

Access to Primary Education in Kenya: Learning from experience

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Outline of Presentation

1. Primary school access during the Colonial period

The Beecher Report (1949)
Impact of racial segregation

2 Since Independence : The first two UPE initiatives (1974 and 1979)

Macro-level evidence: National cohort survival curves

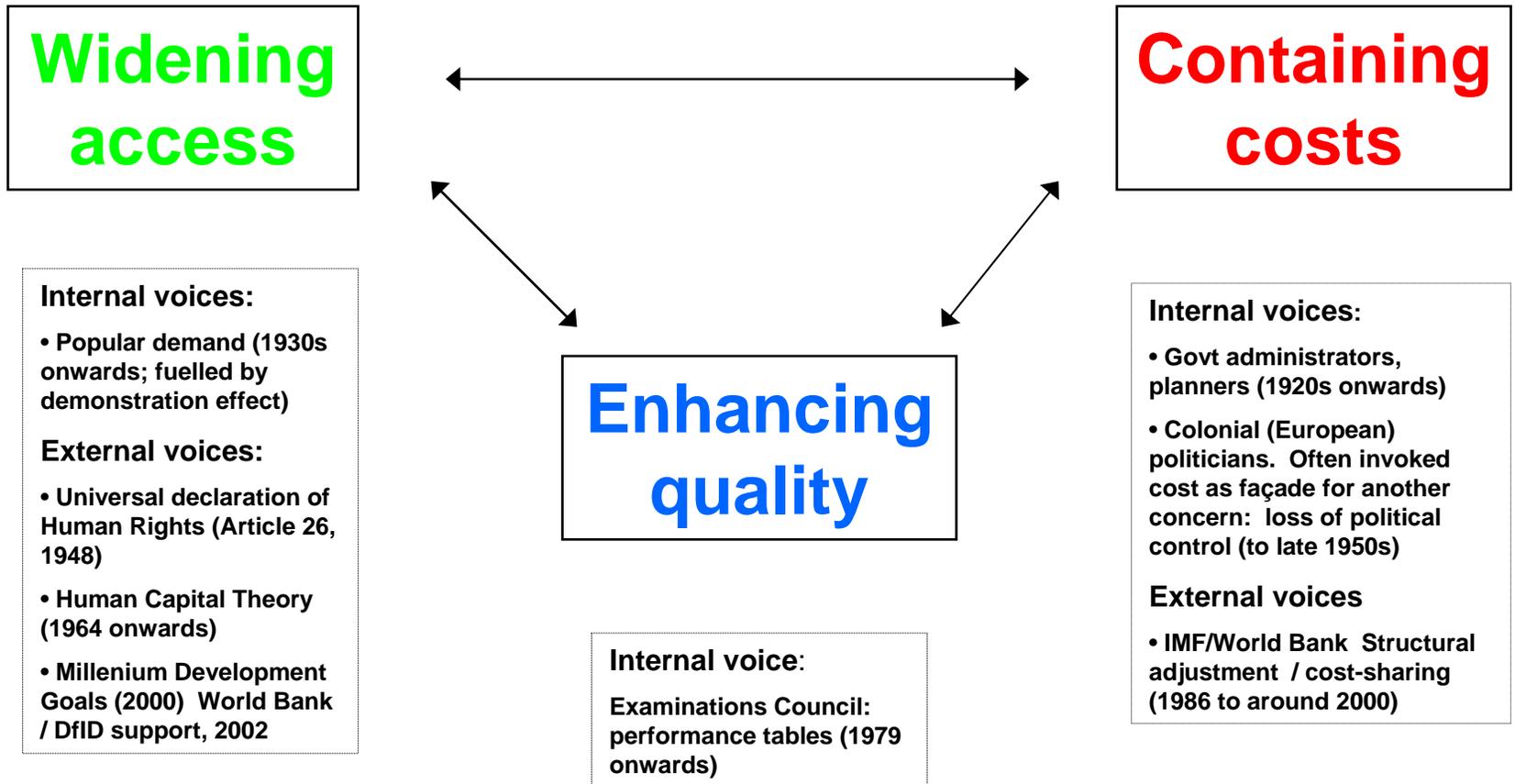
3. The third UPE initiative (2003)

Micro-level evidence: The experience at two high-impact Nairobi schools

4. The lessons of experience

Vulnerability of the marginal
Need for effective preparation
Disruptive effects of rapid population growth
Flight of the more-affluent to the private schools: the new segregation?

Tensions among three goals



Kenya primary education policy initiatives and their impact

(a) 1949 to 1974.

Year	Major concern	Policy initiative	Impact
1949	Cost	Beecher Report. (a) Primary school course reduced from five to four years; (b) Common Entrance Examination governing access to Grade 5 introduced.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transition rates to Grade 5 around 30% (late 1950s) 2. Low dropout rates, Grades 1 to 4 3. Substantial exam-year repetition bulge in Grade 4 4. Continued concern about primary school (Grade 4) leavers
1961	Access	Transition rates to Grade 5 increased, leading to final abolition of Common Entrance Examination in 1964	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Massive rise in upper primary enrolments, starting with Grade 5 in 1961. 2. Exam-year repetition bulge moved from Grade 4 to Grade 7 3. School leaver concerns moved from Grade 4 to Grade 7
1962	Cost	<i>Payment of (a) local tax (GPT) and (b) school fees required for school enrolment. Requirements relaxed 1964</i>	<i>Grade 1 intake down 27% (190,000 to 138,000) between 1961 and 1963. Other grades also down. Intake growth resumed 1964</i>
1974	Access	<u>First FPE initiative.</u> Lower primary (Grade 1-4) fees abolished. Extended to upper grades as first fee-free cohort reached relevant grade (Grade 5 in 1977 etc)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 152% rise in G1 intake, 1974 2. 1975-78: G1 intakes dropped back, but remained 50% higher than 1973

Kenya primary education policy initiatives and their impact

(b) 1978 to present.

Year	Major concern	Policy initiative	Impact
1978	Quality	<i>Introduction of selection examination (CPE, later KCPE) league tables, by district and school</i>	<i>Created Incentive for schools to deny weaker students access to final primary grade ('sifting'). Exam-year (G7) repetition bulge ended; replaced by bulge in previous year. Substantial dropout between final two grades</i>
1979	Access	<u>Second FPE initiative</u> 1. Building levies and other parental contributions prohibited 2. Free school milk introduced	1. Massive increase in Gr 1 intake; maintained throughout 1980s (although with rising population, Grade 1 GER dropped) 2. Massive increases in dropout rates, especially Grade 1 to 2
1986-88	Cost	<i>Cost sharing. Parental contributions reinstated; to cover specified recurrent expenses (maintenance, materials). Aim to reduce Govt recurrent education budget from 35+% to 'around 30%'</i>	1. Little impact on cohort curves, suggesting that parental contributions had continued, in one form or another, in most schools post -1979 2. No (long term) impact on Govt recurrent education budget: proportion back to 36% by 2003
2003	Access	<u>Third FPE initiative.</u> 1. Parental contributions prohibited 2. Free curriculum materials (textbooks, library books, science kits) -provided	1. Massive increase in Grade1 intake 2. Early indication that Grade 1 to 2 dropout rate increased

Access and costs: A 1949 perspective

The history of the last 30 years is dominated by the interplay of two factors – first, the *enthusiasm of the educationists and, later, of the Africans* (for expansion of provision), and secondly, the Government's attempts to keep pace with the growing *financial requirements*

Access, costs and quality (1949)

The story of the period 1911-1949. . . is that of the Government's attempt to build up an efficient and progressive education service . . . and to provide the maximum funds which the Colony can afford. With this is the constant danger of the *qualitative intention being lost in the dilution of quantity.*

African Education in Kenya (*Beecher report*) 1949 Para 8

‘Subversive’ primary leavers (1949)

Large numbers (of primary school leavers) are said to join an idle section of the population. . . African chiefs and responsible African leaders indicated in evidence that they are much exercised by this element in African society, which, in their judgment, is capable of becoming a *discontented and indeed subversive force . . .*

African Education in Kenya (*Beecher report*) 1949 Para 173

‘Suitable’ primary school access (1949)

Some witnesses . . .indicated that the shorter a boy’s stay in primary school . . .the more easily will he be absorbed into the agricultural and pastoral life of the country. *Six years*, it was suggested, *is too long for the attainment of bare literacy; four years* was suggested as *a more suitable period for ‘real’ primary education.*

School Certificate (Grade 10) Passes in Kenya, 1944 and 1948

	All races	African Candidates
1944	79%	87%
1948	71%	93%

... the proportion of African students passing the School Certificate Examination is so high, and so much higher than that of the Colony as a whole, that there must be an *uneconomic severity of selection*...

African Education in Kenya (*Beecher Report*) 1949 Para 185

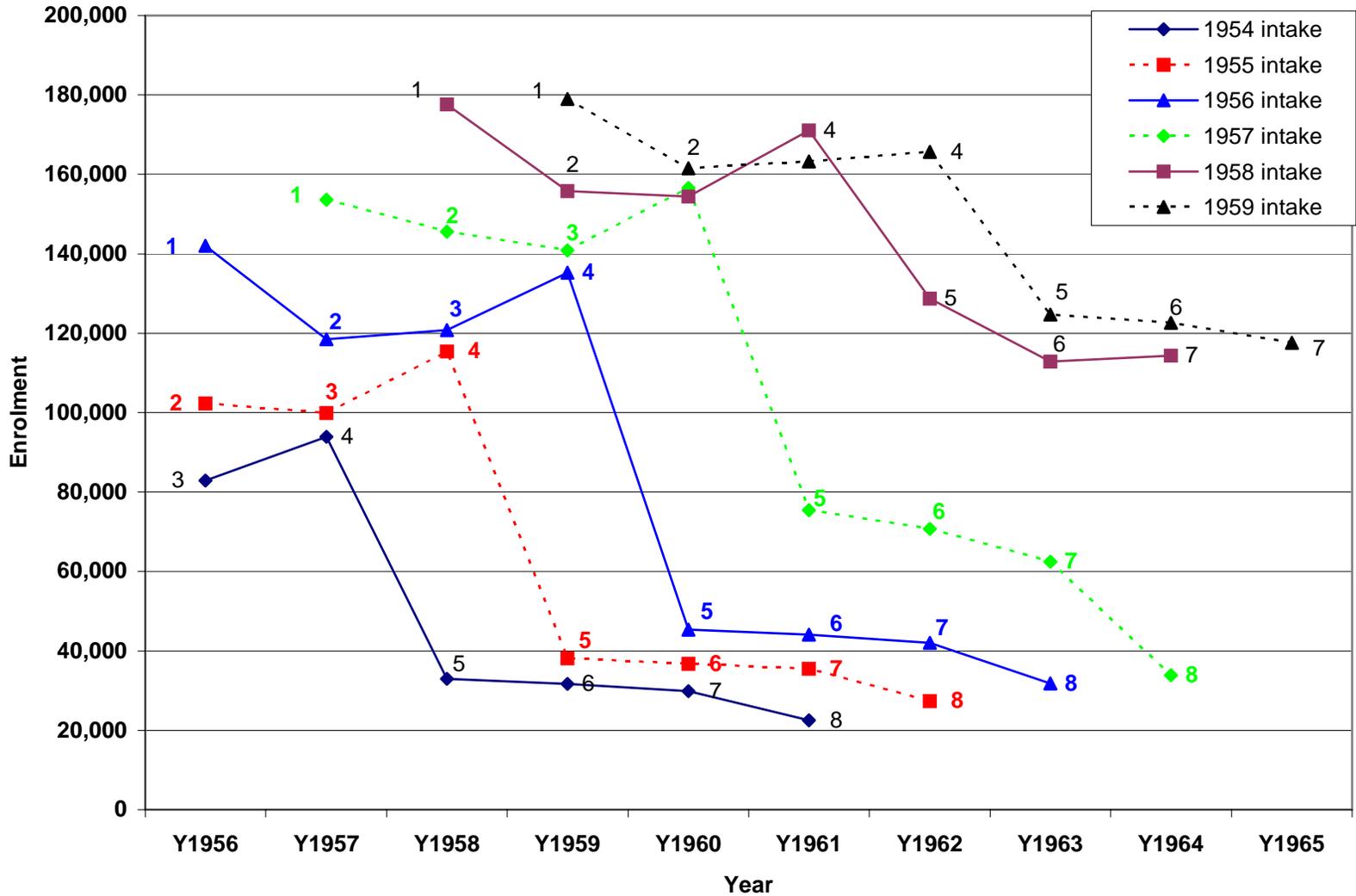
Popular demand for UPE (1954)

Government wishes to state that it is well aware of the *demands for the introduction of compulsory education for Africans* up to primary standard. . . . But the capital commitment alone rules out the possibility of these demands being acceded to immediately. . . .

Development Programme, 1954 - 1957

Kenya Primary School Cohort Survival Curves

Fig 1: Intakes 1954 and 1955 (incomplete); 1956 to 1959 (complete)



Concerns over Education Costs (1963)

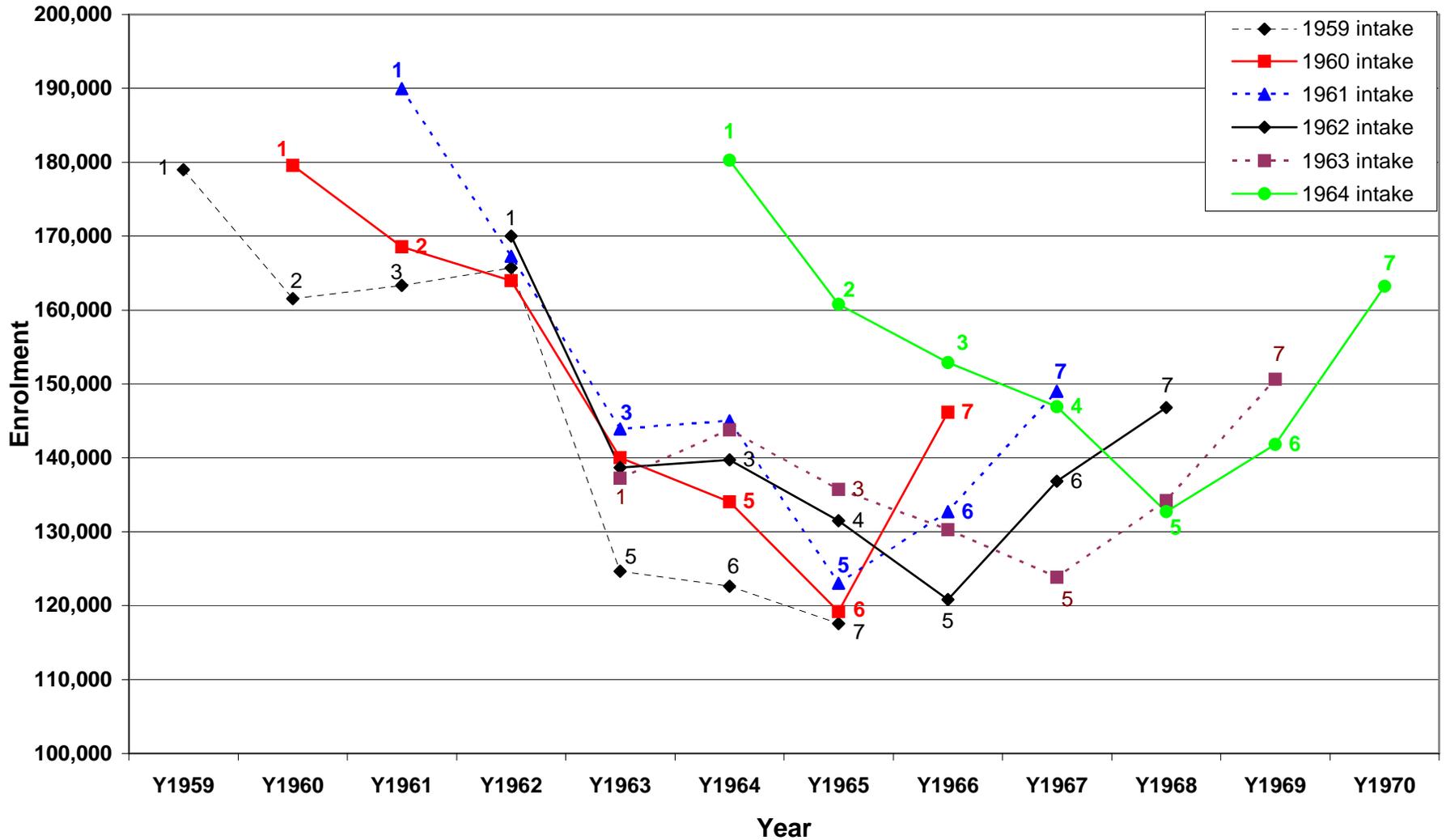
6.7. *Expenditure on education* (in 1961-62) exceeded any other single item and total share *amounted to 16%*, rather more than the whole agricultural and forestry group.

8.5. (There is a) need to bring into balance the recurrent budget through a combination of *cost-cutting and revenue generation*.

Economic Survey, 1963

Kenya Primary School Cohort Survival Curves

Fig 2. Grade 1 intakes 1959 to 1963



Impact of economy measures, 1962-63

9.3 It will be seen that there was a reduction in the rate of growth of pupils at primary schools in 1962 and a fall in 1963. This is a consequence of an *increase in school fees*, higher unemployment, and the *requirement that proof of tax payment be a prerequisite of enrolment*.

Economic Survey, 1964

Kericho Conference, 1966: The primary school leaver problem

The Conference was most concerned about what happens, particularly to boys, after leaving primary school. The majority fail to get into a Government secondary school. While it is possible that they soon get over the first violent disappointment, they nevertheless *frequently turn into the Kenya version of the worldwide 'problem teenager'*.

Conference Conclusions, para 81

Kericho Conference, 1966: Prospects for UPE

. . Kenya is already in the top bracket of nations relative to the proportion of total national income and public revenues being invested in education. It is inconceivable that these proportions can be greatly expanded in the future . . . While *recognizing free universal primary education as the long-term objective*, the Conference could see *no immediate possibility of breaking out of the resource constraints so as to implement it.*

Conference Conclusions, para 66

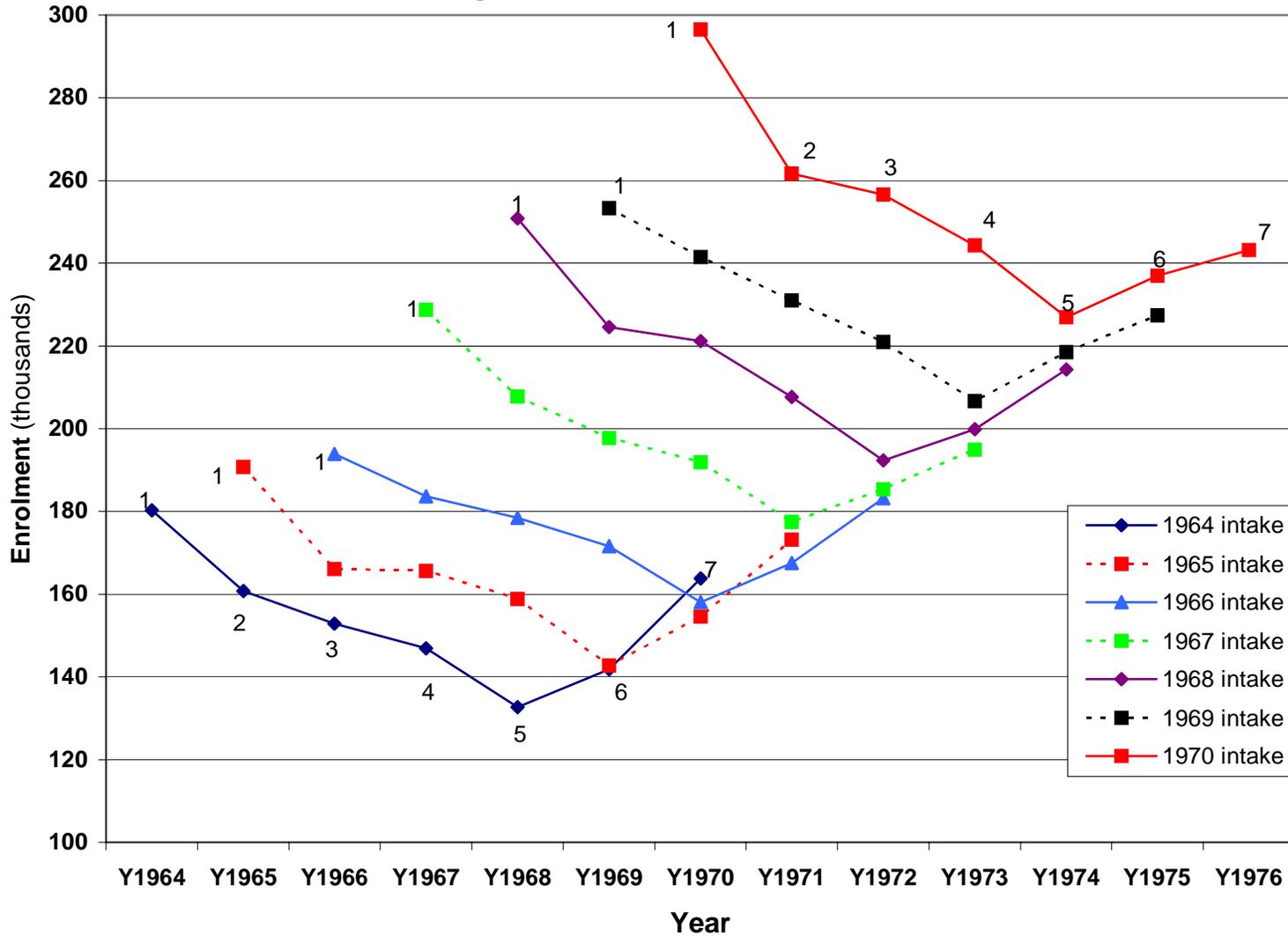
Education as investment

9.1 The provision of physical capital resources is however not enough, for without men capable of using capital efficiently . . . sustained growth will be impossible. It is appropriate therefore (to consider) the *human resources* available to the country in the years ahead and in particular the *progress of education for the supply of middle and higher level manpower*

Economic Survey, 1964

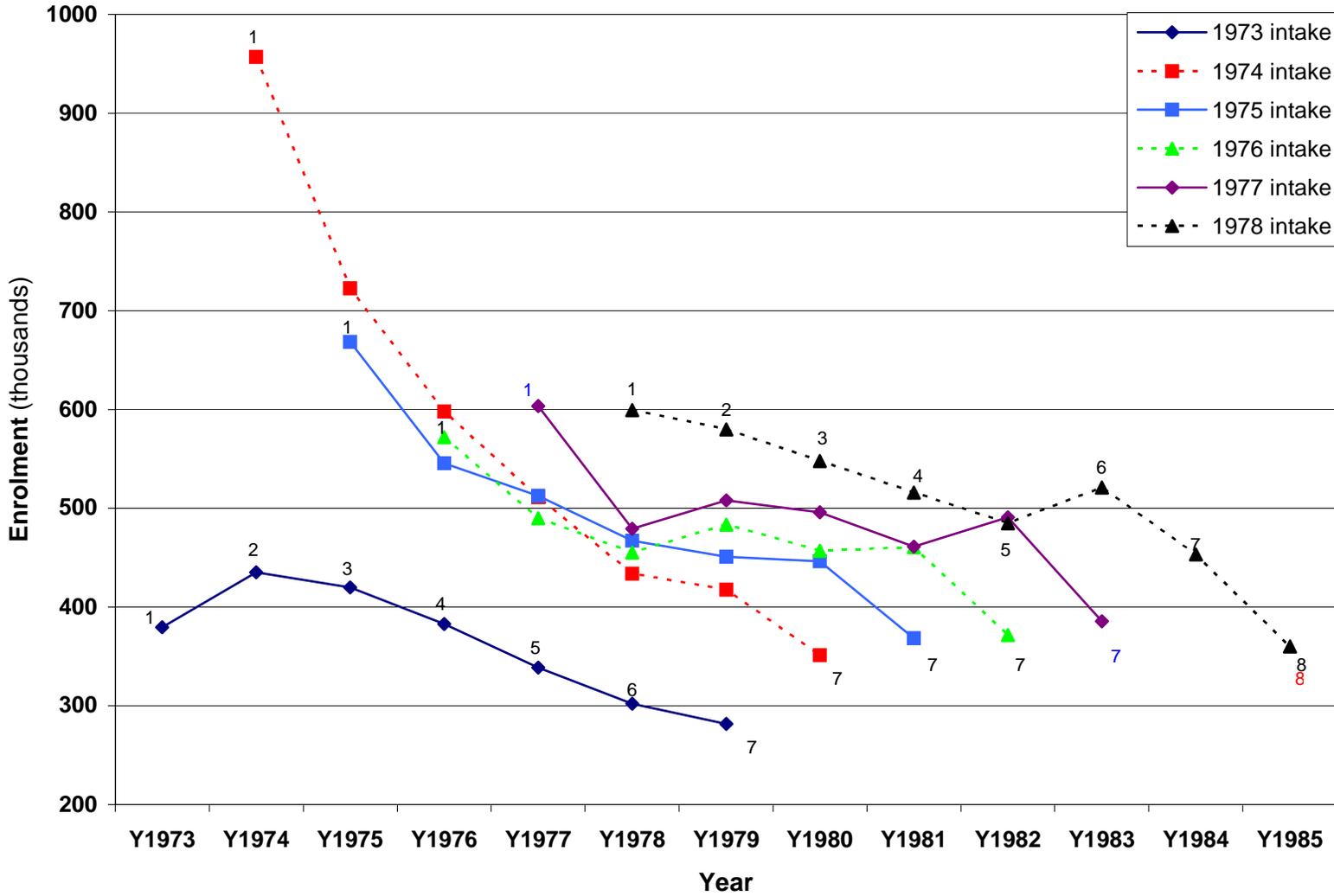
Kenya Primary School Cohort Survival Curves

Fig 3. Grade 1 intakes, 1964 to 1970



Kenya: Primary School Cohort Survival Curves

Figure 5: Grade 1 intakes, 1973 to 1978



**Kisumu
schools
top in
CPE exam**

**Factors behind
the poor show
in rural schools**

**Heads rapped
over poor
exam results**

**Officials
'to blame
for poor
results'**

**TEACHERS
'CANED'
OVER
POOR CPE
RESULTS**

**CPE row:
'Teachers
not to
blame'**

**Poor CPE
results?
'Blame
parents'**

**Teach students
how to think
for themselves,
new study urges**



IT'S THE SCHOOL EQUIPMENT SCHEME!

WHAT ABOUT THE SMUGGLERS?

IT'S THE PARENTS' AND TEACHERS' FAULT!

IT'S THE EXAMINERS' FAULT!

IT'S THE MINISTRY'S FAULT! ALWAYS!

IT'S THE DAMN HEADMASTERS!

IT'S THE SCHOOL INSPECTORS FAULT!

IT'S THE TSC'S FAULT!

POOR EXAM RESULTS - WHO IS TO BLAME?

MAKESENSE! NOT WAR!

"YOU'LL notice nobody's blaming the pupils, like in the old days — so perhaps there's something in this Year of the Child after all!"

Cost sharing (1)

3.12 . . it is imperative that Government begin *spending proportionally more on immediately productive services* . . (including) . . . agricultural development and small scale industrialization. . .

3.13 As a consequence, the *share of formal education*, health and other basic needs expenditure *will necessarily fall* . . .

Sessional Paper No 1, 1986

Cost sharing (2)

- **9.49. . . the share of public expenditure on education has now become an issue of major concern. *As of 1987, over 35% of the total public sector recurrent budget was taken up by education alone, compared to 15% in the 1960s and 30% in 1980.***

Kenya Development Plan, 1989-93

Cost sharing (3)

- **9.57 In line with the budget rationalization programme and the Harambee spirit, parents will be encouraged to continue with their commendable efforts in the establishment of school facilities and the provision of the equipment. . .**

Kenya Development Plan, 1989-93

Cost-sharing: A grassroots perspective

In the middle-class and upper-class (public) schools cost-sharing was successful. But in the poverty schools the impact was devastating

Principal of a Nairobi slum school (August 2007)

Kenya Primary Cohort Survival Curves

Fig 8: Intakes 1993 to 2005

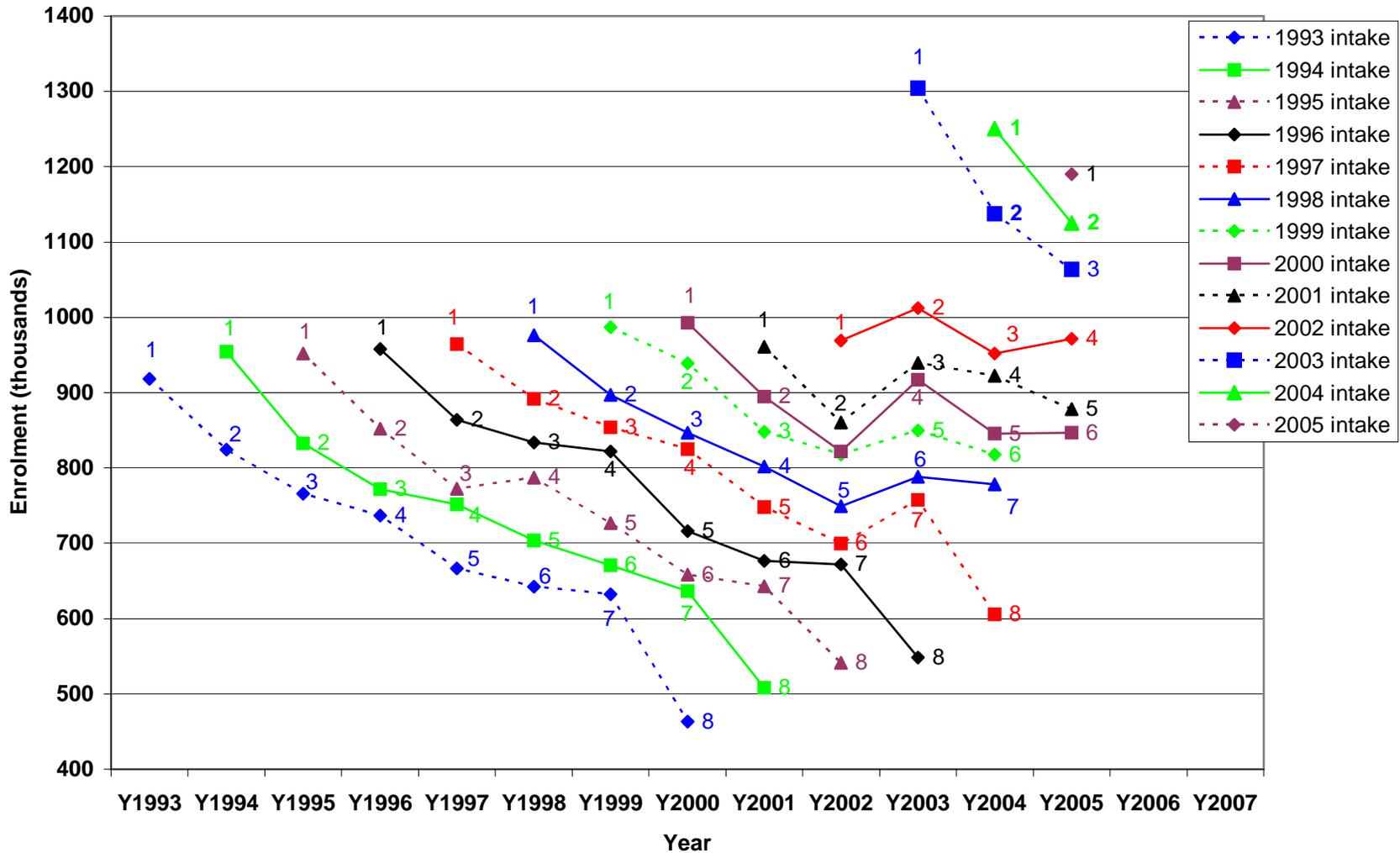


Fig 9 Nairobi City: Settlement Primary School Cohort Curves
Intakes 1997 to 2007

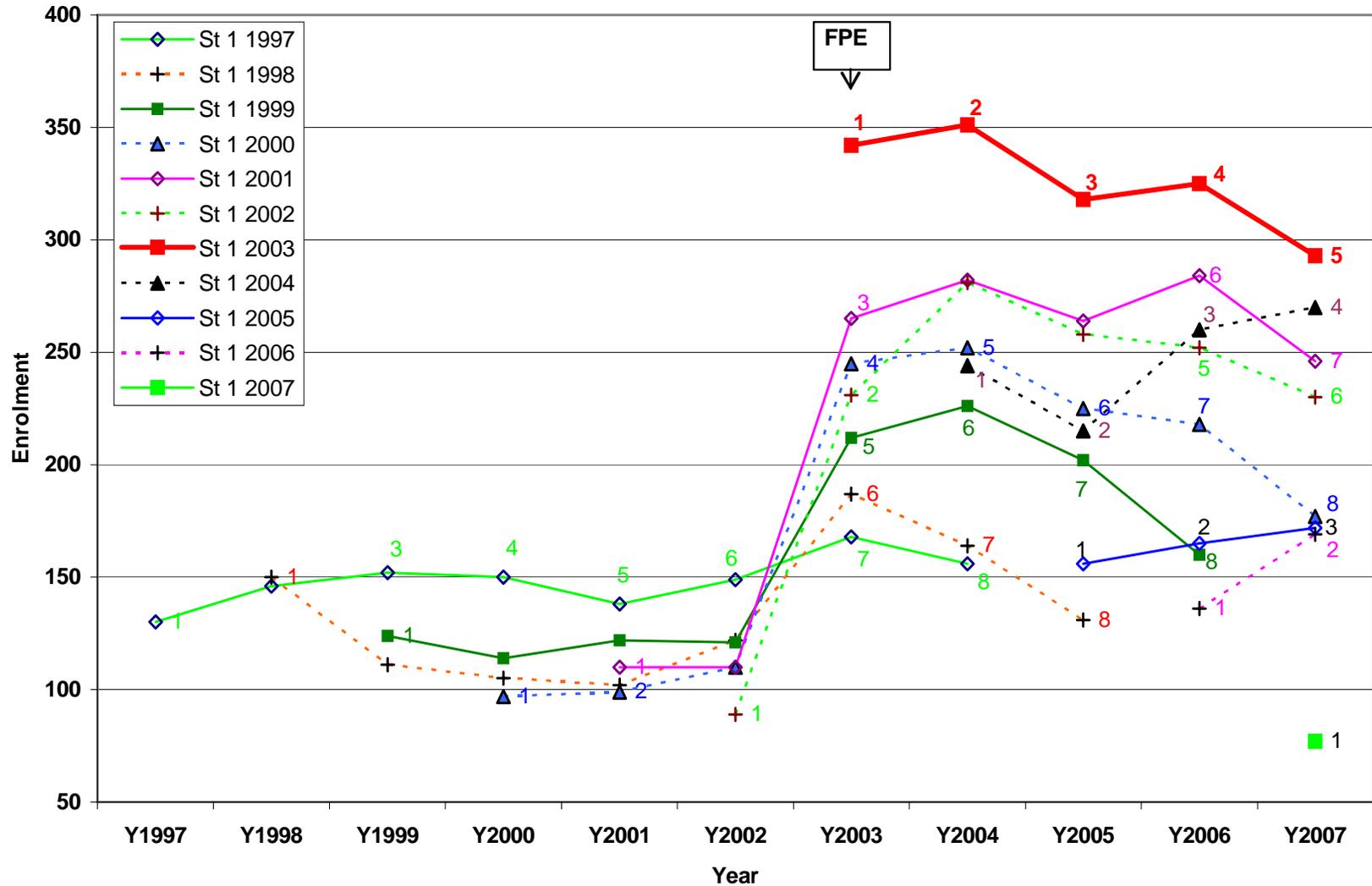
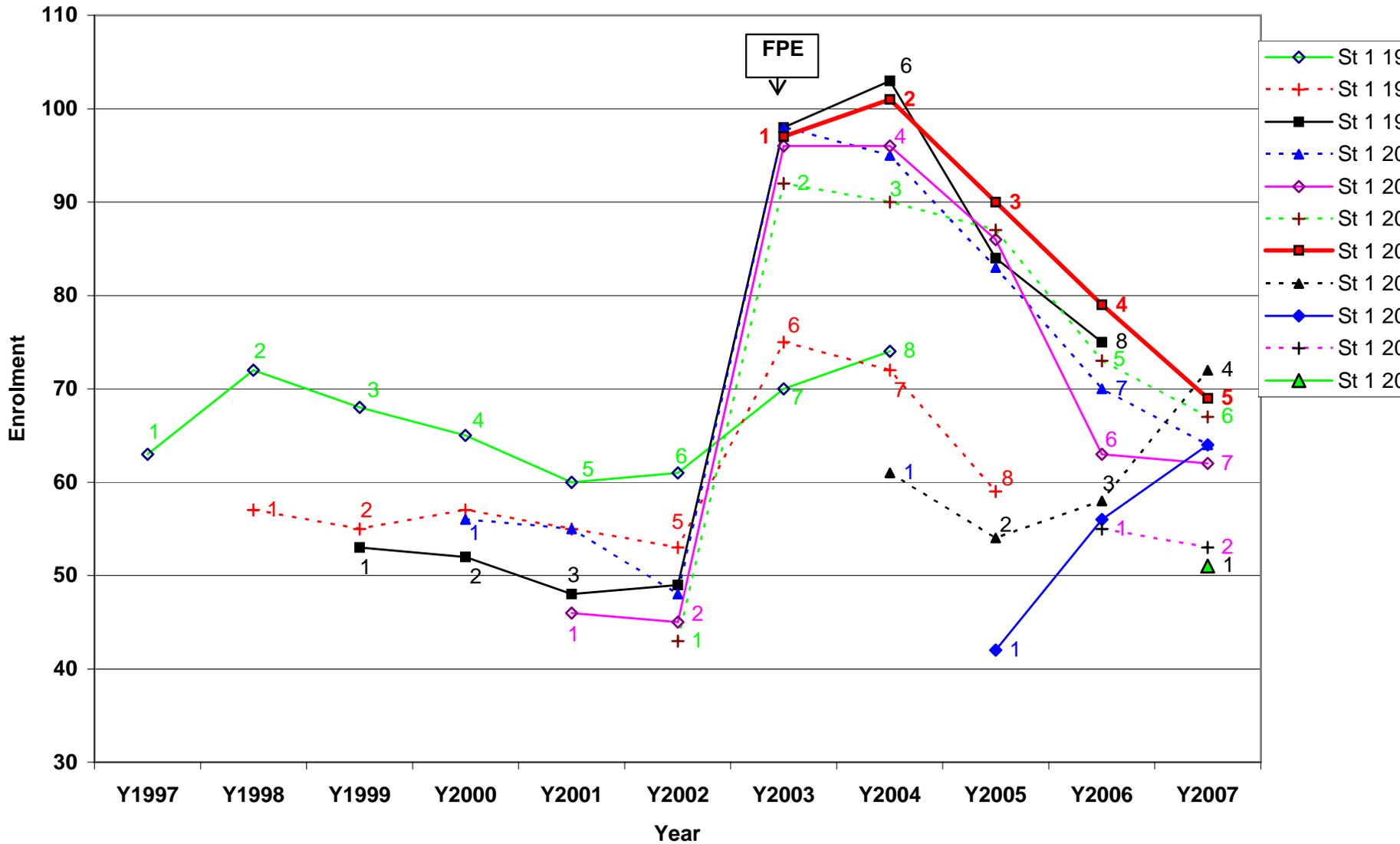


Fig 10 Nairobi City: Hillside Primary School Cohort Curves

Intakes 1997 to 2007



The lessons of experience

Vulnerability of the marginal

Need for effective preparation

Disruptive effects of rapid population growth

Flight of the more-affluent to the private schools: the new segregation?

A Poem for Kibera

Full of energetic, hardworking young men and women

Some say you are full of thieves, dirty and unhealthy people

But whatever they say I know we can change you.

I know you can be a better place

Even though they say you are not worthy you will always be in my heart

Standard 8 girl, age 14