

IS UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN KENYA A PUBLIC GOOD?

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KEY MESSAGES

- ✓ University education in Kenya has long been a public good; fully financed by government
- ✓ Internal stakeholders interpreted NFM as fair distribution of scarce resources



- ✓ The New Funding Model (NFM, 2023) shifted university financing from equality to equity using the Means Testing Instrument (MTI)
- ✓ External stakeholders interpreted NFM as government withdrawal from accountable funding, sparking mistrust

Deep inquiry and stakeholder dialogues suggest that the real issue is the question of whether university education in Kenya is a public entitlement or a shared/private responsibility.

STUDY FINDINGS

 <p>Overreliance on Government</p>	 <p>Equity vs Equality</p>	 <p>Communication and Public Expectations</p>	 <p>Fragmented Funding</p>
<p>Internal stakeholders expect government to cover 60-95% of all fees equitably; external stakeholders expect government to cover all the costs. A parent complained: <i>"Serikali imetuachia mzigo"</i> (the government has left us the burden).</p>	<p>The NFM sought equity and fairness in funding but deepened tensions between shared responsibility and expectations of public entitlement to free university education.</p>	<p>Government framed NFM as fair and equitable; the public saw withdrawal of funding, eroding trust in higher education as a public good. This mistrust led to communication breakdown.</p>	<p>Fragmented funding reinforced public perception that better resource management could sustain university education as a public good.</p>

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 | Aligning financing and policy frameworks with clarified status**
 - End ambiguity on whether public goods may be equitably accessed
 - Implement piloting and robust monitoring, evaluation and learning processes for funding reforms

- 2 | Consolidating and streamlining funding channels**

- Integrate multiple funding streams into a single unified system
- Specify funding roles of key university stakeholders
- Annual publication of university funding expenditures for transparency



- 3 | Adopting Inclusive and transparent national communication strategy**

- Engage key external stakeholders to build common understanding and trust
- Train designated communicators to deliver consistent and evidence-based messages

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