

Full Length Research Paper

Determinants of primary school access and participation rates in the pastoralist Turkana County, Kenya

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The status of education in Turkana County is typical of all the ASAL counties of Kenya characterised by low enrolments levels, high dropout rates and poor infrastructural development. This study was undertaken to determine factors that could enhance pupils' access and participation in primary school education in Kakuma and Lokichoggio divisions of Turkana County in north western Kenya. The purpose of the study was to find out the factors that enhance pupils' access and participation in primary school education in Turkana County, using Kakuma and Lokichoggio divisions. The two divisions' nine schools were randomly selected to form the sample population for the study. The research study employed the descriptive survey design. The data collection instruments utilised included questionnaires administered to head teachers and teachers, focus group discussions conducted for pupils and parents and interview guides used for the key informants and head teachers. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was analysed and presented as respondents' opinions on the status of education access and participation in the area of study. The study revealed that provision of security, establishment of boarding schools, adequate provision of food to schools, good school infrastructural development, availability of teachers and learning materials were the strongest factors that enhance access and participation in primary school education in the area of study. This study recommends that more boarding schools be established in Turkana County. Adequate supply of food to all schools and creation of feeder schools in the very interior nomadic pastoralist areas will enhance access and participation to education. Enough teachers should also be posted to the area.

Key words: Determinants, Primary school, access rates, participation rates, pastoralist, Turkana County, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Issues of education access and participation have dominated world forums and conferences on education due to the fact that education is considered a basic human right. Education is considered as one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty, give people opportunity

to improve their lives and raise their voice, improve their health, productivity and fosters participation in civil society. In the UK the government of her majesty has required that the education providers should make accessibility to all areas paramount, where the pupils' views and the community's must be incorporated in the planning for education service provision. Whereas the need to provide education to all those eligible to get it remains a fundamental requirement to communities and

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governments, it is reported that today, over 125 million children are not in school across the world. (UNESCO, 2006, Oxfam, 2005).

The majority of these children are found in Asia and sub Saharan Africa. While the factors that keep these children out of school are formidable, the international community has the power to fulfill the promise of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and guarantee every child access and participation in education by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000, 2003). Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, (1985) re affirm that education broadens employment opportunities; increases income levels, improves child and maternal health and helps to slow down the spread of HIV/AIDS. The benefits of education extend beyond the family to the wider community and even the nation. Increasing the number of pupils' who finish school leads to economic growth, social and political stability, decline in the crime rate, and improved social services.

Despite the introduction of the Free Primary education (FPE) policy, Turkana County has shown very low enrolment trends in primary school education. It is in the interest of Kenya as a country that education access for the pastoralist child be given a fresh look and those factors that promote pupils' access and participation in primary school education in those areas of Kenya be identified and be reinforced with haste so as to enhance the achievement of the EFA goal. It is by taking such pragmatic efforts that the education of the ASALS will be guaranteed.

Theoretical Framework

The Classical Liberal Theory of equal opportunity and social Darwinism asserts that each person is born with a given amount of capacity. According to this theory, who so ever plays the role of education provider, be it the state, or society must design the system in such a way that all hindrances to social economic development of the person from humble background, whether geographic, cultural, political or historical should be removed. This theory supports the postulate that education access and participation should only be determined by the individual' merit and ability, not their social, geographic or economic background.

Social Darwinism theory asserts that all citizens should be given, through education, their social status. The theory further observes that provision of formal equity of access to education guarantees fairness in the competition for resources and opportunities (Orodho, 2004:19). It is through the application of this theory that education is viewed by its proponents as the "Great equalizer".

The case for improved access and participation in primary education for the pastoralist nomads of Turkana County is therefore a case of seeking social and economic parity with the rest of the Kenyan regions and

people, who for historical and political reasons of government deliberate involvement in establishment of schools and close supervision of education in those areas, seem to have had a head start in education access and participation. It thus means that for any equity concerns to be addressed in the provision of education in this area, access and participation of the children in Turkana should be addressed in a deliberate policy enactment. FPE policy could have been one such strategy however; this policy does not address the equity concerns that make Turkana lag behind in access and participation as compared to the rest of the country. If anything it only reinforces the disparity levels and maintains the gap since all areas are treated equal in the provision of the funds. The funds are based on pupils' enrolments in the school. Having observed that schools in nomadic pastoralist areas of the country have low enrolments, they are disadvantaged in the disbursements received from the FPE policy.

The above theory is thus very relevant in underpinning the study being undertaken as it served to recommend ways of addressing equity concerns in education access and participation in Turkana County and other ASAL and marginalised areas and social groups in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate how pupils' access and participation in primary school education in Kakuma and Lokichogio divisions can be enhanced. This made it possible to reach a broad spectrum of respondents who would give relevant data on pupils' access and participation in primary education in Kakuma and Lokichogio divisions. The descriptive survey research make use of methods such as questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions in order to produce statistical as well as qualitative information concerning pupils' access and participation rates in the area of study that will be of interest to policy makers and education providers in general. By involving a broad base of informants, the study fits within the survey research designs that are cross-sectional in nature.

The research study was undertaken in Kakuma and Lokichogio divisions of Turkana County. The two divisions constitute 20,000 sq. km (about 26%) of the district area. They have a population of 163,004 people out of the 450,627 district population as per the national census statistics of 1999 (33.6% of the district population). The area of study is inhabited mainly by the Turkana nomadic pastoralists with a high density of the livestock herds found in the district. The area is prone to constant cattle rustling clashes between the Turkana and their neighbours in Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia. As observed in the district development plan, the district suffers a lot, in terms of loss of life, loss of property,

displacement of families, destruction of infrastructure e.g. schools, health and water facilities and disruption of education and farming”, (Republic of Kenya TDDP, 2002-2008: 22)

According to the same TDDP, Turkana is one of the poorest districts with major causes of poverty being harsh topography and climatic conditions, insecurity, cattle rustling and low school enrolment. TDDP (Ibid: 20) indicates that HIV/ AIDS is rampant with 33 % of bed occupants in the district hospital being HIV/AIDS patients.

This study targeted the MOE staff at the district and the divisional levels and school personnel such as head teachers, teachers and pupils. In particular, the District education officer, the education officers in charge of primary education in the headquarters and the Assistant Education Officers of the two divisions targeted for the study were considered as the expert informants for the study.

Further data on the primary education access and participation situation in the area of study was provided through involving opinion leaders in the two divisions such as the chiefs, assistant chiefs, parents, sponsors and NGOs involved in education service provision in the district as respondents. These represented the core stakeholders and users of education information. There are various stakeholders in the district's education sector playing diverse roles. The Ministry of Education provides teachers and supervises the educational institutions. NGOs and churches provide textbooks and physical facilities to schools, support children from poor families with fees and uniform.

Oxfam GB Turkana pastoral programme, Diocese of Lodwar and Arid Lands Resource Management Program are NGOs that provide textbooks and physical facilities to schools. They therefore form an important group of stakeholders in education in the study area. Table 1 indicates the target research sample population as was envisaged in the research design.

At the time of the study, there were twenty three public primary schools in the two divisions of the study. Out of these, thirteen (13) were in Kakuma division and ten (10) in Lokichoggio division. Kakuma division had five boarding schools whereas Lokichoggio division had only one.

Multi-stage random sampling was used in selecting the two divisions in this study, later, Simple random sampling was employed in selecting nine schools (39% of the target population) from among the twenty three public primary schools in the area of study. Five schools (38%) were selected in Kakuma division and four (40%) in Lokichoggio division for the study the schools selected for the study, therefore, were representative of the diversity in Turkana County. The respondents for the study were drawn from the schools and they included the head teachers, members of teaching staff and pupils in each of the sampled schools. Interviewed also were members of the community considered as opinion leaders and

education officers as key informants. The target sample size was 250 pupils constituting of 180 pupils; 50 teachers; 9 head teachers; 7 community leaders/ key informants and 4 education officers. The education officials, the opinion leaders and key informants were selected purposefully. These were considered for inclusion as sample population due to their expert knowledge on the problem of study.

The questionnaire was the main data collection instrument interview schedule and focus group discussions were also used in this study. The document analysis method was used in collecting data related to pupils' participation rates from schools, the AEOs and the DEO's office.

RESULTS

Responses from head teachers and teachers in Kakuma division

A common likert scale is used in this study which is in turn manually tabulated to arrive at conclusions. The likert scale ranges from 1 - 4. The means generated are compared to the established criteria of 1-4 and appropriate conclusion is made. For example, a mean of 1 or close to 1 assumes a very strong influence. On the other hand a mean of 4 or close to 4 means a minimal or no influence for that matter. To arrive at the means is by dividing the total score by the total number of head teachers or teachers depending on the sample used.

For example, head teachers from Kakuma division responses concerning factors that enhance pupils' access and participation in primary school education, based on the Likert scale below is tabulated in Table 2.

1 – Very strongly influences	2 – Strongly Influences
3 – Has influence	4 – Minimal or No influence

Table 2 presents the factors that were stated to strongly enhance pupils' access and participation in primary school education in Kakuma division. These were the following:

- Availability of Boarding schools closer to where learners are or live (Mean of 1.4).
- Availability of food in schools while in session in a timely manner and proper quantity (Mean of 1.6).
- Good school performance in the national examinations (Mean of 1.6).
- The Government policy on primary school education e.g. FPE, SFP (Mean of 1.6).

The Factors that were said to have influence in enhancing pupils' access and participation in primary school education in Kakuma division are as follows:

- The location of the school. Whether the school is easily accessed or not by the learners (Mean of 2).

Table 1. Intended Respondents for the study

District Education Officer	1
Education officer girls education	1
Area Education Officers (AEO)	2
Head teachers	9
Teachers	50
Pupils'	180
Opinion leaders/ key informants	7
TOTAL	250

Table 2. Factors enhancing access and participation as rated by the head teachers from Kakuma division

	Arid zone	Kakuma Girls	Kakuma mixed	Pokotom primary	Kalobeyei	Total score	Means
Government policy	2	2	1	2	1	8	1.6
School location	2	2	2	3	1	10	2
Availability of teachers	1	3	2	3	2	11	2.2
Good infrastructural development	1	3	2	3	1	10	2
Availability of learning materials	2	3	2	2	1	10	2
Good communication network	4	4	1	3	1	13	2.6
Good security at school	3	3	2	3	2	13	2.6
Availability of food in school	1	2	1	2	2	8	1.6
Active sponsors	4	3	2	4	4	17	3.4
Availability of boarding schools	2	1	1	2	1	7	1.4
Good examination performance	2	2	2	1	1	8	1.6

- Good infrastructural development in the school e.g. well built and adequate classrooms, dormitories for boarders, proper fence, clean water, toilets for both male and female pupils (Mean of 2).

- Availability of learning resources and materials which are adequate (Mean of 2).

- Availability of teachers in schools to cater for learners that attend the school (Mean of 2.2).

Factors that had some measure of influence in enhancing pupils' access and participation in primary school education in Kakuma division included the following:

- Good security at school. Secure school environment e.g. proper fence, welcoming pupils to new pupils, friendly teachers and school administration.

- Good communication network development

The head teachers of Kakuma division felt that the activity of sponsors in schools had the most minimal influence in enhancing pupils' access and participation.

The 30 teachers from Kakuma division had this to report on the factors that enhance education access and participation in the division.

Other factors that were listed by the teachers as enhancing access and participation with a frequency of just one respondents included secure school compounds, dealing with effects of HIV/AIDS on the children, availing education scholarships for furthering education and effective role models from the community (Table 3).

Table 3. Teachers' responses on factors enhancing access and participation in Kakuma Division

Factors identified to enhance	No. of respondents
Sensitization of nomadic pastoralists on the importance of education	20
Provision and construction of more schools in the area including mobile schools	17
Availability of food in schools i.e. school feeding programme	12
Provide more school facilities and turn more schools to be boarding to cater for children of the nomadic pastoralists	17
Provide enough teachers to schools to cater for the learners	6
Provide guidance and counseling service to pupils to cope with school demands on them	6

Table 4. Lokichoggio division head teachers' responses on enhancing factors

	AIC Lok girls	AIC Lok mixed	Lopiding Primary	St. Johns	Total score	Means
Government policy	2	1	3	1	7	1.4
School location	1	2	2	1	6	1.2
Availability of teachers	1	1	2	1	5	1
Good infrastructural development	2	1	1	2	6	1.2
Availability of learning materials	1	1	1	1	4	0.8
Good communication network	1	2	2	1	6	1.2
Good security at school	1	1	1	1	4	0.8
Availability of food in school	1	1	1	1	4	0.8
Active sponsors	2	1	4	4	11	2.2
Availability of boarding schools	1	1	2	3	7	1.4

Responses from head teachers and teachers in Lokichoggio division

Head teachers from Lokichoggio division responses concerning factors that enhance pupils' access and participation in primary school education (Table 4) based on the Likert scale below were as in the table below.

1 – Strongly influences , 2 – Influences

3 – Minimal influence , 4 – No influence

Based on the following total score range for each of the factors, (0.8-1) would be strongly enhancing , (2) enhancing , (3) minimally enhancing and (4) No influence

enhanced pupils' access and participation in primary school education in Lokichoggio division:

- Availability of learning resources and materials which are adequate
- Availability of teachers in schools to cater for learners that attend the school
- Availability of food in schools while in session in a timely manner and proper quantity.
- Good security at school. Secure school environment e.g. proper fence, welcoming pupils to new pupils, friendly teachers and school administration.

- The location of the school. Whether the school is easily accessed or not by the learners.

- Good infrastructural development in the school e.g. well built and adequate classrooms, dormitories for boarders, proper fence, clean water, toilets for both male and female pupils.

- Good communication network development

Factors that were said to have had influence in enhancing pupils' access and participation in primary school education in Lokichoggio division were government policy and availability of boarding schools. The head teachers in Lokichoggio felt that just like their counterparts in Kakuma division, active sponsors had a very minimal influence in enhancing pupils' access and participation in the area. In Lokichoggio division (Table 5), 20 teachers responded to the questionnaire and returned the following factors as those that enhance education access and participation.

Responses from pupils

The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with pupils of the sample schools gave views concerning factors that go

Table 5. Lokichoggio division teachers' responses on enhancing factors

Enhancing factors	No. of respondents
Sensitization of nomadic pastoralists on the importance of education	16
Provision and construction of more schools in the area including mobile schools	8
Availability of food in schools i.e. school feeding programme	7
Provide more school facilities and turn more schools to be boarding to cater for children of the nomadic pastoralists	9
Provide enough teachers to schools to cater for the learners	7
Availing sponsorship to pupils who excel to pursue higher education	5
Provide guidance and counselling service to pupils to cope with school demands on them	5
Improving the health of pupils in schools	5

towards improving education access and participation in the area of study and they isolated the following factors.

- The current education financing policy of FPE and the SFP which provides lunch for children in ASAL areas are good programmes that should be improved and continued. They felt that many pupils end up missing school, or out rightly dropping out when they don't receive food in school since they are dependent on this meal as their only assured food in a day. Since the introduction of FPE many children have joined school thus improving school enrolments.

- Many of the pupils agreed that availability of boarding schools in their neighbourhood would go a long way to convince them to join school as these schools provide more facilities which make school attractive to attend. The provision of boarding facilities is a pull factor to many children since such facilities are not available at their homes. Provision of beds, beddings, three assured meals in a day, and other facilities is an incentive to come to school.

- Due to the rampant negligence noted in parents concerning education of their children the pupils stated that sensitization of parents on the value of education and their role in educating their children will enhance access and participation in primary school education.

- Many of the school going age children were said to be out of school. The pupils felt that the provincial administration should use the legal instruments available currently to enforce school attendance by those who attained school going age.

- The schools that had good infrastructure like enough classrooms, dormitories for boarders, water in school and toilets were more attractive. Therefore the school infrastructure development scheme has played a big role in improving schools enrolments in the area.

- Abolition of school levies through the start up of the FPE policy had the greatest impact in enhancing enrolments in schools thus the pupils felt that the government should continue to work out ways of completely eliminating all school levies so that education can be truly free in the primary school sector. Such

requirements as examination fees and levies still remain a hindrance to school access and participation by the children of pastoralists.

Responses from key informants, and community opinion leaders

The key informants gave the following factors as the ones that have played a major impact in enhancing primary school education access and participation in Lokichoggio and Kakuma divisions.

- All those interviewed under this category of respondents said that the construction of more schools in the area of study and especially in the interior areas of the region has and will enhance access and participation by pupils in primary school education. Most of the children out of school reside in the interior areas of the region. They are the ones that should be targeted in bringing in more of them to school.

- Other amenities such as water, security and health facilities should be availed closer to the areas where the schools are located. According to the respondents, these also have a strong impact in enhancing education access and participation in the education sector in the area.

- School infrastructural development was another factor that was seen to enhance education access and participation in the area. Schools that have good classrooms, proper toilets, and dormitories, kitchens and staff houses were noted to have high enrolments in the two divisions.

- The respondents were again unanimous in stating that the SFP managed by the DEO's office was very instrumental in keeping children in the area of study in schools. The SFP acted as a surety to the learners in the school of at least a meal a day if they attended school.

- Another factor that was agreed upon by all the respondents was that of the boarding schools. These schools were seen as instrumental in the ability of pupils

in the primary schools to access primary education easily as well as participate effectively in the education level. It was noted that the schools with huge enrolments in the two divisions were those that provided learners with boarding facilities.

- The respondents were of the opinion that establishing feeder schools in the interior parts of the area would enhance access and participation in education by the children of the local area. From the study, it was apparent that the ECD centres in the area acted as holding ground for school age going children who could not access primary school education around their areas of residence. Therefore the establishment of such schools will encourage learners to enroll in school and pursue education easily.

- Schools must be provided with adequate teachers in order for the pupils who access schools benefit from regular instruction rather than going to school just for the school meals provision. Thus provision of teachers to the primary schools in the area would enhance education access and participation in primary school education.

DISCUSSION

Both Lokichoggio and Kakuma respondents are in agreements of the challenges facing education in the wider Turkana County. The results of this study indicate that it is possible to provide quality education to the pastoralist peoples of Kenya if only some factors are put in place. What comes out strongly is that the government has an instrumental role to play in the provision of education. The role of the stakeholders in the provision of any essential service especially education cannot be gainsaid (Fielding, Kerr and Rossier 2007; Epstein, 1995; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies, 2007). There is a crucial need for the involvement of the stakeholders in a concerted effort in the provision of education to the marginalised. It is clear that Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), arrangements can rapidly expand access to schooling and increase its quality, especially if coupled with rigorous quality assurance mechanisms and such interventions as teacher training and school improvement initiatives. In doing so, it particularly benefits marginalized groups and the poor who are ill served by traditionally delivered public services (Word Bank, 2009). Private or mission school and programs involving the private management of public schools can provide the poor with low-cost or free access to education. In fact, these contracting initiatives are usually aimed directly at the poor, including the schools run by the Catholic Church as was seen in Turkana County that provides education in remote rural areas under harsh conditions. There are issues that cannot be solved by input of economic resources only. In the wake

of FPE adoption in 2003, both enrollment levels and fee rates in Kenya's private primary schools more than doubled (Bold et al, 2011). This co-movement of enrollment and fees in the unregulated private sector suggests a dramatic increase in demand for private education in Kenya.

Bold et al, (2011) proceeds to explain that social interactions explain why demand for private schooling went up when the price of government schooling went down. The explanations attributed to this include, differential response on the basis of household relative wealth. Pupils from poorer households were more likely to attend government schools under FPE while their more affluent peers were likely to go to private schools after the reform. As marginal pupils entered government schools through one door, affluent pupils exited through the other door. These social interactions and responses to government policies must be well understood for they present challenges not only in the provision of education but other services. Studies on effectiveness of private or public schools have yielded differing results in the past (Glewwe 2002, Uribe et al. (2006)). Recent studies (Lassibille and Tan, 2001, CEP, 2007) indicate that public schools perform much better than private schools whereas others indicate differing results. Based on this scenario, the government of Kenya should endeavour to provide the best education possible to the majority of Kenyans through the public schools. Finally, the government must be seen to provide the overall security for all. Without security it will not be possible to obtain the envisioned targets in education, it must be remembered, though, that the relationship between school security and the role of government in the whole process is symbiotic (Save the Children, 2008, 2010; Smith, 2005, 2011; Smith, and Vaux , 2003).

CONCLUSION

There is a strong need for the government to play a leading role in the provision of education to its citizens. The government must be at the centre of things but again they cannot succeed to do this singly, there is need for all concerned stakeholders to be engaged for meaningful results in the provision of quality education to the pastoralist communities of Turkana county and elsewhere.

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