Under the conditions of privatization, knowledge production and transmission are being organized in new ways. Increased demand for higher education has led to significant changes in educational financing. Public universities that had virtual monopoly in dissemination of knowledge for decades are now encountering new challenges such as increased demand for higher education, financing, new technologies, a new breed of students with higher expectations and the increasing tendency to rely upon the market to encourage greater responsibilities to higher education systems. Privatization in recent years has seen a dramatic, albeit uneven and still contested, shift in burden of higher education costs from being borne predominantly by government or taxpayers to being shared with parents and students.

This study, therefore, surveyed the implications of the cost of private university education to access by different socio-economic groups in Kenya. The study tried to find out implications of the current financing mechanisms, existing financial aid programmes and alternative financing strategies that could enhance access to private university education in Kenya. Three private universities (United States International University, Daystar University and University of East Africa Baraton (UEAB) were studied. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews and documentary analysis. Respondents included registrars and the students. The data obtained was analyzed quantitatively using frequency distributions and percentages.

The results from the three private universities surveyed showed that private universities in Kenya source funds from tuitions and fees, auxiliary enterprises, donations, grants, gifts and endowments, student loans, bursaries and scholarships and alumni. Using the parents' occupation and highest levels of education, the student's socio-economic background could be described as high.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will aid in the restructuring of private universities with a view to accommodating all categories of socio-economic groups and the formulating of proper policies that will allow access to higher education by all social economic groups in Kenya.