way of understanding worker agency. Labour geographers advocate a view of workers as actors acting to shape economic and socio-spatial relations to their needs, while recognising that structures and other actors are also part of that shaping. This makes for a view of marketisation and teachers' agency as mediated and shaped by each other and other actors in their context. Here, specific attention is paid to the changing geography and labour processes of workers in restructuring welfare sectors, and to how such changes may affect worker agency. I will then introduce an overarching framework and relevant concepts with which to analyse the everyday agency of teachers. This involves recognising the social relations that they depend on for their essential interests. It also means identifying challenges that could undermine the relations through which the teachers can fulfil their essential interests. Finally, it involves discerning the teachers' actions and the social relations that they can draw on to meet challenges. Informed by the previous chapter, I tentatively posit that

teachers may (want to) act based on factors other than solely their working conditions when exerting their agency.

3.2 Labour geography: an evolving field

In the long-standing tradition of economic geography, workers have largely been treated as an input factor in production, rather than as geographical and social actors (see, e.g., Herod, 1997). Much Marxist theory, while indeed concerned with labour–capital relations, has been criticised for being too deterministic, failing to recognise that labour’s, and not only capital’s, interests are involved in shaping the world (Bergene et al., 2010).¹⁸ Scholarly endeavours in geography in which labour is portrayed as secondary to capital have been termed ‘geographies of labour’ by Herod (1997), contrasting this to ‘labour geography’ as a sub-discipline in which workers are viewed as actors with their own interests.¹⁹

In the early years of the sub-discipline, in the 1990s, labour geographers were mainly concerned with labour’s agency in the form of trade union movements and collective efforts to bring about social change. There was an empirical bias towards triumphant moments, manufacturing, and the Global North, cases in which workers, through their struggles, created their own ‘spatial fixes’ and thus shaped the capitalist landscape (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011, 2023). The scope of the subject has, since the early 2000s, broadened to include other geographical areas (Ruwanpura, 2022; Thakholi, 2021), the workplace (Dutta, 2020; Hastings & MacKinnon, 2017), labour and migration (Rogaly, 2009; Strauss & McGrath, 2017), connections between work and the reproductive sphere (Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011; Dutta, 2016; Ramamurthy & Gidwani, 2018), informal work (Grant, 2010; Monteith & Giesbert, 2017), as well as services and public sectors (Anwar & Graham, 2019; Bocking, 2019; Brogan, 2013; James & Vira, 2012; Jordhus-Lier, 2012; Lier, 2008; Sweeney,

¹⁸ It should be noted that there are workerist and autonomist Marxist scholars, for whom workers’ ‘doing’, their ability to create value for themselves, and others, inside and outside of work is at the core (Hastings & Cumbers, 2019; Holloway, 2010).

¹⁹ This is not to say that labour geography was conceived with Herod’s (1997) article, although he brought to light an ontological break with much of economic geography prior (Strauss, 2018). Earlier contributors to this academic endeavour were, for example, Massey (1995) and Cooke (1985).

2013). Such endeavours make for a fuller understanding of workers – their lives, their relations with capital, the state, community politics, and other stakeholders, and, at the core, their agency (see, e.g., Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011, 2023).

Labour geography aims to be “both *of* and *for* the interests of workers” (Hastings, 2016, p. 307, emphasis in original). Most, if not all, labour geographers thus apply a normative perspective, although it is not always made explicit, nor is it agreed upon, what the end goal should be – a socialist revolution or reforms giving workers and the working class more power, autonomy, better pay, etc. (Castree et al., 2004, pp. 248–251; Das, 2012). Regardless, labour geographers’ normative focus largely concerns labour agency and how it can(not) be asserted and expanded, often with a keen eye on how it relates to workers in other localities or workers seen as/made into ‘others’ (see, e.g., Gough, 2010; Ince et al., 2015). Analysing intra-class relations of workers, and not only labour–capital relations, is where labour geographers could potentially forward a more geographically conscious morality of workers and labour unions, working towards global solidarity and strength (Castree et al., 2004, pp. 248–251).

Castree (2007) has called for more engagement with workers’ moral geographies, i.e., their “sets of values relating to modes of conduct – potential and actual – towards other people near and far” (p. 860). As autonomist Marxist and feminist labour geography streams of scholarship suggest (see, e.g., Dutta, 2020; Hastings & Cumbers, 2019), there may be interests that are in play in relation to capital, but also in relation to the self and other human beings, that affect how workers act. This resonates with the education literature on teachers and with findings, for example, that teachers may have both extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic reasons to act in their work lives (Han & Yin, 2016; Tao, 2013). Engaging with workers’ moral geographies also opens up for a certain measure of moral relativism, with the interest lying in workers’ ideals and ideas of justice, even when they contradict one another and the normative morals of the sub-discipline. While such an endeavour involves a measure of ‘descriptive ethics’ (Castree et al., 2004, pp. 248–251), it does not mean that I, as a labour geographer, cannot engage in a more critical and normative analysis of what, in this case, teachers’ moral geographies mean for teachers as a group, or when they express contradictory moralities. I will return to this below, after discussing how we can understand agency and action as

relational, and how the geographies of restructuring in public sectors may affect worker agency.

3.3 Worker agency as situated and mediated capability to act

3.3.1 Agency in relation to structure

As discussed above, labour geographers want to analyse and theorise worker agency, the socio-spatial relations shaping that agency, and how workers exert and assert their agency, i.e., act to shape the social and economic landscape to their needs (Castree, 2007; Herod, 2010). In positing that workers have agency, we also need to recognise that they do not exist and act in a vacuum (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011; Herod, 1997; Thakholi, 2021). One way of understanding this is from a relational perspective, in which we acknowledge that what is and happens in the world is not inevitable, but rather contingent on factors that come together (continuously) and, through confrontations and negotiations, shape outcomes, which, in turn, shape future actions and outcomes. In other words, workers as actors are part of shaping the landscape, but their agency is mediated and shaped by the social relations and institutions of that landscape (see Dutta, 2016; Giddens, 1984; Ruwanpura, 2022, pp. 124–142).

Perhaps the most prominent advocate of a relational geography, Massey (2005) conceptualised space as “a heterogeneity of practices and processes” (p. 107, emphasis removed), “an open ongoing production”, made up by “a dynamic simultaneity” (p. 55) of what is in the world. Massey (1984, pp. 3-4) argued that an overarching understanding of the spatial and the social as reciprocally connected is needed to be able to explain why things happen the way they do in certain places. Viewing the world as following a certain trajectory and holding that certain (economic) laws apply above all others disregards that social forces other than accumulation are at work (Massey, 1984, pp. 6, 7). Relational geography in its extreme rejects fixity and categorisation (see Marston et al., 2005). However, not everything is free flows and unlimited potential; rather, there are ‘stickiness’, inertia, and structures to be acknowledged, affecting people’s agency (Jones, 2009; see also Giddens, 1984).

Agency can be said to be the capability to act within a given situation, and is both shaped *by* the enabling/restricting structures of that context and is shaping *of* those structures (Giddens, 1984, p. 9). Structures can, according to Giddens (1984, p. 17), be understood as rules and resources that are continuously renegotiated and reproduced through what people do, in a recursive relationship over time and in space. Rules can be constitutive (i.e., play a part in the constitution of meaning) or regulative (i.e., sanctioning ways of behaving, normative) (Giddens, 1984, p. 18). Resources can be allocative (i.e., having command over objects, such as land or money) or authoritative (i.e., having command over other actors), and it is through the use of resources that power (to transform) is exercised (Giddens, 1984, p. 33). With regard to the marketisation of education, there are sanctioning rules, i.e., rules for schools and teachers to follow, such as the enforcement/adaptation of new accountability measures. The rationales of marketisation are, at least to some, constitutive, in the sense that they say something about the meaning of working in education, such as giving the ‘customers’ what they want (see Parding et al., 2012).

As there is a recursive relationship between structure and agency, even widely encompassing structures, such as colonialism, capitalism, or ‘common sense’ hegemonic views, change with time and in space, and are neither fixed nor absolute (Massey, 2005, pp. 62–71). However, time, space, and power relations matter for our perception of them, and for their function, as structures (Jones, 2009). While socially constructed and not fixed, structures have ‘structuring properties’ (Giddens, 1984, p. 17). This is a more ‘closed’ view of the world than Massey’s (2005) view, but as Jones (2009) puts it: “All things considered potential does not necessarily become an actual” (p. 493). Yet again, as posited above, societies are not homogeneous, but rather there is interdependency between actors that means that control is not only a one-way phenomenon, and that structures are continuously transformed (Giddens, 1984, p. 16). Interplay and interdependency are important when we want to learn more about workers’ agency, as it would be counterproductive to over-emphasise agency *or* structure, rather than looking at their interplay in different contexts.

3.3.2 Agency and/or purposive action as the focus of labour geography

The abstract concept of agency merits further elaboration, especially concerning its focus in labour geography. Giddens (1984) argued that

agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place [...]. Agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently. (p. 9)

However, in labour geography, agency has sometimes been conflated with action, the intention underlying action, and the outcome of action. Hastings (2016) highlighted that some scholars have

[...] surmised agency as those acts intended and/or practiced by workers in their own interests and/or the interests of others. Such understandings have helped labour geographers to better grasp and articulate different forms of coping, although the onus on functionality in worker coping is potentially problematic in this instance. Specifically the focus on constructive action on the part of workers implies from the outset that agency should be viewed akin to strategies which are purposive. (p. 310)

This is evident through much of the labour geography literature, as much of the aim is to identify ways, i.e., purposive actions and strategies, through which workers can more successfully assert their agency and improve their work lives, as Hastings (2016) has suggested. The potential problem, as I see it, is that the intentions and motivations of labour geographers must not obscure *workers'* intentions and motivations if we want to learn more about workers' agency, as well as their moral geographies, i.e., why and for whom they act in certain ways. Lumping agency together with a specific, 'desired' intention would mean a risk of turning a blind eye towards workers' essential interests and moral geographies, and towards the influence of structures on what workers find just and desirable, for example.

However, to prevent concepts from obscuring one another, but rather to allow them to build on one another, I would argue that intentions/motivations, action and agency need to be analysed in alongside one another. I think of agency as room to manoeuvre in a given situation: *Can* an individual or a group act to

affect X? To figure this out, we need to know whether they want to affect X in the first place. If they do want to change X, it becomes a matter of whether they can act to (try to) do so. The next step, in line with labour geographers' desire to advance workers' struggles, if seen as just, is to learn about how the workers call on rules and resources to do so most successfully – or why they fail. However, if workers do not want to change X, this brings out a methodological difficulty: could they have acted to do so, and could they have changed X? It also brings out the need for labour scholars to check their own preconceptions, to learn about workers' understandings of their situation and their decisions. Is change undesirable because it is perceived as unjust and unfeasible or because the current state of things is the best available option (see Gough, 2010; McGrath et al., 2022)? As workers are social beings, it follows that they do not act only in relation to employers, but also in relation to social structures (adhering to them, or going against them) and to other people (see, e.g., Bocking, 2018; Brogan, 2013; Dutta, 2020; Hastings & Cumbers, 2019).

While Giddens (1984, p. 6) argued that actors' motivations are unconscious (repressed from consciousness), most 'knowledgeable agents', as Giddens put it, are able to articulate in some way why they act, or not, in certain ways. As I recognise the difficulty of knowing others', or even one's own, underlying motivations, I here use the word 'motivations' in a more colloquial sense, to signify what we can say about, or infer from, what is being said and done in terms of reason. This is more in line with one definition given by Han and Yin (2016), in which motivation is "concerned with the reasons for doing something and deciding to do something" (p. 3).

The understanding of agency as relational and complex has been developed by including accounts of less explicitly class conscious, successful or spectacular ways that workers act, inside and outside the workplace (see, e.g., Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011; Dutta, 2016; Hastings, 2016). Analysing workers' individual and informal agency through their (in)ability to organise and how they navigate their everyday lives tells us a complementary story of the collective, unionised capability to act, the enabling and hindering socio-spatial circumstances in moments in time (see Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011; Dutta, 2021). Criticism has been levelled against a potentially unhelpful shift towards emphasising workers' praxis and, along with that, overemphasising workers' agency and ability to affect structures (Castree, 2007; Hastings, 2016). There is, however, still a need to acknowledge and

evaluate acts that do not have such impacts (see Castree, 2007). Like Hastings and Cumbers (2019) and Dutta (2016), I see value in focussing on workers' everyday work life agency, as those instances are also telling of workers' (limited) capability to act within those everyday situations. We can also learn whether their action is aimed at increasing or asserting their agency, or that of someone else. Furthermore, a focus on everyday work life actions can show (potential) ways that solidarity is formed, and agency thus expanded (Dutta, 2016).

Thus far, I have laid out how agency can be understood in a rather abstract way; I will now make the circumstances of the teachers work life experiences and agency more concrete. Wage workers in different sectors and locations share the principal relation of employment. There are, however, differences in the geography of their work and labour markets, as well as in their relations to the state, employers, and the general public, which may affect their collective and individual capabilities to act.

3.4 Connecting the why and the how of teachers' (in)action

3.4.1 Piecing together labour geographies of teachers in the Global South

Getting at the why and how of a group of workers (teachers) involved in a phenomenon (the marketisation of education) and a context (Kenya) that, especially in combination, have not garnered much attention in labour geography, has required building on work in different fields of research. The engagement with teachers in labour geography has focused on public-sector teachers and teachers' unions facing neoliberal restructuring in North America (Bocking, 2018; Brogan, 2013; Sweeney, 2013). This valuable engagement has pointed to teachers' embeddedness in 'complex power relations' on different scales (Bocking, 2018), as teachers find themselves at the nexus of capitalist and social reproduction (Sweeney, 2013; see also Brogan, 2014). Despite the limited engagement of labour geography with teachers and similar welfare-sector workers, especially in the Global South, there are theoretical entry points

of a more general geographical nature that may have a bearing on teachers' actions and agency.

I use Cox's (1998b) concepts 'spaces of dependence' and 'spaces of engagement' as a theoretical umbrella, to give my inquiry and analysis structure and cohesion, rather than as primary analytical tools. These concepts were conceived by Cox (1998b) to separate out the content (the why) and the form (the what/how) in the social construction of politics of scale. Analytically separating content and form was a way to understand how actors' social relations and essential interests, when at risk of being undermined in a particular context, could fuel contestation. It was also a way to understand how that context could yield certain ways to try to defend the essential interests at stake by drawing on actors with social power. I find Cox's (1998a, 1998b) relational focus analytically helpful, as it connects actors to their settings in terms of needs, challenges, and action, but also because it can be used as a tool to avoid making assumptions, in this case, about what teachers want and find challenging.

Under this umbrella, to get theoretically closer to the everyday work lives of Kenyan primary school teachers, I have turned to literature in labour geography and literature on teachers' work, both with a focus on the Global South. As an aid to understanding Kenyan primary school teachers' essential interests, and to connect these to the purpose of action, I categorise these as extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivations (see Han & Yin, 2016). I see these categories as geographically attuned expressions of what Tao (2013) has referred to as "teachers' valued beings and doings" (p. 2). To capture challenges, I connect findings in the previous chapter with Cox's (1998b) notion of challenges as risking undermining social relations, as well as with Giddens' (1984) conception of social structures as both enabling and hindering. As an aid to making teachers' agency and actions more concrete, and to link them to their perceptions of challenges, I have turned to Katz's (2004) concepts of 'resilience', 'reworking' and 'resistance', as well as 'collaboration' (see Gough, 2010; Nyberg & Sewell, 2014). I will begin by theorising teachers' needs, to access their motivations, then moving on to challenges, and ending with action and agency.

3.4.2 Spaces of dependence pointing out social relations and essential interests

The concept ‘space of dependence’ is in this project used as a way to avoid taking for granted, but rather learning about, what teachers need in their work life. Cox (1998b) describes what he has termed ‘spaces of dependence’ as

[...] defined by those more-or-less localized social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential interests and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere; they define place-specific conditions for our material well being and our sense of significance. (p. 2).

What is meant by ‘spaces of dependence’ is thus the spaces in which actors find the relations on which they depend to survive, and, ideally, thrive (Cox, 1998b).²⁰ ‘Place’, in the above quotation, is signified through specific relations, rather than as a bounded spatial entity.²¹ The importance thus lies in the relation(s) connected to places, their meaning and value; it is not pre-existing in places (see Massey, 2005, pp. 130–131). Cox (1998b) has a rather economic emphasis on the circulation of capital through relations, but by including both “material well being [sic] and sense of significance” (p. 2) in his definition and illustrative cases, there is an openness to other social values in life. With regard to well-being, Tao (2013), in her research on Tanzanian teachers, defined it as “a product of the enhanced or constrained opportunities surrounding the beings and doings that people value” (p. 3, drawing on Amartya Sen). In my interpretation, when people can be and do what they value, their well-being increases, and when they cannot, their well-being decreases. I will return to what may contribute to the well-being of teachers, i.e., the fulfilment of their essential interests, after exploring spaces of dependence in more detail.

Workers, like other actors, have several spaces of dependence. These may be overlapping, exist on different scales, and vary in spatial extent. They can be

²⁰ Cox (1998b) also referred to firms, unions, etc., as agents. While humans act on behalf of the organisation, and absolute consensus as to what actions to take is debatable (see, e.g., Knutsson & Lindberg, 2019, on the Global Partnership for Education [GPE]), actions can also be taken in the name of the organisation, in the interest of the organisation (see also Giddens, 1984, pp. 220–221).

²¹ However, Cox (1998b), with his main interest in ‘local politics’ (as in municipal, rather than inter/national), in his text often referred to ‘local’ spaces of dependence.

the spaces where the workers, and perhaps their partners, have work/sustenance, housing, social ties to family and friends, rights to work, to education, etc. (Cox, 1998b). For example, variously extended, yet deeply intertwined, spaces of dependence are those of the many Kenyans who have moved to urban areas from their rural homes. People in the rural home may depend on the worker for monetary remittances, but the worker may also be sustained through reproductive work, food remittances, etc., from the rural home (see Onyango et al., 2021; Opiyo & Agong, 2020). As another example, the space of dependence of teachers to earn money through public employment extends differently in different contexts, depending on whether the employment of teachers is centralised, or is decentralised to the sub-national or school level. Furthermore, in welfare sectors such as education, the number, status, and location of jobs vary greatly with public resources, politico-economic ideology, and international pressures, as well as with the prevalence of corruption and regard for marginalised groups (Geo-JaJa & Zajda, 2015; Jordhus-Lier, 2012; Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 109–128). Teachers' spaces of dependence for wage earning may also depend on the value of their credentials, the labour market, language, religion, etc., in different places (see Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 87–108). In other words, it would be difficult for teachers to relocate to where their credentials are not valid, where there are few vacancies, or where their religion is not accepted, for instance, as they would lack social relations to depend on to fulfil their essential interests.

At the core of spaces of dependence is the fulfilment of essential interests. As spaces of dependence are made up of relations that, ideally, give sustenance and meaning (Cox, 1998b), a social and traditionally highly esteemed profession such as teaching may be important to teachers in more than one way. This can be illustrated by two of the studies from the literature review. According to Han and Yin (2016), in a review of teacher motivation, teachers may have intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic motivations (reasons) to become and remain teachers (see also Moses et al., 2017; Singh, 2021). In the relatively few reviewed studies from low- and middle-income countries, it was found that teachers generally valued extrinsic factors, such as pay, over intrinsic and altruistic factors, such as positively affecting learning and learners. Tao (2013), however, researching Tanzanian teachers' behaviour, suggested that teachers in the Global South do not only have utilitarian goals in their work life. She found that what the teachers in her qualitative study most valued in their personal lives was to be able to take care of their family (e.g., through physical

caring and symbolic acts of providing), have a satisfactory home and be healthy. In their professional lives they wanted to help students learn, be respected in- and outside of their work, and be able to upgrade their qualifications. These essential interests thus pertain both to the teachers' material well-being and to their sense of significance, and they depend on their relation to employers, but also to their pupils and to the wider community.

Han and Yin (2016) and Tao (2013) indicated that teachers have essential interests that align with Marx's notion of objective class interests, i.e., wanting decent pay and working conditions, as well as interests that exist outside of (or perhaps alongside) the relation to capital, in the form of wanting to be meaningful and useful socially (see Das, 2012; Gough, 2004; Hastings & Cumbers, 2019). As Tikly (2022) et al. noted in their study of teacher professionalism in a selection of countries in the Global South, "it is important to situate the perspectives of teachers in an understanding of local contexts and realities" (p. 2). To relate this back to Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, there may, for example, be contextually specific resources and rules that affect what it means to be and work as a teacher. Thus, to say something about what is at stake for Kenyan teachers in the marketisation context, their essential interests need to be defined by the respondents.

While the focus here is on teachers, it is important to point out that organisations and other actors also have spaces of dependence. This means that there can be both conflicting and overlapping spaces of dependence among schools, authorities, pupils, and teachers (see Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 109–128, on staffing of schools). Thus, other actors' spaces of dependence are integral to shaping the context of teachers' spaces of dependence, by invoking rules and resources. When spaces of dependence are overlapping, they may form the basis for collaboration among actors. The basis often follows "along lines defined by the social division of labor" (Cox, 1998b, p. 6), such as workers dependent on a particular labour market wanting decent wages, working conditions, and rights. With regard to welfare sectors such as education, there is also a chance that workers and users may share an interest in the quality of the service (Brogan, 2014). Where conflicts arise, it is because the spaces of dependence of different groups or people infringe on one another, or because external events, such as economic downturns or (inter)national politics, threaten relations (see Bocking, 2018; Cox, 1998b). Pinpointing such

challenges may tell us more about what a certain phenomenon means to the social relations and essential interests of those who experience it.

3.4.3 Challenges to spaces of dependence

In this project, challenges to teachers' ability to fulfil their essential interests related to the marketisation of education in the form of LFP schools are the focal point. I use the term 'challenge' as a catch-all term for instances in which the rules and effects of the marketisation process and the education market are perceived as potentially undermining the fulfilment of essential interests. In cases in which the marketisation of education has been felt to be strengthening, rather than challenging, to teachers' social relations, this is of course also something to be acknowledged, as such experiences have implications for teachers' motivations, agency, and actions, too. As Giddens (1984, p. 25) posited, social structures are *both* enabling *and* constraining, in that certain behaviours are condoned, and others are not. To learn of different teachers' experiences and motivations, it must be acknowledged that not all teachers may identify the same things as problematic or equally challenging, if the aim of illuminating teachers' work life experiences and agency in marketisation is to be fulfilled. Other challenges that the teachers perceive in their work lives, but that are not directly related to the marketisation of education, are also of interest if they interact with challenges related to marketisation and/or the teachers' agency. Such challenges may be related to the teachers' command of resources, time, and space.

As Jonas (1996) has written, people and groups struggling with issues related to labour reproduction and consumption, as well as researchers interested in such struggles, need to understand how challenges fit in, and are mediated by, larger social, political, and economic processes. In terms of challenges, Cox (1998b) emphasised these as "more global fields of forces and events" that "constantly threaten to undermine or dissolve" (pp. 4, 2) actors' spaces of dependence on a more local scale. Challenges to workers' income-earning relations and social reproduction indeed often stem from such 'more global' economic forces (see Cumbers et al., 2010; Riisgaard & Okinda, 2018). As discussed in the previous chapter, (inter)national economic rationales can affect the education policies that shape teachers' employment options, working

conditions, and professional autonomy (Ball, 2016; Bocking, 2017; Robertson, 2012). These rationales involve competition, school choice and accountability, purportedly invoked to achieve efficiency and quality. Such trends have been found to put the teaching profession and teachers' professional autonomy in jeopardy in the Global North (Bocking, 2017, 2018; Parding & Berg Jansson, 2022), with similar indications in the Global South (Locatelli, 2018). Such developments have been accompanied and facilitated by increasing 'scientific management', including high-stakes testing as well as spatial and technical divisions of labour (Au, 2011; Falabella, 2014; Hook, 2023; Riep & Machacek, 2016). Divisions of labour involve a separation of the control, conception, and/or execution of the job, which for teachers means a risk of deskilling of the profession to enable the hiring of cheaper and more pliable workers (see Castree et al., 2004, pp. 50–52; Locatelli, 2018; Massey, 1995, pp. 22–25).

The increase of LFP schooling in the Global South means the relocation of what may be considered traditional public-sector jobs to the private sector. As teachers in the LFP schooling sector are spread out among many small employers (see Verger et al., 2018), there is a further fragmentation of the teaching force, beyond the public/private divide. Furthermore, as so many LFP schools are reportedly unregistered (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 21–40; Ngware & Mutisya, 2021), a larger share of teachers may also be regarded as relocated from the formal to the informal economy (see Lier, 2008, p. 50). While Bieler and Nowak (2021) have argued that the distinction between formal and informal work in the Global South is not clear-cut, in some countries public-sector jobs are quite secure and relatively well paid (see Bold et al., 2018). Thus, a shift from public/formal to private/informal employment may be a challenge to the profession's status, to individual teachers' careers, as well as to the teachers' cohesiveness as a workforce.

A state's restrictions in terms of curriculum and certification may give some protection for teachers against international competition with other teachers (Sweeney, 2013). Still, the pressures engendered by educational restructuring have been found to affect teachers' relations with employers, colleagues, pupils, and parents, relations on which their employment and professional identity and autonomy depend (see Bocking, 2017, pp. 377–396; Falabella,

2014).²² By looking at how such abstract ‘forces’ manifest themselves, we may also find other people and groups that share the teachers’ experiences – or have entirely different ones. These relations matter for the teachers’ spaces of engagement, where they can seek allies and ‘centres of social power’ (Cox, 1998b; actors with ‘authoritative resources’, in Giddens’, 1984, terminology) to resist, refuse, or negotiate the challenges they experience when education is marketised. This is what I will examine in the next section.

3.4.4 Spaces of engagement and ways of categorising engagement

Spaces of engagement are the spaces where actors, in this case teachers, act to defend social relations that they depend on for their essential interests. These spaces are created through ‘networks of association’ in which actors with overlapping spaces of dependence and interests ally to mitigate the effects of challenges and defend their ability to fulfil essential interests (Cox, 1998b). There is often separation of a scalar nature between where a problem is experienced and the political arena in which it can effectively be addressed (Nespor, 2008). To gain influence thus often means strategic ‘scale jumping’ to involve actors with authoritative and allocative resources, in Giddens’ (1984) terms, such as unions, authorities and/or media (Cox, 1998b). As Cox (1998b) has written, the form of a space of engagement is contingent on its context. Hence, if the conditions of a particular situation make scalar strategies or unionising too perilous or difficult to organise, it may not be the route taken even though it would be the more effective way to gain influence (see Nespor, 2008). In my interpretation, the *effectiveness* of an engagement or the specific form it takes is thus not what makes it a space of engagement, but rather the engagement itself.

In terms of forming spaces of engagement, teachers are already socially embedded in networks of association, inside and outside the school (Bocking, 2018). There are social relations with colleagues, with employers and management, with parents and pupils, and with the wider community and society. Based on the literature on teachers, these may be relations that the

²² However, outsourcing and offshoring of public services to the private sector have become increasingly common (Jordhus-Lier, 2012), further facilitated by advances in ICT (see James & Vira, 2012; Hastings & Cumbers, 2019).

teachers alternately depend on, are challenged by, and are able to draw upon. Furthermore, while teachers have a position where they are steered in their work by policy and employers, they may have more agency than their pupils, at least in the classroom (Bocking, 2017, pp. 377–396; Collins & Coleman, 2008). Teachers may thus also function as ‘centres of social power’ (see Cox, 1998b) to be engaged by other actors, such as parents and pupils. However, if parents feel that teachers are causing challenges for their children, teachers may find their agency restricted or questioned, rather than sought after (see Bocking, 2018, 2017, pp. 377–396). Hence, for the sake of building alliances, it may be important both *for* and *with* whom teachers act – themselves and/or others.

In many countries, public-sector workers, such as teachers, still have a relatively high union density (Sweeney, 2013), Kenya being one example (Stromquist, 2018). Adding the centrality of public services such as education and their proximity to the population, public worker action through strikes can be powerful, causing debilitating disruptions. The support for such action varies, however, depending on the public’s, and parents’, views of the service and of the workers, and on the ability to form civil society coalitions around joint goals (Bocking, 2018; Sweeney, 2013; Verger & Novelli, 2012). The unionisation level of private-sector workers is often lower and harder to raise than in the public sector, as the workforce may be more fragmented between different employers and working on non-permanent, precarious contracts (see Anwar & Graham, 2019). In the case of LFP schooling, these schools have been found to be primarily located in densely populated informal settlements (Srivastava, 2016; Wales et al., 2015, pp. 36, 89). This means, at least theoretically, that the proximity to the ‘customers’ offers the potential for even private sector teachers to increase their agency through community organising, if they find shared goals (see Bocking, 2018; Brogan, 2013; Jordhus-Lier, 2012). There is thus a potential in, and a need for, building solidarity with communities and the public, if teachers are to assert and exercise their agency (Bocking, 2018; Brogan, 2013; Sweeney, 2013; Verger & Novelli, 2012).

While Cox (1998b, 1998a) was primarily concerned with the social construction of scale, the concepts ‘spaces of dependence’ and ‘spaces of engagement’ allow for a broad understanding of the relational nature of actors and their struggles. However, in the case at hand, I want to say something more specific about the connection between the teachers’ everyday experiences and

their ability to navigate challenges related to the marketisation of education, especially when organising is difficult. To do this, I draw on Katz's (2004, pp. 238–259) widely used concepts of 'resilience', 'reworking' and 'resistance'. Beginning with what is arguably the rarest of 'the 3 Rs' (Katz, 2004, pp. 251–257; Hastings & Cumbers, 2019), *resistance* is when people identify oppressive and unequal circumstances as such, and want to disrupt or directly challenge the structural causes of those circumstances (Katz, 2004, pp. 238–259). This often involves organising, more in line with Cox's (1998b) examples of the creation of spaces of engagement. Through *reworking* practices, actors similarly identify and are critical of circumstances, but try to undermine or change them, rather than unmaking the social structure(s) causing them. According to Katz (2004), this involves "people's retooling themselves as political subjects and social actors" (p. 247). This may involve educating oneself or others, or ways of redirecting or gathering allocative resources to help those in need.

Resilience practices instead involve autonomous initiatives for recuperation and coping. Gough (2010) posited that social practices, and their justification, are based on what is feasible, constituting a kind of lay morality "in which workers weigh up their own options and respond pragmatically to risk-based situations" (Hastings, 2016, p. 314). Acts of resilience are thus ways in which people try to strengthen themselves and others, without challenging or changing the circumstances under which they suffer. This may involve acts of caring and maintaining dignity. Resilience, reworking, and resistance practices can be overlapping, support one another, and lead into one another. Whether retrenching or countering, what people do transforms, albeit in small ways, the social structures at work (see Giddens, 1984). However, resilient acts in particular may serve to reproduce the social structures that caused the difficult circumstances in the first place.

Katz's concept of 'resilience' concerns actions that may reproduce what people are critical of because they cannot (realistically) act to oppose it. What Katz's concept does not capture, is when people reproduce what others deem unequal circumstances, because they see them as just (see Gough, 2010; see also Barratt et al., 2020; Fredriksson, 2009; Jeffrey, 2012). Both types of acts may serve to strengthen the actor and/or others, as well as to uphold and reproduce challenging structures, but their justifications are different. I think that is important to recognise, if we are to learn of the interaction between agency and

the enabling and hindering properties of social structures, as well as the possibilities for worker solidarity. For example, teachers grudgingly adapting to the market logic of competition may be an act of resilience, to keep their jobs, but there may also be teachers embracing such logics because these chime with what they think is appropriate (Falabella, 2014; Fredriksson, 2009). Where it is possible to distinguish, I will refer to an inability to act against what is identified as oppressive as *resilience*, and a going along with the rules of the structure because they are accepted as *collaboration*. This is a hybrid of the competitive worker strategy to secure jobs identified by Gough (2010, p. 133), ‘collaboration with capital to enhance production efficiency’, and Nyberg and Sewell’s (2014) concept ‘collaboration’, in which workers similarly share management’s frame of reference. Figure 3.1 shows an attempt to summarise the conceptual framework in a figure.

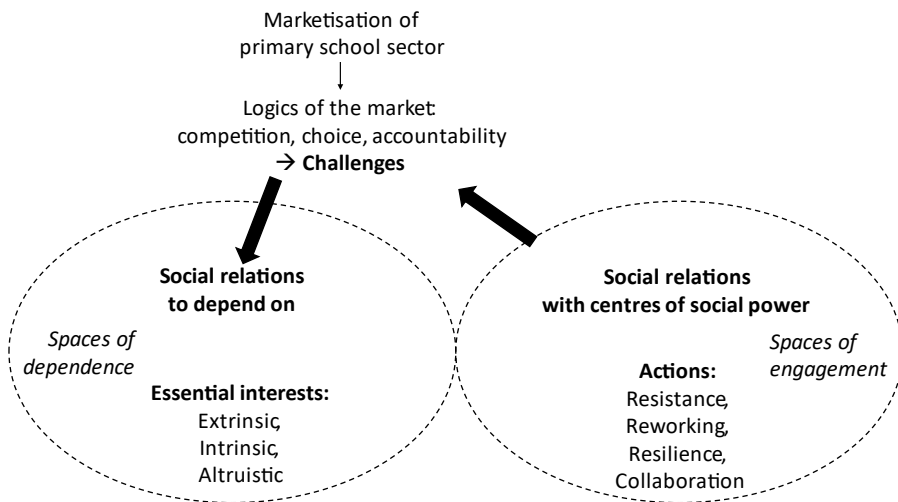


Figure 3.1: Summary of conceptual framework

Before I delve into the results and data analysis, in Chapter (4) I will present and reflect on the methodological approach and the fieldwork conducted. This is followed by Chapter 5, giving a brief background of the post-independence social, political, and economic context that has influenced the growth of LFP schooling and the labour market in Kenya (5).

4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the decisions made in terms of why, how, where and what data have been collected. I start with the conception of the project and work my way through how this shaped the research design and decision to conduct semi-structured interviews with teachers. Here, I also briefly discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the project and the data collection. I then reflect on working with gatekeepers and research assistants, before describing how areas, schools and teachers were sampled. I then discuss the themes of the interview guides, and reflect on conducting different types of interviews. After that, I offer some insight into how the interviews were analysed, before ending with some delimitations made in the data collection.

4.2 The way towards a qualitative research design

4.2.1 Getting into the 'problem' and being thwarted by the pandemic

This doctoral project stems from an interest in people working in public welfare services undergoing neoliberal restructuring. A prior interest in labour issues, and being introduced to the growing phenomenon of, and controversies around, LFP schools set the ball rolling. Partly in accordance with Swedberg's (2016) initial steps of theorising,²³ I started broadly by observing empirics, by reading both academic literature and practitioners' reports, blogs, etc. I also

²³ Swedberg's (2016) steps of theorising are as follows: broadly observe what is being studied; name the phenomenon; use and/or develop concepts; to develop a full theory, get closer to explanation through classifications, metaphors, and/or typologies; and finally, come up with an explanation.

conducted two exploratory interviews with representatives from the international teachers' union federation, EI, which is engaged in a global campaign against the commercialisation and privatisation of education (EI, 2018). I found that what was known about teachers working in contexts with LFP schooling often lacked depth and a focus on teachers as subjects and actors. Furthermore, the scant available knowledge of teachers in LFP schooling contexts seemed to be repeated as in an echo chamber, and yet was often used in the debate for and against LFP schools as part of the provision of education.

From this observation of empirics, and my prior understanding from labour geography that workers are both affected by and affect the socio-economic landscape, I formulated crude versions of the research questions of this thesis. These preliminary questions concerned how Kenyan teachers and the teachers' unions were affected by and affected the marketisation of education in the form of LFP schooling. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a second field trip to Kenya was cancelled. This meant that the initial scope of relating events in policy circles, government agencies, and unions to individual teachers' perspectives fell through. So did the intention to include a more sophisticated analysis of the interrelationships among actors at different geographical scales. It also meant difficulties reaching interviewees from the first and only round of data collection to ask further questions and seek clarifications. Table 4.1 lists the intended interviewees for the planned second fieldtrip.

Table 4.1: Key informants and respondents for the planned second round of data collection.

Interviewee/source	Data
Local/district representatives, Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT)	Sharing knowledge; focus areas; excess of teachers; marketisation
Representative, Teachers Service Commission (TSC)	Teacher management; teacher labour market
Representative, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)	Teacher training; pupil-teacher ratios; allocation of funds
District Education Officers (DEOs)	Teacher management; inspections and support
Representatives, Bridge International Academies (BIA)	Organisation of work in different divisions
School owners/managers/head teachers	In-school relations and organisation
Rural LFP-school teachers	See Appendix A

4.2.2 Coming out with a method and a stance

Like Saxena (2023), I do not feel as though I can put a positive ‘spin’ on my experiences of the pandemic affecting my doctoral project. Unlike Saxena, however, I was lucky to have made one fieldtrip before the pandemic. What follows is an account of that first and only fieldtrip.

Based on my intention to learn about teachers’ experiences and agency, I concluded that a qualitative approach would be most useful. More extensive, statistical data are useful in finding more generalisable patterns, for example, about teachers with certain characteristics acting in certain ways (see, e.g., Bold et al., 2018), but would give little in terms of contextualising responses and yielding new insights and lines of inquiry. Instead, choosing to conduct interviews was a way “to understand how [teachers] experience and make sense of their own lives” (Valentine, 2013, p. 111). Interviewing was thus a way of making it possible to understand the *why* and the *how*: teachers’ motivations, and what their situation meant for how they could or could not act in accordance with their desires. Furthermore, the choice to conduct interviews, as Dunn (2021) has suggested, felt respectful, as it allowed the teachers to expand on their answers, tell me when questions made little sense for them, and ask their own questions in return.

Conducting interviews during work hours made focus group interviews difficult, as getting several teachers to convene at the same time would have interfered with teaching activities. Furthermore, I wanted to make sure I got the views of all the interviewed teachers, avoiding the risk of someone falling silent in a group interview (Caretta & Vacchelli, 2015). While I may have lost out on the synergetic effects of people discussing and taking a topic in unforeseen, but fruitful, directions (Cameron, 2016), to some extent, I feared leaving the focus group with questions unanswered.

In studies of education, when scholars often have experience in the classroom and/or have studied didactics and pedagogy, classroom observation is common (see, e.g., Bocking, 2017; Härmä, 2021b). However, as I am not a trained teacher, sitting in on classes would not be a collegial exercise, with a potential mix of observation and participation. I feared I would instead seem like a ‘complete observer’, which Kearns (2016) likens to someone observing prisoners through surveillance cameras, making me lose rapport with the

interviewees. Furthermore, I attracted so much attention from the pupils that I felt it would be too disruptive to sit in. However, I was often shown around the schools, seeing and talking to pupils and staff, and I walked around the areas surrounding the schools. These observations gave me a much better understanding of the interviewees, of their work life environment, and of other actors in and around the schools. While these observations are not analysed along with the data from the interviews, they have informed Chapter 5, which gives some background on the areas chosen for interviews. Thus, they inform my analysis and, I hope, enrich and offer subtlety to the points that will be made in the results chapters.

In the debate on LFP schooling, it is easy to find arguments both for and against LFP schooling that affect one's preconceptions. Paraphrasing Katharyne Mitchell (2018) in her keynote talk at the 3rd International Conference on the Geographies of Education: being critical is good, but critical with a small 'c' rather than a big 'C' allows one to see the things that perhaps *do* work in a phenomenon that one is critical of. In this light, learning in greater depth about how those working in a changing educational landscape experience changes and act in relation to what they perceive as problematic or not allows us a potentially more nuanced view of marketisation processes 'on the ground'. This is a way of allowing for more than one 'true' moral justification that different teachers may have – a sort of moral relativism or 'descriptive ethics' (Castree et al., 2004, pp. 248–251). Including various moral justifications does not preclude highlighting and critiquing when they, for example, may negatively affect the situation of other teachers or other people. This means that I have taken a normative standpoint in which I, through my analysis, intend to contribute to knowledge furthering teachers' prospects to improve their situations as a group.

4.2.3 Preparations and adjustments

Conducting a pilot study can allow one to see whether one can get the respondents and data needed (Kitchin & Tate, 2014, p. 43). It might be especially important when collecting data via a questionnaire, to test the questions to make sure one is asking the right questions in the right way, but it can similarly be of help in qualitative research (Simon, 2006). I can see the

merits in conducting a pilot, but for the following reasons, I did not. First of all, I had to wait to see what funding I could get to collect data. Monk and Bedford (2016) made the case that conducting a pilot can increase one's chances of getting funding by showing the project's feasibility, but I needed funds for the pilot as well, making that route difficult. Second, waiting for the first research permit application to come through took a very long time, making multiple trips difficult to schedule. Third, I also needed time to reading up on the subject, and about how to conduct research as a privileged outsider – basically, to figure out what I thought I was doing before going. Part of the point in conducting a pilot would be to speed up this process and find out what might be feasible (Kitchin & Tate, 2014, p. 43), as per the points made above, but I wanted to come prepared and well read.

That said, before travelling to Nairobi, I did get to test my interview questions on my friends' children's LFP primary school teacher, outside Mombasa, for which I am very grateful. That pilot interview gave me a chance to see how questions were received, and I was able to discuss and rephrase some of them. However, I still had to collect data with a flexible mindset, prepared to adjust my interview questions and access to respondents. Some changes were rather easy to make, such as revising a mini survey used in the interviews to get teachers' views of statements from the international teachers' trade union, EI, some of which were difficult to decipher. Or, after having met more trained and/or certified teachers in LFP schools than expected, asking about how many of the teachers in a school were trained or not. Other re-navigations were harder, such as realising that getting access to BIA staff and statistical databases was more difficult than even anticipated. I managed to access BIA teachers by visiting many schools, but statistical databases were not accessible without a research permit when in Nairobi, or with a research permit back in Sweden.

On the note of adjustments, after coming home and preparing to go on another field trip in 2020, the onset of the pandemic meant that I had to adjust the project to the data that I had. As Saxena (2023) has described, this was a difficult process, not only because I had to reframe the project and redo the analysis and writing, but also because of the uncertainty as to whether I would be able to go, the fear of lacking data and feelings of inadequacy (I will discuss this matter more in the section on analysis). Before moving on to the sampling

of respondents and reflecting on the interviews, let me introduce the people I had the privilege of working with.

4.3 Working with...

4.3.1 ...gatekeepers

Upon learning about the need for an affiliation with a Kenyan University to apply for a research permit, and upon trying to find out more about the processes involved in applying, I stumbled upon a researcher at the University of Nairobi on an online platform for researchers. They had answered other researchers' questions about the research permit process, so I contacted them, and they offered to help with the needed affiliation with a Kenyan university. Campbell et al. (2006) defined gatekeepers as "those who provide – directly or indirectly – access to key resources needed to do research, be those resources logistical, human, institutional, or informational" (p. 98). This researcher arranged accommodation in Nairobi, and introduced me to researchers and additional, more peripheral, but powerful gatekeepers at the University of Nairobi. The researcher further submitted my first research permit application to the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). However, I never got a response on this application.²⁴ The researcher and a member of senior staff from the Geography Department at the University of Nairobi then helped me move forward in data collection by writing a letter of affiliation, clearly stating my relation to the University of Nairobi and between the University of Nairobi and my home university, the University of Gothenburg. This letter of affiliation was accepted by most (though not all) schools in the urban study area, and allowed me to start collecting data.

I got immense help from the researcher at the University of Nairobi. My research would not have been possible without a contact at a Kenyan university. However, it was a relationship in which I always felt uncertain of

²⁴ My second research permit application was made online from Sweden in advance of what should have been the second fieldtrip, and went through swiftly. That was a relief, first and foremost, at the prospect of access on my second fieldtrip. It also alleviated worries that the problem with the first application had been because the project was rejected altogether.

the terms and expectations, and about how accounts would be settled. I could not read the situation, nor did I have anyone to ask. Financial compensation for the work was of course part of the deal, but where I thought I was getting help just with the research permit, I got more, without knowing whether this was a courtesy or something I should later pay for. Furthermore, I did not want to be a burden, as in Tilley and Kalina's (2021) reflections on North–South academic relationships, but I felt as though I must have been one, against my intentions. My initial refusals of additional arrangements were rebuffed, and I conceded, so as not to be ungrateful or secretive. Ultimately, I felt very uncertain in this relationship, and as if the gate was open, but could be closed, with me remaining more of a burden than I, admittedly, liked or had expected.

Through an interview with two researchers and project managers at the East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights), I got in contact with David (pseudonym), a gatekeeper in the urban study area. He worked as a social worker for an NGO preventing sexual abuse, an NGO active in many of the schools in the Nairobi area. David had thus been in most of the schools in the urban study area and had good rapport with their teachers, pupils, and management. This was invaluable, as it turned out to be hard to get access to interview BIA teachers in the Nairobi area.²⁵ David also, on my request, brought us to other LFP schools of varying ownerships and sizes. The only time that I could tell that our relationship was under some strain was when he took us to a public school that would not accept only a letter of affiliation rather than a research permit. As Tilley and Kalina (2023) have suggested, gatekeepers may see their social capital drained by acting as gatekeepers for Northern scholars, which I fear that this may have done, or at least threatened to do. I did not sense it turning into a problem between us, but we visited no more new public schools together after that, as he had to protect his good relationships with them.

4.3.2 ...research assistants

The research assistants I was assigned by the researcher at the University of Nairobi, Antonette and Renalda, were two recently graduated secondary school teachers. Renalda is also an experienced social worker. I had intended to

²⁵ This was not a problem in the BIA school in the rural town, where we went without a contact.

employ research assistants with a little more experience and knowledge of LFP schooling, and had been advised by a female colleague of similar age to have at least one male assistant, for authority and safety. In hindsight, I am not sure that would have added anything, as Antonette and Renalda were excellent. They were hands on, assertive, yet good at putting people at ease. Both were great in their straightforward way of asking for specific people to talk with, requesting the best available rooms to conduct interviews in, and steering us away from situations that they deemed unsafe, but that evaded my notice.

Like Caretta (2015), I want to underscore the importance and impact of research assistants, perhaps especially in cross-cultural research. As I was the one with the funds and the project plan, my position came with power (Biswas, 2023), but Antonette and Renalda were the ones with invaluable know-how and, when needed, the language. This put me and the project much in their hands. They also suggested adding or rephrasing questions, for example, asking teachers what they thought made them good teachers, which opened up many of the teachers, and opened up matters concerning, for example, what education should be like, working conditions, and their relationships to their pupils. All interviews were conducted in English, but on occasion interviewees would throw in expressions in Kiswahili when the English language did not do the topic justice, and in those cases, it was great to have someone who could explain the meaning if the interviewee did/could not. This was the first time I had worked with research assistants, which was intimidating, as I had to ‘lead’ them in a project that was somehow ‘mine’. A result of this is that I did not ‘let go’ of the interviewing, as I perhaps could have, to save time and get a few more interviews, as I wanted to be able to hear every answer first-hand and be able to follow up myself.

Still, in the two areas where I chose to conduct interviews, the sampling of which I will present next, 36 public- and LFP-primary school teachers were interviewed. In addition, eight key informants were interviewed.

4.4 Sampling

The sampling of teachers was purposive, in order to include interviewees with different characteristics, as opposed to selection being randomised and

attempting to be representative of the entire population.²⁶ I combined criterion sampling, maximum variation sampling, and convenience sampling, through the different steps of the selection process (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). The criterion sampling started with the areas selected, one urban and one more rural, both with BIA schools and public schools.

4.4.1 Areas

Two areas were chosen for the study: one urban informal settlement in Nairobi, and one rural town in a more sparsely populated area in a neighbouring county. The two areas were purposively chosen based on criteria calling for similarities and differences (see Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). Both areas had to be low-income areas and have at least one BIA school. BIA is a prime example of the second wave of LFP schools, i.e., “corporate-backed school chains” that operate “across geographical boundaries beyond the local” (Srivastava, 2016, p. 249).²⁷ The existence of BIA schools served as an indicator that the area might hold other LFP schools. It was hard to know what, if any, LFP schools there were in an area before going there, as there were no official records of the many unregistered LFP schools. Online mapping services, such as Google Maps, might not be updated regularly, and for the schools to appear on such services requires someone to map them in the first place. BIA (n.d.b, n.d.c), on the other hand, had a map showing their schools on their website. I compared the locations of BIA schools with maps showing poverty incidence, to reveal similarities and the likely existence of more LFP schools, and with maps showing population density and distance to larger urban centres, to reveal differences (see Wiesmann et al., 2016).²⁸ I selected an urban and a rural area based on the assumption that there would be a contrast between a densely

²⁶ For simplicity, all teaching staff are here referred to as ‘teachers’, except where training and employment need to be specified.

²⁷ The company was founded by a US couple but has its headquarters in Kenya, where it has built a large chain of for-profit LFP schools, totalling 295 schools as of October 2019 (BIA, n.d.c). This figure likely includes pre-primary and primary schools, as no particulars were given on the company website. I did not think to count the schools at the exact time of the interviews; so the figure is from October 2019.

²⁸ Wiesmann et al. (2016) mapped household expenditures, which may be a relevant measure of people’s cost of living, but without being compared with cost of living, I felt that this did not quite capture people’s financial situation. I thus used poverty incidence, which is based on expenditures and poverty lines in urban and rural locations, respectively.

populated area where there are many schools and pupils, and an area with fewer schools and pupils. The presence of one or more LFP schools in an area that already has many schools might not be as noticeable as in an area with fewer schools. Teachers also tend to prefer working in urban areas, meaning that teachers' experiences could differ between urban and rural sites (see Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 87–108).

The informal settlement in Nairobi was chosen, as informal urban settlements are where LFP schools can mainly be found (Global Campaign for Education, 2016; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 98–100). The area chosen had both BIA schools and a plethora of other LFP schools. The rural town chosen had one BIA school and, reportedly, other LFP schools as well, and is situated in a sparsely populated area with a culturally and geographically different context from Nairobi. The rural study area is largely populated by Maasais, and is situated along a paved road, approximately three hours' drive from Nairobi. It is thus not in what the teachers referred to as an 'interior' or 'hardship' area, meaning far away from urban centres and/or with poor accessibility and services, but neither is it within easy commuting distance of Nairobi or other cities.²⁹ Therefore, some things, such as electricity and communications, are less of an issue in the study areas than in many more 'remote' villages. This bias towards more urban and easily accessible sites is due to BIA choosing such locations over more remote ones (see BIA, n.d.b; Härmä, 2016). I choose not to disclose the names of the areas or of the schools, as this could create risk, particularly for the teachers and managers in the BIA schools, where interviews were reportedly not condoned unless approved by headquarters. It would also jeopardise the promise of confidentiality.

4.4.2 Schools

Within the two areas, I sampled schools based on the criterion of whether they were public or LFP. I wanted to interview teachers in different types of schools and employments. The decision to interview teachers in both public and private schools in both sites was based on the idea that, while teaching in different

²⁹ Hardship areas are areas that have particularly difficult circumstances, for example, in terms of communications, where TSC-employed teachers receive a 'hardship allowance' on top of their basic salary.

types of schools, the teachers were all working in primary education in the respective areas. The debate on LFP schools also incorporates references to the professionalism and working conditions of both public- and private-school teachers, which were topics I wanted to explore. Interviewing a mix of teachers from different schools meant accessing various perspectives on what marketisation entailed.

In the rural town, there was only one BIA school and only two public primary schools. Those three made up the rural town sample. Due to time constraints and thinking I would return during the planned second field trip, I did not visit other private schools there, though I was told by teachers that there were others. I will reflect on this below.

In the Nairobi study area, interviews were conducted in two of three public schools and in six private schools. The choice of private schools was in part based on convenience sampling, i.e., based on access (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016), as our gatekeeper, David, took us around. As previous literature on LFP schools has pointed out, the LFP school category is heterogeneous (see, e.g., Acholla, 2021, 2016; Härmä, 2021b, p. 21–40; Srivastava, 2007). In Kenya, there are so-called community schools, which have an enrolment policy similar to that of public schools; schools run in sole proprietorship; small chains of schools; and large corporate-backed chains of schools. Some schools are run for profit, some are not; some have external funding, some do not; some are registered as private or Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training (APBET) schools, some are not. Knowing of this great variation, the sampling of private schools in Nairobi was also based on my desire for maximum variation. Thus, we conducted interviews in a large LFP school referred to as a community school, three schools run as sole proprietorships, a school in a small LFP school chain, and a BIA school (i.e., a large chain).

In the Nairobi study area, we approached three more schools. However, in one BIA school the area manager insisted on supervising the interview, and no questions on private schools or marketisation were allowed. In yet another BIA school, I was turned away because of a need to arrange access through headquarters, and one public school did not allow me to conduct interviews based solely on the letter of affiliation from the University of Nairobi, but needed to see a research permit. The schools that agreed to interviews seemed

to have administrative staff who felt that they could make such a decision, based on my letter of affiliation and/or the company of our gatekeeper, David.

4.4.3 Respondents

The interviews were conducted at the school managers’ and teachers’ discretion. I chose to conduct interviews during school hours, to not intrude on the teachers’ time outside of work. I asked to interview both men and women differing in education/certification, form of employment (where applicable), level of seniority, and age. In this way, I again attempted to attain maximum variation, albeit within the frame of convenience, i.e., who was available at that time. This was to get as many views and experiences as possible regarding being a teacher, LFP schools, marketisation, and agency (see Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). In total, 35 usable interviews were conducted with teachers who at the time of data collection (January–March 2019) were working in the selected public or LFP schools (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Interviewees by school type and area.

Area	Public	LFP	Total
Nairobi area	Public-school teachers 9	LFP-school teachers 13	22
	All certified		
	TSC 7	Certified 10	
	BoM 2	Uncertified 3	
	Female 5	Female 4	
	Male 4	Male 9	
Rural town	Public-school teachers 10	LFP-school teachers 3	13
	All certified		
	TSC 9	Certified 2	
	BoM 1	Uncertified 1	
	Female 5	Female 2	
	Male 5	Male 1	
Total	19	16	35

Most Kenyan public-school teachers are employed by the central agency, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). In public schools, there are, however, also teachers hired on non-permanent contracts by the Board of Management (henceforth, 'BoM teachers') of the school. These BoM teachers are paid by the parents, through a fee, or by a supporting organisation. Only three BoM teachers were interviewed. Initially, I did not intend to include BoM teachers, as I felt that this might make the sample too wide and shift the focus from the different experiences of LFP and public-school teachers. However, as I realised that BoM employment is a common part of the teaching career in Kenya, I decided to include that category as well. That I interviewed relatively few BoM teachers was because in all but one of the schools they were fewer in number than were TSC-employed teachers. While the interviewed BoM teachers had many commonalities, apart from one who earned a better salary, interviewing more BoM teachers would have made it possible to speak with more confidence about how representative their experiences were.

The distinction between certified and uncertified teachers is based on whether or not the teachers hold a P1 certificate (or a higher credential), as this is the basic primary education certification for teachers. A P1 certificate is required to be eligible for a position with the TSC, the state agency managing public-school teachers in Kenya. Since 2015, it is also required that at least 30% of teachers in all schools be at least P1 certified (MoEST, 2015). Initially, based on previous literature, I was under the impression that nearly all teachers in LFP schools were uncertified. As it turned out, this assumption was challenged, as most of the teachers we met in the LFP schools were certified, and several were in teacher training, and, according to them, so were most of their colleagues. Reflecting on this, there could have been a bias in the schools and teachers selected, despite our efforts to the contrary. The gate keeper perhaps had more contacts in schools more concerned with regulations, and/or school managers perhaps wanted the school to appear to be following regulations. Regardless, interviewing trained teachers presented the opportunity to learn more about the realities of many graduated teachers and their desires and experiences regarding going from private to public school employment (see Chapter 6).

As it was hard to arrange interviews in BIA schools in the urban study area, only five teachers employed in BIA schools at the time of the interviews are part of the sample. Two teachers in the other LFP schools had previously

worked in BIA schools, and their experiences there are part of the data. That I only interviewed three LFP-school teachers in the rural town, all of them in the BIA school and all being outsiders to the town, means I cannot say who works in rural non-chain LFP schools and what their experiences are. The literature suggests that Kenyan LFP schools hire locally (Stern & Heyneman, 2013), likely giving rural LFP-school teachers a different experience as insiders.

Of the teachers interviewed in the Nairobi study area, most, i.e., 16 of 22, were relatively young. This can largely be explained by the fact that 13 of 22 interviews were carried out in LFP schools, where staff members are generally in the early stages of their teaching careers. Another plausible reason is that as the schools are in an informal settlement with socio-economic and infrastructural challenges, public-school teachers who had been employed by the TSC for longer may have been granted transfers out of the area (see Luschei & Chudgar 2017, pp. 87–108). Teachers interviewed in the rural town ranged between young and senior, with most being around middle age, though all three BIA teachers were young.

The sampling went on until the end of my stay in Kenya and, as stated above, was cut somewhat short in the rural town. While most questions reached a point at which few novel answers were given, interviews with rural non-BIA LFP teachers could perhaps have given additional insights. More interviews with BoM teachers and untrained LFP-school teachers could also have given more insights, or would at least have enabled me to speak about those teachers' experiences with more confidence.

4.5 Interviews

4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews with teachers

Teacher interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 1.5 hours, with an average of 40 minutes.³⁰ The length of the interviews depended on the time the teachers were able and willing to spare before going back to teach, oversee exams being taken, or going home. As the questions in a semi-structured interview are open-

³⁰ On average the transcripts were some 3 300 words, with a maximum of 8 500 and a minimum of 1 200 words.

ended, this also affected the time the interviews took and how much there was time to cover, depending on how much the teacher wanted to share on the different topics (see Valentine, 2013). While the interviews were not always as lengthy as I would have liked, all the included interviews were usable to some degree. Not all interviewees had much to say about the union or the existence of a private education market, but all told a story of becoming and working as a teacher in Kenya, making it possible to piece together and find commonalities and differences among the teachers.

Two teachers, T11 and T12, were interviewed together, as this was most convenient for them and the school. They also spoke much less, respectively, than the average. This may in part be explained by their not having double the time, as well as by their often agreeing with each other, giving simple yes/no answers, rather than giving individual answers to every question. It may, however, also have been because they felt less comfortable speaking their mind at length as many of the other teachers interviewed did. They seemed comfortable as colleagues, but the gendered dynamic may have made them both a bit quiet (Caretta & Vacchelli, 2015). Furthermore, while I tried to adapt the interview guide to the situation, several interview questions were better suited to being posed to one individual, rather than to two as a discussion topic.

The interview guides for the teacher interviews concerned three main areas, apart from some introductory questions and some debriefing comments (see Appendix A): work life and needs/wants, changes/challenges, and action. I did not go into marketisation, privatisation, competition, LFP schools, or trade unions in the introduction, as I felt this would risk drawing attention away from the most important subject – the teachers themselves – as well as making them try to figure out what answers I was looking for. I would, however, truthfully answer any questions about the interview and the questions, as I in no way wanted to compromise the trust of the interviewee or be deceitful (see Kitchin & Tate, 2014, p. 219). Introductory questions served to get us warmed up and acquainted: they let me learn whether the teacher lived close by, whether the teacher had moved to or grown up in the area, and about the teacher's work experience, seniority, and education level.

The guide changed somewhat with time, as some questions needed modifying, the order needed to be revised, etc., but the themes regarding work life and needs/wants, changes or challenges related to the marketisation of education,

and action in relation to challenges remained. The themes were not clearly delineated, but rather overlapped. The first theme, work life, was mainly connected to RQ 1 and aimed to map teachers' spaces of dependence. Associate questions concerned why they decided to become teachers, and what they felt they needed inside and outside of work, as well as within themselves, to be able to do their job well and to function as humans. Although we have universal needs, such as food and shelter, these might be expressed differently, especially in relation to work. Most of us need a job in order to sustain ourselves and our family, but what do we need in order to remain, feel, and do well in our jobs? Some of the questions under this theme were also connected with RQs 2 and 3, such as questions about accountability and agency.

The second theme, changes/challenges, was connected mainly to RQ 2, trying to gauge how teachers perceived the labour market, public and private schools, and the increased marketisation of education, as well as whether/how this affected them. This was to check whether/how changes in the education system related to LFP schools and the marketisation of education were perceived by the teachers working in this context. Asking about challenges, or things I perceived as potentially problematic, was difficult, as I did not want to make my assumptions shine through to the interviewee. At the same time, I wanted to get the teachers' views of the challenges identified in the literature. The strategy for this section of questions started in more neutral questions, such as whether they knew the other schools in the area and what types of schools there were, whether they had any experience working in private schools, etc. Then the questions became more specifically about marketing, competition, and schools affecting each other.

The final section mainly concerned RQ 3, and whether the teachers engaged with others (e.g., colleagues, managers, or officials) around perceived challenges at work, as well as their view of teachers' trade unions and their actions in relation to private schooling. This theme was also related to my initial intention to connect the teachers' ways of engaging with those of the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), or other informal but structured networks. This section remained in the interview guide, although it turned out that teachers' agency rather surfaced in the answers to questions regarding their work life and challenges.

The teachers often veered towards speaking with dedication about their pupils, which in some instances made it hard to get the teachers to focus on themselves. Even answering questions specifically about their own experiences as teachers and persons, and about the teaching profession, they often circled back to the pupils and their needs. The teachers seemed unaccustomed to talking about themselves and their own needs. Some questions required the teachers to be retrospective – although this is not a longitudinal study, I still wanted to find out about events over time. This worked better with some of the initial questions, about the teachers’ careers, but required more prompting with questions regarding whether primary school education had changed during their time as teachers. At the time of the interviews, primary schools were in the middle of implementing a new curriculum. Hence, this was the most frequent answer even when I tried using the curriculum change as an example of a change, trying to probe about changes further back in time, such as the implementation of Free Primary Education (FPE), introduction of APBET guidelines, banning of tuition, increase in private schools, etc.

4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews with teachers’ trade union representatives

In 2018, before data collection in Kenya, I conducted two exploratory interviews (example guide, Appendix B) with the project coordinator and project director of the campaign Global Response to the Commercialisation of Education run by the EI. This was to scope out and learn in greater depth about why and how the EI started this campaign and their view of events (see Shackleton et al., 2022). This was before I had quite decided to focus on marketisation, and had a more general interest in LFP schools, teachers, and teachers’ unions. The themes for these interviews were quite broad and concerned: the uneven geography and quality of teachers; privatisation, marketisation, and LFP schools; and responses and union organisation. These interviews gave me some insights for the interview guide for the later teacher interviews (see Dunn, 2021).

During the data collection in Kenya, I met with representatives of KNUT. I met with a local trade union elected representative working as a school

principal close to the Nairobi study area. I also briefly met with the secretary general of KNUT at the time, and had a longer meeting with two other representatives at the national office. The questions here, too, concerned their perceptions of teachers' daily work and lives, challenges to the profession, marketisation, action, and influence (Appendix C). It was hard to get in-depth answers at KNUT, as the person most in the know, the secretary general, was in a rush, giving a quite well-rehearsed informational speech and not having time for many questions. His colleagues were not as well prepared on the matter, which made for less well-rehearsed, but also less informative, answers to help answer my research questions at that time.

These interviews served to give me a sense of where the union representatives stood on matters of marketisation, compared with teachers 'on the ground'. However, with a shift in focus away from how officials on different levels of the teachers' unions and their members regarded matters of marketisation, these interviews were in the end not analysed as part of the data for this thesis.

4.5.3 Semi-structured and unstructured interviews with other key informants

In Kenya, I also met with representatives and campaign managers in advocacy groups working with education in different ways: two researchers and project managers engaged in education at EACHRights (Appendix D); one representative of the Elimu Yetu Coalition (translated as "Our Education Coalition") (Appendix D); and the chief executive officer of the Kenya Private School Association (KPSA) (Appendix E). I also interviewed the head teacher in the large urban LFP school (Appendix F), and had a lengthy, unstructured interview with one former BIA manager. Like the interviews with union representatives, these key informant interviews were not analysed as part of the data. Rather, I gleaned information from their different perspectives regarding the Kenyan education system and regulations, as well regarding attitudes, tensions, and perceived challenges connected to privatisation, education as a right, etc. This information served to contextualise previous literature and the data collected through the interviews, although key informants were not interviewed neatly at the beginning or the end of data collection, as Shackleton et al. (2022) suggested, but rather in parallel.

4.5.4 Access, consent, confidentiality, and data handling

To gain access to teachers to interview, I reached out to the school managers, principals, or head teachers, either by phone beforehand, in person with the assistants or, later in the process, we went in the company of David, the gatekeeper. I emailed the BIA headquarters about visiting schools, but got no response. The two large public schools in the Nairobi study area were run in tandem by the government and religious groups. This and the fact that the schools served in part as community centres may have contributed to a more open attitude towards visitors. As mentioned above, we were turned away from one public school because I did not have a research permit, and from some BIA schools for not having obtained permission from the company headquarters.

At all teacher interviews we introduced ourselves, after which I told the interviewee(s) that I was working on a project in which I asked teachers about what they need in their work life to be able to do their jobs and live their lives. The interviewees were informed that they could end or pause the interview at any time and skip questions they did not want to answer. The teachers were further asked whether they would consent to being recorded, without the inclusion of their names. I also informed them that the data from the interviews would be used for this thesis and related articles, and that the data would only be handled by me and the two assistants (see Dunn, 2021, p. 162, for a list of rights of informants to adhere to). At three interviews David also attended, but he seemed to have no effect on the interviewees, except to make them comfortable. Reassuringly, most teachers did not hesitate to ask me to clarify questions or to either pass over a question or answer with a simple yes/no/don't know if they wanted to. One of the interviews was conducted in a school that was part of a small chain of schools, where official inspectors had recently paid a visit, making the youths working there quite wary of visitors, and recording was thus not allowed. Instead, Antonette and I took notes, with Antonette being able to be more detailed as she was not asking questions. It should be said that the tense situation made the interview quite short, approximately 20 minutes, and the interviewee appeared quite cautious, as I failed to put him at ease. This interview was still usable, but there are no direct quotations in the thesis from it, as I found it difficult to phrase things as he would have from the notes. All other interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. I did not include names of teachers, schools, or areas in the transcriptions, in this thesis, or in

the material on my computer (following the advice of, e.g., Dowling, 2016), to avoid enabling identifying the teachers or their schools.

4.5.5 Being an outsider: power relations and rapport

As Howitt and Stevens (2016) discussed, cross-cultural research is a very strange, privileged, and often harmful thing, in which some researchers, such as me (a white cis-gendered woman, a PhD student, a non-Kiswahili speaker, and a non-teacher, although from a Swedish working-class background with a teacher mother), bring their privileges to another country and, essentially, ask people about their lives, work, relations, etc. There is so much in that relationship that is embodied and unspoken, and/or unchecked and potentially damagingly spoken and written (see McDowell, 2009). Howitt and Stevens (2016) suggested that colonial research “reinforces domination and exploitation” (p. 47) through dismissal of the rights and knowledge of people in the research context: it is intrusive, non-participatory, and extractive. Howitt and Stevens (2016) contrasted this with postcolonial research, which they delineate as based on more egalitarian relationships “intended to contribute to the self-determination and welfare of ‘others’” (p. 47), by “valu[ing] their rights, knowledge, perspectives, concerns, and desires” (p.47). They go on to discuss decolonising research, which “attempt[s] to use the research process and research findings to break down cross-cultural discourses, asymmetrical power relationships, representations, and political, economic, and social structures” (Howitt and Stevens, 2016, p. 47) of colonialism and neo-colonialism. I have been concerned with the welfare of teachers, and my *intentions* have been to contribute to a change in the way teachers from the Global South are often represented in the LFP schooling literature by trying to grasp and represent their knowledge of their own situation. However, that does not negate the asymmetry of the relationship (see Catungal & Dowling, 2021). Furthermore, I could not know how participatory the respondents felt, although I hope that the positive, unsolicited, feedback I got from some teachers was not merely politeness.

To reflect further on the interviews with teachers, I think it made for a good start to establish that they were the experts on the subject I wanted to learn more about – the teachers, their experiences, and agency. I tried to establish a

professional, but relaxed and humble, tone, versus an aloof or overly friendly tone, as either of the latter would have been and seemed insincere (see, e.g., Dunn, 2021). I also think it helped that I looked youngish, and Antonette and Renalda even more so, and appeared non-threatening (as was made clear to me, in a friendly way, by the head teacher in the large urban LFP school [key informant interview 12-02-2019]). I told the interviewees that I was not a teacher, but that the interests of teachers were a leitmotif in my research, and as I am white and Swedish, the teachers explained many things quite thoroughly to me. Being an outsider was in that sense favourable, though the downside can be difficulty creating rapport and intimacy (Dowling, 2016; Ferdoush, 2023), as was sometimes evident, but may as often have evaded my notice. It helped to have the insiders and teachers Renalda and Antonette present, as they sometimes picked up on and, in a more initiated manner, pursued some matters the teachers spoke of. Such things may also have somewhat counteracted the asymmetrical power dynamics.

Choosing to conduct the interviews in the schools I hope made the teachers feel that they were in their own territory and that we were visitors (Dunn, 2021). The environment was noisy, which made transcribing somewhat more taxing; on the other hand, made the interviews difficult to overhear, which may have been beneficial for the teachers, allowing them to be more outspoken. It made me happy that several of the teachers at the end of the interview said that they thought it was good, or that they were surprised that they had enjoyed it. Many started off the interview by saying they had only 15 minutes, and when those 15 minutes had passed, I would apologise and start rounding off the session, but was generally asked to continue, which I also took as a good sign of having created some kind of rapport and mutual interest. There were of course exceptions, when a few teachers were quite stressed about getting back to work, as someone else was minding their class, which was sitting exams, or the next class was about to start. That may, of course, have been a polite way of saying that they did not want to participate any longer.

In the interviews with advocacy groups and teachers' trade union representatives, I was "not in a position of relative power" (Mullings, 1999, p. 338), as in the interviews with teachers. I thus had to convince the prospective interviewees that talking to me would be time well spent by trying to represent myself as an insider (Mullings, 1999). In two cases I became at least a 'temporary insider', as Mullings phrased it, with one key informant referring

me to another, thus vouching for me (see also Ferdoush, 2023). What I could do myself, was to show that I had shared interests in education and relevant knowledge of the subject at hand. In the interview with researchers/project managers at EACHRights, this came about quite noticeably, as early in the interview I asked them about marketisation, a concept they were very interested in connecting to their own focus on privatisation and the right to education. As I got to explain what I meant by it and why I believed it to be important, I established that I needed their expertise, but also that I had knowledge that could be beneficial to them in their work.

4.6 Analysing

The audio-recorded data gathered in interviews was transcribed verbatim using Express Scribe transcription software, and interpretive analysis was facilitated using NVivo software. The one interview in which the interviewee declined to be audio recorded was written out intelligibly immediately afterwards so as not to lose any sense of what had been said. Transcribing the interview material myself allowed me to ‘re-familiarize’ myself with the material, as Crang (2005) put it, which was valuable in making sense of what had been said. Hearing the interviews again, without being so ‘in the moment’ and on edge, facilitated my analysis. As several interviews were conducted on the same day, many towards the end of my stay in Kenya, and as there was trouble hearing clearly what was being said in the often quite noisy surroundings, transcription was slow. Thus, I came home to Sweden with a backlog of transcribing to do. It was not ideal from the perspective of having the situation fresh in your mind (Crang, 2005). However, this served to keep me ‘in’ the material for longer, which was good for simultaneously working on what was supposed to be the first paper of a compilation thesis (Falkensjö & Olsson, 2022), and for thinking things through, over and over. It also helped having conducted the bulk of interviews before transcribing, as I could more easily make connections between the different interviews, finding common themes and concepts.

Coding the material in NVivo helped me categorise and “split and splice” (Kitchin & Tate, 2014, p. 235) different themes and sentiments in the material. I started out with many codes, or ‘nodes’ as they are called in NVivo, in a tree structure, with many smaller branches coming off a few larger ones. These

were often closely related to the interview themes and questions, which connected to the theoretical framework, although new ones were picked up. These nodes were mainly descriptive, serving to tease out different events, relationships, actions, and actors, facilitating an overview. For analysis and interpretation, I printed out the nodes, made up of quotations, which made reading and subsequent recoding, grouping, and/or finding previously unseen themes easier. At this point, I largely left NVivo behind, and drew many, many mind maps, tables, and other forms of visual aids to help me connect the themes. I also started writing drafts of the results chapters, in which themes were rearranged and, with time, increasingly distilled. Despite a largely systematic approach, it was not a 'clean' or linear process, however. The main 'deviation' came with the realisation that there would not be another set of data. This allowed me to give more attention to, and space for, the available data. However, it also meant that planned chapters and juxtapositions, primarily between teachers and teachers' unions, and between urban and rural LFP-school teachers, fell through.

A subsequent difficult part of the analysis was to reorder the findings into a coherent and readable 'story' in the dissertation. The rewritten overarching aim and research questions guided what was of interest to incorporate into the story and how best to organise themes so that they built on one another, rather than failing to incorporate them and treating them as separate blocks. Still, this involved much trial and error, with reorganisation being part of the analytical process. Eventually, I settled for three results chapters following an analytical, if not chronological, sequence: spaces of dependence – challenges to spaces of dependence – spaces of engagement.

The logics of the sub-sections of the chapters were similarly difficult, which may be explained by their different 'origins'. Some of the findings are of a more descriptive nature, relating closely to previous literature, whereas others are more process oriented and/or novel – at least regarding this context. For example, in Chapter 7, I focus on challenges to the teachers' spaces of dependence. Some of them, like marketing, stem from previous literature, and were already identified in the interview guides as sub-themes on which I wanted the teachers' views. Another sub-theme, the mobility of pupils, showed up repeatedly in the interviews as something the teachers themselves saw as a challenge. Yet another sub-theme, which was not explicitly stated, but that I, after some time spent writing, started to recognise as a pattern, was that of

public and private school teachers' perceptions of each other. Thus, the analytical process had elements of both inductive and deductive reasoning: some themes were there from the start, whereas others emerged entirely from the empirical data. A connected reflection with regard to this is that balancing description and abstraction when wanting to incorporate the, at times diverse, voices of the interviewees was very difficult. At least this was difficult with regard to some themes. Again, I believe that this is because some themes are closer to basic science – What do we (not) know/think we know about these teachers? – whereas others are more analytical with reference to process and context (see Cope, 2016). While these themes are different in nature and do not always sit smoothly next to one another, I have judged both as important parts of what I have found.

4.7 Delimitations

Some delimitations were made in the data collection. Regarding areas, I chose only to conduct interviews with teachers in low-income areas. This is where LFP schools locate, and where there is more likely to be a school market with some level of competition for pupils between public and private schools (see, e.g., Härmä, 2016).

Interviewing teachers who had moved on from teaching would have been interesting, to learn about reasons for deciding to leave the profession, but would have created difficulties sampling. The teachers whom I interviewed were those who chose to remain as teachers, even though they did not always think the situation was ideal, potentially causing a bias towards more intrinsically and altruistically motivated individuals (see Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Another bias could be that the interviewees were teachers less able to leave teaching.

In the interviews, I did not ask the teachers about their age, but estimated, based on how long they had been teaching, whether they had done something else before teaching, what their needs outside of work were, etc. I felt that such matters had more bearing on the aim and research questions than their exact age. I did not explicitly ask the interviewees about religion or ethnic belonging. According to the assistants, this could have been a relevant question in certain

areas, but it could also be very sensitive and intrusive. It would have been hard to know beforehand, and I did not want to ruin the rapport or for the interviewees to feel uncomfortable (see, e.g., Dunn, 2021). Neither did I ask overly personal questions regarding marital status, children, gendered experiences, etc., unless they felt like natural follow-up questions and it seemed acceptable to ask them. These things often surfaced when discussing pay, where the teachers lived, relations with the surrounding community, feelings of belonging, etc. I preferred the teachers to air sensitive subjects that mattered to them voluntarily and if they felt relevant, rather than for me to prod. Thus, I posed open questions, left plenty of room, and tried to make the interviewees feel comfortable. Reading the poem “Something there is...” by Barbara Nicholson (2000, reprinted in Howitt & Stevens, 2016, pp. 48–51) makes it all too clear how insanelly private and intrusive people can be in the name of research. I truly did not wish to be that kind of person.

5 The context: Kenya, education, and teachers

5.1 Introduction

As argued for in the literature review and theoretical chapter, markets are made, and continuously shaped by their stakeholders in their historical and geographical context. With this chapter, I will introduce some key developments that arguably are linked to the current situation of primary education, LFP schools and teachers in Kenya. I have needed to be selective in this. Timewise, I focus roughly on the time from British colonisation until today, as certain events and actions in this era have influenced the current situation significantly. I focus on how Kenyan primary education and teachers' labour market have developed largely as consequences of national and international economic events and policies, as well as of demographic trends and households' possibilities and decisions. To do this I draw largely on statistics from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and other national and international agencies. While these statistical records are not always as exhaustive, up to date and disaggregated as would be ideal, they illuminate constraints that many Kenyans face in their everyday lives and with regards to education. I also draw on historic, economic and education research focused on Kenya. The purpose has been to get a mix of perspectives, ranging from the prescriptive to the critical.

I begin by giving some background of the Republic of Kenya, such as its late history, demography and labour market situation in brief. Following that, I give an overview of education in Kenya since independence, with a focus on some more recent policies and events, which are argued to have impacted on the growth of LFP schools, as well as on the labour market and work environment situation of Kenyan teachers. Finally, I will connect these bits of background

with the two sites where interviews were conducted, before we in the next chapter move on to the results and analysis of the teacher interviews.

5.2 Kenya

In the following two sections I will give a brief background to the current situation in Kenya with regards to education and teachers. The reason for focusing largely on major economic developments is because of their impact on education funding and policy, and, subsequently, on people's varying access to different schools. Such economic factors may furthermore begin to explain why there is an excess of teachers in Kenya, why so many of them work in LFP schools, and what their work situations are like, thus giving context to teachers' spaces of dependence.

5.2.1 History in brief

The Republic of Kenya is situated on the east coast of the African continent (Figure 5.1), facing the Indian Ocean. The country has large arid and semi-arid areas, particularly to the northeast, and arable land in the eastern parts, close to Lake Victoria, in its central parts and along the coast (Hitimana et al., 2021). In the late 1800s the British declared Kenya as a protectorate under British rule, and in 1920 it became a British colony. During British colonisation, much of the most productive farmland was taken by colonisers. Taxes were imposed by the colonisers with the explicit goal to force many Kenyans to seek wage labour (Okia, 2022). The British colonisers also enforced production of raw materials for a commercial market, the selling of which was controlled in favour of settlers' produce prices, negatively affecting Kenyans' ability to continue to sustain themselves through farming (Bowden & Mosley, 2010). The colonial era was signified by economic exploitation, political and cultural domination, and persisting inequality (see Atieno-Odhiambo, 1972; Bowden & Mosley, 2010). It was not the interests of the Kenyan population that was centred, but the economic development of the settlers and the colonial rulers (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1972; Bowden & Mosley, 2010).

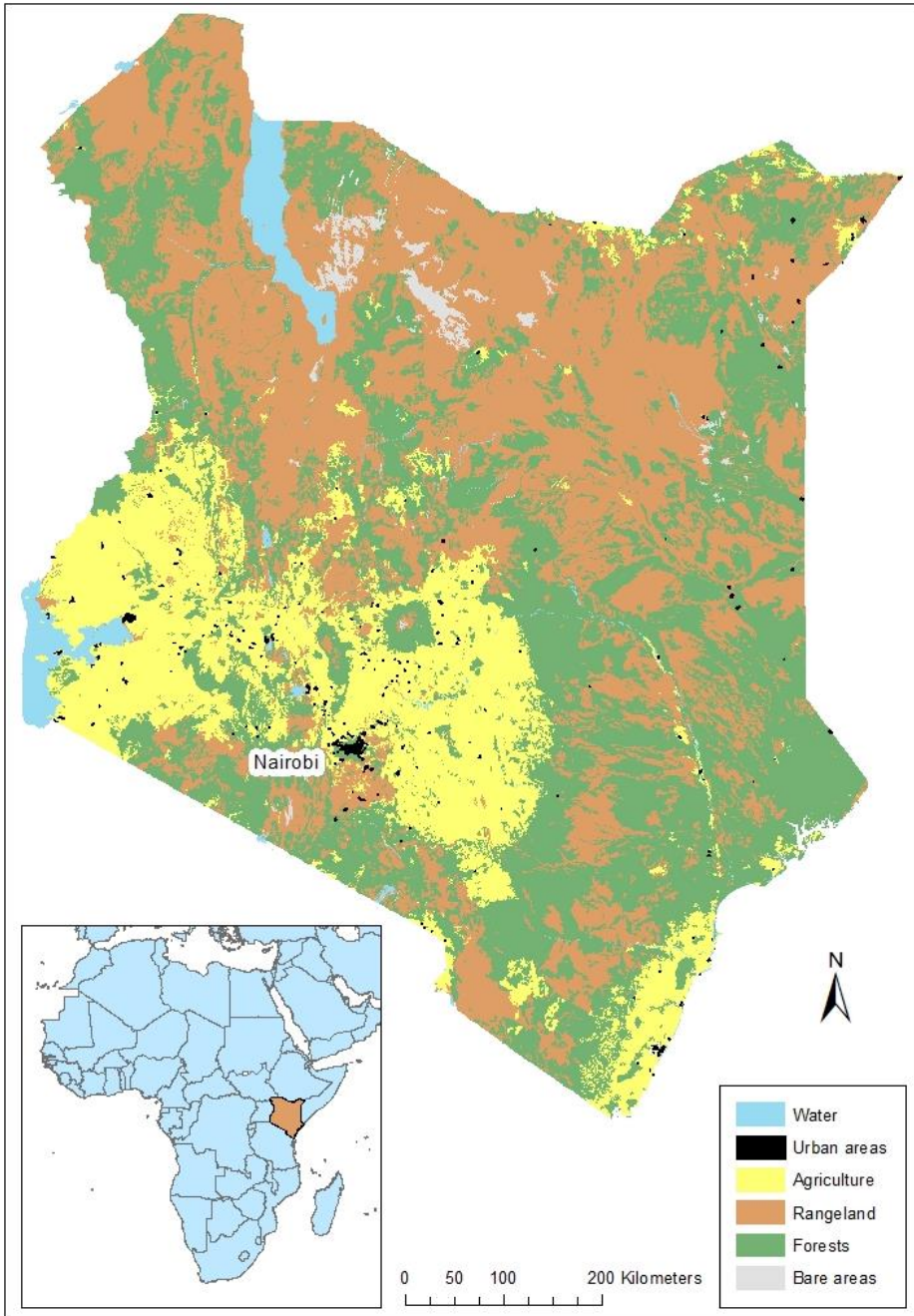


Figure 5.1: Land use and situational map of Kenya.

Source: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, AfriCover, 2000; World Bank, World Bank Official Boundaries, 2020.

In 1963, Kenya gained independence from British colonial rule, and in 1964 it became the Republic of Kenya. Before the European colonisation and dividing up of much of the African continent in 1884, what is now Kenya was, and still is, made up of many ethnic groups. The new nation wanted to build itself up by creating national unity between its many ethnic groups, and to eradicate poverty, disease and illiteracy (Musyoka-Kamere, 2021). One way to do this was through a national adaptation of *harambee* (translated to ‘pulling together’) traditionally a sort of collective self-help, harnessing resources and participation locally to fulfil local needs. Focus was on social (e.g., schooling, health facilities) and economic projects (e.g., roads, bridges), which were financed and built largely with local resources, with the promise of the State then coming in to run them. The success of *harambee* as a national strategy has been debated, however. The top-down planning created tensions and disempowerment as large-scale amenities projects were pushed rather than smaller, locally important, and engaging projects for basic production. Furthermore, as more and more projects were finished, the State’s financial burden of running the facilities built, which up to 1970 had been manageable, became unsustainable (Bigsten, 1989; Ngau, 1987).

Mounting public expenditures, economic shocks, for example, due to rising fuel prices, and large loans put Kenya, like many other countries in the Global South, in debt (Bigsten, 1989; Garrido et al., 2010). The ensuing fiscal crisis made possible international pressures for Kenya to reduce the role of the state, privatise, and liberalise trade. These pressures came in the form of SAPs, loan conditionalities, in the late 1980s (Närman, 1995; Sifuna & Oanda, 2019). I will return to these structural adjustments and how they panned out in education below, but, suffice it to say, they failed to deliver economic stability, hitting poor and vulnerable people the hardest, with adverse effects lingering still (Sifuna & Oanda, 2019).

5.2.2 Demography and economic activity

The population of Kenya has grown from around 6 million in 1960 to over 56 million in 2022 (Figure 5.2). While there is an increasing number and share of urban dwellers, the majority live in what is considered rural areas (World Bank, Health Nutrition and Population Statistics, 2022). Most densely populated are

the western, central and coastal parts of the country (Figure 5.3), where land is generally more productive.

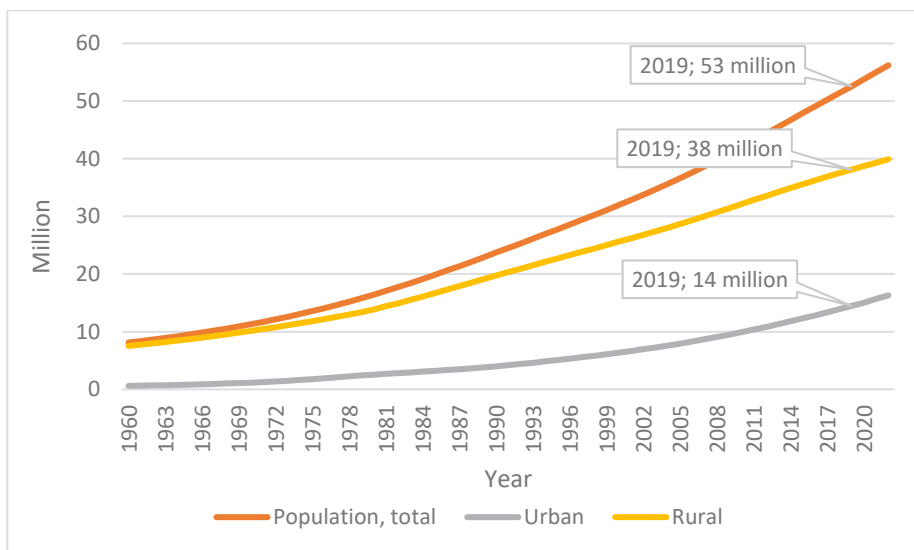


Figure 5.2: Total, rural and urban population, 1960–2022 (millions).
Source: World Bank, Health Nutrition and Population Statistics, 2022.

Historically, as a nation, Kenya has had uneven economic development, with times of strong economic growth and times of economic contraction and imbalance (Kimenyi et al., 2015; Ngau, 1987). Even in times of economic growth this has by and large failed to translate into a substantial poverty reduction, however, as there are large internal disparities persisting (Kimenyi et al., 2015). Despite Kenya becoming a lower middle-income country in 2014, it was estimated in 2015/16 that 36%, or 16.4 million Kenyans, lived in overall poverty, a figure that stood at 40% in rural areas, with peaks near 80%, for example in the sparsely populated Turkana (KNBS, 2018, pp. 294–298, 300).³¹

³² This is a problem for the country, in terms of social cohesion and job creation

³¹ Overall poverty is a national measure computed as KES 3 252 (approximately USD 26 in 2023) per month for rural areas, and KES 5 995 (approximately USD 48 in 2023) for urban areas, based on the cost of consuming basic goods and services.

³² As another, less geographically sensitive, poverty measure, the estimated percent of persons living on under USD 2.15 per day was 29%, and 86% lived on under USD 6.85 per day in 2015 (World Bank, Poverty and Inequality Platform, 2022).

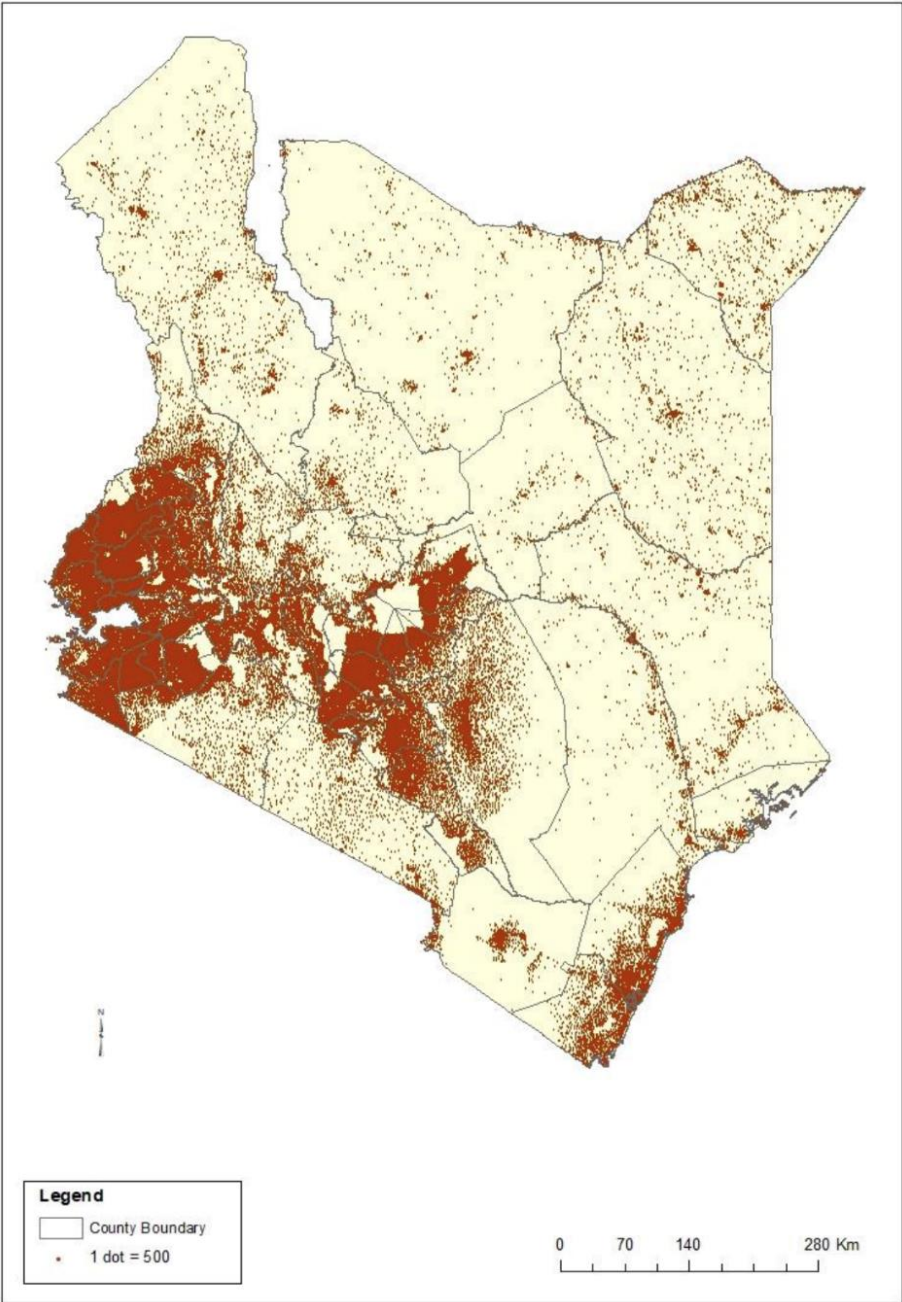


Figure 5.3: Population density, 2019.
Source: KNBS, 2019b, p. 8.

(Bowden & Mosley, 2010). It is also a problem for people, many of whom are young and struggling to find decent work, as formal employment is scarce and there is a growing casualisation and gig economy (Kimenyi et al., 2015; Sumberg et al., 2019).

Kenya has a relatively young population (Figure 5.4), resulting in a large share of the population not yet of working age depending on those of working age. The dependency ratio is declining, however, potentially making for a better economic situation for individuals, as well as for economic growth (Kimenyi et al., 2015). While Kimenyi et al. (2015) see possibilities for Kenya to gain from this demographic transition, they also note that a country needs well-functioning institutions, exemplified as bureaucratic efficiency, low corruption, functioning infrastructure (e.g., health care, education), and a formal labour market with protective laws for both workers and employers, to reap such benefits. In their paper from 2015, Kimenyi et al. are rather positive about Kenya being able to harness its lower dependency ratio, *if* the youth population can be incorporated into the labour force.

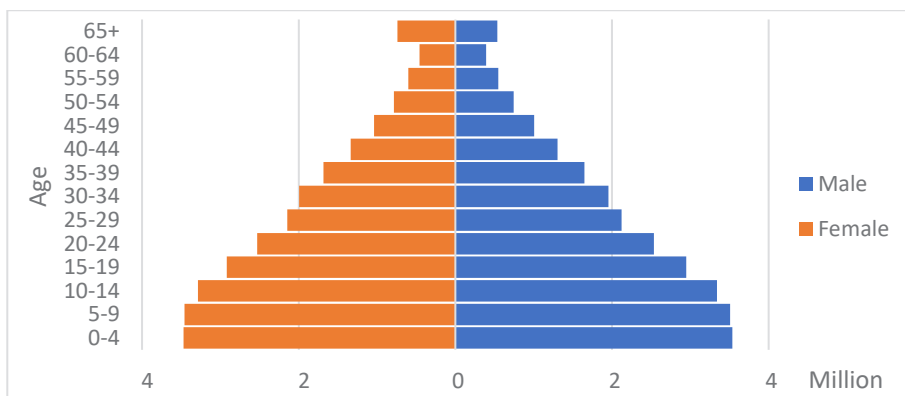


Figure 5.4: Population by age and sex, 2019.

Source: World Bank, Health Nutrition and Population Statistics, 2022.

The share of people who do not have a job and/or are looking for work stood at 12% in 2021 (KNBS, 2021). What may be more disheartening is that youth (ages 15–34) not in education, employment or training stood at 17% in the beginning of 2021, with the age group 20-24 standing out at 28% (KNBS, 2021). These figures serve as indicative, but may be higher due to underreporting. Apart from negatively affecting people’s outlooks, and the

possibilities of a population with a higher rate of working adults, the under-employment of youths may have big implications for the private schooling market, which I return to below.

In the beginning of 2021, overall labour market participation stood at 68% in the ages 15-64 (KNBS, 2021). In the formal economy, the private sector has since 1991 surpassed the public sector in terms of number of employees (Kimenyi et al., 2015). Of the 2.9 million persons in formal wage employment in 2021, 68% were employed in the private sector, primarily in 1) manufacturing; 2) agriculture, forestry and fishing; and 3) wholesale and retail trade, including repairs. Some 210 600 persons, 11%, in the private formal economy were employees in private education (all levels). Of the 923 100 persons employed in the public sector, approximately 43%, close to 400 000 persons, were employed in education (all levels), which employs most public employees. This was followed by public administration and defence at 36%, and human health and social work activities at 5% (KNBS, 2022, pp. 54–56). Education is thus a major sector both on the private and public side of formal employment.

By far outnumbering formal wage employees are those engaged in the informal economy. In 2021 it was estimated that 15,3 million Kenyans were engaged in informal economic activities (KNBS, 2022, p. 54), with the majority, 9 million, in rural areas (KNBS, 2022, p. 68). Informal activities are by KNBS (2022) defined as covering

all small-scale activities that are usually semi organized, unregulated, use low and simple technologies and employ few persons. [A] majority of the small businesses such as retailers, hawkers and other service providers are in this sector. (p. 68)

The three main categories of economic activities that persons in the informal economy are engaged in are 1) trade, hotels and restaurants; 2) manufacturing; and 3) community, social and personal services, in that order. A smaller number are engaged in transport and communication, construction, and ‘other’ activities (KNBS, 2022, p. 68). It is unclear from this data if/what kind of agricultural activities are included. It is furthermore unclear how many persons work in the informal education sector.

While Kenya is considered a lower-middle income country, there are large discrepancies in the formal economy (KNBS, 2022, pp. 61–63), and earnings in the informal economy are difficult to gauge. Recalling the prevalence of poverty and inequality, is important as we look further at the impacts of education reforms and the burgeoning marketisation of the primary school sector in Kenya.

5.3 Education in Kenya

5.3.1 Education in colonial and post-independence times

During British colonisation, education was racially segregated, inequitably distributed geographically, and “fashioned to meet the needs of the Colonial administration, the white settlers and the Missionaries” (Musyoka-Kamere, 2021, p 72; see also Närman, 1995). Africans were primed for lower cadre administrative work or as low-paid labourers in industry, if not ignored altogether, especially in less economically and agriculturally productive regions (Musyoka-Kamere, 2021; Sifuna, 2005).

Already after independence, in 1964, the country’s first Education Commission sanctioned Free Primary Education (FPE). This did however not fully materialise at the time, as there were not enough resources. In a bid to increase access to education, the Kenyan government proposed that if local communities built schools, the state would go in and provide teachers and run the schools. This was part of the *harambee* strategy. Education was prioritised in this planning, with 62% of the invested value in *harambee* projects going to education, according to Ngau (1987). The promise of government take-over and provision of teachers and learning materials did not always materialise, however, making people increasingly disillusioned (Ngau, 1987). It should also be noted, that although unity between ethnic groups was a guiding principle in policy, the uneven distribution of education in the colonial era continued, through ethnic nepotism and poorly designed policy (see, e.g., Munene & Ruto, 2015; Wainaina et al., 2011).

The first concrete steps towards FPE were taken when tuition fees were removed in some challenged regions in 1971, and when fees for class 1-4 were

abolished and fees in class 5–7 were fixed at 60 Kenya Shillings in 1974 (Musyoka-Kamere, 2021). The downside of the abolition of tuition fees without proper funding from the government was a subsequent under-funding in schools. This and increasing enrolment meant that school boards started imposing ‘building’ or ‘development’ fees to be able to operate and accommodate more pupils (Sifuna, 2005). While in 1974 enrolment had gone up from 1.8 million the previous year, to 2.8 million, some 2 million children were still out of school at that time. Still, enrolment numbers kept creeping up until the late 1980s (Figure 5.5). As mentioned above, however, the difficulty for the state of funding this growing sector under the adverse economic times of growing debt eventually got its externally crafted ‘solution’ in the shape of the SAPs.

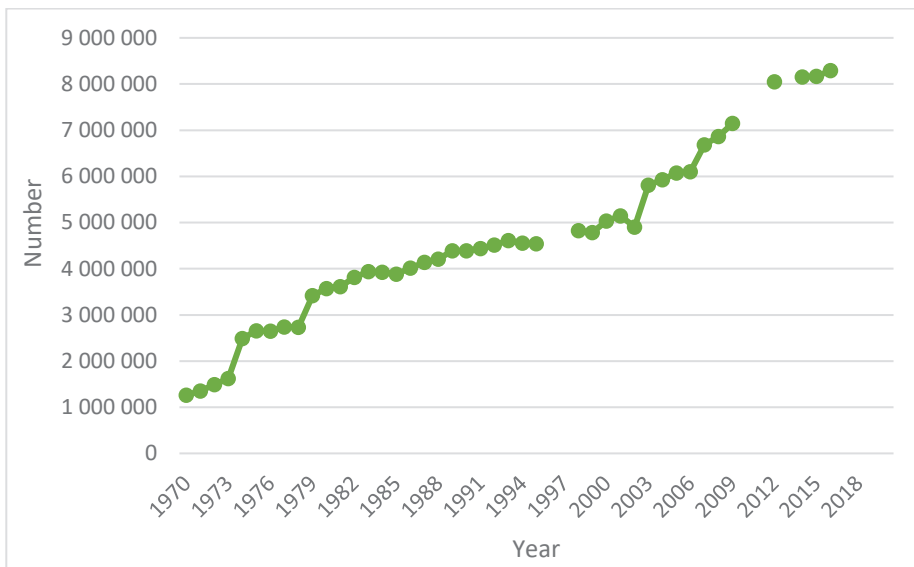
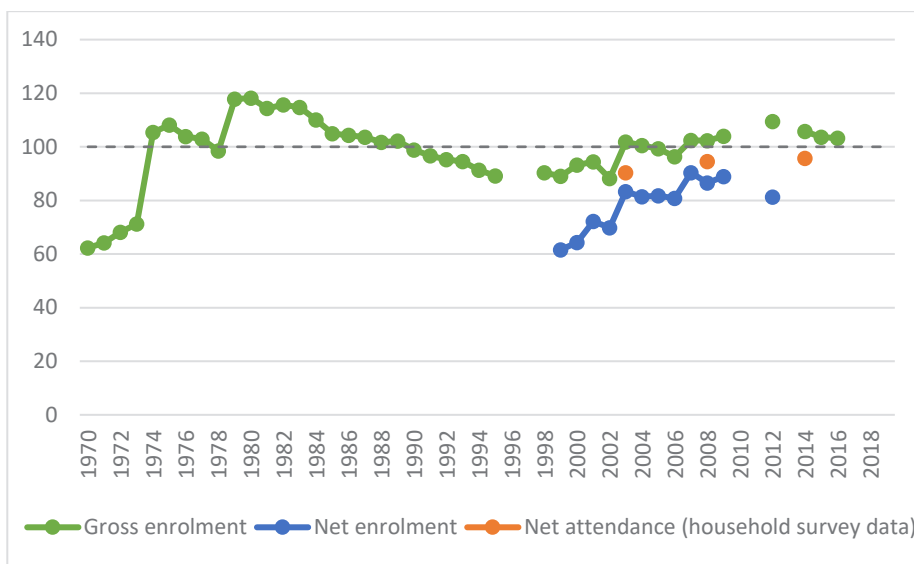


Figure 5.5: Gross enrolment numbers in primary education, 1970–2020.

Source: World Bank, Education Statistics, 2020.

The SAPs were conditionalities from the IMF and the World Bank on loans to handle Kenya’s growing economic problems. In education, this involved a cost-sharing policy being introduced in 1988. This cost-sharing meant that fees were re-instated in public schools, meaning that parents again officially had to bear part of the financial burden for education, to reduce government expenses (Sifuna, 2005). Following this policy, enrolment numbers stagnated, and enrolment rates dropped below 100% (Figure 5.5 & 5.6).



Note: The 1973/4 increase in gross enrolment rates coincides with the abolition of fees in lower grades and capped fees in later classes; the 1978/9 increase coincides with the abolition of building fees; the increase in both net and gross enrolment 2002/3 coincides with FPE (Somerset, 2007). Gross enrolment rate is the total primary school enrolment, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official primary school age population. Net enrolment rate is the percentage enrolled within the official primary school age group. Net attendance is here based on households' reported attendance within the official primary school age group.

Figure 5.6: Gross and net enrolment rates, and net attendance rate, 1970–2019 (percent).

Source: World Bank, Education Statistics, 2020.

According to advocacy groups Hakijamii and GI-ESCR (2015), private schools were uncommon prior to the 1990s. It is unclear how many of the children officially out of school following the SAPs changed to private schools. However, considering that this was a difficult economic time, and private schools also generally charge fees, it is unlikely that private schooling was a mainstream option. However, as Oduor-Noah (2021) suggests, that public schooling again officially cost money may have contributed to making possible the expansion of private schools in the 1990s and early 2000s.

5.3.2 The recent growth of private education in Kenya

Increasing enrolment

While Odour-Noah (2021) argues that “[n]on-State actors have played a significant role in education provision in East Africa since the colonial period” (p. 193), and that they have expanded since the re-introduction of fees as part of the SAPs, she also notes the increase of private actors after the abolishing of fees in 2003. That private education would increase after public education is made free may be counter intuitive, but has its explanation(s). The introduction of the FPE policy in 2003 should be seen in the light of the international community attributing education a higher status (Musyoka-Kamere, 2021). One way that this focus manifested itself was through the inclusion of “universal primary education” (UPE) in the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 (UN, n.d.a), and its adoption into national policies. After some years of stagnant and/or decreasing enrolment since fees were re-introduced in the late 1980s, with the abolition of fees in public primary schools in 2003 there was a large influx of pupils to the largely underprepared and -resourced schools. In the initial period after FPE was introduced, there was reportedly a large over-crowding, with the result that the school work environment for pupils and teachers was suffering (Abuya & Ngware, 2016). It has been found that FPE was perceived to have adverse effects on educational quality in public schools (Simmons Zuilkowski et al., 2017), which likely was the experience for the pupils already in school before the policy change. However, seen to the population as a whole, pupils’ achievements remained quite stable, as poorer districts caught up somewhat (Bold et al., 2010).

Despite reports of over-crowding, according to Bold et al. (2013), the net enrolment in public schools did not increase since 2003. At least not at the national level. Rather, there was a shift, with an influx of poorer pupils to public schools, and a ‘spill-over’ effect of (slightly) more affluent pupils to private schools (Bold et al., 2013).³³ According to data from UNESCO Institute

³³ A few studies conducted in informal settlements in Nairobi suggest geographical variability of the effects of FPE on which pupils attended which type of school. Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware and Ezeh (2010), found that poorer households in informal settlements in Nairobi rather were crowded out of public schools by ‘wealthier’ slum residents. Contrasting, or at least nuancing this, Simmons Zuilkowski et al. (2017) found that households with lower incomes more often sent their children to public schools.

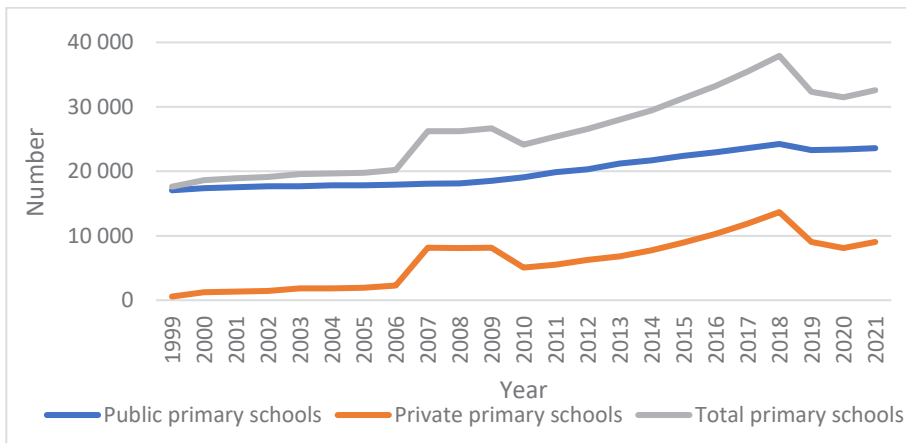
for Statistics (UIS, Education, 2022), the rate of enrolment in private primary institutions in Kenya increased from 4.5% in 2005 to 16% of total enrolment in 2014. In some areas, particularly urban informal settlements, this figure may be as high as 61% (Oketch et al., 2012). Looking at the number of enrolled pupils in primary institutions (Figure 5.5), there has been an immense increase since the 1970s. Leaps in number of enrolled pupils because of abolition of fees can, for example, be seen in the years 1973–1974 and 2002–2003. These leaps can also be seen in gross enrolment rates (i.e., all enrolled pupils as share of the appropriate age group) and the increase in 2003 can be seen in an increased net enrolment rate (i.e., share of pupils of the appropriate age group enrolled) after the introduction of FPE in 2003 (Figure 5.6). That the total net attendance rate (i.e., share of pupils of the appropriate age group reported as *attending* school) based on household surveys are higher than the official net enrolment rate may be indicative of pupils attending unregistered schools, thus not showing up in official records.

Overall, the FPE policy in Kenya has been found to be pro-poor (Bold et al., 2010; Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware & Ezech, 2010). There also appears to be consensus in the LFP schooling literature, both in Kenya and elsewhere, that over-crowding of public schools played a major role in the growth of the number of LFP schools and the ensuing “second wave” of LFP schools (Oduor-Noah, 2021; Verger et al., 2016). With the higher status accorded to education by policy makers and parents, a market grew.

Increase in private schools

Alongside the increase in enrolled pupils, there has over the years been an increase in primary education institutions (Figure 5.7). The number of private schools has seen a steeper increase than has public schools, which may then be explained by the shift of pupils from the public to the private sector (Bold et al., 2013). With many LFP schools not being registered with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) (Heyneman & Stern, 2014; Ngware et al., 2013), the figure should serve as an indication of an overall trend towards increased private schooling, rather than giving the entire picture with

regards to LFP schools.³⁴ While it is difficult to estimate the share of LFP, ‘mid-range’ and elite private schools, Bold et al. (2011b) found that the median fee paid by households was USD 40.9 per year, whereas the mean was USD 110.0, indicating that the bulk of private schools charge a relatively low fee. The reduction in number of institutions that can be seen in Figure 5.7 in 2019 and 2020, primarily in private but also in public institutions, is “partly due to intensified inspection of schools by the Ministry of Education that led to closure of schools that did not meet the requirements of the Ministry” according to KNBS (2020, p. 244). This indicates a potential shift from the laxity of enforcing regulations reported by, for example, Oduor-Noah (2021).



Note: Unregistered private primary institutions are likely not included. The 2007–2009 ‘bump’ may be because of a different definition used in the Economic Surveys of years 2008–2014. KNBS’s (2015) Economic Survey in 2015 gives “revised” (p. 40) figures for the years 2010–2013, but offers no further explanation.

Figure 5.7: Number of primary schools, 1999–2021.
Source: KNBS, 2004, 2007, 2012, 2015, 2019a, 2022.

As some of the interviewees and key informants for this project (Teacher T19; head teacher, large urban LFP school, key informant interview 12-02-2019), as well as researchers, highlight, starting new public schools and properly registering formal private schools is a rather difficult process (Heyneman & Stern, 2014; Edwards et al., 2015). This is particularly the case in densely

³⁴ Ngware et al. (2013) report that several LFP schools were registered with the Ministry of Gender and Social Services, something that Wildish (2011, p. 177) also found. The schools are then registered as self-help groups, according to Wildish.

populated areas, where size and ownership of land is a major hindrance. Non-formal schools, a category within which most LFP schools fall, are schools that resemble formal schools in terms of curriculum, but differ, for example, in terms of facilities, financing and management (MoE, 2009, pp. 8–9). To acknowledge and accommodate these schools, the Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training (APBET) policy was introduced in 2009, with an issuing of guidelines for service providers in 2015. This document was intended to give guidelines for non-formal schools, and to be a way to register even when not meeting the higher regulatory standards of formal education. The purpose was to facilitate schools in nomadic communities and challenging settings, such as urban informal settlements (MoEST, 2015). For example, APBET schools would only be required to have 30% trained teachers, but should work towards having all their teachers trained and registered with the TSC within three years (MoEST, 2015).

According to Oduor-Noah (2021, p. 195), “most registered LFP [schools] are now commonly referred to as ‘APBET schools’”. There has been controversy regarding BIA wanting to register their schools as APBET schools. BIA claimed to strive towards APBET status (BIA, 2016b), while the MoEST (August 31, 2016) claimed that BIA failed to meet requirements and should rather register as private school, cheered on by critics of BIA (EACHRights, 2017). Some organisations are furthermore critical of the APBET policy overall, as it serves to legitimise schools operating by less stringent rules, and may serve as a kind of public-private partnership, as some schools may receive government funding (Hakijamii & GI-ESCR, 2015). Other ways that LFP schools are being legitimised, which also aims to help improve the situation of millions of pupils in Kenya are through different programmes subsidising learning materials, teacher support, etc., in public and LFP schools (Edwards et al., 2015). The Kenyan government, the UN, donor organisations like USAID and DFID, and other organisations of varying size have, and in some case still do, run different programmes, like providing food and sanitary products to pupils in public and private schools.

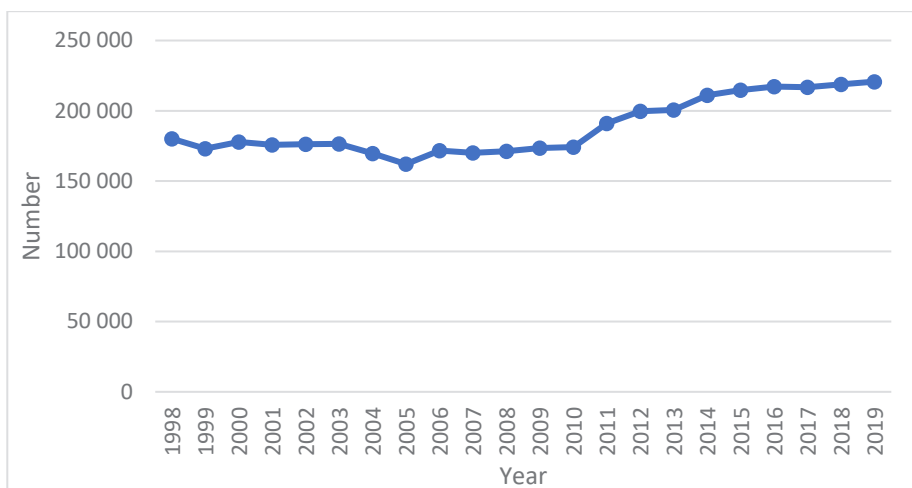
In light of more recent events, the increasing privatisation of education in Kenya can be seen as a result of parents’ demand, a decline in quality (actual or perceived) in public schools, Kenya’s acknowledgement of private service providers as part of the education landscape, and support to LFP schools. While not sufficiently researched (an exception being Andrabi et al., 2007, on

Pakistan), there appears to be another aspect in terms of resources that may have made possible the growth of a LFP school market in Kenya – the many unemployed youths and a large unemployed teaching force.

5.3.3 Current situation of Kenyan primary education teachers

Kenyan public primary schools had an average of 39 pupils per teacher in 2019 (MoEST, 2019, p. 34), but there are large disparities, with arid and semi-arid regions and urban informal settlements persistently having much higher ratios (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, 2018; Oketch & Ngware, 2010). While pupil-teacher ratios have improved in recent years, the TSC wants to be able to hire more teachers. According to the TSC, there was in 2018 a need for 38 000 primary school teachers (TSC, n.d.b). However, as funding is tight, filling that gap has so far failed to materialise, despite there being many teachers officially out of work.

To give some of the background on the current situation of Kenyan teachers, teacher salaries is the biggest post in education budgets, and, as stated above, the Kenyan government allegedly over-stretched their spending on education in the 1980s and had to scale back in the 1990s. Thus, the Kenyan government imposed a hiring freeze on teachers in 1998, except to fill vacancies because of attrition. The hiring freeze was lifted in 2010, when hiring resumed (Figure 5.8). Part of the commencement of hiring was the hiring of 18 000 contract teachers, who were paid less and had fixed term contracts. This sparked outrage from the national teachers' union, demanding full salaries and permanent contracts for all teachers (Bold et al., 2018). Still, the programme was implemented, although the government conceded to make the contract teachers permanent after one year (Bold et al., 2018). In all, the hiring freeze meant that teachers graduated between 1998 and 2010 had to wait a long time to be hired by the TSC (Bold et al., 2017). This effect is still lingering, as while the hiring freeze is now lifted, the State's budgetary allocation for teachers' salaries makes hiring to catch up with pupil enrolment figures a slow process (TSC, n.d.b).



Note: Includes teachers with certification lower than P1 certificate *before 2013*.

Figure 5.8: Number of teachers in public primary schools, 1998–2019.

Source: KNBS, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, 2020, 2022.

Despite the low rate of hiring teachers to public schools, teaching appears to be an attractive career, as there since 1999 has been an increase in teacher students enrolled to become primary school teachers every year until 2018 (Figure 5.9). The dip from 2018 is because of a new policy that teachers need a three-year Diploma in education, rather than the previous two-year P1 Certificate in education to teach in primary education. The purpose of this is to improve the quality of education. The public teacher training colleges stopped their intake in 2018, to prepare for upgrading their teacher training. Whether private Teacher Training colleges (TTCs) purposely reduced their intake for the same reason, or if the lower enrolment in 2020 is because of COVID-19 is unclear (see KNBS, 2022). What the result of the Diploma upgrade will be is at the time of writing yet to be seen.

The slow absorption of trained teachers into the public schools, and the increasing numbers of graduated teachers has led to many ‘unemployed’ teachers. According to the TSC (2019), there are nearly 460 000 registered Kenyan primary and secondary teachers not employed by the TSC, compared

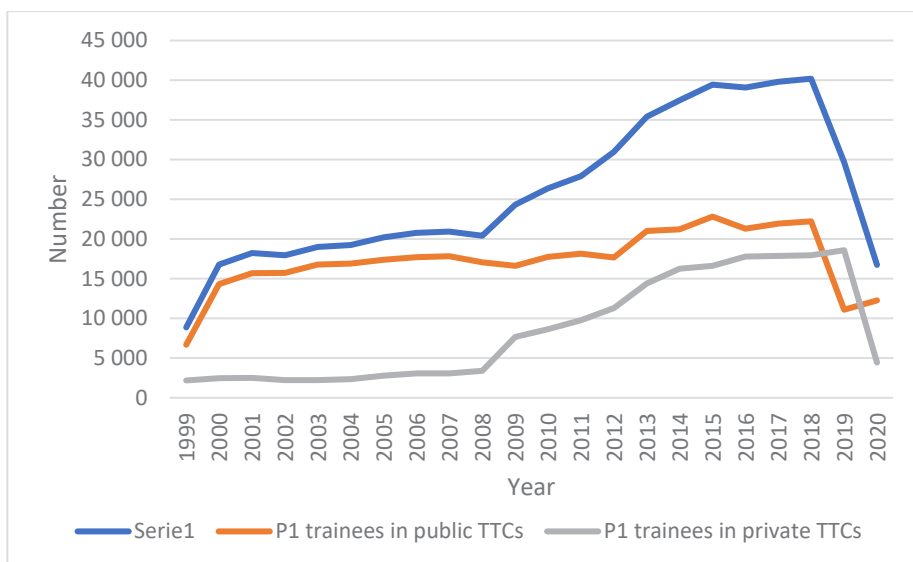


Figure 5.9: P1 teacher trainees in public and private Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) (number), 1999–2020.

Source: KNBS 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, 2020, 2022.

to some 300 000 employed by the TSC.³⁵ What the teachers not employed by the TSC are doing instead, and why they are not working as teachers, is somewhat unclear in the existing literature. However, it appears that many of the officially unemployed teachers are waiting for TSC employment (Bold et al., 2017), and are according to the KNUT likely working in private schools as they wait (KNUT representative, key informant interview, 06-03-2019; see also Chapter 6).

In addition to there being an over-supply of certified teachers waiting for TSC employment, there is the aforementioned large group of un- and underemployed youth in Kenya. This segment of the population, at least those who have gone to secondary school, may be another explanation for why the LFP school market has been able to grow, as secondary school leavers have basic education and are in need of work. Substantiating this is Andrabi et al.’s (2008) finding that women with secondary education made ‘low-cost teachers’ in Pakistani LFP schools, as well as several reports of Kenyan LFP schools

³⁵ This figure was updated on the TSC website in 2019, but has not been amended as of 2023. The figure does not disclose how many of the 458 914 non-TSC employed teachers are primary and secondary school teachers respectively.

using untrained teachers (UTs) (see, e.g., Simmons Zuilkowski et al., 2020; Wildish, 2011, pp. 236–240).

In sum, Kenya, unlike many other countries suffering from an *under-supply* of trained teachers, has a somewhat paradoxical situation of an over-supply of teachers, *and* a need for more teachers to be hired. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis, the continued training of large numbers of teachers, while only slowly increasing hires, seems like a way of having enough teachers, but not having to pay for them. While lacking research on the connection, it is not a far-fetched idea that the public-school under-staffing and the large number of ‘unemployed’ teachers and under-employed youth have at least facilitated the increase in LFP schools in Kenya.

5.4 Schooling in urban informal settlements and rural towns

5.4.1 Some general descriptions and developments

As I will not disclose the names of the areas or schools that I conducted interviews in, I will here describe and discuss informal settlements in Nairobi and rural towns in Kenya somewhat more generally, against the developments described above. I will then give an insight into what education and schools may look like when resources are scarce, based on my data collection.

The urban area chosen for this project is one of several informal settlements in the capital of Kenya, Nairobi. One explanation for why these areas reportedly have many LFP schools is that meeting requirements when starting and/or registering *formal* public or private schools in informal settlements is particularly difficult because of land ownership and size (Heyneman & Stern, 2014). As informal settlements are densely populated and few people own their plot, there is no land available without delocalising many people. LFP schools, registered as APBET or unregistered, are however generally very small and are reportedly ‘mushrooming’ in informal settlements (Stern & Heyneman, 2013). As posited above, the rise in LFP schools is a consequence of an increasing demand for education. In the informal settlement where I conducted interviews, there were only three public schools, with a couple of additional

ones on the outskirts of the area, which appears to be common (Dixon & Tooley, 2012; Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezech & Epari, 2010). As parents of younger children may in part prioritise school proximity, LFP schools are for many a readily available option in informal settlements (Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezech & Epari, 2010). This may be reflected in the increasing attendance rates especially in urban areas (Figure 5.10).

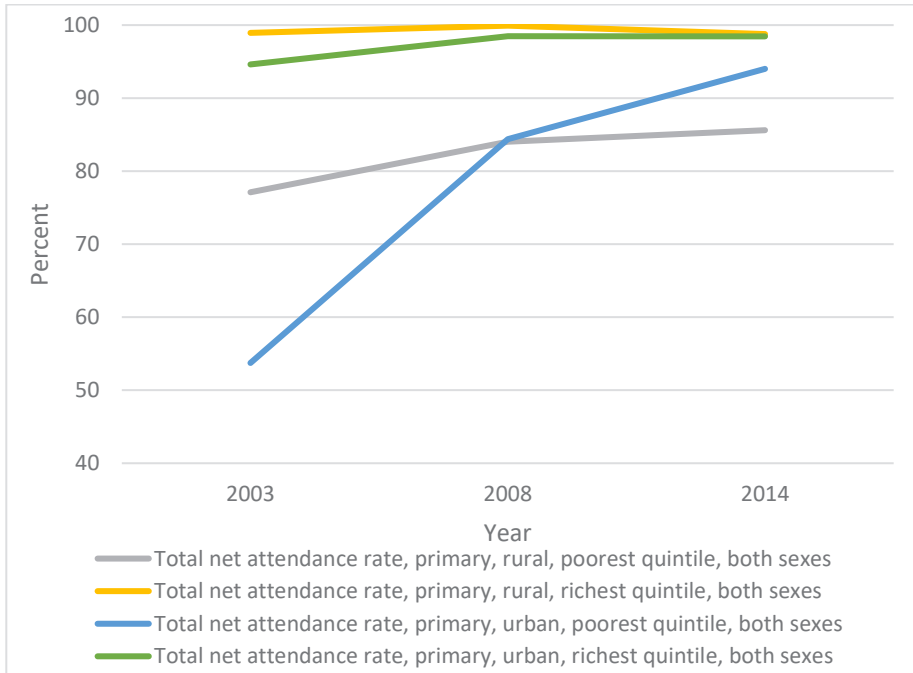


Figure 5.10: Attendance rates in primary education in Kenya by geographical location for the poorest and richest quintiles, 2003, 2008, and 2014 (percent). Source: World Bank, Education Statistics, 2020.

The rural town chosen for this study is situated in an arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) area which, apart from a few larger cities and towns, is rather sparsely populated. In the wider area live pastoralist nomads – groups of people who do not share the same goals and perceptions of education as the providers of education, according to Sifuna (2005). As can be seen in Figure 5.10, attendance rates are generally low among the poorest in rural areas, but earlier interventions to raise enrolment may have had some effect, and they were thus not as low as in urban areas at the time of FPE. Post-independence efforts to

increase enrolment and educational attainment had thus yielded some results. Such interventions included abolishing fees in the 1970s, as mentioned above, and construction of more public schools, particularly boarding schools. However, while abolishing tuition fees made a difference with regards to pastoralists' irregular and often low income, the under-funded schools started charging fees for "building funds", thus negating the potential effect of these efforts (Munene & Ruto, 2015). Furthermore, the boarding schools rather filled with non-pastoralist children, as few pastoralist communities wanted to send their children away, according to Munene and Ruto (2015). While that was long ago, as I was told when visiting a boarding school in the village, few parents from the pastoralist community could afford to pay for boarding still to this day. The situation in the rural area may thus differ from the urban area in both the demand for education, as well as the population's ability and willingness to pay for education. According to more general knowledge of teachers' and educated persons' desires for work in areas with access to services and other amenities (Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 87–108), schools in such an area may be more difficult to staff.

5.4.2 Education in resource scarce areas

The large LFP school visited in the urban area was in many regards more like a public school than it was like the smaller LFP schools. It had large grounds with sturdy brick structures, a library and a few computers. It also had rooms for administration, a social worker and staff room. The large LFP school, like several of the public schools, received some funding from donors. The remaining LFP schools were very small. They were often built out of corrugated iron and wooden poles, and sometimes some bricks as a base (Figure 5.11, 5.12 and 5.13). This made for very hot environments. There was generally little or no room to play or exercise, although the BIA schools had at least some space to run around on their fenced-in grounds.



Figure 5.11: Photo of the interior of a LFP school. The school owner pointed out that the structures were less than optimal, something the school had in common with the other small LFP schools. (Photo: Research assistant Renalda; on initiative of the school owner, bottom right; featured is also research assistant Antonette, bottom left.)



Figure 5.12: Exterior of a small LFP school chain. Colourful and cheery on the outside, but very crowded and fervent inside. Several small, open classrooms were facing against the central 20 m² 'courtyard'. The noise with the children chanting after the teachers was deafening (not in any way exclusive for this school, however). The office, also facing the courtyard, was approximately two square meters and housed a very young, unnerved manager. (Photo: Author's own.)



Figure 5.13: Photo from a BIA office. Blackboard displaying teacher names and responsibilities, hanging on a wall made of brick and mortar, sticks and corrugated iron. The roof was also made out of corrugated iron sheets, and the fabric is likely hung underneath it to give some protection against the heat, and perhaps to counteract sound levels a little. (Photo: Author's own.)

In all the schools, sound levels were, at least occasionally, very loud. During some of the interviews, it was so noisy that it was hard to make out what was being said, and I had to ask the teachers to repeat themselves. In the smaller LFP schools the sound levels were a lot louder, in part because of everything being closer together, and because of the corrugated iron walls and ceilings. In the larger schools, the public schools and the large LFP school, the classrooms were often further apart, often even in separate buildings, and/or had concrete walls, blocking out some of the sounds between them. There were also more often facilities, such as a library or an office, which we could use when conducting interviews in the larger schools. The public schools were a lot bigger (Figure 5.14) and hosted a lot more pupils, which posed their own problems, such as the acreage, number of toilets and maintenance required.



Figure 5.14: Painting of a public school in an area close to the selected urban area. The brutalist permanency of the school structures formed a stark contrast to the surrounding settlement. The public- and large LFP school in the sample were of a similar size to this school, but more often spread out in several one-story buildings. (Photo: Author's own; Painting by unknown artist)

Lacking learning materials, like books, notebooks and pencils, were a problem in all schools, though some of the BIA teachers saw less of an issue in this area, as materials are more readily provided. In some of the LFP schools the number

of books only covered the teachers, as parents could not afford to buy all the books. There were also issues of books indicating that the teacher was supposed to put on a film, or that they should use computers, when there was no equipment to use, something that also public-school teachers experienced. The situation was extra chaotic at the time of the interviews because of the changing curriculum, according to the teachers, as books had not been delivered as promised. With this short introduction to the areas and schools visited for this study, I hope to give some context to the teachers' experiences as I move on to the results.

6 Teachers' work life: what is at stake?

It's a good job. Because, one, we get money. Two, we help learners. (T26 – middle-aged, female P1 teacher, rural public school)

6.1 Introduction

Placing 'get money' before 'helping learners' in the above quotation may not have been the teacher's intention, but those two factors played the leading roles in why the interviewed teachers entered and remained in the profession. In this chapter, I will map and analyse the relations making up and shaping teachers' spaces of dependence – relations that they depend on to fulfil their essential interests. Essential interests may be understood as pertaining to the teachers' material well-being and/or sense of purpose, their needs and wants (see Cox, 1998b). By investigating teachers' interests empirically rather than taking them for granted, we can understand what is at stake in the marketisation of education from their perspective, as well as scrutinise the simplified images of LFP and public-school teachers as different breeds of teacher conveyed in previous literature. We can also recognise that social structures other than what is directly related to the marketisation of education enable and hinder teachers' fulfilment of their essential interests.

I start this chapter by addressing why the teachers chose their career, to get a sense of what they hoped to achieve and/or get out of the job. I then further examine the teachers' essential interests and their fulfilment as the teachers had started working, by looking at public and private employment relations. This is followed by considering the significance of the teachers' relations with pupils, parents, and the wider community. I then look at relations with the

teachers' union and colleagues, and how the teachers related to and depended on their sense of professionalism. These relations serve to tell us who the different teachers were, or wished to be, and enables an understanding of them as depending on relations close and distant to meet their needs to varying degrees. Understanding what the teachers had, or lacked, in their spaces of dependence is important before, in the next two chapters, I examine shifts and challenges brought on by marketisation (Chapter 7), and how the teachers navigated these (Chapter 8).

6.2 Teaching as a calling or a last resort?

6.2.1 Pursuing a calling: intrinsic and altruistic motivations

To recall Cox's (1998b) spaces of dependence, these are spaces made up by actors' social relations needed to fulfil their "material well being [sic] and sense of significance" (p. 2). One point of entry to the teachers' essential interests in their work life is through what they hoped to achieve and/or gain by becoming teachers – their prior motivations.

According to Han and Yin's (2016) extensive overview of research on teacher motivation, teachers' reasons for entering the profession often pertain to wanting to contribute to society, work with children, educate themselves further, and earn money. Many of the teachers I spoke with, in both public and LFP schools, talked of teaching being a calling. Rothmann and Hamukang'andu (2013) referred to a calling as being drawn to what is seen as meaningful by a person, which is "an end in itself and not a means to an end" (p. 4). For most of the teachers, it had been a long-term dream and goal to pursue their profession because they saw it as meaningful – for themselves and/or others. For some of the teachers, it had come as a realisation later in life, and they had then changed careers to work with children and to do something they regarded as valuable (T19). Several teachers came from teaching families (T1, T4, T6, T7, T13, T22, T25, T30). While two teachers from such a background mentioned pressure from their parents to pursue a teaching career, most found motivation in the admiration of their family members' work. Other teachers similarly found their way into teaching through the appreciation of the teachers whom they had as children. The admiration of other teachers as a

reason spans what Han and Yin (2016) have called altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations. Status, an extrinsic motivation, appeared to be important. However, this was intermingled with perceptions of the profession as ‘noble’ (T6, T13) and worthwhile – motivations signifying that they saw it as having value (versus what others saw as valuable) for themselves and other people.

For a few interviewees, it was the opposite of admiration for teachers whom they had encountered as pupils that made them enter the profession:

I had that feeling, that “I need to be a teacher”. [...] I learned in one of the remote regions in the countryside, and I just liked studying, though our teachers were not that hard working, [...] and then the morals... There were those who would drink [...]. So, I felt that “if I grow up I shall be a teacher that has good morals and can be a role model to the pupils”. (T21 – young, male P1 BoM-teacher, rural public school)

For this teacher, and a few others like him, teachers were not necessarily well regarded, but the profession itself held the promise of being meaningful. To the teachers who said that they had entered the profession as a calling, the prospective relations with pupils, wanting to give, and wanting to be a positive role model were essential in their decision.

These findings nuance Han and Yin’s (2016) findings among a small number of studies from the Global South on pre-service teachers’ motivations. Han and Yin (2016) reported that extrinsic motivations, such as pay and job security, are often more highly valued in low- and middle-income countries. What I found, similar to Moses et al. (2017) in their study of Tanzanian teachers, was that intrinsic motivations, such as finding the job meaningful in itself, were not uncommon among the teachers interviewed. However, considering the high prevalence of poverty and low availability of formal employment in Kenya, as in many African countries (see Sumberg et al., 2019), it is hardly surprising that having *any* paying career may also serve as motivation to start teaching.

6.2.2 Reluctantly choosing teaching: extrinsic motivations

Indeed, not all trained teachers had entered the profession because it was their preference (T1, T2, T9, T11, T12, T15, T25, T33). Some had wanted to become nurses, doctors, neurosurgeons, pharmacists, police officers and accountants. Becoming a teacher could even be “the last option” (T11) or even what they “never wanted to be” (T15). After finishing form 4,³⁶ these teachers had come to a fork in the road where they had to weigh up their options:

I didn't want to get into teaching. I was so much into accounts, [but]... due to financial constraints... Teaching is a little bit cheaper. So that's how I went into teaching. Against my [intentions]. But I just went because it was available. (T9 – young, male P1 teacher, urban public school)

Of the trained teachers who had had other careers as their preference, teacher education being cheaper than their desired options, and/or having a low entry grade (a mean of C on an A–E scale) were the main reasons given for choosing teaching. Some said that they had been pressured by their family. In that way, the reluctant teachers took the more/only feasible chance of waged employment, starting to form relations that would allow them to earn an income and eventually secure public employment. What was clear in this group of teachers is that they wanted, or were expected, to go on to further studies – even if it meant picking the ‘last option’. For them, and/or their family, ‘only’ finishing form 4 or going into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) was not an option. Such contextual and socio–economic factors also play a role in why people become teachers (see Han & Yin, 2016). These teachers were, in accordance with findings from the Global South in Han and Yin’s (2016) review, primarily externally motivated by material well-being, and/or were to some degree forced by social structures and available resources. These teachers also spoke of the positive values of their relations with the pupils, but, as I will show, such sentiments rather came when they had already started training and/or working.

³⁶ Form 4 is the fourth and final year of secondary education in the 8-4-4 system, with eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education and four years of university education. The 8-4-4 system had started being phased out at the time of the interviews, replaced with the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC), with two years in pre-primary, six years in primary, three years in junior secondary, three years in senior secondary, and three or more years university education.

As Tao (2013) pointed out, earning an income may allow teachers to fulfil other essential interests, such as taking care of their family, living in a satisfactory home, and feeling respected. I return to the teachers' views of their social and material essential interests below. First, I will pay some attention to a mode, rather than a motivation, of beginning teaching that is relevant in the context of LFP schooling: the untrained teacher.

6.2.3 Untrained teacher by need, as giving back, or as a calling

Among the teachers I spoke with, there were several certified teachers who had started teaching without formal training, and there were four LFP-school teachers who were untrained or in training at the time of the interviews. The older, previously untrained teachers (UTs) had started working in public schools, whereas the younger UTs had started in private schools. According to Wildish (2011, p. 240), UTs were common in Kenyan public schools before the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE). However, in the FPE policy, UTs were no longer allowed in public schools.

For some of the UTs, teaching had been/was simply a way to make some money in a time of need:

[Teaching] was a side hustle. You know, after form 4 you need your own money, so you need to work. (T29 – middle-age, female diploma teacher, rural public school)

This teacher, similar to the reluctant teachers above, went into teaching only as a viable option to get by, motivated and pushed by external factors. The difference was that the reluctant, or happenstance, UTs had started teaching only because the opportunity presented itself, through connections or a job advertisement. They had less of an intention, or opportunity, to build a career. Rather, their choice was described more as a non-committal, short-term gig, often in the local community.

For yet others, working as a UT was described as a “passion” (T4) sought out, or a desire to give back to their community and/or the specific school in which they had been educated:

When I finished [...] my form 4 course, I just went back to give my service to my society where I had been learning. So, I went to that school. (T20 – young, male P1-student, small urban LFP school)

For the teachers like T20, who had gone back to teach in the schools they had attended as children, there were reasons for wanting to teach that built on local relations. Some UTs had also started as local volunteers, again showing that reasons other than money, such as ‘giving back’, were highly valued by many of the teachers. Again, this nuances the findings of Han and Yin (2016) that teachers in the Global South mostly value extrinsic factors, such as earning an income.

For the interviewed teachers who entered teaching as UTs, whether from a calling or by necessity, this served as a steppingstone towards becoming certified teachers. Apart from T16, who was pursuing an engineering career, they all either went on to train as teachers or said that they hoped to do so in the future. T20, above, continued on to say:

Now, from there, from the interaction with the pupils I was teaching, I got interested [...] and I thought “that’s a career for me”, because I like handling kids, just playing with them and passing knowledge to them. That is why I chose to go for teaching. (T20 – young, male P1-student, small urban LFP school)

The above quotation indicates that working as UTs had given them insights into themselves and what they were capable of, as well as into what they came to regard as core values of the profession. In particular, they all spoke of finding joy in the relationships they had formed with their pupils. In this way, they found both intrinsic and altruistic motivations, and thus a sense of significance through their work, which I return to below. Again, this does not preclude the importance of pay and career, which was also discussed as important, but it does tell stories of also finding meaning in work through social relations.

6.2.4 A heterogeneous mix of motivations across schools and areas

The purpose of this exercise was not to judge the reasons for entering teaching

against one another, but to get a sense of what expectations the different teachers had and hoped to fulfil through the job. There were no discernible differences between public and private, trained and untrained, urban and rural teachers in whether they pursued teaching primarily for material reasons or out of a desire for significance. In this sense, the teachers in public and LFP schools were not so different overall. This means that, at least in Kenya and many other African countries where the LFP-school teachers of today are likely the public-school teachers of tomorrow (see Barton et al., 2017, Crawford & Pugatch, 2020), public- and LFP-school teachers are not necessarily different in their essential interests in their work lives. One difference that would potentially speak of some kind of shift in motivations among the teachers, however, was that among the reluctant teachers, all were comparatively young. Whether this was because the older teachers experienced something resembling the sunk cost fallacy, or because reluctant senior teachers had quit and were thus not sampled, I cannot say. Neither can I say whether it is because young teachers are deterred by the slow career prospects, have higher aspirations than teaching (see, e.g., Ansell et al., 2020), are more outspoken, or have their decisions more fresh in their minds. Furthermore, as the sample is small, particularly of senior teachers, no generalisations about such a generational shift in motivation can be made. Still, it does pose the question of whether new teachers are less intrinsically motivated today than they were before.

What did become evident, however, was that the interviewed teachers' spaces of dependence were not a readymade set of relations with which to sustain themselves and pursue their desired lives from the start. Rather, becoming a teacher was one way to (start to) create such relations, from budding essential interests in a career, a secure income, to making a difference for pupils, and so forth. For others, there were social relations, for example, in a school, through which they began to discern essential interests to be fulfilled. Cox (1998b) acknowledged that spaces of dependence may change with time, but, as he was primarily interested in how and why they are defended at a particular moment in time, he did not delve deeper into how actors' spaces of dependence are shaped by decisions made and constraints faced over time. Furthermore, Cox (1998b) acknowledged essential interests other than those purely relating to income earning, and it becomes clear here that teachers begin to create their particular spaces of dependence by seeking out social relations both to meet their material needs and to find a sense of significance. As I will show in this chapter, this has a bearing on how they continued to shape their work lives,

and, in the coming chapters, on what they perceived as challenging and worth defending. In the next section, I will look at the teachers' different employment relations and what these meant for their spaces of dependence, as well as for what they described as essential interests, as they continued to navigate their work life.

6.3 Employment relations shaping spaces of dependence

6.3.1 Public employment: desired and prioritised

Public teaching positions were dearly wanted by all the interviewed teachers not already employed by the TSC, except for T19, who ran his own LFP school, and T16, the engineering student. To get a sense of what the teachers coveted, the essential interests that they could or wanted to fulfil through such a position, I start with the employment relations in public employment.

Stability and progression, or the promise thereof

According to the interviewed teachers, public employment was preferred because it pays better than teaching in private schools, and, more importantly, it comes with benefits, such as retirement funds, and there is very high job security (see also Barton et al., 2017; TSC, 2015, pp. 65–66).³⁷ This was something both public- and private-school teachers largely agreed on. While few public-school teachers thought that their pay was enough, they valued that they got paid regularly. The TSC teachers further said that this steady income and job security allowed them to take loans, join a savings and credit cooperative (SACCO), and made it possible to plan for a (more) comfortable retirement at age 60.

³⁷ Job security in public-school employment means that teachers cannot, or at least should not, be disciplined or fired without a formal process, in which they are given the chance to respond to the allegations (TSC, 2014).

The financial security of a public employment relation could allow for the realisation of several essential interests in life and work:

What I think is... maybe when you are financially stable, your children are fine, [...] you eat well, you don't struggle in life, at least then you can have peace of mind when you come to school, and you become a good teacher. (T11 – young, female P1 teacher, urban public school)

When asked whether that was her experience, T11 said that she “somewhat can't complain”, although she was not entirely happy with her pay. Still, her public employment made it possible to fulfil needs outside of work and have a more peaceful life and peace of mind, which in turn were felt to generate good outcomes at work. This is something that Tao (2013) also found, in her study of what hampered Tanzanian teachers' job performance. In the present study, teachers said it was important to have the means to support their family and themselves, just as it was important to be good teachers, and the two fed into each other.

The TSC is the central government agency responsible for hiring, posting, and disciplining teachers in public positions in all of Kenya, in part through its decentralised county branches and administrative staff at the schools (TSC, n.d.c). Initiating relations with the TSC as one's employer starts with registration, for which primary school teachers need a P1 certificate and other documentation of their education. Though registration appears quite straightforward, especially as grades and certificates are slowly being digitalised, there may be problems for individual teachers if they do not have all their original documentation. T33, a young female P1 teacher working in the rural BIA, said that the reason that she was still working there was because she had misplaced her form 4 and primary school certificates and had thus been unable to register.

After registering, teachers can apply for advertised public postings, then wait and hope for a position. The hiring of public-school teachers is based primarily on years since graduation, then merits (qualifications and grades from teacher education), according to Barton et al. (2017). Still, many of the teachers used words like ‘luck’ regarding postings and waiting times, and some aired suspicions of the hiring, promotion, and transfer of teachers being unfair:

It's very hard [becoming employed by the TSC], because of corruption. Like, in this school we have three trained [BoM] teachers, they're not yet employed [by the TSC]. They take their papers to the concerned parties, but they are not being absorbed, because the employer already has his or her own teacher whom he or she wants to deploy somewhere. (T26 – middle-aged, female P1 teacher, rural public school)

Though the teachers had no hard evidence, their suspicions chime with Barton et al.'s (2017) findings that District Education Officers (DEOs) often disregarded the algorithm for hiring in favour of applicants of their choosing. Problems with corruption may thus affect the teachers' ability to fulfil their needs and desires, if these indeed delay their hiring. Furthermore, even if the corruption exists primarily in suspicions and rumours, reports of which are numerous in the literature (see, e.g., Barton et al., 2017; Taaliu, 2010, pp. 60–63), this brought uncertainty and negatively affected the teachers' trust in their employer.

In public employment, there is also a promotional ladder, based on experience and further education. Many of the public-school teachers with some experience talked of different ways to specialise, or study for a higher degree, if they had not already done so. Promotions were motivating for many teachers who had served in public schools for some years. Promotions, especially to administrative positions, mean increased responsibilities, as well as a higher salary, increased professional autonomy, and influence in the workplace, as two of the more senior public-school teachers interviewed attested to (T22 and T30). However, some believed that there was corruption in this system as well:

I've really stagnated. Because, you see, in [administrative positions] you are supposed to finish three years to [be promoted] to a higher level. But me, I've stagnated as a senior teacher for 13 years. [...] Careers are there, but there is corruption in [the system]. You can be shortlisted, you see your name, you do the interview, but nothing happens. Yeah. So that is the most frustrating thing I am undergoing.

And that problem is on which level? The school or...?

It is within the County, because now people of my... the ones I came with from college, they qualify. You see, at home there is no corruption. Once the names come to TSC it's like that. But here [in Nairobi], whom do you know?

Is it expected that you should also pay something?

Yeah, that is what they want. But I can't pay for something I deserve. I can't. (T22 – senior, female P1 senior teacher, urban public school)

Not being promoted as she felt she deserved made T22 feel cheated by the system and lose ambition, mirroring Verger and Altinyelken's (2013) findings that promotions can be motivating for teachers. However, even though that lack of trust in the fairness of the system negatively affected some teachers' motivation, the long-term financial security and potential for career progression made employment with the TSC very desirable. Promotions were connected to a sense of being appreciated and recognised, providing external motivation, related to both material well-being and esteem in the eyes of others and themselves. It was also connected to mobility: to move 'up', the teachers reported that they likely had to move to a post in another school.

Geography of postings: serving anywhere safe

When applying for vacancies in a desired county, centrally managed TSC teachers may be posted anywhere in the country upon acceptance and promotion (see, e.g., TSC, 2022), and may at any time be transferred to another posting (TSC, 2014, p. 39). The reason for this is to achieve “equity in the distribution and optimal utilization of teachers; and [provide] qualified and competent service” (TSC, 2014, p. 36).³⁸ Staffing certain areas of a country is harder than staffing others (Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 87–108). According to Boyd et al. (2005), US teachers tend to favour working in the areas where they grew up, or in areas similar to where they grew up. Moreover, the attraction of more affluent urban areas, was found by Luschei and Chudgar (2017, pp. 95–97) in case studies in India, Mexico and Tanzania. Thus, when market dynamics decide teachers' deployment and pay, poorer and more remote areas struggle to hire certified teachers, as they often produce fewer or

³⁸ A recent case of a vocal and critical teacher starting a dissident union being transferred to a remote area over a weekend suggests that transfers can also be punitive (AllAfrica, November 18, 2021). Luschei and Chudgar (2017, p. 76) also note that transfers may be a way of punishing 'bad' teachers, often to the detriment of pupils in areas that are less attractive to teach in.

no teacher candidates and fail to pay enough to attract ‘outsiders’ (Luschei & Chudgar 2017, pp. 20, 95, 119–120; Härmä, 2016; Andrabi et al., 2008).

Some teachers suggested that postings and transfers were a way to stave off homogeneous groupings and what they referred to as ‘tribalism’. Regardless of whether that was really the rationale, or whether it was to achieve equity in the distribution of education, the policy on postings was to the teachers, both those already employed by the TSC and those aspiring to become so, such an integral part of the job that it was almost a non-issue. This essentially made their (potential) spaces of dependence related to employment national in scope: they could, with some caveats, substitute one workplace for another, within the nation. In answer to my questions about the importance of place (“Where would you like to work/live?”, “Do you want to continue working/living here?”, etc.), the teachers patiently explained that they would accept any posting, because that was the system, because “change [was] as good as rest” (T10), because it was good to learn about other places, and because they regarded all pupils as their responsibility as teachers. In particular, the last argument for moving was often repeated.

I interpret that last reason as a sanctioning rule adopted in part as a constituting rule: the teachers had to move, or face consequences, but the teachers also, at least in their reasoning, connected it to teaching as servitude. This was expressed as a matter of doing good for pupils regardless of the place. Thus, being a teacher was a (nearly) national commitment *and* national dependency. In other words, public-school teachers would be required/able to substitute their employment in one place with employment in another, anywhere within Kenya. Such a wide-ranging space of dependence is uncommon in Cox’s (1998b) use of the concept. That may be because of his interest particularly in how social relations like those of work are threatened by local events, rather than in migration for work to avoid precarity, which has garnered more attention in more recent years (see, e.g., Strauss, 2018). What makes teachers stand out compared with many other labour migrants is that the Kenyan government, like, for example, Ugandan and Australian governments (see Mulkeen & Chen, 2008, pp. 22–26; Lassig et al., 2015), uses a mix of carrots and sticks to staff less attractive areas and schools. From the interviews, it appeared that the relatively attractive wages and job security, combined with ideas about why moving was good, shaped the teachers’ acceptance of moving.

The one thing prioritised over a public posting was physical safety, putting unsafe areas outside the teachers' potential spaces of dependence. This view was expressed by all but two young male teachers. While a few of the teachers in the urban area said that they at times felt unsafe on their way to work, due to the risk of robberies, that risk was not considered serious enough for any of the interviewed teachers to give a public posting up.³⁹ One public-school teacher, who had previously worked in an upscale private school in a well-off area in Nairobi, recounted her happiness turning to despair when receiving her first posting letter to the informal urban settlement in Nairobi. The teacher had never been to the area of the school. She only knew bad things about it from the media, and could at first not decide how to handle the posting:

I stayed with the letter for seven days, deciding on what to do. "Do I go and [try to get another posting]?" But then something came and touched me. "Remember the Bible says... you looked for that job and you got it. So, you go and work. [...]" So, one day I decided to go. [...] When I arrived here... That time they had the then new building... The office was up there... So, I talked to [the head teacher], and in fact she encouraged me. [...] "It's a good place, you have to work here". I got encouraged, and then I carried on. (T6 – middle-age, female P1 teacher, urban public school)

T6 had been working in the school for nine years at the time of the interview. Like several other, primarily older, teachers, she was a devout Christian and found strength and resolve in her faith. She also found, upon meeting the head teacher at the school, that she would be able to do good and build relations in that school too. In that way, this teacher's fears of the area were trumped by the promise of sound leadership and the prospect of doing what she had set out to do, which is in line with the findings of Singh (2021), Casely-Hayford et al. (2022), and Tao (2013). Her decision should, however, also be understood against the risk of losing the TSC position, and then having to wait a long time in her comfortable, but insecure and less well-paid private school employment, for another chance to get a TSC position.

³⁹ There may, however, be a certain bias in the interviews, as those interviewed had chosen to remain despite perceived challenges, and no 'leavers' were interviewed. As T6 told of teachers being stationed in her school in the informal settlement and immediately requesting transfer out of there, what perceived level of risk is acceptable may differ between teachers.

If an area was perceived as safe, the teachers were prepared to uproot their families or move on their own, as the primary relation allowing them a better chance to sustain themselves/their families would still be in place: their employment. Several of the TSC teachers lived apart from some of or all their immediate families, such as this teacher, who had been granted a transfer to her home area after years of waiting, but whose husband was still awaiting his transfer:

Ok, my husband works somewhere else, he's a teacher as well, so we are not together. It's not all that good, but I have to work to make ends meet. (T23 – middle-age, female diploma teacher, rural public school)

Considering that many Kenyans migrate for work over varying time-spans, spatially spread out families are quite common (see, e.g., Kuiper & Greiner, 2021; Mberu et al., 2013). Deciding to stick it out shows that some essential interests trumped others, forcing T23 and her teacher husband to accept and prioritise their employment relations to maintain them, to keep 'making ends meet'. Substituting the relation of public employment with private employment was not an option financially, although living apart made it hard to pool resources to obtain satisfactory (meaning comfortable, peaceful, and safe) housing and other family needs.

Transfers within public employment were possible but required luck: Would there be vacancies in the desired areas, as well as teachers to replace them at the schools they moved from? The public-school teachers were thus 'locked in', often for several years. The teachers' spaces of dependence, and those of their families, may in cases like the one above be only partially overlapping. While the teachers may be able to care for their family members through "the symbolic act of providing [financially]" (Tao, 2013, p. 4), and stay in touch via phone and visits, some essential interests and values, such as physical care, can only be realised in place. The public employment system in this way both enabled fulfilling some essential interests, while prohibiting or making others difficult.

Distant and mediated relations with the employer: frames and freedom

Many scholars indicate that teachers' ability to fulfil their essential interests in work are dependent on relations with management (see, e.g., Bocking, 2017, pp. 42–43; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022; Tao, 2013). TSC-employed teachers have a hierarchical structure above them that affects their working conditions and employment in different ways. The TSC-employed teachers mentioned the TSC primarily when they spoke of postings and earnings. Their relationship with the distant, centralised TSC was essentially of a contractual and bureaucratic nature, as noted above. The teachers could depend on the relation for long-term financial stability, due to the stable employment contract, but the teachers had little control and say in the relationship. Organisationally closer to the teachers were the District Education Officers (DEOs), as well as Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) and Quality Assessment and Standards Officers (QASOs). These decentralised arms of the Ministry of Education are tasked with ensuring that schools and teachers comply with regulations and fulfil their mandate, and could in the process affect the teachers' sense of efficacy and motivation both positively and negatively, as I will show in the next chapter (Chapter 7). However, with reportedly few interactions, the officers appeared to have little overall impact on the dependability of the employment relation for teachers.

The teachers rarely spoke of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), of which the TSC is part. They more often spoke of the government, of which the ministry is part, when lamenting their everyday workload, learning materials, infrastructure, the 'imposition' (the word of choice of many teachers) of the new curriculum, etc. While feeling trusted, signified by having a job, the teachers spoke of the government as negatively affecting their sense of value, because of their low pay, and as it was felt that education was not prioritised in terms of spending. According to Casely-Hayford et al. (2022), there are indications that contextual factors, such as job resources and job demands, affect individual factors, such as teachers' motivation and well-being (see also Tao, 2013). While the public-school teachers expressed intrinsic and altruistic motivations for doing their job, they also expressed being hard pressed to fulfil their essential interests in terms of doing a good job, primarily because of lack of resources. As with extrinsic motivations, discussed above, the employment relation and the context it provided enabled the partial fulfilment of essential interests.

The administrative staff in the public schools more directly affected the public-school teachers' everyday work and well-being, but less so their employment, judging by the teachers' accounts. While being the teachers' closest link to the employer, the relationships with administrative staff were often, though not always, of a more collegial nature, concerning the everyday operations of the school. The public-school teachers' work had to be anchored with 'the office' (T29), but with trust and/or lack of leadership, they were 'free in the classroom'. Being free in the classroom meant that the teachers had a level of professional autonomy to make judgement calls based on their knowledge of their students and the subject (see Bocking, 2017, pp. 42–43). However, as the teachers pointed out, they were free within the constraints of school rules and the curriculum, and, as surfaced in the interviews, within the constraints of the resources available to them and their pupils.

Still, while being free in the classroom, it was important for the teachers' work and their well-being to feel that they had support, inside and outside the classroom:

I find the head teacher is a link, or a bridge. Since I began here, she's been... I don't even know how to say it, because it's like she's my mother, someone [...] to guide you and give you direction. [...] So, to me [...] it is a good relationship that creates a very good working environment, creates a conducive learning situation, in which everyone feels at home. (T10 – middle-age, male P1 teacher, urban public school)

Though not all public-school teachers described these work relations in as cordial terms, there was no mistaking the importance of feeling 'at home' and supported, both for the teachers' peace of mind and for being able to do a good job. When these relations were good, they had a positive influence on the teachers' sense of professionalism, confidence, and well-being. A positive social climate and support are things that Casely-Hayford et al. (2022) reported may be particularly important for novice teachers, which I saw indications of in the interviews. This was often connected to a feeling of lack of knowledge in a particular subject.

In all, the teachers' extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivations for becoming teachers to some degree could be fulfilled through their employment relations. These came with the risk of de-localisation, which highlighted the teachers'

need for safety, but also how moving is seen as part of what it means to serve as a teacher. Next, I will look at the relations of private employment.

6.3.2 Less favourable, but available, non-state employment relations

As mentioned above, the privately employed teachers were essentially waiting for a public posting. While private employment was less desirable than public employment, which I will explore at greater depth in the next chapter, as I discuss challenges, I will here outline the privately employed teachers' essential interests and how they could depend on their employment relation for their (partial) realisation.

The geography of waiting for greener pastures: steps towards fulfilling wants and needs

For many newly graduated teachers, waiting for public employment means working in private schools, or in public schools as teachers hired by the Board of Management (BoM) or as intern teachers hired by the TSC.⁴⁰ For UTs, employment in private schools or by public schools' BoMs are the only options, as the TSC will not hire unqualified teachers for internships.⁴¹ In this section, unless there are differences that are important to distinguish, all non-TSC teachers will be referred to as 'privately employed teachers' or 'the teachers'.

Although the sample is small and does not include all years of graduation, the career progression of all the interviewed teachers gives an indication of the state of the teachers' labour market. Of the trained teachers, those graduated before 2004 had only worked in public schools. By comparison, the teachers graduated between 2005 and 2009 had all started out in private employment,

⁴⁰ BoM teachers are hired by the boards of the public schools in question, funded by parents and/or sponsors, whereas internships are sought through the TSC. BoM teachers' pay varies with schools/parents' ability to pay, whereas intern teachers reportedly earn KES 15 000 (USD 149) per month (TSC, 2020). I did not meet or interview any intern teachers.

⁴¹ The BoM teachers interviewed were all trained teachers, but according to a report by the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2020), BoM teachers in Kenya overall are among the least educated in Sub-Saharan Africa.

and none of the teachers graduated from 2009 and onwards had yet been taken up by the TSC by the time of the interviews in early 2019. To substantiate this further, Barton et al. (2017) found that 25% of 1 157 sampled applicants for TSC positions in 2010 had waited for eight years or more since graduation.⁴²

To start working as a privately employed teacher before being hired by the TSC was, for younger teachers, indeed a wait for the more desirable public employment. However, it was also emphasised by the trained teachers as a chance to put their professional knowledge to use and do the job that they had set out to do:

I've been trained as a teacher. And I've been given a chance to teach here. My business here is to help the learner become somebody, just the way I am or better than me. (T5 – young, male P1 teacher, large urban LFP school)

The relations with pupils and feeling as though they were doing something worthwhile during their wait for public employment were prominent in most interviews, again showing that intrinsic and altruistic motivations were important in the teachers' decision making. This did not exclude extrinsic motivations, such as the need to start earning an income – albeit smaller than needed and wanted. As I will show in the next chapter, the privately employed teachers had significantly lower pay than the public-school teachers, no formal job security, and dreaded the difficult situation of suddenly being without income for rent and other necessities. Their possibility of covering their material needs through private employment were thus worse than that of public-school teachers (see also, e.g., Edwards et al., 2015).

However, with some 300 000 teachers outside of public employment (TSC, 2019), as well as competition from UTs, it was surprising to learn that teachers in both areas reported that finding work in LFP schools was easy. The teachers put this down to there being so many LFP schools, especially in the urban area. Furthermore, as Edwards et al. (2015) also found, the teachers spoke of the high mobility of teachers in these schools:

⁴² In 2010, it was the end of a hiring freeze, but with a backlog of some 300 000 trained teachers and only a slow increase in the total number of TSC teachers (KNBS, 2020, p. 251; TSC, 2019), it is unlikely that the waiting period should have diminished since 2010.

Actually, even if I go and look now, I will get [a job]. These private schools, they are always looking for teachers. (T1 – young, female P1 teacher, large urban LFP school)

Like T1, all but two privately employed teachers I spoke with were confident that they could find other employment. If they were willing and able to relocate, as a few indeed had, the overall private labour market for teachers could include other cities and villages as well.

In the geography of LFP school employment, the BIA teachers stood out, as BIA has a centralised system, not unlike the TSC. The three interviewed BIA teachers in the rural town had been posted there from the west of Kenya, where they had worked as substitute teachers in BIA schools. Moving to the rural town was a chance to get full-time work at a salary better than that of many LFP-school teachers. However, the teachers did not feel accepted by the locals, particularly the nomadic population; they lacked family and friends for support, and found that food and water were scarcer and more expensive than in their home area. Still, much like the TSC teachers, the rural BIA teachers had prioritised their employment, as this allowed them to fulfil some material and social needs, such as food, clothing, and/or schooling for their children. Being posted far away from their established relations, the rural BIA teachers found themselves with little family to depend on, a source of support that Atitsogbe et al. (2021), in their article about Togolese teachers, suggested is very important. In a study of Ghanaian teachers in peri-urban and semi-rural areas, Peele and Wolf (2020) found that teachers being posted to new areas were more likely to show symptoms of depression and anxiety, in part because they were lacking the support of family, friends, and community. While such diagnoses are beyond the present study it was clear that the rural BIA teachers were under some stress and not very happy being posted far from home.

Cox (1998b) defined spaces of dependence as spaces in which actors can substitute one relation for another, such as one employment for another. In this way, the availability of private employment relations, similar to public employment relations, created large potential spaces of dependence for many of them (see Cox, 1998b). I say ‘potential’, as those who had moved for work had had contacts or employment contracts (i.e., the rural BIA teachers) that facilitated or in some way made the move the best viable option at the time. Furthermore, although the teachers spoke about moving to serve Kenyan children, at least for a TSC contract, some had dependants to care for and/or

depended on family and friends to some degree to get by. The scope of privately employed teachers' spaces of dependence was thus more contingent on social relations other than their employment, with the exception of the rural BIA teachers, who had moved within the company.

UTs' fulfilment of essential interests: priorities and varying dependabilities

Because of their slim financial margins and terminable contracts, many privately employed teachers could not satisfactorily fulfil all their essential interests hinging on decent pay, such as providing for their family, decent housing, and continued studies. Of the three privately employed UTs whom I interviewed, two, T20 and T35, wanted to continue to become trained teachers and eventually be taken up by the TSC. The realisation of this goal – the pursuit of education, a career, and better paid, more secure employment – required certain social relations to be in place, however. T20 had moved from BIA to a small LFP school in the same urban area, as BIA teachers previously had to do marketing and were thus not allowed holiday leaves, something that Riep and Machacek (2016) also reported in their study. In the LFP school where he worked in at the time of the interview, T20 had been able to start studying on holidays to become a P1 teacher. In contrast, T35, the UT in the BIA school in the rural area, was allowed leave to study, since the company had changed its policy. T35 wholeheartedly identified as a teacher and said that she wanted to go on to train, but financing was difficult:

What I want is to go for that training. But the way I'm seeing things, money is not on my side. So, I just pray for that dream to come true. (T35 – young, female UT, rural BIA)

While teacher training is cheaper than other academic programs, for many its cost represents a considerable amount of money that may be hard to raise, even when receiving a salary. Though T35 was paid regularly and more than the other UTs, and even more than some trained teachers in small LFP schools, she struggled to care for her two children *and* put money aside to study. While she had a husband, who lived in Nairobi, she said that marriage in Kenya was “a difficult thing” and that she lived “like a single parent” (T35). Furthermore, T35 had been stationed in the rural area by BIA, far from her native Western

Kenya. This meant that, unlike T20, who had a web of relations in the urban area where he worked, T35 lacked support around her that could help her save money, for example, by being able to stay with family or friends. The inadequate relations of T20 and T35 show how employment in itself may not be enough to depend on for teachers' needs and wants; rather, the fulfilment of essential interests requires building up spaces of dependence, which was easier for some than for others.

The partial dependability of relations with managers and owners

The challenges of privately employed teachers' employment relations were several, and primarily related to their impermanence, as will be discussed at greater depth in the next chapter. There were, however, some aspects of the privately employed teachers' relations with their managers and employers that stood out as enabling the fulfilment of the teachers' essential interests. There were also expressions of essential interests that were *not* being fulfilled through these relations, but that are important to highlight to understand what the teachers wanted and needed in order to increase their well-being in their work life.

Good employment relations were built on communication and, for many teachers, particularly in the large urban LFP school, on co-presence and a cordial relationship. The teachers expressed being able to, or ideally being able to, raise issues and insecurities with management. As for the public-school teachers, when relations with management worked well the privately employed teachers felt more at ease, and as though they could perform better in the classroom. Good management often meant some level of supervision, and being held accountable, as external validation added to the teachers' sense of pride when they achieved or exceeded goals, similar to what Han and Yin (2016) have reported. As in Casely-Hayford et al.'s (2022) findings, encouragement and support were also needed if the teachers were to feel able to do well and be well in work. There appeared to have to be a balance: management should engage in the teachers' work, but not surveil them. Freedom to exercise their professional autonomy in the classroom was desired by all privately employed teachers, if not granted to all.

While the privately employed teachers' relations with management were seen as difficult to depend on for longevity in employment, in their everyday work, these relations could help fulfil the teachers' desires to do a good job for their pupils. In the next section, I will cover this relationship with pupils, which was significant to all the teachers, as well as the relations to parents and communities.

6.4 Relations with pupils, parents, and the wider community

Many of the teachers, private and public alike, referred with some variation to their current and potential future pupils as 'Kenya's children'. Apart from 'imparting knowledge' to pupils being a motivation in the teachers' everyday work, serving 'all Kenya's children' was a motivating factor for working in poorer areas, and an explanation for being open to substitute relations with pupils in one area with those with pupils in another. The teachers' spaces of dependence in this way seemed nearly national in scope – at least potentially. However, when discussing the teachers' relations where they lived and worked, or in desired or potential future postings, it became clear that place-specific relations were not irrelevant. What mattered for how the teachers felt about working in their school and area depended largely on the relations they had, or were lacking, with people in but also around and outside the school.

6.4.1 Pupils: giving work meaning

Teachers in both public and private schools emphasised that without their pupils they would not be working as teachers, and spoke of the teacher–pupil relationship as giving meaning to and motivation for their work. I could see two closely related essential interests here: one was the joy that teachers *got* from the relationship with children, the other was that they wanted to *give* something to their pupils in their work. The first may be seen as an intrinsic motivation, and the latter as spanning intrinsic and altruistic motivations (see Han & Yin, 2016). The teachers who had entered the profession as a calling, wanting to work with and teach children, found this essential interest fulfilled

through these relations. The teachers who had taught as UTs or still did so, found the job rewarding and thus the career pursuable largely because of how these relationships formed:

You know, the time I worked with the kids, immediately after form 4... with small boys and girls, eh? And the kind of relationships I got from them, I found they were like little queens and kings. So... The way they would actually talk to you [...] All in all, the way relationships build up build the morale. So good. (T10 – middle-age, male P1 teacher, urban public school)

For T10, starting to work with children had built insight into how he valued the relationship with his pupils. For the teachers who had had other dreams, it had, similarly to T10's experience, been a process whereby working with pupils had resulted in viewing teaching as a calling. Thus, even the more reluctant teachers had, largely because of their pupils, started to regard their profession as a calling. Nurturing the kind of intrinsic motivation found in the relationship with pupils has been suggested to mean a lot for teachers staying in their positions (Casely-Hayford et al., 2022), and for the interviewed teachers, this appeared to hold true, as they had all remained in the profession.

As they started teaching, the teachers and UTs alike found that they liked or even loved the work, and that they saw meaning and value in doing it. One way that they talked about this was their interest and pride in seeing pupils grow:

[Teaching] is not like any other work, where you work in a factory, maybe, dealing with manufactured goods or whatever. In teaching you are dealing with life, the life of our kids. So, you are there just to give back to life, to change the life of someone. And then you see them grow. You begin teaching... you see a kid in a baby class, you teach them, you see them reach class 8... So, it's very fun and interesting to see them grow in your hands. (T20 – young, male P1-student, small urban LFP school)

Intrinsic (i.e., dealing with and giving back to life) and altruistic (i.e., changing pupils' lives) motivations like the ones described by T20, did not make everything about the job easy or enjoyable. As we will see in the next chapter, the teachers' ability to fulfil their desire to do a good job for their pupils was not always fulfilled. However, it was expressed in the interviews that, in the relation with pupils, the teachers could find a lot of joy and affirmation at

having chosen an important path in life, something going beyond their own material well-being.

Working with and for their pupils made most of the teachers say that they could not imagine changing to another line of work. Previous literature on teachers' retention intentions and motivation similarly suggests that intrinsic and altruistic motivations are very important for teachers' well-being and feelings about their work (see Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). The present study does not rank or compare teachers' motivations or the factors affecting their motivation, like the studies referred to by, for example, Han and Yin (2016). It does, however, add to the somewhat scarce literature on the importance of intrinsic and altruistic factors for teacher well-being and motivation also in the African context (see, e.g., Heystek & Terhoven, 2015). The belief that they could positively affect the future of the pupils as individuals and as citizens of Kenya gave the teachers meaning and, at times, satisfaction. What was part of the narrative of positive futures could differ somewhat, often with a focus on life skills or on work. In the short term, as I return to in the next chapter, there was, however, for most teachers also a focus on achieving good test results, as a measure of how well they and their pupils were doing. In that way, the teachers' relations with pupils, or rather their sense of achievement through their pupils, was in some way also linked to external validation, like that from authorities in the education system, colleagues, and parents.

6.4.2 Parents: variously a support and a challenge

When asked what they needed in school to be able to do their jobs well, all teachers stressed their relations to pupils and parents.⁴³ If pupils showed up with the materials needed and in good physical and mental condition, teaching as planned was easier. This was something many teachers, especially in the public schools, wished that the parents would take more responsibility for, something that Abuya and Ngware (2016) also found in interviews with Kenyan teachers. Martin (1998) discussed the relation between parents and teachers as potentially afflicted by a strain stemming from their expectations of each other in educational provision. Again, public-school teachers in

⁴³ In the interviews, the term 'parent(s)' was used, even though there may have been other family constellations. I will thus use this term, rather than the more widely encompassing 'caregiver'.

particular more often spoke of experiencing difficulties with unengaged parents, and with pupils coming to school hungry, sick, having suffered trauma or drug abuse, etc. In the rural area, convincing parents to send their children to school at all could be difficult, said the public-school teachers posted there. The public-school teachers, primarily, experienced having to step in where some parents did not fulfil their parental duties of looking after and providing for their children; this took mental energy and took time from their teaching.

While the LFP-school teachers also spoke of parents who were difficult to handle and, in some schools, of parents who were unable to provide materials, they focused less on what the parents did not do. However, as will be elaborated on in Chapter 7, for LFP-school teachers, (lack of) trust from parents could have a bearing on their employment, as most of the LFP schools needed to attract more pupils to stay in business and/or make a profit (see Edwards et al., 2015; Locatelli, 2018). Parents could thus be demanding and potentially even threatening to LFP-school teachers' sense of security in their employment. These relationships with parents, when friendly, engaged, and approving, however, positively affected the LFP-school teachers' peace of mind and feeling of being able to do a good job.

It should be noted that all teachers also experienced that some, or even many, parents were very supportive and trusting, which gave the teachers confidence in their work and contributed to their motivation and sense of doing a good and meaningful job. Several teachers also connected deficient relationships with parents to the poverty and challenges of the areas where they worked, recognising that many parents had their own struggles, but it made the relationship with some parents less one to depend on and more one to wish for.

6.4.3 Wider community: ranging from hostile to elevating

Relations outside of the school were also important for the teachers' well-being, and, by extension, for their ability to do well at work. In the rural area, the population was small and the relations in the community were felt very closely. As mentioned above, the BIA teachers, who had not been stationed in the particular village by choice, spoke of not feeling accepted, as they did not "come from the community" (T35). Compared with the rural BIA teachers, the

rural public-school teachers were more content with their posting, and felt safe and more supported, or at least accepted, by the community. One possible explanation for this, which is also supported by Luschei and Chudgar's (2017, pp. 95–97) and Atitsogbe et al.'s (2021) findings, is that several of the rural public-school teachers had requested a transfer to that general area, as they were from around there originally and had extended family relatively close by. The rural public-school teachers also, to a larger extent than the rural LFP-school teachers, saw their needs met in terms of pay, food and housing, which are crucial for material and mental well-being (see Tao, 2013).

Among the urban public-school teachers, there were varying levels of contentment with their postings. Cities are generally more desirable to work in than are rural areas, because of the available amenities (Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 97–100), though that was not something brought up in the interviews. Rather, the downside of working in Nairobi, noted also by urban teachers in private employment, was that housing was very expensive. Several of the urban public-school teachers had some prior relation to the greater Nairobi area – earlier work, relatives and/or coming from/having lived there – which made a posting near Nairobi desirable. None of them had a connection to the informal settlement that they worked in at the time of the interviews, however, and they had little positive to say about it. Few urban public-school teachers had interactions with the surrounding community, and they mainly travelled through it on their way to and from work. This could be difficult, as infrastructure was “pathetic” (T6) during the rains. Lack of safety on the road to work could also cause anxiety. However, this lack of safety was because of a general lack of infrastructure and a fear of robberies, rather than because of feeling like outsiders. Some teachers put this down to there being a bigger mix of ethnicities and religions in the urban area. Another possible explanation is that the urban public-school teachers generally had been employed for several years in their schools. Some spoke of difficulty and reluctance in the beginning, but this had passed as they had settled into their schools, if not fully in the area. Furthermore, the urban public-school teachers felt that they were doing good for the children of the area, and, at times, for the area more broadly by extension. As for most of the teachers, and as has been found in other studies (see, e.g., Han & Yin, 2016; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022), such intrinsic and altruistic motivations gave the urban public-school teachers some level of satisfaction with their work.

In contrast, most of the LFP teachers felt well at home in the urban area, with several interviewees having grown up and gone to school there themselves. In such cases, the teachers had relations that were important to them in the area and, at times, even in their specific school.⁴⁴ Many of them wanted to give back to and do good for the children and the community where they had grown up:

I have been here since 2011. As a volunteer teacher before going to college, then [since] I left college in 2016. [...] I used to live in this area, I grew up in this area, so I schooled here. So, I'm one of the alumni. [...] One of the main reasons why I teach here is because I came back to give back to the society, what it gave me. The values, the help I got from this school, it made me want to teach and, you know, inspire other kids from this community to have a meaning in their lives. (T3 – young, male P1 teacher, large urban LFP school)

Such links and intrinsic motivations were common among the five teachers interviewed in T3's school, and were expressed by a few other urban LFP teachers and a BoM teacher (T8) as well. Rather than go elsewhere after graduation, they chose to build on and honour positive relations already in place. Several had started as UTs and volunteer teachers. Whether hiring local teachers means better learning outcomes is beyond the scope of the present study to determine, and is discussed elsewhere (see, e.g., Andrabi et al., 2008). However, as Härmä (2021b, p. 35) found among LFP-school teachers in India, the local teachers' backgrounds and way of speaking about the area and its inhabitants suggested a closer, less 'socially distant' relation to the community and their pupils. However, a couple of young male teachers said that since they had become teachers there were certain expectations of them in terms of appearance of wealth and behaviour, signalling that this relation had changed somewhat, and not only by their doing. While all the LFP-school teachers, apart from T19 and T16, would move for a TSC position, their sense of significance at the time of the interviews was very much tied to their role/position both as teachers *and* as part of the community: they had made something of themselves, and they had something to offer to the community.

⁴⁴ Some schools were involved beyond the school compound, such as the large urban LFP school, which had a community support programme, providing food for pupils' families in which parents had HIV/AIDS (head teacher, key informant interview, 12-02-2019) and helping alumni financially (T2).

This ties in with the teachers' perceptions of their status in relation to wider society.

While there were different assessments of the status of teachers and the teaching profession in society, some of the teachers experienced that their roles as teachers also meant a lot outside school:

If you become a teacher and you try the best you can to bring the children up in a good way, you have the ability to influence other people. You know, in our village it happens... teachers are considered to be resource people. Most of the time [people] come to us for pieces of advice. "Teacher, how can I do this?" [...] I had a strong liking of being such a person. Where people can come for pieces of advice. (T21 – young, male P1 BoM-teacher, rural public school)

Though the above quotation is from a teacher in a rural school, this type of sentiment was somewhat more frequently expressed by teachers in the urban area. Comparing the teachers' perceptions in the two areas, education was better regarded in the urban area. Han and Yin (2016) found indications that external motivation from status could be important, especially in developing countries. While some of the teachers experienced pressure from the community to be and behave in specific ways, others, like the teacher quoted above, saw the attention from people around the school as motivating, giving a sense of pride and significance.

Looking beyond the local community, the teachers had little positive to say about education policy or policy makers in the country. There was a distant relation of rules and the (poor) enforcement of rules, but little to rely on and trust. As one example, most teachers said that salaries were low, which among the public-school teachers was generally seen as connected to how they were valued in society. Several privately employed teachers, as well as some public-school teachers, wanted government subsidies for private schools, in order to raise standards and teachers' salaries, something that McKay et al. (2018) found in a study of LFP-school teachers in South Africa as well. As another example of how the relationship with policymakers was perceived, a new curriculum had started to be implemented when I conducted the interviews. Many teachers, both public and private, spoke of how quickly it had been implemented, without the involvement of teachers in planning or preparing for it. A few teachers drew parallels to the implementation of Free Primary

Education (FPE) in 2003, which was also implemented quickly and without teachers' involvement or preparation (see Abuya & Ngware, 2016). Still, while not feeling valued, the teachers felt trusted in their work. Despite everything else, that had value in itself, because had they not been trusted, they would not have a job.

These findings indicated that, although the teachers would readily move for work, the relations that they formed in their work lives were important for both their material and mental well-being. It was clear that the teachers were deeply embedded in the social relations of their work life (see Bocking, 2018). As Bocking posited, such relations, from the national to the school level, matter in teachers' everyday work. As I have tried to show here, they can be relations of dependence, relied on to fulfil needs. Furthermore, as I have indicated here, and will return to in the coming chapters, they may also create challenges and be relations to draw on for strength (Bocking, 2018). In the final section before the concluding remarks, I will look more closely at the teachers' needs and wants in relation to one another, and to their role as professionals.

6.5 Teacher–teacher relations, and being a professional

6.5.1 Membership in KNUT: abstract (future) support?

All of the TSC-employed teachers interviewed were paying members of the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT). For some, their membership was a way to contribute to the common good of teachers; to others it was more of a formality. Only one TSC teacher said that he was active in the union and that he liked engaging in union politics (T25), while others said that they were active only when there was a general call for protests. Human geographers Brogan (2014) and Bocking (2018) suggested, when looking at cases in North America, that union membership can mean strength and support for teachers, but that necessarily so. If a union loses its credibility and its connection with its members, for example, through corruption or poorly anchored compromises and agreements with politicians, it may stop serving as a unifying and supportive entity for teachers. Jonyo and Jonyo (2017) suggested that the teacher unions in Kenya are strong in terms of industrial action on the national

level, and some teachers in the present study spoke of the unions' previous successes in, for example, securing higher pay. With little immediate need for engagement with the union, for example, in disciplinary cases, it remained largely abstract to the teachers in their everyday work lives. Not everyone counted on union support to be there if needed, and one teacher believed that there was corruption and nepotism in KNUT (T30). Still, union membership gave many of the public-school teachers a sense of security and of being represented: "Sometimes they fight for you... If you have a problem with the... maybe administration, whatever" (T23 – middle-aged, female diploma teacher, rural public school). While a little toothless, union membership was seen as a way to protect and potentially further advance, teachers' rights and material well-being, and by extension, to some degree, their professional status.

Though KNUT (2014, p. 15) in its 2015-2019 strategic plan states that its membership base "is all teachers registered and teaching in public and private schools [...] in Kenya", none of the LFP-school or BoM-employed teachers were members. This is consistent with findings in other studies of LFP schools (Edwards et al., 2015; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 32–33). The only exception was T19, the LFP school owner who had never been a TSC teacher, who, along with his employed teachers and teachers in other schools, actively petitioned KNUT to put pressure on the government for more spending on education. Of the privately employed teachers, few knew that they were allowed to become members as soon as they were registered with – not employed by – the TSC. Those who knew that they technically could join the union said that they might join as non-TSC teachers sometime in the future. Membership seemed to be for public-school teachers. Furthermore, most of the privately employed teachers said, which Härmä (2021b, pp. 32–33) also stressed, that the pay in private-school employment is generally at the limit of what the school can afford, as schools need to keep fees at a level that (some) parents can pay.

Very few teachers were aware of KNUT's official stance against private schools. Based on an interview with the executive officer at KNUT responsible for matters of privatisation, KNUT's primary concern was with BIA as a foreign company coming into the country to make profit, eschewing local regulation (KNUT representative, key informant interview, 06-03-2019). KNUT's fight against privatisation, or BIA, being largely unknown and the view of KNUT as an institution only concerning public-school teachers may explain why the privately employed teachers primarily spoke of the union in

terms of looking forward to being able to join when they became employed by the TSC. In that eventuality, union membership was as with the TSC teachers, spoken of as “protection” (T4), as a way to join a collective voice to be heard (T17), and as a chance “to fight for the rights of teachers” (T14).

6.5.2 Collegiality: support and inspiration

While few teachers were actively engaged in union activities, all teachers said that they would discuss work life matters with, and had support from, their colleagues. In handling everything from personal matters to everyday work and discussing policy matters of varying magnitudes, good relations with colleagues were important for the teachers in several ways. They could mean practical support, as in helping out with pupils, subjects, and lesson planning. They could also give a sense of team effort, inspiration and importance. According to Casely-Hayford et al. (2022), in-work relations and collegiality are very important for teachers’ decisions to stay in the profession, serving as ‘buffers’ when teachers face challenges in work and even improving their attitude towards their work. In the case of Kenya, Taaliu (2010, pp. 59, 262) found that teachers in his doctoral project would often support one another. Learning from experienced colleagues was mentioned by some of the younger teachers as a way to become better teachers, although one teacher in the large urban LFP school and one in the rural BIA school said that they wanted to have more knowledgeable colleagues to learn from. Older teachers often spoke kindly of guiding their younger colleagues if they encountered problems. As in-service training was found to be lacking by the teachers, as it has in other studies in Kenya (see, e.g., Abuya et al., 2015; Bunyi et al., 2013), this was a way that the teachers could develop themselves, as well as improve the school more generally, both of which were very important to the teachers’ well-being and sense of professionalism.

Teachers sometimes also met colleagues from other nearby schools, for example, during ‘games’ (days with sporting events and athletic competitions between pupils) or debates, often held at a public school in the area because of its better facilities. The teachers reported that, on such occasions, they could potentially share experiences:

We make some comparisons, maybe about our colleagues, their schools, and our school. And we see what is good in their school, what is good in our school, and maybe what is bad in theirs, and bad in ours, what we like and also don't like. We try to share. (T12 – young, male P1 teacher, urban public school)

While time was often short when the teachers met during games, not allowing for in-depth discussions, such chances to meet appeared to be ways to gain information, as well as build and strengthen a shared identity as teachers (Bocking, 2018). Teachers' informal meetings could also lead to good banter, and T2 even mentioned jovial challenges between herself and her teacher neighbour as to who would see their pupils score best in the exams. While good natured, such relations with colleagues could also build respect based on professionalism and pupils' performance, something identified as important for Tanzanian teachers in Tao's (2013) study as well. The essence of the teachers' collegiality was, however, sharing and venting – of information and experiences – which could make work both better and more enjoyable.

6.5.3 Professionalism as capability and significance

As has been indicated throughout this chapter, the teachers' professionalism and sense of significance through their work were vital in making up their spaces of dependence. For the certified teachers, their training and certification were paramount. Through their training, they had acquired knowledge and confidence, even though other studies suggest that, overall, Kenyan teachers' knowledge is wanting (Bold et al., 2017; Bunyi et al., 2013). Their certification was their ticket to public postings and a relatively financially secure life. Furthermore, for most of the teachers, even the UTs, there was often a reference to serving pupils, doing a "noble" job (T6, T11, T13), and being a good person and role model, which served to motivate them, even when the going was tough. As Casely-Hayford et al. (2022) found, intrinsic motivation and efficacy greatly affect teachers' willingness to stay in the profession. In the interviews, it seemed that highlighting the things that they did well and found important in the job was an important narrative for the teachers, even though, or particularly because, they found themselves underfunded and struggling to meet goals set by themselves and others.

One – if not the most – important aspect of the teachers’ professionalism was their professional autonomy. The teachers’ professional autonomy was both a means and an end. It was a sign of recognition of their professionalism from employers and other stakeholders, and, as Bocking (2017, pp. 56–58) has argued, is necessary for the teachers’ working environment and ability to work with their particular pupils and classes. The public-school teachers all reported that, within the frames of regulations and requirements from the school, the Ministry of Education, and the TSC, they were trusted and had professional autonomy in the classroom:

Because you see now, it is the teacher that knows the level of the pupils, and through that he [sic] will make sure the children are ok to move on to the next topic or whether they need to do the same thing for some time. (T27 – middle-age, female P1 teacher, rural public school)

The privately employed teachers, both trained and UT, expressed similar views of the teacher’s professional role and need for freedom in the classroom to shape their lessons and teaching to ‘their’ class and pupils as they saw fit:

Yeah, you feel free, because you are the one there in that class. You feel free because you are the one who knows more about these kids. The decision-making, I am free. (T1 – young, female P1 teacher, large urban LFP school)

While some LFP-school teachers saw their autonomy in the classroom circumscribed, as I will show in the next chapter, having autonomy meant a lot for the teachers’ ability to look after the needs of their pupils, which was connected to their sense of significance as professionals (see Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Feeling that they, based on their knowledge of the curriculum, the subject, and their pupils, could exercise judgement and make decisions that benefitted their classes was part and parcel of teaching (see also Bocking, 2017, p. 3). In the coming chapters (7 and 8), I will look more closely at how this freedom could be shaped by teachers and by management demands in LFP schools. Still, the importance of and pride in that professional autonomy was significant for the teachers’ sense of worth and ability.

6.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter aimed to highlight and connect the teachers, as more complex human beings than is sometimes portrayed in the literature on teachers in the Global South, with some of the relations through which they achieved, or hoped to achieve, their essential interests. While material needs such as food and shelter are essential for survival, we also need to recognise that workers are social beings who pursue not only personal utility (see also Tao, 2013). This chapter has been something like walking a tightrope, as the teachers' fulfilment of needs and wants was rarely without challenges – challenges being the subject of the next chapter. Still, there were several factors that made the teachers' work life at least hold together, and their work worth doing. Alongside being able to pay for their own and their families' needs, the teachers highly valued their relationship with and ability to help their pupils. To do their jobs well, they depended on their own knowledge, and on the at times scarce support of others.

It was also made evident in this chapter that the teachers were actors, as they had created their sometimes fraught and incomplete spaces of dependence, and while some were more content than others, they were not finished creating these spaces by the time of the interviews. It was also clear that the choices they made were not always their preferred choices, but rather hinged on their available options and on their engagement with others. This meant that some relations created *in* the marketisation process, such as LFP-school employment, were relations to depend on – at least on a day-to-day basis – despite being less reliable than public employment.

In this chapter, in mapping the relations making up the teachers' spaces of dependence, I have touched upon some challenges to their essential interests. In the next chapter, I will look more closely at the challenges to those essential interests related to the teachers' work lives in the marketised educational landscape.

7 Challenges: are teachers' relations and essential interests at risk in the new educational landscape?

There is stiff competition [in the education market]. That is why it is survival of the fittest. So, you have to work hard to exist. (T15 – young, male P1 head teacher, small urban LFP school)

7.1 Introduction

The above quotation illustrates the pressure that particularly affected LFP-school teachers in the education market. In this chapter, the focus is on how the teachers' relations and essential interests explored in the previous chapter were challenged in the marketisation of education. The purpose is to learn about challenges pointed out in previous literature on LFP schooling from the teachers' point of view, as well as bring to the fore other challenges that were uncovered through the interviews.

This chapter is divided into two main themes. The first theme concerns expressions of the core rationales for the marketisation of education: competition, choice, and accountability. Here, I present five sub-themes. The first four are often addressed, though rarely from teachers' point of view, in previous literature on LFP schooling: the focus on test results, marketing, the use of scripted lessons, and the use of untrained teachers. The fifth sub-theme has been less discussed in previous literature, but it was raised as a challenge by the teachers: the high mobility of pupils between schools. In the second main theme, the rationales of the market are also present. However, these

challenges are framed more broadly by the shifts from public to private education, and the accompanying shift from public to private employment. The first sub-theme, in previous literature discussed in terms of pupils' accessibility, is pupils being absent because of fees. The three following sub-themes – workload, pay, and job security – pertaining to the teachers' labour market and working conditions, are often discussed in terms of exploitation or efficiency in the private sector in previous literature. Here I make some comparisons with public employment, to better understand the teachers' career trajectories in the new educational landscape. The third sub-theme concerns a challenge that I began to recognise throughout the interviews: a socio-spatial fragmentation between public- and LFP-school teachers. After exploring how these challenges were experienced by the teachers, I will make some concluding remarks, before I move on to the next chapter, where I will look more closely at how teachers could, or could not, act on what they perceived as challenging.

7.2 Expressions of competition, choice, and accountability

7.2.1 Accountability as test results and hierarchies?

I begin this chapter with how the teachers were assessed and held accountable, as the strong emphasis placed on test results here sets the stage for understanding several other challenges for the teachers, and especially for the less job-secure LFP-school teachers.

Low accountability in public schools is a problem for parents and pupils in many countries, as parents lack means and power to, for example, call into question politicians, schools, and teachers for not doing their job (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 41–63). In the literature on LFP schools, competition between schools and teachers on non-permanent contracts has been pointed out as potentially leading to higher accountability and quality, as parents can vote with their feet, and employers easily can fire teachers who do not 'perform' (Andrabi et al., 2008; Barton et al., 2017; Dixon, 2012). Potential issues have also been highlighted, however, such as a lack of or even false information in the market, as well as steering and de-professionalisation of teachers through

a narrowing focus on high-stakes tests (Heyneman & Stern, 2014; Härmä, 2021a, 2021b, pp. 145–156; Riep & Machacek, 2016).

In their everyday work, the teachers stressed the importance of pupils' test results (referred to as test 'scores') in teacher assessments and as the basis for accountability to pupils, parents, and employers. Several teachers also used them to assess themselves and whether they reached goals that they had set for themselves. Lindsjö (2018) similarly found that both teachers and parents in Tanzania primarily mentioned test results as an indicator of quality in education (see also Härmä, 2021b, pp. 149–152). In that vein, for several teachers in the present study, test results were an indication of their significance as teachers. According to the teachers, test results could be useful for assessing their pupils, and for strengthening them in their work. Positive feedback from parents, managers and pupils based on the test results could also strengthen the teachers' sense of significance and motivate them in their work.

However, the importance accorded to test results in assessments and accountability systems could also be a challenge, as several factors outside of the teachers' control could affect their pupils' results. The public-school teachers in particular mentioned factors such as pupils being hungry or ill, or class size, and lack of resources as hindering them from achieving better results. Both public- and LFP-school teachers experienced not performing well as challenging, both because they wanted to live up to their own goals, and because parents and managers could be unhappy, which could be stressful. The focus on test results, and the stress of expectations being higher than they felt that they could meet, could thus challenge the teachers' sense of achievement. The LFP-school teachers experienced the pressure, even though they more often spoke positively about what they achieved in their work. The major challenge for them was that test results could undermine the relations that they depended on for their income, which is linked to the job-insecurity several other scholars have reported (e.g., Riep & Machacek, 2016; Singh, 2021). Thus, the privately employed teachers could find relations that they relied on for their material well-being and their sense of significance at risk if they did not achieve good enough results (see Cox, 1998b). In comparison, the public-school teachers could find relations that they depended on for their sense of significance undermined, which very much affected their well-being, but their employment was unlikely to be ended. That difference runs through this chapter and the next, and will be discussed in greater detail later on.

The focus on test results, particularly the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), a national exam taken at the end of primary school, was more pronounced in the LFP schools than in the public schools. In the former, test results were a crucial way to attract and retain pupils, the teachers believed:

If they [i.e., the class 8 pupils] perform well [in the KCPE], we are very sure of a good population in the near future. But if they perform dismally, then... So, it's like our fate. The fate of an academy depends on good performance. (T15 – young, male P1 head teacher, small urban LFP school)

Apart from parents being critical of the teachers' work, if seen as not good enough, parents were, according to most of the teachers, choosing better-performing schools. As the 'fate of the academy' rested on test results, stakes were high for most LFP schools and, by extension, for their teachers. Fewer pupils meant fewer staff and less money for wages. Furthermore, inability to 'perform' could mean pressures to use unorthodox and unprofessional methods, and, ultimately, being fired:

Private schools, they are like a business for someone, so [the owner] needs the business to be handled the way [they] want. Some will say "teach the kids, give them the skills so they can handle the life, handle the questions, so that they perform, so that the school can have many kids". Others will tell you that "if you do that in class and the kids are not performing, find a way of making the appearance that we as a school are doing something". [...] You work hard to perform, and because you... if you don't perform and the director says you cannot fit in this school [...], you'll leave the job and then maybe go find another job, which might be a bit tricky. (T20 – young, male P1-student, small urban LFP school)

T20, while still only a P1-student, had worked in three different private schools (formerly as a UT) with different types of management. While anecdotal, remarks about pressures to 'spoon-feed' and cheat in LFP schools were prevalent, and similar dubious practices have been reported elsewhere (e.g., by Härmä, 2021b, pp. 145–156). It should be noted that none of the LFP teachers said that they, in their current job, acted in ways that they regarded as unethical, although some of them felt pressured to move too quickly through the curriculum to leave time for revision for tests.

Like proponents of performance-related contracts and pay for teachers (e.g., Barton et al., 2017), some LFP-school teachers argued that the job security of TSC-employed teachers meant that they were not being properly held accountable, and thus lacked incentive to ‘perform’. However, even if public-school teachers’ employment was not at risk, they could find relations with management affected if they did not ‘perform’. Since 2016, public-school teachers have had to fill in “learners’ progress” and self-assessed “teaching standards” in the digital Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) system (TSC, n.d.a).⁴⁵ Test results were important, as they were the only measure of pupils’ progress in the TPAD system (TSC, n.d.a). Though public-school teachers thought that the TPAD content was relevant per se, it was seen to result in little real evaluation or development. These are findings similar to a TPAD evaluation report by UNES (2021; see also Karamperidou, 2020, p. 38–40).⁴⁶ This one-sidedness may have played part in the teachers’ view that the TPAD took up too much valuable time:

You find that to teachers it [i.e., TPAD] is something that is not necessary, because most of the time, our whole business here is to teach these learners. [The government] are the ones who should bring the people on the ground to check what we do in the classrooms, but now with this [TPAD] our time is being divided to go into the cyber cafés, to fill in some of the clerical jobs. (T9 – young, male P1 teacher, urban public school)

Already struggling to divide their time between their many learners, spending time on administrative tasks requiring a computer and Internet connection added to the public-school teachers’ workload. Still, the interviewed teachers saw themselves as fortunate to work in areas that had an Internet connection, and spoke of teachers in other areas who were less fortunate and had to travel to be able to fill in the TPAD forms. Another issue with TPAD was a fear that “the head teacher or the deputy [head teacher] [...] can write anything if you are not on good terms” (T23).⁴⁷ The teachers’ experiences indicated a hierarchical rather than collegial relationship between public-school teachers

⁴⁵ At the time of the interviews there were seven ‘teaching standards’: professional knowledge and application; time management; innovation and creativity in teaching; learner protection, safety, discipline, and teacher conduct; promotion of co-curricular activities; professional development; and collaboration with parents/ guardians and stakeholders (UNES, 2021).

⁴⁶ In areas where teachers feel that they need to develop, they are supposed to be able to access professional development interventions, such as courses (TSC, n.d.a).

⁴⁷ The head of the institution or another senior staff member fills in the appraisal of the teachers’ ‘teaching standards’, and of the teachers’ weekly lesson attendance (TSC, n.d.a; UNES, 2021).

and administrators (see Bocking, 2017, pp. 334–338), putting the appraisee in the hands of the appraiser in the TPAD system. This evoked insecurity and resentment in some of the public-school teachers, because, as I interpreted it, it was an infringement on being respected as knowledgeable adults.

It should be noted that the teachers were not only assessed and held accountable based on test results. However, that T9 in the above quotation requested ‘people on the ground’ may reflect that the teachers were rarely visited by officials (see Okutu, 2020). Curriculum Support Officers are supposed to regularly visit public schools to assess and support public-school teachers in their teaching (TSC, 2015). The few teachers who had received such visits, primarily in the rural public schools, felt that the Curriculum Support Officers indeed supported their professional improvement, as the teachers got feedback directly. In BIA, the company Quality Assurance (QA) teams seemed to work in direct ways similar to the Curriculum Support Officers in public schools, which was liked by the BIA teachers for the same reasons. However, as one untrained teacher in BIA put it, there could be too much supervision in her work, making her ‘tense’ and ‘worried all the time’ (T35). That supervision is very close and detailed in BIA has been reported in previous literature (Riep & Machacek, 2016). If one considers BIA’s use of untrained teachers, such as T35, close supervision may be seen as necessary, but the feeling of close surveillance risked challenging the teachers’ peace of mind and the certified teachers’ desired autonomy.

In a similar way, but less frequent, many teachers in both the public and private schools found Quality Assurance and Standards Officers visits stressful, as the officers acted as inspectors rather than providers of advice and support. That the officers inspect rather than support is contrary to findings from UNESCO (2014a), but similar to findings by, for example, Bunyi et al. (2013) and Karamperidou (2020, pp. 41–43). All teachers said that they welcomed being assessed, but like the Kenyan teachers in a study by Abuya and Ngware (2016), they questioned the officers’ qualifications and methods. They could be “harsh” (T32), and did not give the teachers constructive feedback, but spoke to the management about how the teachers had performed. None of the teachers reported finding their job on the line due to negative evaluations by QASOs. However, again a hierarchical power dynamic undermined their sense of professionalism and autonomy when they were denied two-way communication, something common in policy changes involving teacher

supervision (see Bocking, 2017, pp. 334–338).

To sum up this section, the teachers could be critical of the focus on test results, yet, perhaps symptomatically, often focused on and talked about test scores themselves. As several scholars in Western contexts have pointed out, even though teachers may worry about and be critical of what is measured as performance, measurements one way or another seep into teachers' work practices, and even into their professional identities (Ball, 2003; Falabella, 2014; Parding et al., 2012). Test-based accountability shifts power relations in education, as external stakeholders such as parents may more easily question teachers, for example (Verger & Parcerisa, 2018). This may be positive for parents, traditionally lacking power, but risks undermining the professional judgement and agency of the teachers, as well as obscuring other hard-to-measure qualities in education (see Au, 2011; Bocking, 2017, pp. 313–346; Härmä, 2021b, p. 149). The use of test results, as indicated above, served a purpose in attracting pupils to LFP schools. It has, however, also been of concern in previous literature that LFP-school teachers have to do marketing to increase enrolment (Riep & Machacek, 2016).

7.2.2 Marketing: an unproblematised task with disruptive effects

Marketing has been identified in studies of LFP schools as a non-teaching task with little or no pay, carried out on weekends and holidays, making for less time off for teachers in LFP schools and contributing to de-professionalisation (see, e.g., Riep & Machacek, 2016). At the time of the interviews, T15 and T16, in a small LFP school, and the three teachers working in the rural BIA school did marketing as part of their work tasks, primarily when more students were needed. The urban BIA teachers (T13 and T14) were more evasive on the subject, saying that they had 'meetings' during holidays with the parents of their pupils to spread the word to their neighbours.

Marketing was thus not done by all interviewed LFP-school teachers or in all LFP schools. It was carried out outside of regular school hours, but, contrary to earlier findings, for pay. T16, a UT working extra as a LFP teacher, described his experiences doing marketing:

We might decide “this Saturday we will not have classes, we will go for a marketing session, and also for Sunday, if time will allow.” [...] The [head] teacher [T15] gives us some [KES] 500 [USD 5] in marketing fee. [...] We also put up some posters, some phone numbers, so whoever will be interested, he or she will contact the number and find some directions. [...] Last month we went for a marketing session, after the marketing session we received about 15, 13 students. Pupils. Yeah. What we are doing in marketing sessions, [we talk about] the results in the previous exams, and the last year’s exams. (T16 – young, male UT, small urban LFP school)

Again, we can see the importance accorded to test results. For T16, marketing was an unproblematic part of his extra work. It could be done instead of teaching, or as an extra task. Doing marketing brought his salary to KES 8 500 (USD 84), 500 shillings (USD 5) above the salary of his trained colleague, T17, who had worked for two months in the school, but did not do marketing. In the interviews, the reason for the different tasks of the teachers was unfortunately not uncovered; T17 only said that he did not do marketing as he believed that it was a task for the management.

In the rural BIA school, marketing, called ‘outreach’ by BIA (BIA, 2016b), would take place during holidays, according to the teachers.⁴⁸ More than anything, however, marketing was a challenge because the teachers struggled to get on with the locals and felt like outsiders:

It is very tricky, because first language barrier. Most of them ignore [us]. Then even if they understand the language they ignore.

So you try to approach...?

Yeah, we try to approach.

How?

We tell them what we offer, the new curriculum. We tell them many things. (T34 – young, male P1 teacher, rural BIA)

⁴⁸ At the time of the interviews LFP-school teachers doing teacher training were reportedly exempt from marketing on school holidays, as they would be in college then. As noted in the previous chapter, this was something that had changed recently in BIA, as teachers previously had to do ‘outreach’ and would not have time to go to college (T20).

T34 felt unsafe in the area, which affected him negatively, making interactions with the local community feel perilous. His two female colleagues were less intimidated, but still felt that they were seen as outsiders.⁴⁹ With BIA as a company having little local connection, the rural BIA teachers believed that they were less attractive to parents from the outset. Not originating from the urban area appeared less of a problem to the urban teachers, as there was more of a mix of people from different backgrounds there, the teachers believed, and perhaps also because the urban LFP schools in sole proprietorship in this study had owners or senior staff with local connections.

What was interesting in the interviews was that several teachers, who, notably, did not do marketing, were strongly against such practices. This was related to the type of predatory marketing done by *other* schools, particularly in the urban area:

Last year, some of the schools were just going around campaigning, like a [...] political campaign, I tell you! With placards everywhere. “Come to my school! Come to my school! Come to my school!” So... there’s a challenge also. [...] I don’t [know] why a professional... If you are really giving what is supposed to be given in education... Why should you campaign? (T19 – senior, male B.Ed. teacher, owning a small urban LFP school)

The marketing strategies of other schools were seen as a problem if they were untruthful, predatory, and exploitative of parents and pupils. Few teachers viewed parents and pupils as vulnerable and easily duped, but many were wary on their behalf, especially in the urban area. In this way, many teachers regarded marketing as a challenge to the profession, as well as to pupils’ and parents’ ability to find good schools, although few teachers reported being tasked with marketing themselves. The challenge to the profession was related to marketing as a non-professional task, as some scholars have highlighted (see Riep & Machacek, 2016; see also Parding & Berg Jansson, 2022, in a Swedish education market context). Perhaps even more so, marketing was seen as a challenge to the profession because of how it was done, i.e., what information

⁴⁹ Public-school teachers in the rural area did not do marketing, but spoke of approaching parents about keeping pupils in school. As (partial) outsiders, they, like the rural BIA teachers fought an up-hill battle with some parents, albeit on matters such as education and child abuse (T26).

was shared/withheld from parents, problems that Härmä (2021b, pp. 146–152) has also noted.

In the next section I will look at scripted lessons, which may help improve learning in disadvantaged education settings (Macdonald & Vul, 2018), but that have also been criticised as a way that some chains of LFP schools compete and steer their teachers (Riep & Machacek, 2016)

7.2.3 Scripted lessons: a demand to be a robot rather than a teacher

In most LFP schools, the demands on the teachers reportedly focused on retaining and attracting pupils through test scores, while teachers were paid little enough to keep fees low (see also Härmä, 2021b, pp. 149–152). In BIA schools, one way to try to ensure ‘performance’ while keeping costs down is by having teachers, trained and untrained alike, follow a script with detailed teaching instructions (Figure 7.1; also reported by, e.g., Riep & Machacek, 2016).⁵⁰ These scripts are downloaded to BIA teachers’ Nooks (Figures 7.1 and 7.2), also used for taking attendance, according to the teachers. The Nooks are sometimes referred to as ‘tablets’ or ‘teacher computers’ (e.g., BIA, n.d.d; EI & KNUT, 2016), but are relatively basic e-readers (see Barnes & Noble, n.d.). They are thus primarily for reading and much cheaper than tablet computers. Why I am emphasising this distinction is so that when BIA, and some researchers, call the Nook a tablet or computer we should not assume that the teachers can use it to search for information or aid creativity in their teaching.⁵¹

The lesson scripts are supposed to be followed verbatim. To several of the BIA teachers, this was a challenge to their professional autonomy. As one BIA teacher put it:

⁵⁰ Omega, another second wave LFP school started by scholar and LFP school advocate Prof. James Tooley, reportedly also uses scripted lessons (Riep, 2014).

⁵¹ My putting Nooks down has a very privileged tone. Of course, e-readers are high tech, and I think they are amazing vehicles for texts, but they are not to be equated to tablet computers.

I never want to, like, [teach] like a robot [...] You're a teacher, you're a trained teacher, you know what to do. (T14 – young, female P1 teacher, urban BIA)

This teacher seemed almost insulted at having to use the Nook. While less affronted, the other BIA teachers expressed similar sentiments, judging the scripts to be too fast paced and/or incomplete (see also Riep & Machacek, 2016). Furthermore, the teachers' long days were controlled with lessons stacked on one another, leaving no time for their own preparations:

Here, we are fulltime in work. You cannot have time for research.

Research?

To give learners better information. For the future. But here you can't do it because of the time you are at work. Once we have reported [it is] work until evening. (T33 – young, female P1 teacher, rural BIA)

Not having sufficient time to both prepare classes and teach is a common problem for Kenyan teachers, particularly in public schools and rural areas, according to Karamperidou (2020). On that note, with regard to BIA's system, T23, a female public-school teacher in the rural area, said that she would like to have ready-made lesson plans, to save her some time. However, according to the BIA teachers, BIA's way of supplanting preparation time with more hours spent with a script in class made it difficult for them to progress in their teaching and learning, and, as they saw it, to do a good job. According to BIA (n.d.d), scripts "enable plenty of creativity and innovation", but there was little evidence of the BIA teachers regarding them in this light. Rather, the scripts appeared a textbook example of 'de-skilling', which:

in the classic form can be schematised as the breakdown of a task, which previously involved thinking the job through, organising it and actually carrying it out, into two separate jobs: in one the task is set up and in the other actually performed. (Massey, 1995, p. 32)

'Performed' is here a very apt word: attempting to externalise both the conceptualisation and organising of teaching through a spatial and technical division of labour left little but a 'performance' to the teachers (see Massey,

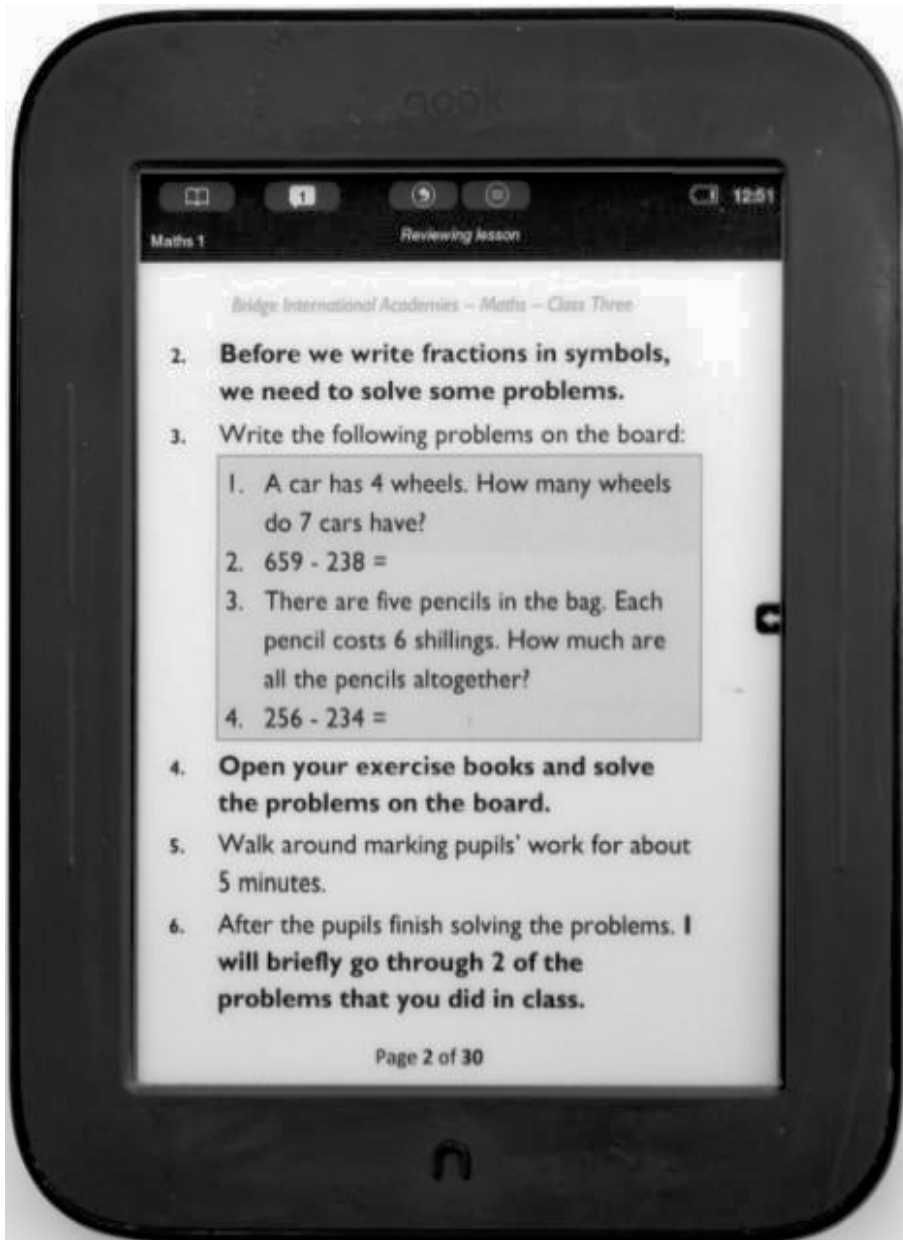


Figure 7.1: An example of BIA's lesson scripts. One can see the teachers' 'lines' in bold type, and the instructions for actions in regular type.
Source: Image from a BIA (2016a) factsheet.



Figure 7.2: A Nook charging in the Academy Manager’s office in one of the BIA schools. (Photo: Author’s own.)

1995, pp. 30–34). Kenyan teachers reportedly often lack knowledge and skills needed in their work (Bunyi et al., 2013), and of all the teachers interviewed, some indeed spoke of themselves being ‘weak’ in some topics. Macdonald and Vul (2017) found in their study in Papua New Guinea that scripted lessons for one hour per day could improve learning in such contexts (see also Gray-Lobe et al., 2022). Their conclusion made them pose the to them ‘natural question’: “How much flexibility should teachers have within the curriculum in a developing country context?” (Macdonald & Vul, 2017, pp. 17–18). Against

the same background, but based on the interviews with teachers, the question should perhaps instead be, ‘How can we create support for teachers that aids in time management and develops their subject knowledge and skills?’ My interpretation of the interviews with BIA teachers is that BIA’s scripts did not further the teachers’ knowledge, creativity, or professionalism, something Härmä (2021b, pp. 127–130) has also problematised; rather, they were intended to supplant them. As Kirchgasser (2016) put it, in BIA “the dual role of making up and acting upon social facts is no longer individualized and invested in the teacher” (p. 81); rather, “the individual as an agent of awareness and intervention” is superseded (Kirchgasser, 2016, pp. 81–82). While there is criticism of the scripts turning teachers into ‘robots’ (Riep, 2019), in the next chapter I will show that this was not always the case.

Another critique in the literature is that scripts are part of a business model that facilitates the use of untrained teachers, a cheaper, more malleable, and expendable workforce (see Härmä, 2021b, pp. 127–130), further risking de-skilling through a social division of labour (see Massey, 1995, pp. 30–34). It is to the UTs I turn next.

7.2.4 Untrained teachers: a start or a threat to the profession

The Kenyan government has devised a policy aimed at increasing the hiring of trained teachers in informal schools (e.g., MoEST, 2015), which includes some LFP schools. Still, the use of UTs in LFP schools was widespread, according to the interviewed teachers, something the literature also confirms (e.g., Simmons Zuilkowski et al., 2020). The trained teachers gave two types of answers when asked if this affected them and the profession. On one hand, if they had or had had colleagues who were UTs, or had started as UTs themselves, individual UTs were not necessarily seen as a challenge in the teachers’ everyday work. In my interpretation, the question of UTs was then quite concrete. In other words, the relation to UTs was rather benevolent when the teachers had specific UTs and/or a common history in mind. The trained teachers then said that UTs could be or become good teachers, and figure out if that was their calling, though they may require help with lesson planning and other matters in work.

On the other hand, most trained teachers believed that the use of UTs drove down quality in education as well as wages for teachers, at least in the LFP school labour market. Furthermore, the teachers were concerned that employing UTs could make teaching seem a job not requiring skill. They were concerned that UTs' shortcomings would reflect badly on them, as parents and communities may not distinguish between trained and untrained teachers:

[UTs] pose a problem for those who are trained, because some parents have this problem of including... Just, say if they are commenting on something, they'll just say "those teachers". They will not specify which teacher. Like, for example, if a teacher is untrained, you know he will not be able to handle a child the way a trained teacher is. (T8 – young, female P1 BoM teacher, urban public school)

The teachers emphasised the importance of their education for their interaction with pupils, their understanding and delivery of the curriculum, and clarity of vision of their work. Such knowledge and understanding are core elements to teachers' professional autonomy according to Bocking (2017, p. 42). My interpretation of the teachers' emphasis on their education, apart from feeling more able post training, is that the use of UTs risked reframing teaching as unskilled work, which one teacher also explicitly stated, thus devolving teacher credentials and professional status, as well as pay. That the teachers regarded UTs as a problem on a systemic level, echoed fears of the international teachers' union federation, EI (2018), and some scholars (e.g., Locatelli, 2018; Singh, 2021).

The potential downgrading of teachers' professional status through UTs differs from e.g., a contested policy in Mexico, where the government in 2008 and 2012 proposed the hiring of teachers be based on a standardised test rather than pedagogical experience and knowledge (see Bocking, 2015, 2018). Except for BIA, reframing UTs as teachers was not done through a strategic technological division of labour either, but through pressures for cheaper and expendable workers, cramming more from 'less'. In this way, some scholars frame the use of UTs as efficient, as UTs are less likely to be absent from teaching for fear of being fired, thus potentially yielding similar or better learning outcomes for less pay (see Andrabi et al., 2008; see also Day Ashley et al., 2014, for an overview). Others argue that it is unjust both to UTs and pupils, as the UTs are essentially exploited youth, in some countries often young women (Srivastava,

2013), and that the pupils are not getting the quality education that their families are spending considerable money on (Härmä, 2021b, pp. 103–120). In the study at hand, among the teachers with relations to UTs, there was a concern for their well-being, whereas when the teachers talked about UTs as a systemic issue, the concern was for the teaching profession and for the pupils. The concern for the pupils was present in the challenge presented by pupils' mobility as well.

7.2.5 School choice as pupil mobility: disrupting teacher–pupil relationships

One of the key arguments for the marketisation of education, both in the Global North and in the Global South, is that parents choosing schools in a competitive market leads to better school quality (see, e.g., Friedman, 1962; Dixon & Tooley, 2012). The effects of parents voting with their feet in the LFP school context has however garnered little exploration from teachers' point of view, with the exception of Abuya and Ngware (2016) briefly bringing this up as a problem for Kenyan primary school teachers. Similar to Abuya and Ngware (2016) the teachers in the study at hand raised 'pupil mobility' as a challenge.

According to the teachers interviewed, pupils moved a lot between schools because parents wanted to pick the best school – based on test results and popularity – and variously were able and unable to pay fees (see also Maluccio et al., 2018).⁵² As in Oketch, Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezeh and Epari's (2010) study in six urban sites in Kenya, the teachers in both areas reported mobility between LFP schools, and mobility both ways between LFP and public schools. Härmä (2021b, p. 87) refers to public schools as operating as within a silo, with a competitive LFP school market around them. I could see that in Kenya, in the sense that the over-crowding and lack of incentive meant that public schools were not willing or able to really compete with the LFP

⁵² The teachers also believed that parents chose the school for their children based on safety and whether the school had a feeding programme. Previous literature backs these observations, and has further shown that parents may choose schools, if they can indeed choose (Härmä, 2016), based on e.g., proximity, discipline, and flexibility of fee-collection practices (Dixon & Humble, 2017; Härmä, 2010; Sivasubramaniam, 2014, pp. 226–236, 250–255).

schools.⁵³ However, that there was movement also into public schools, especially after performing well, as well as the public-school teachers' pride in when they were seen as a good school, may nuance Härmä's (2021b, p. 87) comparison with a silo somewhat. Furthermore, the rural teachers I interviewed were not in a very remote area, such as the teachers in Härmä's (2016) study in Nigeria, where there were too few schools for there to be much choice for parents. That there was a small LFP market, combined with varying test results and incomes, and nomadic livelihoods in the rural area I visited may explain why the rural teachers I interviewed found that they also were affected by high pupil mobility. The varying test results and incomes, and the nomadic life of many families in the rural area, may further explain why the rural public-school teachers saw some mobility between the public day-school and the public boarding-school. In contrast, mobility between public schools was uncommon in Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezeh and Epari's (2010) study, and was not noted by the urban public-school teachers whom I interviewed either.

In Maluccio et al.'s (2018) study, pupils moved schools once in primary school on average. The pupil in T19's school who reportedly had changed schools eight times was thus likely an outlier, but may illustrate especially the urban teachers' perception of how the education market had unintended consequences that affected both teachers and pupils. As the teachers were prepared to move for a posting, relationships with pupils in one place were regarded as possible, and even likely, to substitute with relationships with pupils in other schools and places. However, the importance of stable relations with their current pupils was unmistakable for everyday interactions, teaching and learning. The challenge that arose from pupils' mobility was thus that those relations were disturbed and had to be rebuilt as pupils moved in and out of the schools. Pupils moving meant a loss of continuity in their work.

The movement and absence of pupils was most acutely felt in the small LFP schools, including the BIA schools, as one pupil missing was more noticeable in their smaller classes. Though BIA is a large chain of schools, the four

⁵³ As one rural public-school principal told me, there was a three-year period between adjustments of public-school funding, which was always inadequate anyway. This meant that attracting more pupils rarely meant more funding.

schools visited were very small.⁵⁴ With regard to pupils moving to other schools, T34, who taught in the small higher classes in his school exclaimed:

It affects! It affects me seriously. How can I teach a class with no pupils? (T34 – young, male P1 teacher, rural BIA)

In this immediate way, low enrolment affected on the LFP-school teachers' work, morale, and motivation. Having fewer pupils was felt as a failure. None of the LFP-school teachers spoke of losing their job as a direct consequence of individual pupils changing to another school. However, falling enrolment and lower incomes from fees affected LFP schools' 'fate', as T15 put it (see also Heyneman & Stern, 2014). According to the market logic of competition, what Cox (1998b) would term an external, 'more global force', unpopular, 'bad' schools should close down or shape up. However, even scraping along was disheartening for the teachers. T34 may have been a 'good' or 'bad' teacher, but other factors, such as the lacking local connection of BIA, other schools performing better, poverty in the area, etc., may also have added into undermining his efforts of keeping his pupils. As Parding and Berg Jansson (2022) show in a Swedish study, the geographical and socio-economic context of (predominately private) schools in a competitive education market matters for teachers' ability to retain pupils as well as for their work environment.

While desirable for LFP-school teachers in small LFP schools with small classes, pupil mobility *into* LFP schools and public schools alike caused disruptions in the teachers' planning and teaching. Whether pupils came from schools that were ahead or behind, or, like BIA, had a different way of teaching, the pupil would need to adjust to new ways and new teachers, the teachers pointed out (see also Abuya & Ngware, 2016). This took time and effort from the teacher, which came at the cost of the other pupils, and risked lowering 'performance'. The teachers' ability to do their job in a way that they found satisfactory was in this way challenged.

The movement of pupils out of public schools and into LFP schools was by the public-school teachers discussed in both positive and negative terms. Speaking about the number of learners and the workload, mobility of pupils out of public schools was seen as potentially positive for the public-school teachers' work environment, to make it more "manageable" (T9). Still, while public-school

⁵⁴ Four BIA schools were visited, with non-supervised interviews conducted in two.

teachers believed that LFP schools alleviated some of the pressure on public schools, they also experienced negative consequences. Cream skimming, or ‘poaching’, as one teacher put it, was believed to be a result of LFP schools wanting to be able to show good results (see also, e.g., Romero et al., 2017, in Liberia; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 153–154, in India). This was noted, and felt, by teachers in schools with less discriminatory enrolment:

You know parents look at performance. Last year we dropped a little bit. [...] If they hear [another] school has performed well, they rush their children there. [...] Us, we have big numbers. And we, we collect... we pick any. But with [private schools], they are with the mini score. They want a performing child. That’s the difference. [...] They poach our children. They poach our clever children, leaving the weaker ones. So they are not doing justice to us. (T22 – senior, female P1 senior teacher, urban public school)

Working with less well-performing pupils affected the teachers in public schools, as their job was less rewarding from a performance perspective. This may seem selfish, but being able to do a good job gave both satisfaction and motivation for teachers (as it likely does for most people) (see also Han & Yin, 2016; Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, p. 33). While they could, and did, still value their work with the pupils, results dropping also seemed to cause a fear of being regarded as not doing a good enough job. As education is a public good with many stakeholders and opinions, this is a valid fear, as teachers risk lacking allies if they are seen as failing (Bocking, 2018; Sweeney, 2013).

Interrupted relationships between teachers and pupils, meaning less stability and less time learning, was similarly a risk because of absent pupils. However, while the mobility of pupils may be seen as a school choice gone to extremes, pupils being absent because of fees may rather be seen as one consequence of the shift towards a fee-charging market and the failure to properly fund public education.

7.3 Shifts towards a private education market and increased private employment

7.3.1 Pupil absenteeism because of fees: demotivating and straining relations with parents

Even if some LFP schools offer concessional places to needy and/or studious pupils, LFP schools' margins are rarely large enough to lower fees to accommodate the poorest pupils (Heyneman & Stern, 2014; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 39, 96–98). This inequality problem has been pointed out both by critics of LFP schools and by proponents of voucher systems for LFP schools (see, e.g., Dixon et al., 2019; Riep & Machacek, 2016). In the interviews conducted for the study at hand, pupils' absenteeism because of fees was a challenge experienced also by teachers in the LFP schooling market. For many LFP-school teachers it was a challenge particularly for two reasons: disruptions and demotivation similar to that of pupil mobility, and a strain on the relation with parents. However, unlike pupils' mobility, this challenge does not stem from expressions of the rationales of marketisation. Rather, it is a challenge that stems from the shift towards private providers of education, where schools have different policies on allowing pupils unable to pay in class and on who is supposed to make sure that parents have paid.

Apart from test results, the LFP-school teachers often connected their school's attraction to parents with the school's cost relative to the other schools in the local school market.⁵⁵ Still, parents could not always pay, or pay on time, and children would then be sent home to collect money. As with the mobility of pupils between schools, not knowing what to expect in terms of number of pupils from one day to the next affected most of the teachers in LFP schools. Absent pupils affected the teachers' motivation in class, making them "demoralised" (T17) and hampered their ability to structure their work:

When you're in a class where there are 20 pupils and 15 are sent home, then you remain with the 5. It's terrible. You are

⁵⁵ The large LFP school previously charged KES 300 per term, but had recently increased their fees to KES 1 000, which included lunch and a snack (head teacher, large urban LFP school, key informant interview, 12-02-2019). This can be compared with BIA, where fees ranged between KES 2 530 and 4 760 in the urban area (T13), or to KES 8 500 for boarding at the rural public boarding school plus KES 750 for BoM teachers' pay (which reportedly few could afford to pay, however) (T30).

used to that big number, [...] you go to class, you can't deliver everything to your fullest, because you are knowing you are delivering the thing and half of the class are not there and you have to repeat it when they come. So that is a challenge. (T20 – young, male P1-student, small urban LFP school)

Having to choose between repeating or leaving absent pupils behind was difficult, according to the teachers, and neither option seemed fair to the pupils, those present and those missing respectively. Again, this undermined the teachers' ability to see to the needs of their pupils, as well as their desire to do a good job, diminishing their motivation.

It should be noted that in the rural area pupils were often absent from public schools as well, according to the rural public-school teachers. There were more or less hidden costs in public schooling as well, but absenteeism because of the collection of fees was not mentioned. Rather, the teachers believed that parents needed their children to move with them to tend animals and did not value education much. Sometimes pupils were missing from lunch, as they went home to eat and did not return for the remainder of the day. Public-school teachers in a study in India reported similarly 'erratic' attendance among children, which, like what the teachers described in the study at hand, hampered the continuity of the curriculum (Härmä, 2021b, p. 43). Several of the teachers in both areas, in both LFP schools and public schools, pointed out that there was a risk of 'losing' children to risky behaviour and sexual violence in the areas if they could not be in school. While especially public-school teachers said that parents needed to take more responsibility, it was clear that absenteeism overall caused some level of stress, because the teachers cared about what happened to their pupils.

In BIA, the fee collection was supposed to be exact and on time. If there were fees outstanding, the pupils were sent home and labelled 'not allowed' (in class) in the attendance list on the Nook (the e-readers used) until the fees had been paid in full (T20, formerly in BIA; also noted by Riep & Machacek, 2016). This meant that some pupils could be absent for weeks or a month (T34), which was challenging both for the teachers' work and their relationship with the parents:

The challenge that will be at times [is] to handle a small number in class because they haven't paid the school fees, you know. Then control over that [and] talk to parents, "pay school

fees so that you can keep your kids in class”. But it’s very difficult [with them] not being able to pay school fees because of this and this. Just that’s the main challenge. (T14 – young, female P1 teacher, urban BIA)

There were thus several layers to the difficulties of outstanding fees. The BIA teacher, above, found it difficult to not have a full class and have the whole class present as they moved on with the curriculum. He also described feeling caught in-between as he knew the company policy, yet he could understand and felt bad for the parents’ inability to pay, even though outstanding fees in the end could threaten the privately employed teachers’ income and employment (see Riep & Machacek, 2016). While some LFP schools were more lenient or had a manager that handled such matters, the issue of fees created difficult situations for teachers to maintain good relations with parents, if forced into the role of convincing them to pay and send their children back to school. This strained the ‘relation of educational provision’ between teachers and parents (see Martin, 1998). However, contrary to Martin’s (1998) findings from Mexico, and Unterhalter et al.’s (2018) findings in BIA schools in Nigeria, the LFP-school teachers in the study at hand were very aware and compassionate regarding the parents’ difficult financial situations. This may be because several of the LFP-school teachers came from similar circumstances themselves. That is something Härmä (2021b, pp. 35, 73–75) points out as putting parents and pupils on more equal terms with LFP-school teachers, compared to better-off public-school teachers.

Another explanation for why the absenteeism because of fees was challenging may be found in that most teachers, even those in LFP schools, believed that education should be free. The promise made by the Kenyan government to provide Free Primary Education (FPE), and the teachers’ regard of education as fundamental to life, were used by the teachers to argue for that education *should* be accessible to all. This can be compared to Muzaffar and Sharma’s (2011) notion that contexts that have not historically had a successful public education lacks a strong ‘public’ concept to counter the concept of ‘private’. The teachers interviewed did not find private schooling categorically wrong, nor did many argue explicitly for only public education. This supports Muzaffar and Sharma’s (2011) hypothesis of private being less problematised. However, it appeared that the FPE policy had raised (and razed) the teachers’ expectations on the government, and influenced their way to argue for public or subsidised education, saying that it should be free because it is a human

right. Only a few of the teachers, primarily older public-school teachers in the urban area, believed that it was good to charge ‘something little’ for education, or let the parents buy materials. This they believed would make the parents take more responsibility and value education. Here, in comparison to many LFP and rural public-school teachers, some of the urban public-school teachers were a little less understanding of families’ financial situation. That can be seen as more in line with Martin’s (1998) findings on there being a strain on the relation of educational provision from the teachers’ side, as well as Härmä’s (2021b, pp. 35, 73–75) regard of public-school teachers as more socially distant from families’ situations.

In the next section, I will look at what the shift towards private education and private employment has meant for teachers in terms of working conditions.

7.3.2 Worsening labour market and working conditions

Based on the interviews with teachers and key informants (KNUT representative, key informant interview, 06-03-2019), as well as Barton et al.’s (2017) study, it is evident that many certified teachers in Kenya start their teaching careers in private schools. There, they may remain for around a decade, alongside UTs. The large surplus of teachers and high unemployment rates in Kenya favours the LFP school market (see Barton et al., 2017; KNBS, 2021). However, the state also benefits from the large supply of trained teachers to cover their shortcomings at a lower cost, as parents/organisations pay, and privately employed teachers are forced to accept wages below those of TSC teachers (see Barton et al., 2017; Bold et al., 2013).⁵⁶ Whether the surplus of teachers is part of a strategy of the Kenyan government to enable more education without footing the bill, or if it is because of the high demand for teacher training from students, this study cannot tell. Regardless, both LFP and public schools benefit from the large surplus of teachers and unemployed youth. Several scholars on LFP schools have raised concerns of exploitation of teachers and UTs in LFP schools, with reports of long hours, low pay and precarious employment (Edwards et al., 2015; Riep & Machacek, 2016). In

⁵⁶ All BoM teachers should be trained and registered with the TSC, but it has been difficult to find other than indications on that this is not always the case (see International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2020)

this section, I look closer at the teachers' experiences and challenges in private employment relations, and how their experiences were shared, or not, with the public-school teachers.

Workload

While we previously learned that the teachers found it easy to get a job in the LFP school market, finding an acceptable job in terms of workload and pay was very difficult. Starting with the work hours and expectations, these were pointed out as challenging in some LFP schools:

[T]he problem is, sometimes you get a job and it's very stressful. [...] Because you are stressed up, you're not given any freedom. And then you're supposed to reach there at 6 [AM], you're leaving at 6 [PM]... So [the previous job] was very tiresome. (T4 – young, female P1 teacher, large LFP school, urban area)

Not all LFP-school teachers interviewed had 12-hour long days, though several worked early mornings, in the evenings and/or on weekends and holidays. Some LFP-school teachers, predominately young males, took pride in the workhours – it was a sign of their hard work and their commitment to their pupils and/or the school. In the framing of long days there was a discernible difference between some men and women. While several women also prided themselves for working hard and being committed, and some men felt that days were long, many women and no men mentioned that long days were stressful because they had household chores outside of work (see also Muasya, 2020). Feeling like the days were too long for many teachers meant that they were left with little freedom, time and energy for both doing a good job and taking care of themselves and their life.

In comparison, for the public-school teachers the challenge in terms of workload was rather that they had too many pupils to handle, and no ability to influence the number:

You know, you are entrusted to too many kids. And they all need your attention. [...] The number of learners per class I cannot control. They are pumping in every day. Kenyan education is free, so even if they are a 100, we bring in 101 to

class. We don't have control over that. (T7 – senior, female P1 teacher, urban public school)⁵⁷

The public-school teachers said that they struggled to pay attention to all pupils, correcting homework, and managing over-crowded classrooms, something that has been noted by Sivasubramaniam (2014, p. 107) and Abuya and Ngware (2016) as well. Like Abuya and Ngware (2016), I found that overcrowding was perceived as a massive challenge for the public-school teachers' ability to carry out their work, which undermined their sense of accomplishment. Abuya et al. (2015) have pointed out lacking involvement of public-school teachers and their unions in Kenyan education policymaking, yet teachers are tasked with implementation. While appreciating that 'free' education allowed more children to go to school, the 'constant' admission of new pupils was challenging because the public-school teachers felt that they had no influence on the mismatch between resources and the number of pupils.

Pay

Finding an acceptable LFP school job in terms of pay was a more universal challenge than acceptable work hours:

Getting a job in the private it's not hard. The problem is now the pay. Because if I left here today... because the schools they are like mushrooms. And if you go, they say they can offer you a job, but the pay somebody can give is maybe KES 3 000 [USD 30], but rent alone is 3 500 [USD 35]. Pay is the problem, but getting a job is easy. (T2 – young, female P1 teacher, large LFP school, urban area)

None of the LFP-school teachers reported earnings below KES 6 000/month (USD 59) in their current employment. Edwards et al. (2015), reported wages from KES 3 000 (USD 30), and Stern and Heyneman (2013) from as little as KES 1 500 (USD 15) in Kenya, however. Still, nearly all LFP-school teachers said that they were earning too little to give them a peaceful, stable life with

⁵⁷ PTRs in Kenyan primary education was around the beginning of 2018 on average 41:1, with large variations between counties and schools (MoEST, n.d, p. 96). Some reports are however more in line with what the teachers in this study reported (e.g., Dixon & Tooley, 2012). Whether this is because of studies predominately being carried out in poorer areas or other factors is unclear.

ability to develop in their professional and private lives as desired. In a living wage report, Andersen et al. (2021) put the monthly living expenses of a Kenyan family in 2019 at KES 39 591 (USD 392), and a gross living wage at KES 26 826 (USD 266). While that estimate was for a nuclear family with two children in a non-metropolitan urban area, it may serve as an indicator of how far off the mark LFP-school teachers' salaries are from making possible "a basic but decent standard of living" (Andersen et al., 2021, p. 7). As a comparison, public-school teachers start at a minimum of KES 21 756 (approximately USD 215 at the time of the interviews⁵⁸), plus eligible allowances (TSC & KNUT, 2021). This could make for a living-wage in some areas and circumstances, but shows that even as teachers become public employees, they do not necessarily earn a living wage.

Their low salaries made the LFP-school teachers financially and socially vulnerable:

Although I told you from the beginning, [your financial situation] depends on how you plan your life, your money, your resources... But some other times it is also a challenge. When you have a family, and you have little money... you have some challenges of meeting some of the family needs. So it means that you have to go an extra mile, or you have to forfeit some other things [...] for life to continue. [...] Imagine I'm teaching here, I'm handling other people's children, because it is my calling, and my child is not in college or has been chased away from school because of school fees, and I'm here now, my mind is focused on teaching and I receive a call, "Mwalimu ['teacher'], your child is at home, because there are some balances here he or she has to pay". Your brain will be disoriented in some way for some time. (T19 – senior, male B.Ed. teacher, owning a small urban LFP school)

T19 had earlier in the interview said that teachers' salaries' sufficiency was a matter of frugality, but then acknowledged that his small margins were easily disrupted. Being unable to care and/or provide for their own and their family's needs was stressful, and could harm the teachers' sense of worth and status. According to Muasya (2020) and Tao (2013), Kenyan female public-school teachers' and Tanzanian public-school teachers' ability to financially provide

⁵⁸ All KES to USD conversions in the results chapters are based on the conversion rate at the time of the interviews, February to March 2019, which according to Google Finance stood at KES 0.0098-0.0099 per USD.

for, and physically and emotionally care for their family is largely intertwined. Considering the much lower pay in LFP schools, the LFP-school teachers' ability to provide and care for themselves and others was further circumscribed. Caring was thus not only undermined by a lack of time and energy, living apart from family, or inadequate spousal support, but also by the struggle to pay for housing and education.

Compared with LFP-school teachers pay contra performance, some scholars argue that Kenyan public-school teachers' pay is too high in relation to learning outcomes (e.g., Barton et al., 2017; Simmons Zuilkowski et al., 2020). In the interviews I conducted, the public-school teachers rather put their pay in relation to their needs and to their workload. With the over-crowding and lacking resources, the TSC teachers found that they were paid "simsim" (translated as 'sesame seeds', T26):

No, no, no, I'm not ok [financially]. In fact, the work we do, and the payment is like... We are just doing something like Red Cross [charity work]. It is so, so little. (T23 – middle-aged, female diploma teacher, rural public school)

Nearly all public-school teachers expressed a mismatch between their workload and their pay. Several said that they struggled to fulfil their own and their kin's material needs outside of work, as they sometimes were the sole income earner and/or had several dependants (cf. Andersen et al., 2021). Most strikingly, the pay contra workload made nearly all public-school teachers feel like they were not valued and recognised by their employer, the State. This is something Lindsjö (2017, p. 94, 2018) also found among teachers in Tanzania.

Of the interviewed trained teachers awaiting public-school employment, three were employed as BoM teachers to make up for under-staffing:

There are some not TSC. Because the number of children, the head teacher had to employ other teachers, because they were not enough. [...] They are being paid by the parents. (T23 – middle-aged, female diploma teacher, rural public school)

All four public schools in this study had BoM teachers. Like teachers in small LFP schools, the rural BoM teachers were financed by the parents, while the urban BoM teachers were paid by the schools' Christian sponsors. The poverty of the rural area affected the rural BoM teachers' pay, as few parents could

afford to pay regularly (T30), whereas the urban BoM teachers earned more than other privately employed teachers. In a study by Bold et al. (2018), Kenyan teachers paid by parents earned USD 56 per month on average, approximately one fifth of TSC teachers' earnings in the same study. While I was not privy to all three BoM teachers' exact earnings, the pay gap was less on average. Still, the gap was significant even to the most well-paid BoM teacher. The BoM teachers had served for 3–4 years in a similar manner to the TSC-employed teachers, only with fewer administrative tasks. While they felt that their work was a little less stressful in comparison, and that they could spend more time on teaching tasks than their TSC colleagues, their lower pay and insecure employment felt unjust to them, considering their similar education and work.

Again, the lower cost for teacher salaries in private employment has been discussed in terms of higher efficiency by some scholars (see, e.g., Barton et al., 2017; Bau & Das, 2017). However, it needs to be recognised what a pay below living wage means in terms of material standard and stress. For the teachers it meant difficulties providing for themselves and their families, perhaps particularly in terms of safe and peaceful housing, and difficulties to progress in life. Another major stressor was the lack of job security in private employment.

Job security

In the wait for public employment, job insecurity was the primary challenge to all the privately employed teachers' spaces of dependence. The lack of job security has been repeatedly reported on (see, e.g., Härmä, 2021b, pp. 30–35; Ratteree, 2015; Riep & Machacek, 2016). Non-permanent and/or informal contracts meant lacking long-term financial stability and ability to take out loans, according to the teachers. They also meant the impending threat of being fired, and from one day to the next stand without an income for food, housing and necessities for themselves and/or their families. While finding a new job was relatively easy, as posited above, finding a new *acceptable* LFP school job was difficult. The job insecurity undermined the LFP-school teachers' well-being, their ability to rest and to plan. Some connect non-permanent contracts with accountability and increased effort, as teachers not fulfilling their

employers' or parents' demands may be fired (e.g., Barton et al., 2017). However, to the privately employed teachers there was a sense of fickleness regarding employment, which was really stressful. While some LFP-school teachers lamented the lack of consequences for public-school teachers not doing their job – again taking pride in their own commitment – they wanted that stability and found their own situations too insecure. Even when LFP-school teachers had been employed for years and had good relations with employers and managers, they could (should?) never be entirely sure what the future may bring.

Bocking (2017, pp. 175–189) argued that neoliberal education policies involving non-permanent contracts in the US, Canada and Mexico has made teachers' work more precarious, with risks to professional autonomy and solidarity. The precarisation of traditional public-sector work may also in part be driven 'from below', however. In contexts with a lack of formal job opportunities, people rather have a low-paid and precarious job than no job, as Millstein and Jordhus-Lier (2012) suggested with regards to casualisation of civil service work in South Africa. In the case at hand, it appears that the surplus of teachers is exploited to staff schools, private and public (as BoM teachers), at a much lower cost than in public employment. I regret that I have not been able to find data on how many surplus teachers are teaching and how many have decided to do something else as they wait for public employment. However, among the teachers I interviewed, it was evident that an insecure and poorly paid private employment as a teacher was the best available choice in the wait.

In the final section before this chapter is wrapped up, I will look at why the fragmentation of teachers into public and a myriad private schools may challenge teacher-teacher relations, and thus teachers' cohesion and professional status.

7.3.3 Fragmentation and questioning others' professionalism

As has been alluded to in some places in this chapter, there were in the interviews at times a sense of discord, or mistrust, between LFP- and public-school teachers, predominately with references made to professionalism. This

discord often echoed some form of the simplified, dichotomous views of LFP- and public-school teachers found in the literature, with public-school teachers as uncommitted and underperforming (see, e.g., Barton et al., 2017), and LFP-school teachers as cheating or teaching to the test to achieve high test results (see, e.g., Riep & Machacek, 2016; Tikly et al., 2022). Both LFP- and public-school teachers may have valid points in the shortcomings they saw, if we consider, for example, Härmä's (2021b) well-researched and not-too-rosy accounts of private and public schooling in the Global South. However, it does not give the whole picture, and the challenge stemming from fragmentation and competition in the education market that I identify lies in a potential schism between public (in this case both TSC and BoM) and LFP-school teachers. The accounts of how the teachers spoke of one another presented here can be seen as ways that they competed for acknowledgement and allies. Analysing those actions is the subject of the next chapter. Here, I present how I picked this up as a potential challenge, if teachers are undermining each other's professionalism and a shared identity.

Several of the LFP-school teachers brought up having witnessed absent and uncommitted public-school teachers in their own time as pupils or teacher students:

Having gone to a public school, when I was in primary back at home... the way teachers taught is not the same as teachers now. Myself, I'm always here, early in the morning, 6.40, and by seven I'm in class, in some days. But when you go to public schools, most of them... teachers [...] arrive in school late. And they are not committed. Some of them are of old age, about to retire. So, you can't compare them to the young ones. (T5 – young, male P1 teacher, large urban LFP school)

This view of public-school teachers as uncommitted was found among several LFP-school teachers, similar to findings among proponents as well as some critics of LFP schools (Dixon, 2012; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 42–44). However, contrary to proponents of hiring teachers for less money (e.g., Andrabi et al., 2008; Barton et al., 2017), the LFP-school teachers never criticised the salaries of public-school teachers. While arguing for putting more pressure on public-school teachers if they do not do their job well, the teachers in LFP schools at the same time felt the stress of losing their job as a very negative thing that they wanted to get away from – by entering public employment. The pay and permanency of public employment was coveted, but there was a sense of

unfairness in the feeling among LFP-school teachers of working very hard and having to wait for natural attrition and additional postings, rather than ‘bad’ public-school teachers being fired.

Public-school teachers, on the other hand, accused many LFP-school teachers of teaching to the test, rather than in the ‘holistic’ manner that they accredited themselves with doing. Some also believed that LFP-school teachers had an easier job, with smaller classes and more high-performing pupils due to cream-skimming, which may well be the case (see, e.g., Härmä, 2021b, pp. 43, 149–152). The public-school teachers, like some scholars (see Bold et al., 2011a; Gruijters et al., 2021), argued that the more disadvantaged students remain in public schools. According to Sivasubramaniam (2014, pp. 224–225; see also Oketch & Ngware, 2010), this may not always be the case in urban informal settlements in Kenya, however, with some parents forced to choose LFP schools because they found public schools charging unobtainable fees. Even if the previous literature is inconclusive on where disadvantaged pupils school, there may be a correlation between parents’ engagement and esteem of education and sending their children to LFP schools (see Bold et al., 2011a). That could explain why the public-school teachers, and a few LFP-school teachers, spoke of pupils’ different ‘readiness to learn’ in the different schools.

I want to stress here, that there in the interviews were sentiments expressed of solidarity and a shared identity that incorporated all trained teachers, as was explored in the previous chapter. However, there was also a sense of competition between LFP and public-school teachers that created an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’. This was not the competition for work through social exclusion based on gender, ethnicity, etc., that Gough (2010) has pointed out as a worker strategy, as the progression from private to public was essentially out of the teachers’ hands. Rather, it was a competition for esteem and recognition. It seemed that perceptions of and comparisons with the ‘other type’ of teacher at times called forth almost defensive narratives of teacher professionalism. To me, this appeared to put at risk that shared teacher identity, as well as their common ground as professionals with insight into what lacking resources and pressure rather than support meant in the schools and classrooms. Failing to see also their commonalities, joint interests, and socio-spatial trajectories in the teaching career over time has potentially harmful implications for the profession, as it can undermine solidarity and joint action (see Gough, 2010; McDowell et al., 2007). As told in the previous chapter,

although KNUT is officially a union for both private- and public-school teachers, this was neither the teachers' nor the interviewed KNUT representative's view (KNUT representative, key informant interview, 06-03-2019). Such widely held perceptions may further entrench a budding division (see, e.g., EI & KNUT, 2016). As KNUT's official stance against privatisation, which in practice was a stance against BIA (KNUT representative, key informant interview, 06-03-2019), was not known by many teachers, it is difficult to see that the union's view would have added to the schism, however.

Kenyan teachers appear to face a problem and dilemma to some degree similar to what Lier (2008, pp. 226–229) studied among municipal workers in a process of privatisation and casualisation of work in South Africa. The permanent municipal staff had historically worked to improve their own salaries and working conditions. As the permanent workers belatedly realised that their jobs were being outsourced to much lower paid casual workers, they had to choose between continuing to fight only for themselves, or to join forces with the workers in the informal economy to try to 'raise the floor'. This was not an easy choice, as it essentially meant some degree of legitimising the outsourcing to the private sector. While union politics is beyond the scope of this thesis, this example may show how the marketisation process broadly redraws the playing field for teachers, presenting challenges both to the teachers' spaces of dependence, as well as to their spaces of engagement, which is the subject of the next, and final, results chapter.

7.4 Concluding remarks

Talking to teachers, at different times and spaces in their career, helped shine a light on that challenges in the marketisation of education in the Global South pointed out in previous literature may be experienced and perceived differently. It could vary with a sense of justice, as with test results, or with proximity, as with UTs. Furthermore, discussing teachers' challenges in the marketisation of education in the form of LFP-schooling expansion, but looking also beyond the private schools, I have found both contrasting and shared experiences. The contrasts gave few surprises. Public-school teachers struggled to juggle performance and over-crowding, whereas LFP-school teachers struggled with high pressures and small and varying class sizes. LFP-

school teachers found their already poor employment relation on the line due to the demands that they faced, whereas public-school teachers did not. More revelatory was what the teachers had in common due to competition: the experience of finding themselves challenged because they cared about being able to do a good job, and other peoples' regard of them. Even if the teachers were unlikely to see their spaces of dependence permanently disrupted, as private school teachers were likely to find another job, and public-school teachers were unlikely to be fired, there being competition affected their sense of accomplishment, of fairness and their regard of one another.

In the next chapter, focus is on how the teachers mitigated the challenges they faced in the marketisation of education. To understand their action – and inaction – we need to bring with us what they felt was challenging, the circumstances of their employment relations and what motivated, helped and/or hindered them in fulfilling their essential interests.

8 Navigating in the marketisation of education: how and why do teachers exert their agency?

What I can control? I can control those things that are within my reach. The case may be where I have been given permission to... Like when the parents say “I want you to do this and that” I’ll feel free to do it. But without their consent then I’m limited.
(T3 – young, male P1 teacher, large urban LFP school)

8.1 Introduction

The quote above is one illustration of how the teachers expressed having some agency, but also how their agency often was bounded. While only one example, the teachers could see their agency both enabled and constrained by relations to other stakeholders. If challenges to teachers in public and private employment have garnered little in-depth engagement in the LFP schooling context, teachers’ agency and motivation for taking action has received even less focus. Rather, LFP and public-school teachers in the LFP school literature often tend to be represented in quite passive terms: as victims of steering and exploitation, and as lazy and uncommitted, respectively (see, e.g., Dixon, 2012; Riep & Machacek, 2016). In an attempt to nuance this picture further, I focus on the teachers’ everyday spaces of engagement in/through which they responded to challenges to their needs, with acts of resilience, reworking or, more rarely, resistance. Reworking and resisting involve an identification of circumstances as oppressive and unequal, and aim to change or over-throw these (Katz, 2004). Resilient acts are rather non-oppositional acts of going

along with circumstances that are challenging, to cope and get by. However, where possible, I try to distinguish between when teachers chose resilience despite a critical consciousness, and when they were uncritical or approving of circumstances. The former I refer to as resilience, and the latter as collaboration. This helps us to get a better understanding of the teachers' reasons and possibilities to act in certain ways.

Similar to the challenges in the previous chapter, I start with how the teachers navigated expressions of market rationales: test results, marketing, the use of scripted lessons, the use of UTs, and pupils' mobility. I then move on to the shift towards a private education market and private employments: pupils' absenteeism, teachers' working conditions, and the fragmentation between the public and private sector teachers. With regards to working conditions, rather than handling workload, pay and job insecurity separately, I have picked out four ways that the teachers navigated them: side hustling, exit, staying/moving for work, and sharing rather than scale jumping. I will end the chapter with some brief concluding remarks, before I move on to the concluding discussion chapter.

8.2 Alignment with expressions of market rationales shaping actions

8.2.1 Test scores and hierarchies: navigating professionalism and employment

As discussed in the previous chapter, several teachers emphasised performance in terms of test scores as a way to be held accountable to management, evaluators, parents and pupils, as well as to themselves. It was a source of pressure on the teachers, as schools, primarily LFP schools, competed with one another by showing 'good' results. However, many teachers also referred to their test scores in talking about their work, and gave exam scores legitimacy as a way to measure quality and be competitive in the schooling market:

If you [with the new curriculum] realise at the end of the term that there is no accountability as a teacher, what [you] did in class, because there will not be a test... This test will put the teacher on [their] toes [...] But removing these tests, it will just

mean you move into class, your day counts and then you leave in the evening. There will be no competition between you and other schools, therefore low quality. (T2 – young, female P1 teacher, large urban LFP school)

While speaking about her fears for the introduction of the competency-based curriculum (CBC), this teacher talked of tests as the main way to keep herself and other teachers motivated and accountable.⁵⁹ She appeared to have adopted/adapted to a logic of quality as measurable in test scores and achieved through competition in the education market. Somewhat more temperate versions of T2's views were prevalent among teachers in LFP schools in both areas, and some public-school teachers also spoke of test scores in similar ways. Where their regard of test results came from – policy, their view of education, their management, their own education, parents' expectations or all of the above – this study cannot say. However, Falabella (2020) and Holloway and Brass (2018) have suggested that working in education systems where schools compete, using high-stakes tests as part of accountability and quality measures, changes teachers' behaviour and regard of what it is to be a teacher. Regardless of how, and how much, the teachers had incorporated test results as part of their view of professional behaviour, they often reproduced the elevated status of test results in the interviews.

Some LFP-school teachers handled this competitive pressure by focusing their teaching on the tests. T16, an UT, did this by doing revision rather than course work with class 8, who would sit the high-stakes national exam, KCPE. T20, the P1-student, spoke of how test days were his best days, and that:

the manager that I can work with is only the manager that will give me the opportunity to do anything in class as long as there is performance. Not even following whichever, the principles or the rules of the school, but the whole thing is the kids' performance. (T20 – young, male P1-student, small urban LFP school, former UT in BIA)

T20's relationship with his school's non-teacher owner was one of freedom, granted that he got good results, rather than pedagogical support. T20 said that he liked the focus on results. He was very engaged and caring for his pupils, and being pushed and assessed based on his pupils' results appeared to be in

⁵⁹ The CBC will have assessments throughout the pupils' education, rather than as a one-off examination like the KCPE (KNEC, 2021)

accordance with, or have shaped, his actions and view of what doing a good job as a teacher meant. Teaching to the test, which fits T20's description of his work, and more corrupt practices like cheating, is something that Härmä (2021b, pp. 145–156) has noted that the high stakes and competition in education markets in the Global South have led to. In the interviews, several factors, particularly in the LFP-school teachers' context, seemed to converge towards such a development, such as the expectations from managers and parents, the job insecurity, and, perhaps, that many LFP-school teachers were relatively young and inexperienced.

Most of the LFP-school teachers conformed to the focus on test scores, whether they approved or not, because their employment depended on this. Some, however, placed less emphasis on tests, and more on what they referred to as a 'holistic approach' (T33), 'nurturing pupils' minds' (T19). Based on how those teachers said that they taught, it may be referred to as a more traditional professional approach with a broader focus on knowledge and learning than those expressing a focus on the needs of the school, i.e., showing performance (see Parding et al., 2012). Considering the emphasis placed on exam results in most of the LFP teachers' schools, I regard this as a subtle, but daring, reworking of the desired performance-driven teaching in their competitive context. It was not necessarily a way of trying to affect teaching in their schools (the exception being school owner T19) or the focus on test results as a systemic issue. Rather, the focus was on teaching the way that the teachers themselves saw as appropriate.

The public-school teachers often spoke of a more holistic approach, sometimes defensively as an approach that may not yield as good test results as for private schools, but better for the pupils' long-term understanding. They seemingly experienced a lower, albeit varying, pressure (or expectation) to perform, and saw less of a possibility to heed pressures on test results due to their large classes. Public-school teachers' strategies in work were rather focussed on, and struggling with, classroom management and trying to get their many pupils to grasp as much as possible. The public-school teachers were thus invariably geared towards coping, with some acceptance of test results as important and potentially saying something about quality, but with more scepticism regarding what test results represented. Detracting from the focus on test scores may have been part of a mental coping strategy for those that felt that they could not achieve the results that they would have wished, something Holloway and

Brass (2018) found in their study. Whether to regard the public-school teachers' way of navigating test results as resilience or reworking may depend on how one regards the challenge. In their less competitive immediate contexts, with management that saw test results as important, but not imperative, there was less of a challenge to act on. However, looking beyond the school, to the education market and the TPAD, then the public-school teachers' way of teaching may be seen rather as reworking.

However, the public-school teachers' actual *use* of the TPAD as an accountability tool was rather a matter of resilience:

We can do it for formality, if that's what they want, just fill all those things that they want. [...] At the end of it, who loses? The kids lose, because we waste time on something that is not tangible. (T9 – young, male P1 teacher, urban public school)

Like T9, most public-school teachers reluctantly complied with filling in the TPAD. The perceived distance and/or power relation to the evaluator and the sense that anything could be filled in, made it abstract, compared to direct assessments and feedback. Similarly, evaluations by Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASO) were hard to act on as autonomous professionals for the teachers in LFP schools and public schools, as the quality officers reportedly met with the management, who then served as a link to the teachers. This meant that the teachers had to depend on having an ally in management to defend them and their essential interests up the 'chain' (T9). Furthermore, the teachers wanted to be able to tell evaluators of their challenges, for those to be acknowledged. They wanted a more direct link to those in decision-making power, which was denied to them.⁶⁰ Abuya and Ngware (2016) in their study similarly found that Kenyan public and private teachers wanted a chance to give assessors their view on the challenges they faced, as they believed that their knowledge could improve the education system overall. Very few of the teachers in the present study spoke of bringing matters further than to the school management. It did not seem viable to them. In lacking relations to draw on, I regard the teachers as quite circumscribed in their agency, as their

⁶⁰ Bunyi et al. (2013) also noted that QASOs were more known as evaluators than for their other key function, "to provide advisory services to schools on how best to improve teaching". Furthermore, a lack of capacity due to shortage of officers as well as issues of lacking competency among officers made Bunyi et al. (2013) conclude that QASOs, at least in the past, have not had a positive impact on teaching and learning.

professionalism and performance was discussed at a level they could not access themselves.

In comparison, visits by Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs), in public schools, and Quality Assurance teams (QAs), in BIA schools, were better liked by the concerned teachers, as they could respond and act on feedback:

It's a fair system, because they correct you on the spot. [...] Maybe the content is not enough, the officer will call you after finishing your lesson and tell you "this area, this area, you did not do this, try do this", and when they come next time, they'll get that you've done what they have told you to. It's a good way. (T26 – middle-aged, female P1 teacher, rural public school)

In these interactions, the interviewed teachers felt that they were treated as professionals, and thus collaborated in evaluations and development. While the teachers spoke of valuing their freedom in the classroom, knowledgeable input was welcomed and wanted, as it was regarded as furthering their teaching skills. Several teachers spoke of self-assessment and staying accountable to their own goals and values, with or without using test scores, as per above. It is thus understandable that the teachers wanted knowledgeable stakeholders to recognise their work, have a dialogue, get feedback, and develop. Recognition from others, particularly peers, was important for their sense of significance as teachers (see Cox, 1998b), and may reflect the emphasis placed on collegiality by Bocking (2017, pp. 379–380). In their role as both assessors and support in the public-school teachers' work, support officers thus appeared to provide a valuable relation to draw on in the teachers' desire to do a good job, thus strengthening their spaces of dependence. BIA's QA visits in this study seemed similarly like a way to improve, albeit more regular and frequent than government officer visits.

As mentioned above, the teachers' relationships with management and the way that the management interacted with other modes and relations of accountability also shaped the teachers' agency. Management could be a centre of social power for the teachers to engage (see Cox, 1998b), for example, in bringing issues that the teachers saw to a higher level, e.g., to the District Education Officer (DEO), whom the teachers were unlikely to contact directly. That kind of engagement was however rarely mentioned in the interviews. A

good relationship with management was more often discussed as something to draw on for strength in the teachers' everyday work life in the school:

Although we have some small [problems] here and there, if you talk to the director, sometimes you know, she's always a friend to you, she always tells you whatever, where you are. There is always a dialogue with her. I feel like I am trusted. (T1 – young, female P1 teacher, large urban LFP school)

Like the relationships with support officers, good relations with management appeared largely connected with proximity, trust, communication, and collegiality. Such a relationship between teacher and principal is important for teachers' professional autonomy, according to Bocking (2017, pp. 239, 379–380), which appeared to be true also in the interviews I conducted. Most of the teachers felt that they had the approval and trust of the management of their school, which in part explains the ability to rework teaching practices. In the public and private schools where the management was directly involved in the daily work of the teachers, they could be a welcome resource in the mitigation of challenges. This meant that the teachers would be able to ask for help if needed – assistance with subjects that they felt weak in, meeting parents' complaints and handling more personal problems. However, not all managers were seen as present, involved, and approachable, nor were all administrative positions in the rural public-schools filled. This was something that affected the teachers, as the principal being short on time made the teachers feel bothersome, and gave them less chance to be involved in decision-making. The teachers' relations with management meant varying possibilities to work autonomously with confidence, make their voices heard and feel like professionals met as such.

8.2.2 Marketing by both collaborators and very subtly reworking critics?

In this study, few teachers had to do marketing. Among those, sentiments were that doing marketing was part of their job, and more or less part of keeping their LFP schools in business. Two of the teachers who did marketing were UTs (T35 and T16), which may have impacted on them regarding a non-teaching task as unproblematic. T16 marketed together with T15, in the urban area, and the two of them were the most on board with marketing among all

the teachers. T15, who was also head teacher in the school, spoke of marketing as a way of increasing the number of pupils for the school to maybe one day be profitable. For him, there was thus a very clear connection between marketing, the financial situation of the school, teacher salaries, and resources. It appeared that both the school and the teachers benefitted from T15's 'insider' status in the area when it came to marketing, as T15 and T16 found it easy to talk with and promote the school to parents, and thus managed to bring new pupils in.

Doing marketing was not always enjoyable or attracted new pupils, however. The rural BIA teachers connected both the displeasure and their difficulty in succeeding to their own and/or the LFP school owners' lack of relations with the surrounding community:

Because here, this school is under a white... it is a white company. The owner of the school is not a black Afri... is not an African. So [the parents] feel that due to that they can't see the owner. (T33 – young, female P1 teacher, rural BIA)

With distant owners, and feeling like outsiders themselves, the rural BIA teachers had few relations to draw on. Rather, they appeared to do the bare minimum to not put themselves at risk, while performing the marketing task. It should be said that I did not get the impression that these three teachers regarded marketing as wrong per se. Rather, they collaborated, but found it very arduous, and bordering on dangerous, as they had to approach people that they felt did not quite like them as outsiders.

The only teacher that spoke of having had an issue with being forced to do marketing and acting upon that was T20, who had left his job in BIA to be able to pursue teacher training instead of having to do marketing. His 'agency by exit', which will be discussed further in section 8.3.2, was done in protest (see Kiil & Knutsen, 2016), not against marketing, but against marketing preventing him from going for training. In light of his desire to undermine the company's practices, and reportedly kicking up a stink at the school, but his exit being a solitary action, I would see this as an attempt at reworking the practices of BIA. Considering the excess of teachers and UTs, his exit likely had little impact. Still, according to the interviews, BIA had stopped having mandatory marketing sessions, allowing teachers to study during holidays instead. This may be because of regulations saying that at least 30% of teaching

staff in informal schools should be trained, and that that percentage should be increased (MoEST, 2015). While effects of actions are beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to know how many BIA teachers used their agency to quit to study, if there were any concerted efforts, and if this may have put any pressure on the company.

I set out to examine marketing as a task that teachers were assigned, as per above. However, in the interviews with the teachers not having to do marketing, it became increasingly unclear where to draw the boundaries of marketing, and of acting against marketing. The majority of the non-marketing teachers spoke of marketing as something that was not actively done, but rather came by the school being well renowned, e.g., for their results and good discipline. Primarily in public schools, there seemed to be a quiet resolve that if they just did their job, teaching well, that was their form of marketing:

Mostly, I can just say... we are striving in academics. [...] We can still market our school by performance, by the way we are performing. So we teachers, we can do that by ensuring our children perform well. I think that's the only way we can engage in marketing our school. (T8 – young, female P1 BoM teacher, urban public school)

This was according to the public-school teachers not to attract more pupils, as they were all struggling with too large classes. Rather it was connected to their sense of significance and professionalism – to be a good school, a good option.⁶¹ In a similar vein, some teachers, predominately in the large LFP school, engaged in ‘informal’ marketing, by talking favourably about their school to parents in the area because they believed their school to be “the best” (T4). The predatory marketing which several teachers in both private and public schools in the urban area expressed that they saw, they could do little about, but said they tried to prove themselves and show the parents what good quality education looked like (T19). These ways of acting, working hard and/or informally touting their school to people in the surrounding area may all be seen as collaboration and alignment with their schools. Beyond their schools, their actions may also be seen as collaborating in the competition. However,

⁶¹ In some of the public schools and the large LFP school, marketing was done by administrators/management towards donors and NGOs, for the school or specific pupils. This could reportedly be stressful, as the varying inflow of money made it difficult to plan the schools’ future finances (T30; head teacher, large urban LFP school, key informant interview 12-02-2019).

when discussing marketing, working hard and earnestly was expressed by the teachers as a way to undermine the predatory marketing of “quack schools” (T19), i.e., reworking how schools should communicate and compete. This slightly tangled analysis of the teachers’ actions aims to reflect that what I have brought up as one challenge could have layers of right-or-wrong-ness to the teachers, which reflected in their actions and/or their justifications for actions. With regards to scripts, the concerned teachers’ actions and justifications were less mixed, however.

8.2.3 Scripted lessons and the reworking of an imposed teaching role

Though all teachers expressed having control and freedom to use their own judgement in the classroom, the frames within which they worked differed somewhat. Most of the trained teachers mentioned the curriculum and rules and regulations of the MoEST and/or of the school as the boundaries within which they were free. In the LFP schools the owners/managers could also impose rules on how the teaching should be done, such as BIA’s use of scripts. The teachers assigned using scripted lessons regarded them as a challenge to their professional autonomy, learning and teaching. Riep and Machacek (2016) in their study on BIA in Uganda pointed out that “the agency of a teacher to act within this educational reality [of BIA] is bound by externally-devised tools that control what and how to teach” (p. 28). Härmä (2021b) further refers to the BIA model as a “dictatorship of the e-reader” (p. 127). In some scholarly critique of the use of scripts, the teachers thus appear very passive. However, despite the company’s efforts, BIA’s control is not ubiquitous (see also Härmä, 2021b, p. 139; Kwauk & Perlman Robinson, 2016).

In fact, none of the BIA teachers interviewed followed the scripts at all times. Some even said that they never did, apart from when there was an inspection. Why and how she as a certified teacher chose to deviate from the script was explained by T14, who in the previous chapter spoke of not wanting to teach like a robot:

I don’t stick to the Nook. I maybe use it to take in what happens in class, eh. [...] Because I’m a trained teacher, it’s for me to see what means I’m going to use to make sure I deliver or meet

my goals in class. [...] Personally, I majorly use it to take attendance, and maybe feed the performance into the system, and after that I send that performance to HQ. But on normal circumstance I rarely use it. I don't. (T14 – young, female P1 teacher, urban BIA)

The way this teacher and the other BIA teachers acted was a way of reworking the system. They saw the scripts as too fast, 'short' (T34), insufficient and/or even faulty or inappropriate (T35). While critical of the scripts and having to use them, leaving them was not done to challenge BIA. Rather, they left the scripts to turn the teaching into something that they saw as working for themselves and the pupils, doing things as they saw best suited for their interaction with their pupils, considering where they were at in their learning. This is what Bocking (2017, p. 3) put forward as part the core of teachers' professional autonomy, albeit working with the curriculum as basis for judgement. Their knowledge of the curriculum was not discussed, but some of the BIA teachers brought own materials, not because there were no materials for the pupils, as BIA has their own books, etc., but rather because they expressed needing additional sources of information in their planning and teaching. Massey (1995, pp. 32–33) elaborated on deskilling as not necessarily meaning less autonomy. In the case of BIA, it seemed that although the school model attempted to remove teacher autonomy in the deskilling process, the teachers still felt that they needed, and despite the odds created, autonomy in the classroom.

Much of the literature on BIA focuses on the horrors or benefits of teachers made to use scripts (Gray-Lobe et al., 2022; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 127–129; Riep & Machacek, 2016; Spreen & Kamat, 2018). However, if my findings are indicative of BIA staff more rarely using the scripts, it poses several (new?) questions, such as how much of BIA's results can be attributed to their scripts and how much should be attributed to their teachers? Furthermore, what do their UTs do instead when they leave the scripts?

As a teacher you need to use your own wisdom, you cannot just rely on [the script]. Because even man is to error, and those things are made by man, so if you depend on them fully, the children may end up astray, so just use your wisdom 100%. (T35 – young, female UT, rural BIA)

That certified teachers were uncomfortable following a script was not surprising (although I was surprised that they dared and managed to leave them), considering that they had an education and regarded themselves as professionals. More surprising, and potentially problematic, was that the UT in BIA (T35) also regarded herself as a teacher and did not always use the script either. Granted, she had some three years of experience, expressed taking teaching very seriously, and despite being an outsider to the local area was more anchored with her class and in the Kenyan context than the distant experts creating the lesson plans. However, three years in BIA, with a strict schedule of scripted classes and ‘no time for research’, as she put it, would not be an ideal situation to develop, for example, subject knowledge. One way intended to develop UTs’ skills, if not knowledge, in other schools was reportedly through support from their colleagues.

8.2.4 Untrained teachers and their support

The few UTs interviewed often spoke of themselves as teachers, with power and freedom to make decisions in the classroom. T16 and several former UTs also spoke of being able to draw on trained and more experienced colleagues’ knowledge and expertise to learn how to plan lessons, for example. The UTs reported sometimes being active in seeking support, if they felt out of their depth and had the possibility, and it was often part of their induction. As mentioned earlier, the trained teachers regarded the use of UTs as a problem on a systemic level, yet when talking about specific UTs, they helped compensate for the UTs perceived shortcomings. Among the interviewed teachers, the collegiality with and support of UTs within schools did thus not appear to be very different from that with trained teachers (although collegiality and teamwork could differ widely between schools). I would term the trained teachers’ actions as a way of collaborating on the school level. Trying to help the UTs do a better job for their pupils and the school was in the trained teachers’ interest, as it affected in-school relations and the work they could all do together. By extension, however, such everyday acts of helping UTs were contradictory to the teachers’ perception of UTs as a problem on the systemic level. On that scale, trained teachers’ support may rather be seen as acts of resilience, as their caring and strengthening in the everyday work facilitated the use of UTs. This shows some similarities with how municipal

workers in Lier's (2008, pp. 186–223) study worked alongside subcontracted workers, and had sympathy for their struggles, but at the same time recognised how they were essentially competing with one another for work. While there are regulations in place to prohibit the use of UTs in Kenya (MoEST, 2015; TSC, 2014), and the State would thus not enforce a transition towards UTs in public schools, UTs are reportedly prevalent as privately employed teachers (International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2020, pp. 29, 42).

With regards to acting to mitigate the challenges to the teachers' labour market and pay stemming from the competition with UTs, there were only two individual teachers with some power to directly counteract the employment of UTs: T19, the LFP school owner, and T15, the LFP school head teacher. T19 spoke of having P1 teachers "across the board", and of UTs as "inserting some damage in the teaching profession".⁶² He acted in accordance with his regard of trained teachers as possessing crucial knowledge and skills as professionals, even if they sometimes required his support. T15, however, spoke of hiring whoever he found most qualified for the job, regardless of training, as exemplified by the UT T16. T15 then trained his new teachers himself. T15 explained this with that:

Some people are just going there [to the teacher training colleges], but in actual sense they are not made teachers, they just go to get the profession. (T15 – young, male P1 head teacher, small urban LFP school)

In contrast to T19, T15 did not regard teacher training as essential, but rather believed that some people were "born to be teachers". While somewhat of a tangent, these two teachers with some authoritative resources and insight into teacher hiring indicate other systemic challenges, such as the quality of teacher training and the need for newly trained teachers to also receive support. They also illustrate what Parding et al. (2012) referred to as different logics, or loyalties, of teachers – to the profession and to the organisation. While T15 showed more of a loyalty towards the organisation and "satisfy[ing] the paying customers" (Parding et al., 2012, p. 298), T19 was more focused on professional knowledge and ethics.

⁶² T19 however also spoke of having early childhood and development (ECDE) teachers employed who were doing in-service training at the time of the interview.

Like several responses to challenges, the teachers largely acted pragmatically to problems in their everyday work life. A joint space of engagement on a higher scale, such as the teachers' union, may have been more efficient in ensuring the hiring of qualified teachers, but was unattainable or not sought out. In the following section, I will look at another challenge beyond the school which was mostly handled within the school: pupils' mobility.

8.2.5 Pupils' mobility requiring delicate navigation inside and outside the classroom

Pupils' mobility was a challenge perceived as stemming from the performance of the teachers' own school, the results in other schools, marketing and that parents sometimes behaved a bit rash, 'rushing their children' (T22) to the best performing school. To avoid losing pupils, the LFP-school teachers could try to talk to parents to not be too hasty to remove their children. This appeared uncommon, however, as the teachers talked of respecting the parents' right to choose schools as they saw fit. Still, a few urban LFP-school teachers said that they may keep track of pupils moving to other LFP schools, and if they found out poor behaviour in the pupil's new school they would raise the issue with the parents, telling them to be vigilant:

I heard that the exam was the same as the questions that were in the books [of the pupil who moved school]. So, I called the parents "you can see the way they are doing, these questions that are in the exams, they are also in the books". (T20 – young, male P1-student, small urban LFP school).

In the case of the pupil in the quote, he/she did not move back, because of fees, but it illustrates the ways the teachers would act against mobility and for their pupils. Such actions were spoken of as a way of caring for pupils and parents in the area. Following Katz (2004), this can be interpreted as a way of trying to rework the local education market by discretely undermining schools that they perceived to work in unethical ways, rather than protest to the school in question. The teachers acted very much on the down-low against 'bad' schools, and would only very rarely mention names in the interviews, even when prompted. They would talk about bad behaviour, as they saw it, but not about in which schools. Furthermore, most of the teachers seemed understanding of parents wanting to move their children if they thought they could get better

results elsewhere. Variations of ‘value for money’ appeared to be a pervasive rationale when talking about parents’ decisions, both in public and LFP schools. Again, this recalls Muzaffar and Sharma’s (2011) reasoning that when free, quality education is scarce, other rationales than social justice are more accepted.

With regards to addressing the mobility itself, apart from subtly telling parents, the teachers mostly spoke of actively attracting pupils through marketing or performance. How the teachers did this by advocating for the school as a task or informally, and how they had different focus in their teaching has been discussed above. However, in relation to mobility, a desire to retain and/or attract pupils by doing a good job/performing illustrates how LFP-school teachers’ and employers’ spaces of dependence and essential interests could be overlapping. Employer and employee formed a joint space of engagement, loosely defined, trying to keep pupils. The LFP-school teachers wanted a full class. In public schools there was less of a focus on attracting pupils, but the desire to perform and be attractive to pupils was also expressed.

With regards to handling the effects of the mobility, both LFP school and public-school teachers had to make difficult decisions on how to progress with the syllabus when new pupils came in. Pupils from other schools could be ahead or behind, and it would take some time for them to get used to a new school, teacher, and way of teaching (see also Abuya & Ngware, 2016). In this the teachers had to rely on their professional autonomy in the classroom to make decisions that would get their pupils to the same speed – juggling moving ahead and remaining with those behind. Apart from the teachers trying to rework the sway of schools appearing better than they were, and the teachers speaking positively about competition for pupils, thus being more like collaborators in the market, most teachers had to handle the effects of pupil mobility by resiliently trying to cope in the classrooms. For their pupils’ and their own sake, they had to make up for these less talked about, negative effects of school choice, a market mechanism touted by its proponents in positive terms (see, e.g., Dixon, 2012). As I will show next, some teachers also wanted to act for their pupils’ and pupils’ parents’ sake when parents could not afford to pay the school fees.

8.3 The shift towards private education and private employment

8.3.1 Fees and attendance: engaging management

The challenge with pupils' absenteeism was in part the same as with pupils' mobility, that pupils would be at different stages in the curriculum, making progression difficult. It was also a challenge for LFP-school teachers' relations with pupils and parents when they had to send pupils home and ask for outstanding fees. While several LFP-school teachers expressed that they believed their school's fees to be 'affordable', they felt for parents and pupils when they could not afford to pay the fees, which was very common. Talking with parents and/or pupils about fees may be seen as collaboration and/or resilience, as the teachers kind of straddled agreeing with that fees should be paid because they were not that much, but also felt compassion, especially if it was only small sums. It may further be seen as an act of resilience as the teacher wanted to maintain their employment and good relations with management. It could thus be an uncomfortable position. Engaged managers eased the pressure on teachers to try to persuade parents to pay the outstanding fees.

Compared with the mobility of pupils, there was room for some of the LFP-school teachers to act to mitigate these challenges, by allowing pupils in class despite not having paid their fees (in part or in full). However, with the teachers lacking authoritative resources, this generally had to be done in agreement with the manager and/or owner of the school. As Härmä (2016) put it, LFP school owners are likely to be somewhat lenient to not lose customers. If they were not, and the teacher pushed for allowing pupils in, he/she could see the relationship with management deteriorate. The teachers speaking up for allowing pupils in class may be seen as acts of reworking, regardless of the managers stance, as they acted to bend the rules. All the LFP-school teachers said that they wanted to allow pupils in. The motivation for allowing, or mediating on behalf of, pupils in school was to have a full class, and, largely, because the teachers felt bad for the pupils and their families. To allow pupils in class was thus not only a way for the teacher to carry on with her/his work, but also to keep up the pupils' progression, maintain the relationships with pupils and parents, and prevent parents being forced to take their children elsewhere.

T15 here discusses this problem and potential solution from his position as a head teacher:

When it comes to paying the school fees, as the vicinity where this school is is under abject poverty, even paying the school fees is a problem. Sometimes you find that you can send the child home even three times, the child is coming without school fees. [...] So there is a very big problem. [...] Sometimes we just have passion for the pupils, and we allow the child to be in class. (T15 – young, male P1 head teacher, small urban LFP school)

‘Having passion for the pupils’ for T15 meant allowing pupils that to stay, even if fees were not fully paid. This was presented as a way to encourage studious pupils, while, if being cynical, it also helped the school keep their scores up. T19 did not speak of particularly promising students being favoured, but was altogether more lenient, as could be seen in the many blank spaces of his ledgers. Again, T15 and T19 were, as head teacher and owner respectively, in a different situation from the other teachers. While many teachers were a person to draw on for parents, T15 and T19 were de facto centres of social power for others, parents or teachers, to engage in (potentially) solving such matters, as they had power to influence or make decisions (see Cox, 1998b).

Allowing pupils in class with unpaid fees was reportedly particularly risky in some schools, like BIA, where such leniencies were forbidden and could result in salary deductions and even dismissal of the teacher (T20, former BIA). Even the BIA academy managers – closest in rank ‘above’ the teachers – would be unable to try to accommodate the parents:

At Bridge [International Academies], the manager we had was a very good guy, but he was tied. With Bridge you have the procedures and the... like you cannot do anything until you have consulted the head office. Like, for example, a parent can come and pay a fee and then you have to send that kid outside even if he only owes the school ten bob [KES; USD 0.1], because that is the system. You follow exactly what the system tells you to do. So you see a child, we call them “not allowed”, it’s not allowed in class because of ten bob. The manager cannot change that because it is from above. That was the issue. The manager can understand the parent that he is dealing with, but the [...] system cannot understand. (T20 – young, male P1-student, small urban LFP school, former UT in BIA)

None of the teachers working in BIA, at the time of interviews or previously, spoke of allowing pupils in class. Rather, they spoke of often missing pupils because of fees, and the stress of trying to mediate and persuade parents to pay when the teacher could recognise the financial pressure of the parents (T14). This contrasts with findings by Unterhalter et al. (2018, p. 50), who found some BIA teachers bending the rules, for example, when partial payments had been made. In the interviews I conducted, it rather seemed that the teachers and managers had little power to rework what they regarded as a too rigid payment system, and rather had to reluctantly comply. Reluctantly complying was common in the teachers' dealings with employments as well.

8.3.2 Navigating working conditions and labour market

In this sub-theme, rather than addressing the three challenges in the previous chapter (workload, pay and job security) one by one, I will focus on four ways that the teachers' acted (or not) to mitigate one or more of those challenges.

Side hustling?

While this study does not contradict findings of LFP-school teachers working hard for minimal pay (see Andrabi et al., 2008; Barton et al., 2017), it calls into question scholars arguing for paying teachers below living wage in the name of 'efficiency'. The teachers' struggles with poor pay made me ask whether they supplemented their teaching income in any way? Teachers' 'moonlighting' has been found to be common in other areas, like Tanzania (Timothy & Nkwama, 2017), and private tutoring as a side income has been very common in Kenya and several other countries (Bray, 2009, pp. 18–19; Bray, 2021).

Some interviewees (T8, T9, T14, T16 for whom teaching was the side hustle, T19, T24, T25, T32, T34) said that teachers practically *had* to have a business or another source of income on the side, because of the poor pay:

With the tight economy of our country a side hustle has become a necessity, it's not a choice. (T9 – young, male P1 teacher, urban public school)

Contrary to T9, who found himself forced to have supplemental incomes, the majority rather felt constricted to only teaching. Several *wanted* to have another source of income, but looked at me incredulously when I asked about it, because who would have time for that? There was no discernible difference between public- and LFP-school teachers in this respect. This is somewhat surprising, as their income levels differed significantly. However, according to Timothy and Nkwama's (2017) findings in Tanzania, income levels may be a poor predictor of which teacher 'moonlighted', even though supplementing income is the main reason for doing so. Timothy and Nkwama (2017) found that age and gender were significant predictors for engaging in income-earning activities on the side. As I conducted few interviews with senior teachers, I cannot say whether older teachers were more prone to moonlighting. However, like Timothy and Nkwama (2017), I found that all but one supplementing their income were male. The female teachers more often referred to not having time because of work, and a few spoke of having their time already divided between work and duties at home. While not the focus of this thesis, here, especially, it seemed that patriarchal structures played out in social relations for both men and women, affecting what actions were feasible.

Those who had or wanted a supplementary income spoke of a need for additional income to pay for (better) housing, food and education for themselves and/or their dependents, something also found by, for example, Tao (2013), in the case of Tanzanian public-school teachers. More money was/would be a way to develop their lives beyond what only teaching salaries could offer. T14, a young, female teacher in BIA, was a vendor, part-time, when not in work. A few others had a business nearby or in their rural home, which was run by family members or an employee when they were working during school terms. A couple of older teachers had *shambas* (translated as 'farms' or 'fields') that supplemented them with food and/or financially:

Apart from teaching, I'm also a farmer. When I'm here I have some shambas somewhere, gardens somewhere, so that's where I also supplement what I get from the teaching. (T19 – senior, male B.Ed. teacher, owning a small urban LFP school)

Supplementing with food cultivation is quite common among Kenyans who have moved to cities to work, especially in times of hardship, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic (Onyango et al., 2021; Opiyo & Agong 2020). The moonlighting teachers thus added or retained social relations that they could depend on, giving them additional material security.

Only T34, in the rural BIA, gave tuition to earn an extra income, and T28, a BoM teacher in a rural public school, said that he may do it if parents felt that they “needed extra” and wanted to “chip in”. Others spoke of remedial classes, but these were part of the teachers’ work in the school, rather than organised outside of it. All but T28 and T34 said that they did not do tuition, as it had been banned and/or because they/the school did not do that (see Republic of Kenya, 2013). Several teachers said that they did not do it *anymore*, while two spoke of it as a natural thing. For example, T17 spoke of it as a given for teachers to do this, yet as a hypothetical scenario, not incriminating himself or anyone else. Considering that visits from ministry officials were rare, moonlighting may be feasible (Hausken & Ncube, 2018). ‘Shadow education’ is very common in several countries, for example, with allegations of teachers under-performing or only covering parts of the syllabus during their regular classes, to then do extra tuition for pay in the evenings or at weekends (Bray, 2009, p. 79). Hence, it is possible that it occurred in this context too.

Teachers who did not have time for a supplemental business or job often expressed that it would be too tiresome and/or interfere with their work:

Ok, if to be on the sincere side, if I get another job, it may hinder me from delivering in class. Even if I... say I go for a part time job in the evening, as a teacher there are things you do in the evening. So, a part-time job may interfere with your delivering.

Do you feel like you can live off your salary?

Well, yeah, there is need for salary increments, but doing two jobs... maybe if you start a business, and you employ someone to run it for you. (T2 – young, female P1 teacher, large LFP school, urban area)

Like T2, several teachers wished to have ‘a business’, but did not have time to run it and/or the money to set it up. This weighing of needs against time and

ability to do their job is something that Tao (2013) also identified among Tanzanian teachers. Especially the female teachers interviewed often spoke of wanting an extra income if they would get the chance in the future. However, if the teachers short on time would try to improve their financial situation by adding supplemental income-earning, they feared that they would simultaneously endanger their current relations with employers and/or their pupils.

The teachers' different modes of getting by, either by supplementing their pay with other sources, or by devoting their time to their work without what they considered adequate pay, did not openly challenge their employers or improve their salaries. Rather, these were acts of resilience, to try to get by within the constraints that they faced. For the unionised public-school teachers, pay was one of the main matters to be handled by the union at the national level. Considering the buyers' labour market and their insecure employments, the LFP-school teachers had to stay on the LFP school owner's and/or manager's good side. In a competitive environment, without a union and with poor parents paying their salaries, there was little possibility for finding centres of social power to connect with and draw on for leverage, without simultaneously losing some of the relations that they depended on. On a larger scale, the 'entrepreneurial' teachers may (should?) send a message to those in power that teachers cannot rely on their employment for their material needs, which may hamper their ability to do their work as teachers. As Sweeney (2013) warned of, however, there is for teachers a risk of failing support if their demands exceed their perceived value in the eyes of the public, i.e., if they are seen as not doing their job. While Sweeney is referring to public sector teachers, it is likely that the same mechanisms concern LFP-school teachers as well, albeit on a scale closer to the school, as value for money appears an important factor in LFP school parents' choice of school (see Dixon & Tooley, 2012). As Härmä (2021b, pp. 32–33) posited, it is unlikely that LFP-school teachers could get a higher pay, no matter how well they do their job, as LFP school budgets in most cases are too small. With limited ability to negotiate, some teachers had made the choice to quit.

Exit

Most of the teachers, including public-school teachers, had experiences working in (other) private schools before their current employment. Several teachers spoke of LFP schools where they had only been able to endure the work for one month up to one semester, as they had been under-/un-paid, over-worked, too stressed, did not like the way they were required to teach and/or the work had been incompatible with their plans for the future.⁶³ In such cases many had quit, like T4 and T9, speaking of previous experiences:

Before I came here, I tried to teach in some of the other [low-fee private] schools, and some of them I had to leave, even before I could complete my first month. Because you are stressed up, you're not given any freedom. [...] I had to leave. (T4 – young, female P1 teacher, large LFP school, urban area)

For the first three months you are being taken care of well, then after that... that was just only to welcome you. Then from there now, things start dillydallying. You also have your issues to meet, your bills to clear! So you walk out. Then others are being... They always have a pile of applications ready, so you find “hey, can you come over?” so the next one comes and starts. (T9 – young, male P1 teacher, urban public school)

In the LFP-school labour market, ‘agency by exit’ appeared a viable strategy for the individual, as less was at stake and jobs were easier to come by, compared to the public sector, because of the higher turnover. This meant that the teachers were able to ‘shop around’ a little for a less bad/better job. According to a review on contract teachers conducted by the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2020), this has been identified as a strategy among BoM teachers as well. None of the BoM teachers in the study at hand reported having switched jobs, however. One individual exiting by moving on to the next school in the market in hope to better her/his chances, Kiil and Knutsen (2016) described as “an act of coping, a form of forced survival strategy” (p. 108). However, if a teacher would use exit as a threat to gain better terms, Kiil and Knutsen (2016) regarded it as a way of trying to rework employment conditions, although the excess of teachers and UTs and

⁶³ In the autumn of 2020, there were some 300 000 applicants to 11 574 announced public-school vacancies (both primary and secondary) (The Standard, October 3, 2020). The unusually large number of applicants was likely partly because of privately employed teachers not receiving their (full) pay during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cordeiro et al., 2021).

the poverty of the areas likely prevented this from working. None of the teachers reported having successfully used such a strategy. Perhaps for some quitting was the first step towards building a “critical consciousness to confront and redress historically and geographically specific conditions of oppression and exploitation” (Katz, 2004, p. 251). However, instances of quitting did not appear as acts to challenge the system allowing schools to employ teachers on the cheap. Rather, while all wanted and needed a higher salary, several also spoke sympathetically of the difficulties for LFP schools and/or parents, considering the parents’ difficulties to pay fees.

Among the teachers, there was a mix of pragmatism and critical consciousness regarding the shift towards a private education market, but also regarding the education system as a whole. As mentioned in previous chapters, most teachers believed that education should be free, but at the same time, many said it *could* not be free, as not all pupils could fit in public schools and LFP school owners could not give education for free, as they had to, for example, pay their teachers. The teachers’ way of holding both these views at the same time again recalls Muzaffar and Sharma’s (2011) suggestion that in contexts with a historically weak public sector, the concepts of ‘private’ and ‘public’ do not stand to counter one another as in a Western context. As all but one of the teachers were or aspired to become public employees, both for the financial stability and for meaning of the job itself, the public sector was desirable. This willingness to wait for the better working conditions of the public sector has been noted by Crawford and Pugatch (2020) as a situation in many African countries that have a large surplus of trained teachers. The public sector was also largely seen as the solution that *should* be there, but it could not be counted on to improve the education sector.

The older teacher running a small LFP school, T19, represented another way that non-TSC teachers could act autonomously by exit, and ideally also to improve the education sector (see Hastings & Cumbers, 2019; Katz, 2004; Kiil & Knutsen, 2016). He said that he had turned TSC employment down to stay in the area where he had been working with Christian missionaries for the last 20 years. In the area he saw a need for a school, as there were no public schools close by:

I told you the education level here is very low. [...] I also did my research in university on why is it that there is a lot... a bit

of crime and alcoholism [in this area]. [...] And then when we did such research, we found that we have no schools around here. Only one government school, [...] and the [large LFP school]. [...] So, I felt that actually these children also need education, so that in the future they should not continue being lacking education-wise. [...] So, I reside here first of all for that child to get the education that is needed. (T19 – senior, male B.Ed. teacher, owning a small urban LFP school)

This teacher was the only one among the interviewees that had started a LFP school himself. As he was older, but had not earned the pension of public-school teachers, starting the school may also have been/become a way to cope with retirement. That is something Timothy and Nkwama (2017) found was common among Tanzanian teachers. There was little money in the school as few pupils were able to pay their fees, and T19 worked there as a teacher as well as a watchman at night and on holidays, essentially living in the school, away from his family. While T19's role was that of employer rather than employee, this was his way to try to rework – change – the (lacking) local education market, by adding a well-needed school and setting an example of non-exploitative relations between school and parents. This instance recalls Härmä's (n.d.) differentiation between for-profit schools where fees (barely) make up the salary of owner and teachers working in the school, as in T19's case, and large-scale for-profit chains like BIA, where profits – if there are any – are taken out of the school, and even out of the country.

While Thurairaja (2010) found that there are several reasons for teachers to leave teaching, like finding more attractive options being reported elsewhere, among the TSC teachers interviewed, there seemed to be only one reason – safety. Although the teachers spoke of being prepared to go anywhere in Kenya, as part of the deal of public employment, they had their preferences. Requesting transfers, which would take years, or refusing to take a posting were essentially the teachers' only options if posted to an undesirable area. As mentioned in Chapter 6, safety was an essential interest for the teachers, and the only reason given for refusal was if the area was perceived as unsafe:

If I'm given a transfer I'll go. And if I see I'm posted to where I don't want to be, I'll have to protest.

How would you do that?

To re-appeal [to the TSC].

Would you have to go first?

If you think I'll go to Mandera, I won't! I'll simply resign. [⁶⁴]
I'll not go there because of the conditions of that area.

So then you'd rather resign than...?

Yeah, than to go to Mandera and those sites. (T29 – middle-age, female diploma teacher, rural public school)

Refusing to take a posting means that a teacher loses not only her/his sought-after public employment, but also her/his accumulated pension (TSC, 2015, p. 1210). This, along with the over-supply of teachers and the private labour market for teachers being a poor option, gives teachers little leverage. Similar to LFP-school teachers, exiting to put pressure on employers may thus not be a viable strategy to change the deployment system for Kenyan teachers if only individual teachers quit. Refusing a posting was for the interviewed teachers only a hypothetical scenario, however, as none of them had thus far been transferred to an area where they feared for their safety enough to quit.

Staying/moving

Kenyan teachers' initial and continued employment in the public sector depended more on time queuing than on competition in the labour market or in the education market. Once a teacher has secured a public employment, they are on a permanent contract (Barton et al., 2017). Centralised deployment, as in Kenya, does not solve all issues of education inequality and/or teachers' satisfaction (Luschei & Chudgar, 2017, pp. 110–127). Regardless, the public-school teachers interviewed had opted to stay in the system, to thus secure more well-paid and stable public employment.

All public-school teachers who had had difficult postings far away from family and amenities had thus accepted the location and school of their posting, at

⁶⁴ Mandera county is in the north-eastern 'tip' of Kenya, bordering Ethiopia and Somalia. One of the teachers in the rural area had worked in Mandera, when teachers were killed there, and was after the tragic event transferred out of there along with other non-local teachers. The desire for safety meant that he was willing to go "anywhere else" (T30).

least for long enough to apply for and be granted a transfer. If we recall the teacher living apart from her teacher husband as they both needed to earn their salaries, quoted in Chapter 6, this is how she spoke of their situation and possible course of action:

Like for now, they [i.e., the TSC] have something called de-localization. You can even be taken out of your county to another county, yeah. And you have to. You have to go, because you need that job. [...] Ok, you might want to be transferred [from there], but it is not possible. [You] just wait. And stay wherever you are. (T23 – middle-aged, female diploma teacher, rural public school)

The wait for a transfer could take years, as it depended on a vacancy in the receiving area, and it was little the teachers could do to speed up the process, unless for medical reasons. Filing for a transfer, and filling the wait with learning their trade and fulfilling other potential essential interests, may be acts of resilience, as the teachers would then act to secure their own and others' well-being to some degree. However, disregarding that deciding to stay and wait for some was a recurring decision not to quit, it is difficult to frame the wait as anything but resilience, a way to cope, by prioritising remaining employed and earning an income. As few public-school teachers were willing to leave their posting in an undesirable area, they were 'locked in', with the benefits and challenges of a public employment, in the sense that they could not choose where to work, but neither could they be fired. Still, there was essentially neither anything to act for, nor against. It appeared to be a state of limbo.

Reasons for requesting transfers were predominantly to be close to their family home, as there the teachers would more easily be able to care for, and be cared for by family, and, if posted close enough to live in their rural homes, their living would be cheaper. Transfers to their home areas could thus lead to a strengthening of their spaces of dependence, as there would be several social relations beyond work to rely on, a strengthening that Muasya (2020) also pointed out in the Kenyan context. Many public-school teachers also had or planned to educate themselves further. They could then apply for more specialised postings and/or move up the career ladder, thus, in the longer run, earn more and gain more autonomy and ability to influence the work in their schools, if not always the location of their postings. This, unlike the wait for a

transfer, I would categorise as collaboration, albeit in the employment system rather than the marketisation process: a way for the teachers to make the employment system work for them, whilst remaining in and contributing to it.

As there was no formal job security for the LFP school and BoM teachers, their job security rested a lot on relations with management and parents. Like the public-school teachers, many LFP-school teachers wanted to work in their home area. For the urban independent LFP schools' teachers, it seemed that building on already established connections in their area and in their schools may have helped create more stable employment relations. For example, several of the teachers in the large LFP school were alumni of that school and had all been working there between three and five years. Most of the BIA teachers had been working as temporary teachers in other BIA schools before their current schools, so they had continuity of employment within the same company, if not within the same school. This gave some stability of income, even if they had had to move with the job despite their desire to stay where they had a social context that they belonged to. Still, among the interviewees, employments in the small, independent LFP schools and BIA averaged less than 16 months. The longest employed among them was T35, the UT in the rural BIA, with three years in the same school, far away from her home in the Western Province.

Compared with the public-school teachers, the LFP-school teachers' spaces of dependence could to a higher degree be shaped by the teachers choosing where to look for a job. The one difference was for the rural BIA teachers, who had had to accept their posting, to then try to transfer if they wanted to remain employed by BIA:

I was posted here [one year ago]. I had no option. I don't like the place, but I had no choice.

You don't like...?

I don't like the environment. [...] Too hot, lacks water, everything. It is not just Bridge.

Do you think you can be transferred?

Yeah, even last year [...] I applied for that, but it didn't go through. (T34 – young, male P1 teacher, rural BIA)

T34 did not know for how long he would be able to stay there and considered moving on, literally to greener pastures in a lush part of the country, while then risking entering a more insecure employment situation. According to the rural BIA teachers, it was difficult to get a job in their desired home areas in the Western Province:

Can you ask for a transfer back to Western if you want to?

I can ask, but to find that vacancy is the problem. Because those teachers there, most of them come from that area there, so just resigning is not easy for them. So even if you ask for the transfer you will not find that transfer.

Maybe if they become taken up by the TSC?

Maybe, but as you know right now, being absorbed by the TSC is not that easy. So, it takes some time and we have so many teachers. (T35 – young, female UT, rural BIA)

Like for public-school teachers, reworking or resisting the deployment system was not viable for the rural BIA teachers at the time of interviews, as they had little leverage in face of the excess of teachers where they wanted to be. All three believed they could get a job in another LFP school, despite there being “so many teachers” (T35) in the labour market waiting for TSC employment, but the steady income of BIA was more attractive – at least for the while being. As the teachers had to prioritise their need for an income, there so often seemed to be trade-offs that had to be made with regards to the location of their work, where one space of dependence – e.g., the food-rich home area – may come at the cost of another – a passable employment. Härmä (2016) has found that the education market in remote and very poor areas in Nigeria cannot compensate ‘outsider’ teachers enough, but it appeared that BIA at the time of the interviews was balancing close to where the teachers felt that their pay was enough to stay – at least for the time being.

Sharing and caring, rather than scale jumping

In the everyday, the public-school teachers continued to carry out their work under working conditions challenging their well-being and their desire to do a

good job. One female teacher with a class of 81 pupils told of how she still tried to do what she was supposed to do:

You can teach like four times and the learners have not understood, but you keep on repeating, at least for them to get something out of what you are teaching. (T26 – middle-aged, female P1 teacher, rural public school)

For many, hanging in there and doing their best with the means available to them became the course of action, rather than trying to rework or resist the system (see Katz, 2004). Affecting their work environment was difficult, largely because of their workload, and their ‘reach’:

Most of the time the head teacher is so, so busy, so you don’t have that time [to influence the school and the teaching]. I’m also busy in my class, I have to follow that. At the end of the day you are supposed to have finished these lessons, so I don’t have that time. Maybe sometimes during breaktimes, but on breaktimes you are marking, so the kids can go home with their books, so it is tight. (T23 – middle-aged, female diploma teacher, rural public school)

As individuals, the teachers talked about issues with each other, and they would try to find ways of doing things better, if possible, together with the school management, but that was as far as their spaces of engagement and their ability to affect the everyday work seemed to go. This is an example of where scale jumping to a space of engagement involving policy makers and other stakeholders, with authoritative resources on the national or county/sub-county level, may be needed, as Nespor (2008) suggested. While all the public-school teachers were members in the union, few engaged actively to address challenges to their spaces of dependence, however. This was like what Lindsjö (2018) found in her interviews with Tanzanian teachers, who did not have the time or possibility to engage in labour politics, as they were busy working to make a living. Among the teachers whom I interviewed, some also expressed that they were “not born with that vein of politics” (T7). Furthermore, not all teachers openly criticised the government, and a few even expressed understanding or were apologetic on behalf of the government for their lack of funding and ability to provide education for all.

Similar to the public-school teachers, the LFP-school teachers said that they would talk to one another, share experiences and hardship. While some of them

longed to join a union, and even to actively engage for the rights of teachers, none, except T19, were part of any formal or informal groups doing this. While shared experiences are where unionism and spaces of engagement may be born (Bocking, 2018; Brogan, 2013; Cox, 1998b), the LFP-school teachers did not appear to find themselves in a position where they could afford to resist poor pay and stressful work in ‘goal-directed’ and ‘sustained’ ways (Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011). Rather, they recognised the backdrop of teachers’ structural power-disadvantage due to their over-supply (see Kiil & Knutsen, 2016), and the competition from UTs. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 6, there was a sense of LFP schools as a better option than seeking employment outside of education, as they could put their training to use, do good for manageably sized classes – while at least earning *some* money.

8.3.3 Fragmentation of teachers: misdirected action in the competition for acknowledgement?

In the previous chapter I presented the public- and LFP-school teachers’ talk of themselves and teachers in the other type of school as potentially undermining of each other. It created an ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ imagery, making shared spaces of engagement for all Kenyan teachers seemingly distant. Here, I will begin by analysing what creating an outside meant for the inside. I will then recall the many shared experiences of the teachers and bring forth ways that I in the interviews found that they acted in ways that mitigated divisions, consciously or not.

The teachers’ referring to the other type of teacher as less professional than themselves may fall under one or more of the categories collaboration, resilience or reworking (Katz, 2004), depending on how and why the teachers were doing it. As Kenyan schools are competing, albeit to varying degrees, for recognition from parents and authorities, the teachers’ competition was partly aligned with such a logic. They collaborated with their school in competing with other schools for being regarded as good/the best. As has been discussed earlier, being good or best meant achieving results and/or teaching in a holistic manner. In terms of resilience, it appeared that teachers talking themselves up in comparison to others was a way for many to defend and/or strengthen their view of themselves and/or their colleagues in light of their difficult

circumstances. They did this by pointing out their significance in doing a good job in caring for their pupils, the community and/or the nation – which some other teachers were then not seen as doing. While reworking may be a stretch, as only T19 spoke of bringing concerns beyond the school, raising and condemning unprofessional behaviour of other teachers may be seen as a step in that direction.

In neither case was the reason a competition for jobs, as moving from private to public employment depended on the TSC, and none of the public-school teachers would want the pay and insecurity of a private employment. Rather, in most cases it seemed a competition for acknowledgement. This may reflect that teachers need to be well regarded, for example, by parents and the public, or even employers, to be able to build spaces of engagement to secure shared spaces of dependence and overlapping essential interests (see Sweeney, 2013; Kiil & Knutsen, 2016). Compared to the collaboration to forward the school, building themselves up and speaking up against unprofessional behaviour could potentially be something to rally around beyond the school.

In lack of formal organisation spanning public and private, other potential ways towards a more cohesive teaching force may involve breaking the socio-spatial fragmentation of teachers. How much the teachers in LFP school and public schools mingled was not measured in this study, but it seemed that in the everyday, interaction bred cohesion. This can be exemplified with the positive in-school relations between TSC and BoM teachers, and trained teachers and UTs, above. In contrast to LFP and public-school teachers, the BoM and TSC teachers in public schools worked together without animosity, although the BoM teachers envied their better paid and job-secure colleagues, who, in turn, felt bad for their less fortunate colleagues. The BoM and TSC teachers shared some working conditions and had more insight into each other's work, making it seem that working in different schools made more difference than working on different contracts. Several of the teachers spoke of talking to other teachers, in their own and other schools:

We make some comparisons [with] our colleagues, their schools, and our school. And we see what is good in their school, what is good in our school, and maybe what is bad in theirs, and bad in ours, what we like and what we don't like. We try to share. (T12 – young, male P1 teacher, urban public school)

Mingling in- and outside of school was quite common, and can be seen as a way that the teachers built and shared a critical consciousness, helping each other to identify oppressive and unequal circumstances (see Katz, 2004). Some teachers felt that they missed out on interactions with other teachers, however, because they lacked time (T7), and/or because there were too few teachers in the school and little engagement with other schools in the area (T33). Lack of time and proximity/a place of contact thus appeared to play a role in hindering the teachers from meeting one another.

While the public and LFP-school teachers often referred to each other as less professional, they shared many things. In the interviews, both kinds of teachers spoke of doing their work with care and passion. They often shared views of teacher training, the profession, the meaning of education and the education system. They also shared several challenges, like an arduous career progression, lacking resources and pupil mobility. These similarities nuanced my image of the teachers, and it rather became one of *one* teaching force, with many shared essential interests, having to navigate needs and challenges differently along the trajectory from private to public employment. While critique of other teachers was common, there were teachers who would differentiate between the school and the teacher:

I think teachers who are in schools where you are told to only teach those things that are tested in the national examinations so that the school gets a higher grade on the general performance, so that they can in turn get more pupils from other schools to come... that is tragic. Because this turns those teachers into people who can't think for themselves. You're just doing things because you've been told to, not because you think they are right or that you shouldn't do them, you just do them anyway.
(T3 – young, male P1 teacher, large urban LFP school)

Bringing out the pressures on teachers, T3 directed some of his criticism towards the structures shaping the teachers' work and agency. He was not alone in doing so, and the teachers' general sense of the education system being underfunded and the private education market only serving as band aid may be a way forward for the teachers to find some unity. As Bocking (2017, pp. 377–386) and Brogan (2013) suggested, for teachers to mitigate oppressive structures affecting the teaching profession, they need to identify them as such, guard their professional ethics and autonomy, aiming to further teaching and education more generally. As Bocking (2017, pp. 379–386) argued, teachers

and their unions have a lot to gain from joining forces around being the experts on education, gaining favour in the eyes of the public, as well. That way they may gain allies, to draw on for making their work environment, and that of their pupils, better.

8.4 Concluding remarks

In many ways the Kenyan teachers' agency was circumscribed. One could question how I categorise so many quite steered and circumscribed ways that the teachers acted using Katz's categorisations, as she was referring to autonomous actions. Have I not just tried to paint controlled teachers acting in accordance with what is demanded of them in a less passive light? The geography of and in what we may think of as traditionally public services like education makes for a web of enabling and hindering relations both in and outside of work. Education matters from the individual to the national and international level, and teachers are situated in its middle. By and large, the teachers' agency was indeed shaped from several directions, and their spaces of engagement were often quite limited. Being job insecure in a labour market and schooling market with much competition made it important to stay on employers' good side. Rules and regulations, like the curriculum and accountability measures, put in place by stakeholders with authoritative resources, could form quite strict frames, favouring and pressuring work in certain ways. However, within those frames, the teachers had – or took/created – room to act with or slightly against the frames, in ways that at least strengthened some of their essential interests. Furthermore, they often made decisions and acted in ways aimed to strengthen what they regarded as their pupils' essential interests, which were then often essential interests also for the teachers. The biggest loss to the teachers' potential spaces of engagement, to perhaps be able to gain some leverage in addressing challenges to teachers and in education more broadly, was public- and LFP-school teachers' tendency to discredit one another. While their criticism could be partially valid and thus difficult to navigate, it could potentially be directed towards systemic issues like increased hiring of teachers to public schools, better support and accountability mechanisms, including collegial accountability.

9 Final discussion and conclusions

9.1 Introduction

In the literature review, I showed that there are many reports in passing of what appear to be the very poor working conditions of LFP school teachers. However, I found that primary school teachers as subjects in their own right have largely been absent from research on LFP schooling, despite these teachers being used in arguments for and against the marketisation of which the schools are part. Scholarship on teachers in the Global North has indicated that teachers are both affected by and affect marketisation processes. Kenyan teachers, in their context, warrant similar attention, to further our understanding of the everyday consequences of the marketisation of welfare sectors such as education in the Global South as well. I thus argued that we need to learn about and analyse teachers' own views of their work life, to understand them as actors in the new educational landscape taking shape.

In this chapter I will discuss my main findings. I begin by answering the three research questions that guided the results chapters, to contribute to and nuance our understanding of teachers in the marketisation of education in the Global South. These answers to the research questions largely summarise the main findings of the three results chapters, in which I engaged with previous findings on teachers and made novel contributions. I then go on to address the aim of the thesis, by bringing together the empirical and analytical findings. Following this, I discuss the findings in relation to policy and debate on LFP schooling, and how the findings may matter for teachers' unions and teachers as a collective. Finally, I reflect on the research process and on future research.

9.2 The findings

9.2.1 Teachers' spaces of dependence in motion

The first research question was posed to learn about teachers' own views of their needs and how they could fulfil them in their work life:

- In different schools and geographical settings, what are the teachers' needs in their work life, and what social relations do they depend upon to fulfil them?

The different teachers shared essential interests in their work life and, as such, were not so different. There were even similarities to the untrained teachers (UTs) who wanted to make teaching their career. The most prioritised essential interests were to be safe and to be able to care and, especially, financially provide for themselves and their families. Thus, entering and keeping a better-paid and more secure job was a priority. However, doing a good job for, and being regarded as professionals by, their pupils, the community, and/or their country was also important, and meant that teaching was what they wanted to continue doing. Teachers who had reluctantly entered the profession spoke of warming to it because of the relationship with their pupils, a relationship that all the teachers in various ways said made the profession meaningful, 'noble', and important. As tentatively posited in the theoretical chapter, the teachers had both material and social needs in their work life – essential interests that depended on having employment yielding an income as well as relations with pupils and other people and stakeholders that gave a sense of meaning.

The teachers largely shared the types of relations that they depended on: their employment relation, and relations with school management, colleagues, pupils, parents, and the surrounding community. The importance of such relations for the needs of teachers chimes with Tao's (2013) findings on teachers in Tanzania. Relations with pupils, parents, and colleagues were important for all teachers' sense of significance in their profession. Pupils gave intrinsic and altruistic motivations, both by being fun and inspiring to work with, and also because the teachers found imparting knowledge rewarding. Parents and colleagues could mean support, although relations with parents could also be challenging. With regard to management, the relationships could vary from collegial to absent and distant. Close and supportive, but not

surveillant, relationships meant that the teachers found it easier to fulfil their desire to do a good job.

These findings may be almost provocatively mundane when one looks to research on teachers in the Global North (see, e.g., Bocking, 2017; Casely-Hayford et al., 2022; Han & Yin, 2016). Still, they represent a contribution to the literature on teachers in the Global South, where teachers' self-expressed needs are much more rarely explored (and rarely related to their actions). My contribution is thus along the lines of the teacher advocacy of Tao (2013) and Tikly et al. (2022), in which teachers are recognised as social beings who have material needs, but do not only have utilitarian goals in their work. However, where Tao (2013, 2016) and Tikly et al. (2022) focused on connecting teachers' needs and agency to improve education, I have had a focus on their needs in order to understand the circumstances and moral geographies of workers' everyday actions. This is similar to the focus of some labour geography scholars engaged in the meanings of/in work, alongside or beyond capital-labour relations (see, e.g., Dutta, 2016; Hastings & Cumbers, 2019). Mapping teachers' social relations and needs has been an important first step towards understanding their actions in the changing educational landscape, not only in relation to their employers, other workers, and their own material needs, but also other social relations formed in/through work.

As public- and LFP-school teachers in much of the LFP schooling literature are presented as two essentially different groups of teachers (see Bau & Das, 2017; Dixon, 2012; Riep & Machacek, 2016; van der Berg et al., 2017), their similarities in terms of needs is an important finding in itself. Why I found that the teachers were very similar in terms of their essential interests is, first of all, likely because these are very human needs. Second, most teachers were trained and/or interested in continuing a teaching career, although they had had different entry points and were at different stages of that career path. Few scholars have noted that many trained teachers work in LFP schools because there is an over-supply of teachers in several African countries (exceptions being, e.g., Bold et al., 2017; Crawford & Pugatch, 2020). That I did not meet many UTs in LFP schools may also be because of policy against the use of UTs (MoEST, 2015), and because of potential bias in the selection of schools and/or teachers, despite attempts to sample a variety of teachers. Third, there may also be similarities because the interviewed teachers had decided to remain in the poor areas that they were working in. In other words, TSC

teachers posted in the urban informal settlement who immediately move away and teachers who leave the profession altogether may not have the same essential interests and priorities as those who stay. Lastly, the purpose was to learn about the interviewed teachers' essential interests, and about the social relations through which these could be fulfilled, to understand challenges and actions in relation to them. The questions asked, and the analysis made, was based on Cox's (1998b) definition of essential interests as incorporating both material and immaterial needs. Here, I was inspired by Tao (2013), who emphasised teachers in the Global South as subjects with valued beings, doings, and capabilities within a particular context. To capture and group what was important for the teachers, I turned to Han and Yin (2016), focusing on teachers' extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivations to seek out and continue working as teachers. While the teachers were not a homogeneous group, the theoretical concepts and data were not quite sufficient to tease them apart in different categories based on their needs. Rather, the context of the teachers' postings and employments were what set them apart, as that affected their ability to fulfil their needs.

What differed then, was that the TSC employed teachers in both areas had more stable and better-paid employment than did the privately employed teachers, which is reported in almost every study on LFP schooling (see, e.g., Edwards et al., 2015; Heyneman & Stern, 2014). Even if the public-school teachers' job security came with the geographical caveat of being posted anywhere, and few felt that they could fulfil all their essential interests satisfactorily, it was a more dependable and desirable employment relation financially. For the privately employed teachers, their work was a less desirable way to begin to build their desired spaces of dependence, gaining experience and earning an income as they awaited public employment. Most of them also had freedom to work nearly anywhere, as LFP-school teachers were always needed. The upside of being able to choose more freely where to work was that most urban LFP-school teachers worked in an area or school where they were from or to which they had a connection, which gave them a chance to 'give back' to the area/school. The rural BIA teachers represented the opposite side of that, feeling like outsiders in their postings – more like some of the urban public-school teachers had done when initially posted in that area. Still, the interviewed BIA- and public-school teachers had chosen to stay, as long as they were safe enough, as the job was worth not losing.

The teachers' varying abilities to fulfil their needs made the first research question difficult to answer without confusing the conversation by introducing the challenges that the teachers were facing. Furthermore, the teachers' spaces of dependence were in a state of making, involving plans of movement from private to public, from P1 certificate to maybe earning a degree, or being promoted, or transferring to somewhere else. Thus, capturing teachers' spaces of dependence bled into capturing their agency and their spaces of engagement. These difficulties may result from using Cox's (1998b) theory, conceptualised to capture what happens in conflicts largely defined by the involved actors' social relations and essential interests, to map the needs of teachers in a resource-poor context, where their work lives are challenged and navigated continuously.

Furthermore, the teachers' readiness to move for a TSC position and income, and the requirements for them to do so from the TSC, seemingly made Cox's (1998b) notions of spaces of dependence less useful than the focus on social relations and essential interests. Cox (1998b) described spaces of dependence as demarcated by relations tied to a particular place, and that are difficult to replace with relations in other places. What was interesting here was that, apart from the employment relation, the teachers regarded certain social relations as potentially available anywhere – especially the relationships with pupils. Thus, for much of their careers, both privately and TSC-employed teachers were ready to move almost anywhere for work – with or without spouses and children. Less mobile, however, were the relations to the home area, and it was *preferable* to live close to family and friends for financial and social reasons, particularly towards retirement. Furthermore, importantly, many teachers were content in the schools they were in, having formed relations that mattered to them over time. Thus, teachers would move – and stay – for different reasons. In Jones' (2009) words, there was a stickiness to certain relations in their spaces of dependence, affected by what was required of them, and by their preferences and priorities.

The contribution of Chapter 6 lies in connecting what the teachers wanted to achieve through their work, and how this related to other actors in their schools and surroundings. Yes, teachers in the Global South may often prioritise extrinsic motivation – i.e., matters of pay and job security – as Han and Yin (2016) posited in their review. However, intrinsic and altruistic motivations, related to the meaning of the job itself, were also important. While individual

teachers' spaces of dependence were in motion towards hopes of better-paid and more stable employment, by serving pupils everywhere, Kenyan teachers as a collective group of workers appear to be finding themselves with less stable and fulfilling spaces of dependence at the start of their career.

9.2.2 Challenges primarily related to risk of undermining material needs and sense of professionalism

The second research question builds on the understanding of the teachers' essential interests and relations from the first research question. Its purpose was to explore how challenges affected the teachers:

- What are the challenges to the different teachers' social relations and needs in the marketised education landscape?

The growth in LFP schooling and the way the schooling market operated were variously regarded as challenging and, as strengthening may be too strong a word, as less problematic. The first main theme among the findings concerned what may be regarded as expressions of competition, school choice, and accountability in the teachers' everyday work lives.

The pressure to 'perform' in the eyes of management and parents by having pupils achieve high test results could be very stressful. The pressure to perform, and teach in certain ways to do so, was particularly high on the LFP-school teachers, whose employment was closely connected to their performance, something also acknowledged by, for example, Singh (2021) and Locatelli (2018). A few teachers, predominately young, male LFP-school teachers, had adopted test results in the education market as a way to assess themselves, and appeared to find the competition based on results exhilarating. For the public-school teachers, being judged based on test results by distant assessors, without consideration of circumstances that the teachers could not affect, was felt to be pointless and/or unjust. This was especially so among the public-school teachers in the rural town, where poverty was rife, and where parents were not perceived to prioritise education. Teachers' belief in the importance of having schools' and pupils' socio-economic circumstances recognised in assessments has been highlighted by Abuya and Ngware (2016), further pointing to the need to improve how teachers are assessed and held accountable, in both public and

private schools. Fair, professional, in-person assessments with feedback were welcomed by all teachers, as assessments and accountability were seen as part of being a teacher, and as a way to develop. There being some pressure was not necessarily perceived as negative, as the teachers' expectations of themselves as professionals were somewhat aligned with the schools' and parents' interests.

There was an emphasis on test results in LFP schools because they were a main way to attract pupils and were used in marketing. Marketing was done by some LFP-school teachers in this study, and was common in the urban area. In contrast to the findings of, for example, Riep and Machacek (2016, on BIA in Uganda), the task itself was not seen as very problematic by the teachers who had to do it. This may be because the teachers were paid for marketing, and because marketing no longer interfered with teacher training, changes seemingly made since Riep and Machacek's (2016) and EI and KNUT's (2016, in Kenya) findings. Still, for the rural BIA teachers, who felt that both they and the school were outsiders, marketing was regarded as a potential challenge to their safety. Several other teachers regarded marketing as unprofessional and saw it as potentially disruptive and predatory, though they could still promote their own schools in unofficial ways, by talking to parents and by trying to 'be the best'.

Another challenge to teachers highlighted by Riep and Machacek (2016) and other scholars (e.g., Härmä, 2021b, p. 127; Kirschgasler, 2016), is the use of scripted lessons in BIA. This was experienced as a challenge by the BIA teachers interviewed in this project as well. Having to follow a script verbatim was seen primarily as a challenge to their sense of professionalism, as it attempted to take away their autonomy in the classroom and devalue their training. Furthermore, the scripts were described as too fast and/or incomplete, even by the UT in the rural BIA, thus being seen as a challenge to the pupils' learning as well.

With regards to the use of untrained teachers, many teachers saw this as a challenge to the trained teacher collective. This was both because it had a negative impact on their pay and job opportunities in the private education market, and because it could reflect badly on the teaching profession, if people did not differentiate between UTs and trained teachers when UTs did not teach well enough. Such systemic challenges have been brought up by scholars such

as Locatelli (2018) and Singh (2021). What was interesting in the present study was that UTs were rarely seen as problematic on the individual level, as several trained teachers had started out as UTs or worked with them. Then UTs could be seen as trying teaching out, and good even though they required support from experienced colleagues. Thus, the level of abstraction appeared to determine whether UTs were seen as a challenge or not in relation to particular social relations and essential interests.

The growing number of schools, the strong focus on test results, and the practice of marketing had led to considerable mobility of pupils between schools. This is a challenge that few scholars have examined, and then primarily from the pupils' point of view (see Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, Ezeh & Epari, 2010; Maluccio et al., 2018). However, I found that pupil mobility affected all teachers' teaching as well as their learning relationship with their pupils, as it disrupted the pupils' education. This has been briefly pointed out in such terms by Abuya and Ngware (2016). Here, I learned that pupil mobility was found both to undermine the teachers' ability to do their job as well as they liked, and to hamper the learning and well-being of the pupils, which was also important to the teachers. This was a challenge to all teachers, but pupils moving out of LFP schools could particularly undermine the motivation of teachers teaching already small classes.

The mobility of pupils had similarities to the first of the challenges discussed under the second main theme, covering challenges related to the shift towards private schooling and employment. Pupils being absent from LFP schools because their parents could not afford to pay the low fees had effects similar to those of pupil mobility for the LFP-school teachers. However, apart from affecting the teachers' ability to do a good job, being tasked with collecting fees and asking parents to pay was a challenge, as it risked undermining their relations with the parents, especially as the teachers could see their difficulties paying. The LFP-school teachers' sympathy for parents may have reflected the fact that they were often from similar circumstances, at least in the urban area. This nuances findings regarding teachers and parents as in an adversarial relationship (Martin, 1998), and of LFP-school teachers as less than sympathetic about families' poverty (Unterhalter et al., 2018).

The shift towards a growing private education market, as well as there being a large surplus of teachers outside TSC employment, meant a shift towards a

challenging waiting period in precarious and low-paid work for many trained teachers. Again, these parallel shifts have been paid little attention in previous literature, although Bold et al. (2018) acknowledged that the surplus of trained teachers means that many LFP schools can hire trained teachers, and that many teachers wait for public employment in those schools. In contrast, the poor working conditions, in terms of workload, pay, and job security, in LFP schools have been frequently reported (see, e.g., Edwards et al., 2015; Riep & Machacek, 2016; Stern & Heyneman, 2013). The implications for the teachers, and similarities and differences between public- and private-school teachers, are, however, more rarely discussed. The long days often reported in LFP schools were experienced differently, the young male teachers taking pride in them, whereas young female teachers more often regarded the workdays as simply too long and stressful. This appeared to reflect the division of chores in the home, but was not explored in depth here. In terms of workload, the public-school teachers all struggled with over-crowding rather than long days. While some public-school teachers said that LFP schools probably somewhat relieved the enrolment pressure on public schools, the effect was hardly felt. Classes of up to 100 pupils made their work difficult to carry out, affecting their sense of accomplishment.

Very few of the teachers felt that they earned enough to meet all their needs. For the public-school teachers, who earned close to a living wage (see Andersen et al., 2021), the problem was also a feeling of not being paid enough for the hard work they were doing, and thus not feeling valued by their employer. Among the LFP-school teachers who disclosed how much they were paid, salaries were higher than the lowest findings in previous literature on LFP schooling in Kenya (e.g., Stern & Heyneman, 2013, which is dated, but the latest available). Still, their pay was not nearly enough to give them peace of mind, good housing, and the ability to progress as they desired in their lives. In combination with their essentially non-existent job security, the LFP and BoM teachers were financially vulnerable, in both the short and long terms. This was felt to be very stressful, considering that their material welfare and personal development hinged on the continued earning of sufficient income. While no privately employed teacher criticised the pay of TSC employed teachers, there was some resentment in terms of doing a good job, but not getting the desired pay and job security.

This leads to a result that I, with an interest in the teachers' power to influence their work lives for the better, came to regard as a potential challenge. From a labour perspective, the new educational landscape posed a threat to teacher–teacher relations. While the teachers spoke of sharing a profession, knowledge, and burdens, most interviewees also expressed a sense of feeling judged relative to the work of other schools and teachers, and of unfairness in comparisons and circumstances. This mostly represented a division between public and private schools, although the rural public-school teachers also vented about urban–rural unfairness. By and large, the teachers were undermining teachers in the other type of school, using images similar to those noted in much of the LFP schooling literature: LFP-school teachers teach to the test, and public-school teachers are uncommitted and under-performing (see, e.g., Barton et al., 2017; Riep & Machacek, 2016; Härmä, 2021b, pp. 145–156). While the images may not be entirely untrue, they are not the whole truth either, and, importantly here, they are divisive. The fragmentation of teachers among public and a myriad of private schools, competing for acknowledgement, risks undermining their collective identity, if their shared spaces of dependence and challenges are obscured and they fail to find shared spaces of engagement. As Lier (2008) found, there is a danger of workers in fragmenting labour markets not recognising their counterparts as part of a shared problem in terms of working conditions. Furthermore, as Bocking (2017, pp. 379–386) and Sweeney (2013) have pointed out: teachers and their unions have a lot to gain by using their expertise in education to address challenges, gaining favour in the eyes of the public as well.

9.2.3 Agency circumscribed, but exerted for self and others

The third research question relates to a need to develop the rather passive images of the different teachers depicted in the literature, along the lines of Tao's (2013) efforts. It also stems from an identified need to understand teachers' ability to act in their context, as well as teachers' role in shaping events:

- How do different teachers navigate challenges to their needs in the marketisation context, and what shapes their actions?

While most of the challenges experienced were felt on the school level, some challenges were identified by the teachers as systemic, like the use of UTs, or the shift towards a precarious labour market because of the under-funding of education in both public- and LFP schools. According to Nespor (2008), it is necessary to link challenges faced in the classroom with the larger scale from which they are coming, to effectively meet them. However, apart from public-school teachers being unionised and sharing their concerns with one another, there was generally no seeking of spaces of engagement on a higher, more efficient level to rework or resist these circumstances. First, this was largely because the teachers did not feel that they, beyond the school, had access to what Cox (1998b) has referred to as centres of social power – actors with authoritative resources with whom they could join forces to affect events. The union was distant for most teachers, although perceived as a champion of public-school teachers on some matters. Second, this was because of the need to keep earning an income and the desire to keep working as a teacher. In the face of a large teaching force and availability of UTs, the LFP-school teachers had little structural power to leverage. Third, parts of the marketisation in the form of LFP schooling were regarded by several teachers as either good or – in a resigned way – as just the way things were. Considering the many systemic challenges the Kenyan education system and its teachers face, such as lacks of resources, human capital and equality, the challenges related to the growing education market are just some of many.

Not jumping scales to address systemic challenges did not mean that the teachers were passive or did not strive to mitigate challenges at all. Rather, what they generally did was to keep working as best they could, for their own sense of achievement and to maintain good relations with employers, parents, and pupils. Most teachers thus acted resiliently, to maintain and strengthen at least some parts of their spaces of dependence. I have, based on Katz (2004), defined resilience as identifying something as oppressive, yet not acting against it, but rather acting in a way that enables getting by. Based on recognising that the teachers had several social relations through which to fulfil their essential needs, I have started to think of resilience as the prioritisation of which essential need(s) to fulfil, if it is not seen as feasible to fulfil more or all of them. Maintaining employment relations was often prioritised, perhaps at the cost of teaching in a particular way, or accepting instructions not to let pupils in who had not paid fees. This chimes with Tao's (2016, p. 199) findings that, for example, providing for family and satisfactory housing, both often

dependent largely on income, are prioritised as they are important for survival, but also because they have generative positive effects on both health and work performance.

The instances of collaboration would often play out similarly to resilient acts. However, with a regard of what was demanded of them in the marketised educational landscape as just, there were fewer conflicting essential interests and less a matter of priority. For example, if teaching to the test was seen as good for the pupils, school, and teacher her/himself, doing so would fulfil both the need to keep earning an income and the desire to do a good job. I have not been able to categorise the teachers according to an identification with the profession or the organisation in a manner similar to Parding et al. (2012), or according to how market oriented they are, as Fredriksson (2009) did, as I cannot say that the data are sufficient in all interviews. However, I can see how such a categorisation could be part of a framework that would help explain the teachers' actions, and perhaps bring out further connections between essential interests, challenges, and actions. Suffice it to say, compared to the public-school teachers, the LFP-school teachers faced more demands to be competitive in the education market, appeared to be more accepting of such demands, and more often collaborated in meeting them. Sometimes the collaboration was with other clearly defined actors, such as school managers, whereas it other times rather was a collaboration in the expressions of the marketisation, or in its constitutive rules, so to say.

The most striking way of responding to a perceived challenge was the BIA teachers leaving their scripts, exerting their professional autonomy in their classrooms. This has also been found by other scholars (see, e.g., Härmä, 2021b, p. 139; Kwauk & Perlman Robinson, 2016), but it was still surprising that *none* of the teachers used their Nooks as prescribed, not even the UT. Furthermore, it was interesting to learn about how this was done to silently rework what they regarded as oppressing them as teachers, and unfair to their pupils, despite risking their employment. The teachers' acts of reworking were not against the marketisation itself, but, in the everyday, they acted on its expressions for themselves and their pupils.

It was also an interesting finding that the teachers often acted as centres of social power to defend their pupils' spaces of dependence, by trying to ensure their continued learning and by caring for them, even when doing so could

affect their employment relation or meant extra work. This appeared to be the identification of a shared space of dependence that the teachers entered as allies, either because they were approached as such or on their own behalf. Again, if recognised by parents and the wider community, such actions may be a way for teachers to find allies and to fulfil their own needs for significance and for the ability to do their work (see Bocking, 2018; Brogan, 2013; Sweeney, 2013). Often, as with LFP-school teachers allowing pupils in despite unpaid fees, there was another centre of social power ‘above’ them in the form of management. The teacher could then try to draw on the manager’s power, and act on behalf of both the pupil and her/himself.

Overall, the teachers’ spaces of engagement were very local – within the classroom, school, and/or local community. Through relations close to their work life, they could try to alleviate the effects of working in a new competitive education landscape, through resilient and collaborative acts to get by and continue making a living. This often meant that they reproduced the system by aligning with employers and parents – whether or not they were critical of the system/aspects of the marketisation process. While they drew on the relationships with their close colleagues for strength, competition between schools meant that, in efforts to maintain their own sense of professionalism, they also lost the ability to act as a collective.

9.3 The aim: exploration of nuances rather than grand revelations

In the first two chapters I posited that while teachers’ work situations in contexts of marketisation of education in the Global South are frequently reported on, there has been too little in-depth engagement with these teachers as people and actors. Perhaps because of this, the images of teachers in public and LFP schools often appear rather shallow and stereotypical in the literature on LFP schooling. The aim of this thesis was accordingly *to explore and analyse primary school teachers’ experiences, and how they exert agency in their everyday work lives to fulfil their needs, within the marketisation of education in Kenyan low-income contexts.*

The research often confirmed that matters previously reported on, such as low pay, job insecurity, pressures to perform, the use of UTs, and scripted lessons, are indeed present and challenging in Kenyan school markets in low-income areas. The main contributions instead stem from having talked to teachers about how such challenges matter in relation to their needs and circumstances, and how these teachers could act in their everyday work lives to navigate them. By talking with, rather than about, teachers, I found that public- and LFP-school teachers were not so different in terms of why they started working as teachers and what they wanted out of their work – to earn money and teach children. Their essential interests were quite similar. Nuancing the picture of teachers in the Global South as rather singularly focused on their material needs, the teachers spoke about altruistic and intrinsic motivations, such as wanting to do a good job for their pupils and for the country. I also found that several needs were connected to one another, such as teachers relying on a decent income to be able to live in a satisfactory home, which could contribute to their peace of mind and in turn make them feel more able to do a better job. It feels like stating the obvious, but in the literature on teachers in the Global South, teachers are too rarely approached as social beings for whom needs and context matter for their well-being and hence also for their work.

The aim was broad with regard to wanting to explore teachers ‘within the marketisation of education in Kenyan low-income contexts’. I not only wanted to be open to experiences and agency as affected by marketisation as defined in literature in the Global North, but to take the wider context into consideration as well. The Kenyan teachers’ needs, in combination with their different employments and locations, the prevalence of poverty, the large surplus of teachers in the labour market, and the state of the general labour market, influenced much of their partially shared and partially different experiences and agency.

Public-school teachers still struggled to teach in over-crowded classrooms, not really experiencing the increasing enrolment in the LFP schooling market as a relief, although some recognised that, all other things being equal, if it was not for LFP schools their situations would probably be worse. While appreciating their job security and ability to plan for the future to some degree, they felt undervalued and not in control of their workload. Furthermore, even though the public-school teachers did not see their jobs as depending on their performance, there was a sense of competitiveness and judgement that

stemmed from the way different schools operated and performed in the market. The public schools may have operated largely in silos, but the competitive arena of the schooling market was still felt by the public-school teachers to some degree.

The LFP-school teachers had a more precarious situation and experienced stress from struggling to fulfil their material needs and meeting demands stemming from a need to ‘perform’ and be competitive. On a more positive note, many LFP-school teachers appeared to be somewhat more satisfied than public-school teachers with their own work. They had smaller classes of pupils, who reportedly were more invested, which may partially explain why the LFP-school teachers more often seemed to feel that they lived up to their own and others’ expectations. On that note, some teachers, predominately young men in LFP schools, were more aligned with the competitive rationale of marketisation. I have only been able to crudely tease out those teachers as more collaborative with the schools and in the marketisation process, based on their being more accepting of competition between schools and for pupils, and accepting test scores as *the* measure for them to compete by. While crude, it appears that what the teachers saw as professionalism, or what they saw as their job as teachers, affected what they experienced as challenging and how they acted with regard to demands. While all teachers spoke of wanting to do well by their pupils, the seemingly more market-oriented teachers appeared to have different approaches and goals for achieving that, for example, in how they regarded the importance of test results and how they focused their teaching. However, this indication does not say anything about why a teacher would agree more or less with the competitiveness of the market, or whether it was a view they had adopted from their own education, their teacher training, policy, or simply from being subjected to more such pressures. Thus, finding that the teachers differed regarding whether these pressures were considered just or not, and thus acted more or less in alignment with their employers and the marketisation process, is a small contribution to the field of labour geography. Still, it reminds us that workers are not acting in a vacuum, but their agency should be seen as relational and thus continuously shaped by and shaping of the social and economic landscape. While small, this contribution sits well alongside findings like those of Brogan (2013), who has written about how teachers may reproduce or resist neoliberalism in/through education in North America. Teachers are thus interesting to study, as they are situated in

the middle of a thick web of social relations and in the middle of social reproduction.

That the teachers had work life needs relating both to their own well-being, as well as to their sense of significance as teachers promoting the well-being of others, mattered for the way that they exerted their limited agency to mitigate challenges to their own and/or others' spaces of dependence. Their material circumstances, ideas about what teaching was/should be in relation to themselves and to others, and the relationships formed in and through work gave the teachers reasons to (want to) act in certain ways. Whether they felt as though they had control and agency mostly related to their perceived autonomy in the classroom. They still had to act in accordance with the curriculum and rules of the school in question, but that was often seen as part of the job. The teachers often conformed in their actions to the needs of employers and parents – sometimes because they shared essential interests in the welfare of the school and the pupils, and sometimes because they had to, as some of their own essential interests hinged on maintaining good relations. To recognise these different motivations for action, Cox's (1998b) related concepts 'spaces of dependence' and 'spaces of engagement' were helpful, even when there were no clearly defined or explicit spaces of engagement formed through alliances for joint struggles.

I think it is important to understand the public- *and* LFP-school teachers' experiences, to relate them to each other, even though the public-school teachers' experiences are affected more by resource constraint than unfettered marketisation. That the Kenyan government has essentially outsourced growing parts of education to LFP schools, and is partly responsible for educating more teachers than are hired by the public sector, means that prospective Kenyan public-school teachers these days first undergo a long wait in private employment, subject to high pressures and having little ability to fulfil their material needs. The private sector likely benefits from the much better working conditions in the public sector, in that many teachers accept poorer conditions for a time, as they are waiting. In countries that have such an over-supply of teachers, which includes many African countries, the literature suggests that such segmented labour markets, and their effects, are more common, meaning that the findings on the experiences and agency of teachers in the present study may have bearing in those contexts as well.

What I found in my research on the experiences and agency of teachers in two quite disparate but interconnected parts of an education market in the Global South, is that it may be difficult at times even to discern how to speak of the phenomenon as marketisation for both groups. I still struggle to find a way to frame the marketisation process that aptly captures what it means for the different teachers, but there is something in the pervasiveness of competition that struck me as a common denominator for the teachers. It affected them differently, but it was always there, the competition for recognition, if not for pupils. Perhaps this is an effect not just of the marketisation process, but also of the built-in meritocracy of Kenyan education, and education more globally, as well as of the way that teachers in Kenya and the Global South are framed as lacking.

Overall, however, the existence of LFP schools may have less of an impact on teachers than the general lack of resources in public education, particularly for hiring more teachers. The continuous pressures of over-crowding in public schools and the pressures and insecurity of private employment would be diminished if the Kenyan government further increased their ambitions and acted to lessen their reliance on LFP schools, the excess of teachers, unemployed youth working as UTs, and parents to cover for their failings. The teachers, while not categorically critical of LFP schools, all wanted the financial stability of a public posting and a more just education system for all pupils, largely exerting their agency in small ways in their everyday lives to that end.

9.4 Teachers in the marketisation of education in Kenya

So, what can a focus on teachers as subjects and actors tell us about teachers and/in the marketisation process in the Global South? In the theory chapter, I outlined how we can understand the labour geography of teachers, while recalling that there is still much to be learned about teachers in the Global South. A relational understanding of places and processes points to the importance of identifying different structuring factors in the context that affect the relations among, in this case, teachers and the state, capital, pupils, and their families. The marketisation of education can be considered global, with

empirical accounts from around the world indicating its pervasiveness. At the same time, it is a phenomenon that is constructed, upheld, and contested by various stakeholders in different places. This means that neither the marketisation of education process, nor its effects, necessarily – or even likely – look the same in different countries. In the Global North, where most scholarship on the marketisation of education is undertaken, marketisation is more often implemented within the public system and/or through opening that system to private actors using a voucher system (see, e.g., Ball, 2016; Verger et al., 2017). The explicit argument in those contexts is that competition and choice will lead to better quality, as schools will be held accountable by parents. In the case of Kenya, the marketisation of education is not an explicitly defined public strategy in the same way as in, for example, Sweden, even though it would be insulting and naïve not to regard Kenyan education policy on LFP schooling as strategic. In Kenya, and many other countries in the Global South, private schooling has grown from below, with the acknowledgement of the state and the involvement of corporations in recent years. Thus, there is less cohesion between the public and private sides of the market (see Härmä, 2021b, p. 87, for a similar sentiment), and less state control on the private side. This means very different circumstances for the teachers in the different sectors, particularly in terms of expectations on them and in terms of working conditions.

One way to frame the difficulty of talking about one marketisation process and one education system, may be found in how the teachers spoke of ‘public’ and ‘private’ both pragmatically and idealistically. In the case of a changing educational landscape in the Global South, Muzaffar and Sharma (2011) argued for a need to recognise that in many places the public and the private are not in a strong oppositional relation discursively, as the public side has failed to deliver services reliably. On one hand, I could see this among the interviewed teachers, in their pragmatic view of LFP schools as a complement, often seen as performing better than public schools, and as necessary, because the public schools could not cater to all pupils. If LFP schools were good and gave value for money, they were not seen as problematic, but rather as part of the solution for many pupils, even by many public-school teachers. On the other hand, most teachers referred to education as a human right, and said that the state should live up to its promise and responsibility to provide free quality education to all of Kenya’s children. But even here there were different views. Several LFP-school teachers suggested that this should be done by subsidising

private schools, so that they could be fee-free and pay teachers better. Public-school teachers instead emphasised properly staffing and funding public schools.

Hiring more teachers in the public sector would be one way to likely improve the well-being of both teachers and pupils, but another important step would be to improve the assessment and accountability of teachers. That the schooling market is inflating the importance of test scores to such an extent that teaching to the test and cheating risk undermining the value that test scores could and should have as a tool is a problem that countries such as Sweden are struggling with. While human and financial resources are scarce even for quality assessment and curriculum support in Kenya, it is worth taking seriously teachers' desires regarding how assessments and accountability measures should be designed. The problem was not in being assessed and held accountable, but by whom, how, how much (or little), and what was being taken into account. The teachers wanted to be assessed by knowledgeable officers who understood their situation and whom they met in person. They wanted dialogue, to be able to discuss the feedback they got, and to be helped to improve. They wanted regularity and *more* visits. Furthermore, the public-school teachers at least wanted their scarce resources, the large number of pupils, and the socio-economic situation of their pupils to be taken into account when they were assessed. Improving education and the work lives of teachers is costly. However, based on the interviews with teachers, a lot may be gained in terms of trust and quality by treating them as the knowledgeable and engaged professionals that they are and/or want to be, rather than as a group of workers to be poorly managed.

The divisions between teachers in public and private schools are something that KNUT needs to consider in terms of solidarity, cohesion, and status. I regard this in light of KNUT supposedly being for all teachers, and its role as the biggest union for primary school teachers. At the moment, private-school teachers appear to regard KNUT as something for the future only. KNUT needs to consider its role for teachers who are certified but not yet TSC employees, as well as what the role of those teachers could be in KNUT. Could those teachers, in a more structured way be incorporated into the struggle to hire more public-school teachers? Could they be part of a struggle to improve the quality of teachers, and thus improve their status? A related issue is KNUT's stance on private schools, which appears to be mostly about BIA. Having a

very strong stance against BIA while being less clear regarding private schools in general lacks clear logic, and KNUT should more thoroughly think through its stance before approaching private-school teachers. Alternatively, as there is a union for private-school teachers, KNUT could consider that union an ally for improving education and teachers' working conditions across the board.

9.5 Reflections on the research and its limitations

Oh, hindsight. I will not dwell on what could have been, had there not been a pandemic, as this is discussed in Chapter 4. Rather, I want to reflect on the research that took place. Before I get ambitious, and bring up what I wish I had spent more time on, one thought that has been with me for some time is the trade-off between scope and depth that at times rears its head in this dissertation. I have variously felt that my scope has been too wide, and too narrow. By interviewing teachers in different areas, schools, and types of employment about essential interests, challenges, and actions, I obtained the desired broad insight into Kenyan primary school teachers' needs, experiences, and agency in the marketisation of education. However, narrowing the sample and/or scope could have given more in-depth insights into any one of the interesting findings made. A closer focus on the teachers' essential interests combined with a framework for teachers' professional identity along the lines of Parding et al. (2012) would likely have improved the possibility of explaining why the teachers experienced challenges differently, as well as their differing actions. I did not set out to find exactly how much a particular teacher needed to earn to support her/his family, or whether teachers valued parents' opinions over those of management. In hindsight, trying to better order and distinguish teachers' essential interests and relations could have been valuable in trying to explain why some teachers experienced steering in their work as more challenging, or why some followed school policy more closely than others. With regard to a too narrow scope, my focus on the marketisation of education in the form of LFP schools, if broadly defined, made some of the public-school teachers' experiences difficult to incorporate. While some expressions of the rationales of marketisation affected the public-school teachers, such as the mobility of pupils, there may have been other changes, for example, in administration and organisation, that were overlooked in favour of matters of the school market.

On administration and organisation, I see myself as guilty of something similar to what I accused Collins and Coleman (2008) of, when I said that they lump teachers together with other authorities in education. If I were to repeat the same research project with only one round of interviews, I would be more intent on teasing apart ‘management’ – which comprises head teachers, principals, directors, managers, school owners, and other people in a position of power relative to the teachers. Perhaps this would have yielded more valuable information than the less fruitful questions about the teachers’ union. It could have been a way to learn about who had what kind of power in the schools, to map more detailed labour processes and spaces of engagement. Such a focus could also contribute to knowledge of how different parts of school management can work to improve the well-being of teachers, from the teachers’ point of view. Furthermore, while the intention was not to cross-check the teachers’ interviews, it could also have been helpful to interview more directors, principals, and managers of schools. It would have given different insights into the teachers’ labour market, the expectations of teachers, and the competition between schools. However, seeing that time was often in short supply in the schools, and prioritising teachers, I was quick to accept school administrators’ declining of interviews.

Another point of view that I did not get, because I did not seek it out, was that of teachers who had quit. While ‘exit’ was a potential course of action for the interviewed teachers, it was primarily discussed as a response to a hypothetical scenario of lack of safety. However, Thurania (2010, pp. 246–262) listed several reasons why Kenyan teachers who had entered teaching as a last resort quit. Several of those reasons pertain to poor working conditions and status. It is not clear whether either of the reasons presented by Thurania were related to the marketisation process and the shift towards a private market, as he mostly referred to public employment. However, if public employment is itself seen as poor, the long wait in worse conditions in private education could conceivably also lead to exit.

Those versed in the literature on teachers in the Global South may miss references to teacher absenteeism, which is a large problem. Absenteeism as a form of protest could also be of interest to labour scholars, just like foot dragging and other practices are interesting. I purposely did not ask teachers about whether they were absent from school, from the classroom or how they stayed on task, as I wanted to avoid appearing to frame the teachers as deficit

and thus create a poor interview environment. Furthermore, teacher absenteeism has in previous literature been reported to primarily be because of matters like teachers or their families being ill, female teachers having a higher burden of chores in the home, needing to travel for medical reasons, or because of school related tasks like filling in the TPAD (see, e.g., Karamperidou, 2020, pp. 32–61; Tao, 2013). If absenteeism would have come up as a way of protesting, like exit strategies, this would have been included.

9.6 Suggestions for future research

While I found that it was deemed important for all the teachers to do a good job for their pupils, I also found indications that that could mean different things and have different outcomes in the actions that the teachers took. One example was how some teachers focused on teaching to the test, whereas others said that they had a broader focus on understanding. A more systematic analysis of what ‘doing a good job’ meant to different teachers (differing, for example in age, experience, gender, teacher training college, and union membership/activity) in relation to external circumstances in public and LFP schools would be interesting, if we want to learn more about teachers’ roles in the marketisation of education in this context. As Brogan (2013) put it, teachers can work with or against neoliberalism. Teachers are a particular type of semi-professional ideational worker. As my research and that of others (Bocking, 2017; Brogan, 2013) indicates, however, what teaching is supposed to be may be subject to shifts towards less skilled or even unskilled work. I think that more labour geographers should try to figure out how public sector professionals, or professionals in traditionally public sectors, navigate restructuring processes that incorporate competition and changing governance.

With some younger/LFP-school teachers conforming to the rules of the LFP schools by, for example, placing greater emphasis than older teachers on test scores, it is possible that what are now rules being enforced through schools’ authoritative resources (partly because of the teachers’ weaker standing because of the surplus of teachers) will become entrenched as social structures over time. Another example on that theme is that the teachers often used very similar expressions, for example, saying that teaching meant serving ‘all Kenya’s children’. Conducting a discourse analysis of interviews with

teachers, policy documents, representations of teachers in the media and/or course material from teacher training could be telling as to how and where sanctioning and constitutive rules are incorporated into teachers' rationalisations of their actions. It could also be a way to further teachers' opportunities for solidarity, if different discourses relate to one another could be better understood.

While I found similarities between the teachers, it is possible that more in-depth and prolonged data collection could find differences among them that matter for their interaction with and reproduction of the rationales of marketisation. As younger teachers are working in the system they recently left as pupils and students, they have different experiences than older teachers as they start working (see Stacey, 2020). Perhaps such an exploration could give more answers, for example, as to why some teachers were fine with marketing, whereas others were absolutely against it.

There could also be merit in conducting a similar study including teachers working in well-off public and private schools as well, applying a more class-sensitive perspective, like that of Bourdieu's fields and cultural capital, to agency. As the teachers said that there was corruption and nepotism with regard to postings, there is likely a wider repertoire available to teachers able to choose, and/or less idealistic in doing so, their postings in accordance with their essential interests.

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Indicators selected: *Population ages 00-04, female; Population ages 00-04, male; Population ages 05-09, female; Population ages 05-09, male; Population ages 10-14, female; Population ages 10-14, male; Population ages 15-19, female; Population ages 15-19, male; Population ages 20-24, female; Population ages 20-24, male; Population ages 25-29, female; Population ages 25-29, male; Population ages 30-34, female; Population ages 30-34, male; Population ages 35-39, female; Population ages 35-39, male; Population ages 40-44, female; Population ages 40-44, male; Population ages 45-49, female; Population ages 45-49, male; Population ages 50-54, female; Population ages 50-54, male; Population ages 55-59, female; Population ages 55-59, male; Population ages 60-64, female; Population ages 60-64, male; Population ages 65 and above, female; Population ages 65 and above; Population, total; Rural population; Urban population.*

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Data selected: *WB_countries_Admin0_10m*

Key informant interviews:

EACHRights representatives. (25-02-2019).
EI representative, communicator. (16-05-2018).
EI representative, project manager. (16-05-2018).
Elimu Yetu Coalition representative. (13-02-2019).
Former BIA manager. (05-03-2019).
Head teacher, large urban LFP school. (12-02-2019).
Kenya Private School Association CEO. (08-03-2019).
KNUT local elected official. (11-03-2019).
KNUT representative in charge of privatisation matters. (06-03-2019).
KNUT Secretary General. (06-03-2019).

Appendix A: Interview guide teachers

Example guide. Similar with some changes for non-certified and private/BIA where relevant. Within brackets are potential prompts for follow-up and further probing.

Introduction

- How long have you been working here as a teacher? Why here? (In this place/neighbourhood/school)
- Do you live in this area? (Where, close?) Are you from this area?
- Where did you study to become a teacher? When? Did you work as a teacher before this? (How was the teacher education? Did it help having worked as teacher before?)
 - Alternatively: Did you train in some way to become a teacher? Where? For how long? Do you want to study to get a P1 certificate? Can you? Does it matter that you do not have a P1 certificate?

On work

- Why did you decide to become a teacher?
- Is the work as a teacher what you expected?
 - Do you think it's a good job? (Do you have or need other employment to make ends meet? Do you do extra tuition?)
 - What is a good day like in work? (Children, staff, support, time, materials, lesson plan)
 - What is not a very good day like? (“)
- What do you need in work to be a good teacher? (Infrastructure, resources, colleagues, head teacher...? In service training? Career motivation?)
 - What traits would you say classifies you as a good teacher?
 - What do you need outside of school, in your personal life? (Housing? Safety? Have kids? Child-care? Schools? Work for partner/spouse?)
 - What do you need outside of school, in society? (Pay, security, rights, influence?)
- Do you feel trusted in your work? By whom? (Parents, kids, head teacher/management, society, government) How does this trust show?
 - How are you being assessed/held accountable? (TPAD, report cards...?)

- Do you feel free to make decisions about teaching? (What can you control? What can you not control?) How far does your ability to influence reach?
- Do you feel valued/appreciated in your work? By whom? (Parents, head, children, soc, govt) How does this show? (Or: Why do you feel you are not? How shows?)
- Do you want to continue to teach? (Still be teaching in five years' time?) Why/not? Here?

Changes/challenges?

- Is it hard to find a job as a teacher? TSC/private. Why/not?
- Did/would you move to get a job as a teacher? Where/where not/why?
- (If with TSC now) How was it to go from private to TSC employment? (Major differences? As good as thought to be?)
- How has primary school education changed during your time as a teacher? (Technology/material/resources/infrastructure? Status of school/education? Curriculum/content? Trust? Rights? Pay? Status of teaching profession?)
 - Has this presented any challenges for you?
 - Do you talk to your colleagues about this? Talk with anyone else? Any advocacy groups? Can you affect things together?
- Which change most important? (When?)
 - 2003 FPE → more students? More schools? What kind?
 - 2009/2016 APBET guidelines → know anything about? Affected school?
 - 2018-2020 New Curriculum: 2-6-3-3 (from 8-4-4) → challenges/needs? Less focus on test → good or bad?
 - Government/MoE to procure text books (public schools) → working out?
 - Students not to be allowed to be in school before 7.15am → shorter days?
 - Introduction of an education registration number that will be used the child's entire education life → affect you?
 - Tuition in schools is banned → less income/more time?
 - More schools? What kind? Around here?
- Do you know the other schools in this area? What types of schools are there? What difference between them? (Categories? What relation to? Do you know the teachers there? Talk about work/challenges?)

- What are your experiences with public/private schools, if any? (Difference from where you are now? Have kids in...?)
- Do you look or market for students to join your school? (Competition with other schools? How? Students? Results?) Why do you think your students choose your school? Why do you think others do not?
- Are you affected by the other schools/competition/marketing in any way? (How? Professional, personal life? Pos./neg./neither?)
- How do you think pupils are affected by this? Affects different pupils differently?
- Do you think that private schools in any way affect public schools? (How?)
- How does it matter who manages a school? (Engagement, trust, freedom?)
 - How does it matter who teaches in a school? (Commitment, trained/untrained, local/outsider...?)
- Do you think there should be the same minimum standard of training for all teachers in all schools? (Is it realistic?) How could this be achieved? (Are all TTCs equally good? Are they well funded by the government? Is the teaching relevant?)
- What is your view on for-profit low-cost private schools?
 - How do you think that for-profit schools affect the right and access to education?
 - Any thoughts related to teachers or teaching in for-profit low-cost schools? (Trained/untrained, used for profit, working conditions, rights...?)
 - Do you think schools using untrained teachers affects you as a trained teacher in any way? (de-professionalization/-skilling?) How?

Action?

- How do you think the government should handle for-profit low-cost schools? (Regulations, teachers...?) Should be held accountable? How? By whom?
- (If applicable) You said earlier that you talk to the other teachers about challenges – do you bring thoughts or issues to the management or anyone outside of school? Does this give you strength, being listened to, change...?
- Do you know the teachers' trade union KNUT? (Member? Would like

to be?)

- Do you think they have power to affect education? Teachers' working conditions? How?
- Do you know the international teachers' trade union Education International?
- Do you know of the trade unions' campaign against for-profit low-cost private schools? (If so, how did you find out about it?) Do you agree with them?
- Are you aware of any other protests against private schools? (Who/what against? Thoughts?)

Rounding off

- How do you view education? (Right, investment, key to dev...?) Do you think that education should be free? Do you think that fees lead to inequality?
- What school would or do you send your children to?
- Is there anything you want to add?

Appendix B: Explorative interviews with EI

Introduction

- How did you end up here?
- Could you describe a bit of what your work entails?
- Has your work changed in this time? What has changed in focus for EI and teachers' unions?
- What is the importance of education to you? What is teachers' role in education to you?
- Change in teachers' role/what the aim with education is? How do you see connections to...? privatization/marketization? Commodification?

Uneven geography and 'quality' of teachers

- What would you say are the biggest reasons behind the uneven spread of teachers geographically, i.e., btw urb/rur, rich/poor?
- A lot of studies done on the topic of attracting and keeping teachers, what missing?
- Do you have any thoughts with regards to policy aimed at closing this gap?
- In the 2013/14 Global education monitoring report the case is made for four (five) strategies to 'improve teacher quality and management':
 - Attracting and retaining best teachers
 - Improving teacher education
 - Deploying teachers more fairly
 - Incentives, like salaries and attractive career paths
 - (strengthening teacher governance)Would you like to add to (or retract from) this?
- A further problem related to how classrooms are staffed is the subject knowledge gap. How can EI address this?
- How can EI address teacher absenteeism?
- Is it a problem, you reckon, that teaching is by many viewed as a calling rather than a profession? Does this affect the way EI/teachers posit 'demands' – as for the good of education at least as much as for teachers – and the way you campaign and

protest? (aiming at policy makers and politicians, research, too much striking → lower trust/backlash from public?)

Privatization, LFPS, problems

- What does EI perceive to be the biggest problems with privatization? Differs between rich and poor countries?
- What do national teachers' unions and members perceive to be the biggest problems with privatization? Does it differ between rich and poor countries?
- What does EI perceive to be the biggest problems with LFPSs? Second wave
- What do teachers perceive to be the biggest problem with LFPSs?
- LFPS chains have a strategy of hiring local youth, do you see any merits in this practice, any way this could be used and made legit?
- Do you see any parts of the LFPS 'strategy' as useful for public schools? (Local hiring, scripted lessons, ICT, administration streamlined...?)
- Do you see these untrained teachers in LFPSs as contract teachers...? (Voluntary teachers?)
- Do you see a (possible or already present) stratification of teachers (and education)? Why do you think this is?
- How do you see the relationship between privatization and marketization? (Anything else you think is more important? Commodification?)

Response(s), organization

- Would you tell me a bit more about the Global Response campaign?
- What 'parts' are there in what you do? How much is online/face-to-face work?
- Who is the 'target' for what you do?
- How and where did the GR campaign start? (a specific problem related to privatization? top-down, bottom-up, in several countries...?) Is it *one* campaign? Homogenous?
- How does GR work geographically? – i.e., where are problems identified (national unions, EI HQ or regionally) and how do they travel in the organization? Says on website that national unions bring issues up?
- (How) are you involved in national campaigns through the Global

response? Pick them ‘up’? Do they differ? Do they have different ‘targets’/goals?

- Are actions by all for all, national for national, all for one, some countries being more supportive of overall campaign, North to South...? With EI/GR as “umbrella”?
- How do you design an international program when teachers might be very different?
- How do you incorporate both licensed/unlicensed and trained/untrained teachers in this campaign? Is there friction there? Where from?
- Communication – how sensitive internationally? How get policy makers to listen?

Ending

Anything you would like to add or that you think deserves more focus?

Anyone else you think I should contact on the subject of teachers’ geography/ deployment policies or privatization/marketization/LFPSs?

What are the biggest challenges with regards to quality education? What do the teachers/unions see as problematic?

Appendix C: Interview guide teachers' unions

Basic template. Changes such as additions/omissions of questions would be made depending on the position/function of the interviewee. Within brackets are potential prompts for follow-up and further probing. Asking about privatization or marketization depending on what the interviewee

Introduction

- Name, title/position
- How long have you been active in KNUT/EI? (Have you held other positions in KNUT/EI before? Where?)
- What does your job entail/a day's work entail?
- (When and where) did you work as a teacher? Would you care to tell about it?

Teachers

- What would you say are the biggest challenges for teachers in their daily work in school? (Resources, understaffed, trust, agency, appraisals, career opportunities?)
- What challenges in teachers' lives? (Housing, safety, pay, family well-being)
 - Pay – what levels getting? What acceptable? (bribes/'motivation money' – necessary to survive or a matter of opportunity?)
- What are the biggest challenges for the profession in society? (Status, conditions, rights, pay, labour market, de-skilling)
 - Differences between more remote/rural and urban areas?
- Teacher training, quality? (Teachers expressed education differs although most seemed happy with the education *they* got → how affects teaching profession, status etc.?)
- Are teachers trusted? (By whom? How does this show?)
 - Valued? (By whom? How does this show?)

Education, marketization

- How do you view the marketization of education? (What is, what

- means)
- How would you describe marketization/privatization of education in Kenya? (Always been highly privatized? class?)
 - In informal settlements/low-income areas?
 - What makes it possible for low-fee private schools to run in Kenya? (Policy, politics, private interests, need from communities, external/international forces)
 - How does it matter who owns a school? What types of schools do you see? (How differentiate between commercial and community fee-charging schools?)
 - What challenges to teachers in their daily work do you see stemming from privatization/marketization?
 - Challenges to the teaching profession?
 - Different areas of the country?
 - What positive aspects do you see? (Job, education, quality, pressure on government)
 - What challenges to education are the most real and immediate?
 - (KNUT, discuss EI's points w Kenya in mind) What challenges from for-profit private schools/commercial are the most real and immediate? What are the sources of those challenges?
 - Agree/disagree?
 - State funding for teacher training is under threat
 - Funding for school infrastructure is under threat
 - Profit making in education undermines the right to education
 - Profit making in education undermines the working conditions and rights of teachers
 - Profit making in education contributes to de-professionalization
 - Profit making in education leads to less democratic decision-making and public accountability in education governance
 - Test-based policies and standardised, reduced curriculum lead to less quality in education
 - Choice and competition between schools lead to inequality
 - There should be minimum standards for teachers in all schools
 - Fees lead to inequality
 - Education should be free

Action

- Do you think the Kenyan government/Ministry should stem

privatization? How? (Focus on providing ed., regulation of APBET schools...?)

- Is the union involved in any such work? (Want, feel should?)
- How do you work to influence?
- Where does KNUT/EI have to gain influence to affect the issue of for-profit private schools? (Nationally/internationally? Locally? How?)
 - Who do you ally with? (Could ally with? Other Kenyan trade unions for teachers? Advocacy groups? Internationally? Parents?)
 - Is it easy or hard to rally against privatization of education?
 - What victories would you say KNUT/EI has had in the struggle against LFPSs?
 - Challenges ahead?
- How does KNUT/EI work with teachers/branches of union against profit-making in education/LFPSs/ BIA? (Knowledge sharing, actions?)
 - Do you feel teachers are on board? Why/not?
- How work with and attract private school teachers? As I've understood it KNUT is for all certified teachers...? All but one of the private school teachers I have talked with believed KNUT only for TSC employed teachers. I read that KNUT wants more members from private schools though. How are you working with this?

Rounding off

How do you view education? (rRght, investment, key to development...?)
Anything you want to add?

Anyone you think I should meet? Documents to read?

Statistics on teachers, schools?

Appendix D: Interview guide advocacy groups

- What is your name/is your name.....? What is your title/position?
- How long have you been working in.....? What does your job entail? Have you held similar positions before? Where?
- What is your view on education? On the teaching profession?
- Have you worked in education yourself? Would you care to tell about it?

On different schools

- Do you know any public and private schools in this area (or a particular area of interest/where active)? Which ones?
- What are your experiences with these schools, if any? Differences?
- How do you think it matters who owns and runs a school?
- What is the stand on the question of private education in this organization? On LFPSs? Why?
- What is your opinion on commercial LFPSs? Why?
- Kenyan education marketized before LFPSs?
- Do you ever talk to teachers, colleagues or others about LFPSs? Why/not?

Changes and challenges

- Are there any particular changes in policy or regulation that you think are of importance to the existence of LFPSs?
- Any changes in popular opinion? (it seems, e.g., that BIA schools have closed down, and some report a decline in students)

On teachers' unions and their work

- Are you aware of the teachers' union KNUT's and the international teachers' union EI's campaign against private schools? If so, where did you learn about it?
- Do you think any of the changes in policy and opinion

can be attributed to this campaign?

- Does your organization side with teachers' unions? Do you know how any cooperation started?
- Do you agree on the points the unions are making? If so, which ones? Why?/Why not?
- Are you active in any campaigns on the subject? Which one(s)?
- What do you think should be done about privatization/marketization, if anything?

Rounding off

Anything you want to add?

Anyone you think I should meet? Any particular organizations? Documents to read?

Appendix E: Interview guide CEO Kenya Private School Association

- What does your job as CEO of KPSA entail?

On schools

- What schools are part of your association?
- What is your view on the APBET (Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training) framework? Is this a way for schools to become registered?
- Do you as an association aiming to “continuously further the quality of private education” see a problem in the large number of unregistered private schools? Does the poor quality in some private schools reflect badly in any way on private schools in general? How? (Quality, trustworthiness?)
- Do your members in any way express any concerns regarding unregistered private schools?
- Do you work to help schools such as Bridge International Academies to become registered?

On teachers

- In interviews with teachers in public and private schools (the majority however unregistered) it seems that teachers in the private schools are waiting to be employed by the TSC – is it hard to employ and retain teachers in private primary schools?
- How do you view the use of unregistered teachers in many (unregistered) private schools?
- Is there a trade union or association for private school teachers that you are aware of?

Appendix F: Interview guide head teachers/ school directors

Introduction

- Name, position, school
- What does your job as head teacher/director entail?
- How many (primary) teachers do you have working in your school?
How many have a P1 certificate?
- Do you teach?

On teachers and education

- What do you, as the head teacher/director, consider the biggest challenges in running a school? (Funding, quality, affordability, enrolment, teachers/staff, students' challenges...)
- What are the biggest challenges regarding hiring and keeping teachers? (Qualifications/education/skills/ knowledge, turn-over, not attractive area, pay, accountability... Someone said teachers want to move to a public school for pension/social plan...?)
- From teachers' point of view, what challenges do you see affecting their work in school? (Resources, pay, accountability...)
- What challenges do you see affecting teachers outside of school? (Pay, housing, child-care...)
- Has teaching in primary school changed in your time, such as the curriculum reform now? (Technology/material/ resources, curriculum/content, accountability, trust, rights, pay? Which change most important? When?)

On different types of schools

- Do you know the other private and public schools in this area? Which ones?
- What are your perceptions of the differences between the schools?
- Do you find yourself in competition for students with the other schools? Do you have to do marketing to enrol students? How come students choose your school?
- How does it matter who owns and runs a school?

- (If not BIA: What is your opinion on commercial/for-profit low-fee private schools? (Why? Style of teaching? Use of teachers?)
- Do you ever talk to colleagues, staff or others about these schools? Why/not? What about?

On teachers' unions and their work

- How aware are you in the debate and campaigning around commercial LFPS such as BIA? (Involved? Who involved with? Stance, views...?)
- Are you active in any projects or campaigns aimed at affecting policy? (Which? Any concerning teachers work and profession? Who with?)
- I have some statements from the international teachers' union which I would like to ask if you agree or disagree with:

Rounding off

How do you view education?

Anything you want to add?

Anything I can contribute with in terms of materials?

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