

Teachers in the marketisation of education

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

Sara Falkensjö

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Handelshögskolans fakultetsnämnd vid Göteborgs Universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentlig granskning fredag den 17 november 2023, klockan 13.00 i sal B22, Handelshögskolan, Vasagatan 1, Göteborg



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
HANDELSHÖGSKOLAN

ABSTRACT

Sara Falkensjö, 2023. *Teachers in the marketisation of education – A labour geography perspective on the expansion of low-fee private primary schooling in Kenya.*

Publications edited by the Departments of Geography, University of Gothenburg. Series B, no. 133. Department of Economy and Society, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg. ISBN 978-91-8069-461-2

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

ISSN 0346-6663

ISBN 978-91-8069-461-2 (TRYCK)

ISBN 978-91-8069-462-9 (PDF)

<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/78320>

© Sara Falkensjö

Printed by Stema Specialtryck AB

Distribution:

Department of Economy and Society

P.O. Box 625

SE 405 30 Gothenburg