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ASPECTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF NAKURU  
SCHOOLS ON THE CERTIFICATE OF PRIMARY  
EDUCATION

by

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DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 236

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June 1976

This paper was originally presented at the meeting of the Canadian Association of African Studies, held in Victoria, B.C. in 1976.

Views expressed in this paper are those of the author. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of the Institute for Development Studies or of the University of Nairobi.

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ABSTRACT

In this paper the origins of the three-tiered school system in Nakuru are traced to the colonial period and the system is described as it developed before and after Independence. The primary schools in the town are divided into two groups - ordinary low-cost schools and higher-cost schools, including the one formerly European high-cost school, the two formerly Asian medium-cost schools, and three assisted schools. A number of comparisons are made between these two groups of schools based on performance on the Certificate of Primary Education examination which is given at the end of the seven years of primary education. It is found that pupils from the higher-cost schools tend to achieve higher scores on the examination and thus are more likely to gain coveted places in government-maintained secondary schools. Success in the examination may be correlated with better equipment in the schools, with more highly qualified teachers, in some cases with a better teacher-pupil ratio and possibly with a more conducive home environment. The relative success of the higher-cost schools cannot be attributed to non-African pupils, but rather it may indicate the beginning of social class cleavages within the African population.

ASPECTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF NAKURU  
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If the whole point of primary education is to simply qualify kids for secondary school, then let's get untrained 'leavers' in just to sit and cram past papers into them. Think of the savings we'd make. We'd be the World Bank's darlings.

In my time education used to be an escape route, nowadays it's getting more like a dead end.

- Joe magazine (2)

The structure of the education system in Kenya is disturbing, whether one argues that education is crucial in that it is the key to a lucrative formal sector job or that education is simply of value in itself.<sup>1</sup> The system is characterised by a series of bottlenecks, starting with the Certificate of Primary Education which arouses wide popular interest and concern. This is the set exam at the end of seven years of primary education which governs entrance to government secondary schools. Nationally, only one in seven C.P.E. candidates is successful.

This particular examination was instituted, along with other restructuring of the school system, a few years after Independence in 1965-66. (5) It consists of three multiple-choice tests: English, mathematics and a general paper. These are given letter scores (B+, C-, etc.) which are translated into numerical equivalents (A=12, A-=11, etc.) and totalled to give a composite mark. While less weight seems to be given the general paper, for most purposes it is this composite mark which is crucial for matriculation.

School authorities thought of the C.P.E. not only as a matriculation exam but also as a school leaving document. For those purposes they defined a C- average, i.e. a score of 15, as a "pass". However, as primary education was devalued as an employment qualification, the pass lost whatever meaning it might have had for the public. Its remaining value was as a crude and quite minimal measure of the success with which particular schools were preparing the students. The real measure was matriculation results, but in this respect comparisons could only be made locally. That was because the distribution of secondary school places was uneven across the country. Thus

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1. See Marvin (6) for this rather unusual view.

a high average score in a school in a very competitive area might represent a lower matriculation rate than a lower average score in a more favoured area.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of access to coveted secondary school places is twofold. From a national perspective, certain areas provide better chances than others. But from a local perspective, the main concern is which primary schools display the best matriculation record. In Nakuru's case, both questions are of interest. The first will not be dealt with here except to note that the municipality is relatively advantaged in terms of secondary school places. The second question, which schools provide the best chance, is the burden of this paper.

In the Nakuru context, this question of differential matriculation success is a particularly intriguing one. That is because the question focusses our attention on the multi-tiered school system which has developed directly out of the colonial racially-segregated educational structure. Thus we are able in this case to relate clearly the question of matriculation success to that of social stratification. The upwardly mobile group appears to be solidifying its newly won position by improving its children's chances of secondary education by sending them to a higher-cost primary school.

#### THE MULTI-TIERED EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE - BACKGROUND

During the colonial period education ... was clearly seen as the master key to certain prospects in the colonial society. But the colonial authorities had a much tighter control on the structure which had developed under their direction to meet specific and limited needs for manpower ... (in) the island of European economy ... which needed an assured source of cheap manpower. The structure of education (featured) ... racial separation which in effect produced three educational systems in the country ... and the serious bottlenecks in the African system which various policy decisions had introduced ... to solve the problem of population and financial realities and the political implications of expanding educational facilities for the African. (7)

This succinct review of the shaping of the educational system in colonial Kenya requires some further comment to set out the Nakuru case. The Kenyan settler economy was quite fragile and depended on what amounted to a subvention from the African population mainly in the form of cheap labour. (See 9.) The other side of this economic situation was that the settler population was able to demand a high level of services (e.g., the maintenance of British educational standards in European schools) on the somewhat specious

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2. King (5) quotes an example in 1970 when a candidate writing in Kericho needed a score of 31 to matriculate, while in Ngong a score of about 20 was sufficient to gain a place in a government secondary school. See also Somerset (8) for some additional information on this subject.

argument that they were generating much of the government revenue. This meant that not only were separate school systems developed and maintained for Europeans, Asians and Africans, but that the level of government support for them was in inverse proportion to the size of the population group.

In effect, the government could not afford to create an adequate African school system. The growth of African education remained dependent largely on mission initiatives. There were also a number of independent school movements, most notably the ones in Kikuyuland in the 1930s when perhaps as many as 400 schools were started. (See 1.) These popular movements expressed a number of very significant socio-political cleavages, while at the same time showing a recognition of the importance of education in improving the African position within the colonial structure. (4)

In a sense this situation was clearest in the towns. Educational opportunities for Africans were poor in the urban areas reflecting the very marginal position of Africans there. Africans were labourers; except insofar as measures were required to maintain that labour pool, Africans merited no further services, certainly not education. Families belonged, as did ultimately the migrant labourer, on the reserves. (See 11.) In Nakuru prior to the end of World War II, the only schooling for Africans was provided by mission groups.<sup>3</sup> To be fair, the then Municipal Board was not active in any of the educational systems.

After World War II, the Nakuru local administration was taken over by a development-oriented group of European urban settlers. (See 10.) They espoused a philosophy of gradualism and ameliorationism, involving the African population as junior partners in a multiracial structure. This orientation either implied or was congruent with a policy of labour stabilisation which necessarily involved a considerable expansion of services for the African population. Thus the municipal authorities began to involve themselves more in education. An African full primary school was built in 1948 with municipal board encouragement. It offered primary and intermediate classes and the municipal African Affairs Officer sat on its board, acting as executive officer. (Annual Report, 1953, Municipal Council of Nakuru)

The first education explosion in Nakuru took place in the decade prior to independence. Five of the eleven schools in town catered for Africans, and there was a Catholic multi-racial school. The churches remained very active, offering education to Africans and to segments of the Asian population, notably the Catholic Goans. Along side the church schools though, there was

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3. There was also an Islamic school, but it was not involved in secular education.

the nucleus of the three-tiered school system: a European school (Lugard, now Lena Moi)<sup>4</sup> on the slopes of Menengai Crater in the most expensive part of town; two Asian schools (Lake School east of the bazaar area near major Asian housing areas, and Nakuru West near the then Ibrahim and Rahemtulla development); and the African schools.

With Independence, the pressures on the national government for provision of educational opportunities intensified further. The central government let these pressures devolve on the local authorities, while keeping control of overall educational policy, curriculum planning, teacher training, etc. Nakuru was given access to the Graduated Personal Tax revenues to support education. Education immediately became a major budgetary item, one of the largest of municipal departments, and a complex political and administrative problem.

One pressure was to provide as many places as possible for the burgeoning African population. In the decade following Independence, primary schools grew from 11 to 22 in number, including 4 taken over from the district authorities when town boundaries were redrawn in 1972. By a number of other indices,<sup>5</sup> Nakuru has responded impressively, considering it was working within what became a tight budget.<sup>6</sup>

A related problem was to keep school fees down, and perhaps because of the potential political implications of fee increases, basic fees at least have remained stable for quite some time at 20/- (\$3) per term. As a result the municipal authorities have tried hard to strike a balance in personnel costs: to eliminate unqualified (i.e., untrained) teachers on the one hand,<sup>7</sup> but also to cut down the number of overqualified teachers (graduates and SI in the primary schools). Lack of success in the latter effort reflects most eloquently the retention of a multi-tiered school system.

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4. This was named for the wife of Kenya's Vice President, Daniel Arap Moi.

5. See Evans (3) for an idea of comparable national growth trends in school construction and enrollment up to 1970.

6. For example in 1969, according to the Annual Report of the Municipal Council of Nakuru for that year, education costs were £57,858. This was more than the total Graduated Personal Tax revenues and school fees combined, and thus it represented a drain on other revenues. Even so, Nakuru's financial position has been strong compared with that of many other local authorities.

7. The Council was successful in reducing the number of unqualified staff in the period under discussion. However, in 1974, when the President announced the elimination of fees for the first four standards of regular primary schools, the large increase in enrollment necessitated hiring some fifty untrained teachers in Nakuru.

Along with this popular pressure for the widest possible access to education, at the same time there was considerable pressure to maintain the elite standard schools. Since Europeans and Asians were politically ineffectual, clearly this pressure came from the African salaried class which was moving into an ascendant position politically and assuming important positions in the economic structure.

The rationale for retaining the multi-tiered educational system was fairly persuasive. It was not much of a burden on the public purse since the higher fee structure paid for most of the difference in costs. In that sense it was not exploitative. More positively, as Kenyanisation was a long-term process, it was arguable that it was best to train the next generation to the best standard available. If the 'fruits of Independence' meant anything, surely it meant opening up to African children the opportunities for high quality education which were enjoyed by the children of the other groups.

These concerns were clearly expressed in the 1967 Annual Report of the Nakuru Education Department:-

Due to the somewhat prohibitive rates of fees at Lugard School, the only former European school in Nakuru, the number of African pupils remained lamentably low, while it was apparent that the number of Asian pupils was greater than in the previous year, particularly in the lower classes. The Education Committee of the Council looks at this state of affairs in clear disfavour and is therefore endeavouring to look for ways of bringing the situation to a level, where at least most parents can afford to pay the fees. It should also be noted that this school retained most SI teachers during the year thus considerably adding recurrent costs of running the school.

At other maintained former Asian schools the proportion of African pupils rose steadily .... It was confirmed that these schools are more popular with the African parents than the former African schools (because, their C.P.E. classes do comparatively much better, other reasons being that pupils at these schools are better behaved. The schools have more and better facilities, etc. Perhaps there could be influx of the African pupils into the schools, were it that the school fees were within the means of many African parents.

The resultant integrated school structure in Nakuru has several divisions. The greatest number of the schools are maintained wholly by the Municipal Council. One, the former European school, is designated a high-cost school and charges fees of 280/- (\$40) per term. The two former Asian schools are designated medium-cost schools and cost 90/- (\$13) per term. The remainder are regular low-cost schools where fees are 20/- (\$3) per term. In addition there are three assisted schools. These are sponsored



schools from the pre-independence era which have not been absorbed into the municipal system. The standards are apparently higher than normal in these and so are the fees, although costs are kept down somewhat by a grant of 40 per cent of the teachers' salaries by the Municipal Council. It is these six higher cost schools (the one high- and two medium-cost maintained schools and the three assisted schools) that we compare below with the regular schools.<sup>8</sup>

#### C.P.E. RESULTS OF HIGHER COST AND REGULAR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The crude test of school performance that the municipality reports is the percentage of candidates 'passing' the C.P.E. If we compare the higher cost schools and the regular schools, there is a clear advantage in the former's performance. The association holds up strongly for the two years included in the table below.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1. Schools ranked by percentage of candidates passing C.P.E.

		1971	1972
	Rank	1,2,3,4,5,10	1,2,3,4,5,6
Higher-cost schools (6)	Range	94.7-62.5%	92.1-68.0%
	Rank	6,7,8,9,11,12,13	7,8,9,10,11,12,13
Regular schools (7) <sup>a</sup>	Range	67.1-47.7%	62.7-48.0%

a. One of the regular schools, left out because of lack of comparable data, would have altered the ranking in 1972, coming fourth. Even so the distribution would yield a u-score significant at .01.

Mann-Whitney  $u=0.4$ ; significant at .01 level or better.  
Inter-year comparison, Goodman + Krustall,  $G=.72$ .

It turns out that in fact the rankings on C.P.E. results are fairly good indicators of the much more crucial measure of matriculation success. It is clear that attending a higher cost school improves one's chances of gaining admission to secondary school. This can be shown as follows:-

8. There are no unaided schools in Nakuru. The municipality absorbed one Harambee (self-help) school, Kenyatta, which was started in 1965 by the Nakuru Parents' Association because there were 700 would-be Standard One entrants at that time who could not be accommodated by the existing schools. Kenyatta had severe difficulties trying to operate on the fees which were collected, so it began receiving government assistance in 1967 and then it was taken over. Since places for Standard One entrants were still in short supply, another Harambee school was started in 1968. This, the Railway Primary, limped along until the municipality helped it phase out and absorbed its student body in 1971. (Annual Reports, Municipal Council of Nakuru)

9. Unless otherwise noted, the source for all information given in the tables is the files of the Municipal Education Office, Municipal Council of Nakuru.

Table 2. Schools ranked by percentage of Standard Seven class gaining entry to government secondary schools, 1973.

HIGHER-COST SCHOOLS(6)	RANK	1,2,3,4,7,9,
	RANGE	51.2 - 20.5%
REGULAR SCHOOLS(7) <sup>a</sup>	RANK	5,6,8,10,11,12,13
	RANK	30.7 - 12.6%

a. One of the regular schools left out because of lack of comparable data would have altered the ranking, coming fourth. This would yield a u value significant at .05 level.

u = 5; significant at .01 level.

Table 3. Matriculation results, 1973.

	A SIZE OF ST. 7 CLASS	B NO. OF MATRICULANTS	C B AS % OF A	D A AS % A	E B AS % B
HIGHER-COST MAINTAINED SCHOOLS(3)	213	60	28.2		
ASSISTED SCHOOLS(3)	127	57	44.9		
HIGHER-COST TOTAL	340	117	34.6	27.7	41.4
REGULAR SCHOOLS(11) <sup>a</sup>	908	179	19.7	72.3	58.6
TOTAL	1248	296	23.7	100.0	100.0

a. Some regular schools did not have Standard Seven classes.

Another way of assessing the relative advantages of the various grades of schools is to consider the distribution of C.P.E. scores for matriculants. Once again the higher cost schools show themselves to be superior, although by less than a full letter grade.

Table 4. C.P.E. scores of matriculants by class of school, 1972.

	16-17	18-19	20-21	22-23	24-25	26-27	28-29	30-31	32-33	34-35	TOTAL MATRICULANTS	%	MEDIAN SCORE
HIGHER-COST MAINTAINED SCHOOLS(3)	0	12	9	14	19	14	9	4	2	2	85	29.9	b
ASSISTED SCHOOLS(3)	1	3	4	10	14	9	9	6	2	3	61	21.4	
HIGHER-COST TOTAL	1	15	13	24	33	23	18	10	4	5	146	51.3	24.5
REGULAR SCHOOLS(8) <sup>a</sup>	2	17	20	47	25	15	4	2	6	1	139	48.8	22.5
TOTAL	3	32	33	72	58	38	22	12	10	6	285	100.0	

a. Several regular schools did not have Standard Seven classes or had no reported matriculants.

b. The high-cost maintained school (Lena Moi) had a median score of 26.5.

By all of these measures, pupils at higher cost schools have a significantly better chance of gaining a secondary school place. The next section looks at some differences between these classes of schools in an attempt to explain this advantage.

ANALYSIS OF HIGHER COST SCHOOLS' MATRICULATION ADVANTAGE

Having categorised schools as higher-cost versus regular, we shall look at the actual relative costs implied. This is more difficult than might be expected because the only data available to the author were taken from the municipal budgetary estimates and these proved difficult to interpret. Moreover, the estimates do not contain full information on assisted schools. However, the figures are informative, even if they indicate only the relative orders of magnitude.

The education budget is a very large one considering total ordinary municipal expenditures. The 80 to 85 per cent of the education budget which goes to cover the running costs of the schools is quite unevenly divided. Very roughly, two times as much is spent per pupil in high- and medium-cost maintained schools as in regular schools. If we assume that the level of expenditure per pupil in the assisted schools<sup>10</sup> is about equivalent to that in the medium-cost maintained schools, then the overall expenditure per pupil in higher-cost schools is 70 per cent greater than in regular schools. This fact in itself goes a long way towards 'explaining' the difference in matriculation performance between these two classes of schools. As we saw above, Standard Seven pupils in higher-cost schools were about 75 per cent more likely to gain secondary school places than their counterparts in regular schools.

The municipal authorities can afford these high expenditures because high- and medium-cost school fees repay them. In fact, from the information we have, it would seem that the net cost per pupil is lowest in the high-cost school and highest in the regular schools. From this point of view, it can be argued that higher cost schools are not exploitative; rather they represent a small downward redistribution of wealth. One imagines though that this added burden is cheerfully borne by wealthier families in return for better matriculation results.

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10. Based on the assumption that teachers' salaries represent 75 per cent of total school costs. Therefore the 954 students in the assisted schools cost

$\frac{\pounds 6,845}{.40 \times .75}$  or 475/- per student.

Table 5. Education budget (£).

	A	B	C	D	E	F
YEAR	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	A AS % MUNICIPAL BUDGET	INCOME	C AS % OF A	G.P.T. REVENUE	DEFICIT
1972	191,925	37.1	61,360	32	130,000	565
1973	227,980	39.3	75,115	32	132,000	20,865

Source: Municipal Council of Nakuru, 1974 estimates.

Table 6. Income and expenditure by class of school (£).

	1972		1973	
	INCOME <sup>a</sup>	EXPENDITURE <sup>b</sup>	INCOME	EXPENDITURE
HIGH-COST MAINTAINED SCHOOLS	12,380	12,275	18,450	19,590
MEDIUM-COST MAINTAINED	16,255	37,570	24,840	32,425
REGULAR SCHOOLS	19,060	101,105	16,730	135,220
ASSISTED SCHOOLS	-	6,425	-	6,845

a. Income for regular schools excludes revenues for school lunch programme.

b. Expenditures exclude costs of central administration.

Table 7. Cost per pupil by class of school (Shillings).

	1972				1973			
	No. Pupils (A)	Gross Expenditure per Pupil (B)	Gross Income Per Pupil (C)	Net Cost per Pupil (D)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
HIGH-COST MAINTAINED	268	920	928	- 8	317	1235	1153	72
MEDIUM-COST MAINTAINED	1200	625	250	355 <sup>a</sup>	1311	495	380	115
HIGHER-COST TOTAL	1468	680			1628	620		
REGULAR	7354	275	50	225	8117	335	45	290
ASSISTED					954	144		144

a. This cost was so high because of the salaries of some contract teachers who were phased out at the end of the year.

Higher expenditures per pupil are not of much analytical interest in themselves unless we can determine what they imply about educational differences. We might hypothesise that they imply better facilities, teachers with higher qualifications, or merely a more favourable teacher-pupil ratio. The first of these assumptions is not easy to quantify. Informal observation seems to indicate, however, that higher-cost schools do have better facilities.

The second hypothesis, that teacher qualifications are higher at higher-cost schools, is strongly borne out. This more highly qualified teaching staff accounts for much of the difference in levels of expenditure. Highly qualified teachers (perhaps over-qualified in the case of the high-cost school) seem to be one thing on which wealthier parents are able to insist. Municipal authorities have been able to eliminate graduates from the staff, but the expensive S1 grade (teachers trained to secondary school standard) has been retained and continues to serve higher-cost schools predominantly.

Table 8. Grades of teachers by class of school, 1973.

	S1	P1	P2	P3	Untrained
HIGHER-COST MAINTAINED SCHOOLS	16	27	9	0	0
ASSISTED SCHOOLS	3	12	8	1	0
HIGHER-COST TOTAL	19	39	17	1	0
REGULAR SCHOOLS	3	60	85	63	9

The non-citizen teachers who have been retained remain only in the higher-cost schools. As a group they are highly trained, and contribute significantly to the quality of the staff in these schools.

Table 9. Teachers in higher-cost schools by citizenship, 1973.

	S1	P1	P2	P3
KENYAN TEACHERS	11	20	14	1
NON-CITIZEN TEACHERS	8	19	3	0

The hypothesis that higher-cost maintained schools have a better teacher-pupil ratio is supported by the data we have here, although assisted schools show a poorer ratio than regular maintained schools. In addition, factors not visible in this table must enter into our analysis. Wealthier parents not only send their children to higher-cost schools, but they also support an apparently flourishing tutorial system of small classes held evenings and weekends, generally lead by off-duty teachers. It seems likely, then, that in more than one respect pupils at higher-cost schools benefit from more intense instruction.

Table 10. Teacher-pupil ratio by class of school, 1973.

	No. TEACHERS	No. PUPILS	RATIO
HIGH-COST MAINTAINED	16	317	1:19.3
MEDIUM-COST MAINTAINED	37	1311	1:35.4
HIGHER-COST MAINTAINED	53	1628	1:30.7
ASSISTED	24	954	1:40.0
HIGHER-COST TOTAL	77	2582	1:33.5
REGULAR SCHOOLS	218	8117	1:37.3

All of these factors seem to be the usual prerequisites of superior class status. For various reasons, however, social class terminology has not been easily applied in the African context. Before these data are taken as evidence for developing class divisions in Kenya, we must deal with one basic objection. Colonial Kenya showed what might be popularly described as 'caste' features, rather than class ones, since many socio-economic status variables followed racial lines. The multi-tiered school system is a transformed vestige of that structure in more than one sense. Thus the tiny number of European pupils and the larger group of Asian pupils are to be found exclusively in the higher-cost schools. Are the better matriculation results influenced by this? That is, are we dealing with a different cultural orientation towards educational achievement or some other ethnic factor, rather than one which points to developing class differences within the African population?

The information we have is not conclusive on this point,<sup>11</sup> but it does not suggest an ethnic explanation and thus does not rule out a class interpretation. For if the non-African student body were the crucial element, then we might have expected a clear association between matriculation success and percentage of non-Africans among the matriculants.

Table 11. Percentage of non-African pupils.

SCHOOL		TOTAL	TOTAL	B AS %	TOTAL	D AS %	C
		PUPILS 1973	NON-CIT. PUPILS	OF A	NON-AF. KENYAN PUPILS	OF A	PLUS B
		(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
ST. XAVIER'S	ASSISTED	325	95	29.2	81	24.9	54.1
LAKE	MEDIUM-COST	582	177	30.4	92	15.8	45.2
LENA MOI	HIGH-COST	317	62	19.5	48	15.1	31.6
ST. JOSEPH'S	ASSISTED	333	31	9.3	63	18.9	28.2
NAKURU WEST	MEDIUM-COST	728	37	5.1	31	4.8	9.9
HARAMBEE KHALSA	ASSISTED	296	9	3.0	3	1.0	4.0

11. Ideally we need only look at matriculants and candidates by racial and ethnic group, but we did not have this information.

Table 12. Percentage of non-African pupils and success in C.P.E.

	RANK % NON-AF. PUPILS (A)	RANK CPE PASSES 1971 <sup>a</sup> (B)	RANK CPE PASSES 1972 <sup>b</sup> (C)	RANK % MATRICULANTS 1973 <sup>c</sup> (D)
ST. XAVIER'S	1	2	1	1
LAKE	2	6	6	6
LENA MOI	3	1	2	2
ST. JOSEPH'S	4	5	5	4
NAKURU WEST	5	4	4	5
HARAMBEE KHALSA	6	3	3	3

a.  $G = -.067(A+B)$

b.  $G = .067(A+C)$

c.  $G = .20 (A+D)$

CONCLUSION

This paper documents the advantages of attending a higher-cost primary school in Nakuru. Most significant among these is the greater probability of entering a government-maintained secondary school. The cost is high but it buys some combination of better facilities and more highly qualified teachers. It was not possible here to assess the extent to which these advantages, rather than others largely extrinsic to the school situation,<sup>12</sup> contribute to higher C.P.E. scores. Be that as it may, the retention of a multi-tiered school system is clearly significant from a socio-political point of view. It must certainly be regarded as an important way of passing on a high socio-economic status and thus solidifying the elite groupings concentrated in one of Kenya's major urban centres and transforming them into something which more closely resembles a social class.

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12. Hypothetically, this would include family-derived motivations, the effect of home study conditions, the effects of an 'enriched' home environment, special tutoring or simply a better diet.

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