



Re-Examining Access and Participation: Contribution of Cultural and Socio-Economic Variables in Inhibiting Rural Arid Communities of Kenya to Meet the EFA 2015 Target?

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article No.: 061518082 Type: Research DOI: 10.15580/GJER.2018.4.061518082 Submitted: 15/06/2018 Accepted: 26/06/2018 Published: 28/06/2018 *Corresponding Author Prof. Grace Bunyi E-mail: orodhojohn@gmail.com Keywords: Free Primary Education, School Access, Participation, Cultural Factors, Socio-Economic Factors.	The thrust of this paper was to determine the contribution of cultural and socio-economic variables inhibiting rural and arid communities in meeting the EFA target on education in terms of access and participation in public primary schools in Kenya. The objectives of the study were; to find out the attitudes of teachers, pupils and parents towards education participation and performance and how these attributes are shaped by the culture and social-economic practice of the communities living in Isiolo Central Division, Isiolo County. The study purposively sampled 13 public primary schools. From the sampled schools, 6 pupils and 3 teachers were selected through simple random sampling to yield 117 respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires for teachers and pupils while interview schedules were used to collect data from parents. Simple descriptive statistics were used to show relationship between variables and presented as percentages, frequency distribution tables and means. The study established that there were multifarious and intertwined cultural and socio-economic variables within communities residing in arid areas which negatively affected access and participation of learners in schools. It is therefore apparent that such communities did not contribute meaningfully to the EFA 2015 target. It is recommended that there is need to sensitize parents and communities to discard socio-cultural practices that prohibit effective participation of girls and boys in education like early marriage for girls and Female Genital Cuffing (FGC) in some communities in Kenya and enforce legislation against the violation of the children's right to education. In addition, the local community, especially parents, should be involved when implementing projects requiring collaborative efforts.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and context

As the post-2015 goal-setting process continues, education has increasingly been scrutinized not only as a development goal in its own right, but also as a key way of reaching other development goals (United Nations, 2013). And for good reason: a country that provides free access to quality education for all its citizens is far more likely to reduce poverty, promote economic growth, lower child and maternal mortality and achieve social inclusion (Rose, 2013; United Nations, 2013). The importance of education and learning is adroitly highlighted in the Draft Executive Summary for the United Nations *World We Want* Post-2015 Global Consultation. Nonetheless, given the fast approaching deadline of 2015 and 2030 for meeting the internationally agreed goals and commitments related to education as stipulated by Education for All (EFA), and Vision 2030, respectively, governments that are signatory to these commitments seem to have panicked since their citizens expected a transparent stock taking of their progress as part of accountability concerns regarding their promises (United Nations, 2013). On the positive side, it has been established that strong political will and commitments, coupled with substantial and sustained allocation of the state budget to education sector, have translated into the development and implementation of major policies and programmatic interventions enabling the country to record progressive expansion of the sector (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012).

Nonetheless, the missing gap is that household characteristics being important determinants of schooling decisions and outcomes have not been adequately examined (Dryden-Peterson & Sarah, 2011; Brockington Institute, 2013; Ngware, Oketch, Ezech & Mudenge, 2008; Ngware, Oketch, Ezech, & Mudenge, 2009;). The household production function approach to developed by Baker (1965) is often used to by researchers in economics of education to show that household characteristics such as income and levels of parental education determine whether a child enrolls in school, stays in school, learns and makes progress to higher levels of education (Oketch & Ngware, 2012). It is also used in economics of education to model other household schooling decisions such as the type of school that a child attends (Ngware, et.al., 2012). It is against this backdrop that this paper was conceived in an attempt to make a postmortem on the possible contribution of communities in arid communities in Kenya in meeting the EFA 2015 targets that are long gone.

1.1. State of the Art Review

There is abundance of literature that examines the cultural, social, and economic dynamics of communities and educational provision and

participation (Adan & Orodho, 2016; Kinyanjui, 2011; Njeru & Orodho, 2003; McMahon, 2005; Mugisha, 2006; Orodho, Waweru, Ndichu & Thinguri, 2013; Rose, 2013; Walque, 2005; Wang and Yang, 2010). Examples from African, that studies that use the household production function approach usually differentiate between rural and urban households. Rural household are often portrayed as disadvantaged in terms of having lower income and lower levels of education and therefore being associated with disadvantaged schooling decisions and outcomes compared with urban areas (Jones, 2005, McMahon, 2005, Mugisha, 2006; Orodho, Waweru, Getange & Miriti, 2013; Walque, 2005). Furthermore, cross country studies on school participation have demonstrated the demand for schooling as an important factor in overall schooling outcomes (Griffins, 2010; McMahon, 2005; Oketch & Ngware, 2012; United Nations, 2013).

A study in rural Peru found that mothers' education has a bearing on their children's school attendance, particularly in low-income households (Behrman & Rosenzweig, 2002; Reche, Riunguet.al, 2012). This finding is replicated in Africa (Sibanda, 2004, Onsomu, Kosimbei & Ngware, 2006, Walque, 2005). The studies by Ngware et.al. (2012) and Wright (2009) demonstrated that school attendance for low income and for female children is more strongly affected by changes in school fees. In Kenya, it is notable that Nairobi Province, with 60 percent of its population living in informal settlements, has the second lowest primary school enrollment rate out of eight provinces (Republic of Kenya; 2012; Warrah, 2008; Wasanga, Ogle & Wambua, 2011a, 2011b). As per Orodho, Waweru, Getange and Miriti, (2016) marginalization in education is a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying cultural, economic and social inequalities. It represents a stark example of 'clearly remediable injustice'. Removing that injustice should be at the centre of concern at the national and international levels.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Education policy adopted by various governments worldwide more or less centre around the improvement of the quality of human life, acceleration of economic growth and eradication of inequality and poverty among the people. Kenya government has also put in place education policy that makes an initiative to create an environment in which all Kenyans can expand their capabilities, opportunities and realize their potentials. Despite the implementation of the existing government education policy in place, many people in Mandera County Kenya have low self-esteem and some people are living in the state of disgrace. The level of poverty is still high and the living standards of people in the district are very low. Literacy rate, completion rate, and employment rate is very low as reported by National Industrial Training Authority

(2017). Thus, the gap between the rich and the poor still widens up and the rate of gender inequality is prevailing. More so many people in the district are living under state of social servilities, ignorance, apathy, misery and dogmatic beliefs.

1.3 The Purpose and objectives

The thrust of this paper was to determine the contribution of cultural and socio-economic variables inhibiting rural and arid communities in meeting the EFA target on education in terms of access and participation in public primary schools in Kenya. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Find out the attitudes of teachers, pupils and parents towards education participation and performance.
2. Determine the overall influence of the cultural and socio-economic factors on education provision as an attempt to contribute to the just concluded EFA 2015 targets.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The design was found appropriate in line with the recommendations made by Orodho, Nzabaliwa, Odundo, Waweru, & Ndayambaje (2016) who aver that survey research deals with the incidence, distribution and interrelations of educational variables in describing the nature of existing conditions. In addition, Orodho (2017) stresses that descriptive research is appropriate when dealing with self-reported issues from an adequately chosen sample with requisite information. The study purposively sampled 13 public primary

schools in Isiolo County, Kenya. From the sample schools, 6 pupils and 3 teachers selected through simple random sampling to yield 117 respondents. From the estimated sample size of 117 participants, only seventy-eight (78) questionnaires were filled, yielding a response rate of 67% which was adequate for analysis. Data was collected using Questionnaires for teachers and pupils interview schedules for parents. Relationship between variables was shown using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency distribution tables and means. Discussion of the results was done as per the objectives of the study. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows version 20 (Kothari, 2004; Ofori & Dampson, 2011; Orodho, Ampofo, Bizimana & Ndayambaje, 2016). Simple descriptive statistics were used to show relationship between variables and presented as percentages, frequency distribution tables and means.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Influence of Cultural and Socio-Economic Factors on Education

To understand the socio-economic factors influencing participation in education, the study started by seeking to understand the sizes of the families represented by the responses carried in Table 1. It emerged that 38% of the families had 6 to 7 members while 15% had 8 to 9 members. A quarter of the families had 4 to 5 members. The average family size was six members. This is rather a large family for communities living in areas known for scarcity of livelihood resources such as food water and health services.

Table 1: Family Sizes of the Households Represented by the Respondents

Family size(Members)	Frequency	Percent
2 to 3	11	14
4 to 5	19	25
6 to 7	30	38
8 to 9	12	15
10 to 11	3	4
12 to 13	2	3
Above 13	1	1
Total	78	100

The study also established in an interview that female headed household constituted 90% of all the families with single parents. Since women occupied a subordinate position to men in these ASAL communities, female headed household were faced with a greater challenge in terms of economic empowerment, more often than not children from

these households did not attend school though education was offered free by the government. The study also sought to establish the social - economic activities of parents and their influence on education of their children. The results of social economic activities of parents are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Social -Economic Activities of Parents

Career	Frequency	Percent
Farmers	18	23
Businessmen/women	39	50
Policemen/women	8	10
Teachers	6	8
Others	7	9
Total	78	100

The study indicated that half t of the respondent parents (50%) were businessmen/women while little below a quarter of them were farmers/pastoralists. One tenth of them were in police service. A very small percentage were teachers (8%). Only 37%of the working parents were women an indication of their disempowerment in acquiring economic opportunities in the area. Majority of women (75%) were housewives who only stayed home while their husbands worked to feed them. In an interview with one of the parents, it emerged that:

Pastoral Farming and trading were generally undertaken by parents with lower education levels or those with no specific career orientation. I also see people who are educated engaged in pastoral farming besides career employment. I have realized that farming is really for people with low or no education.

The implication of this citation is that fewer people aspire to be traders and farmers. Teachers, policemen and nurses influenced the ambitions of the respondent. The idea of role models featured prominently as the pupils had watched keenly the people they aspired to be like though most of the educated people did not stay in the rural areas.

The Socio-Cultural practices that Influence Education Participation

The respondents identified diverse cultural practices commonly practiced in the area. Marriage was

identified by majority of the respondents (88%) as the most common. To the community, marriage, especially among the girls was valued while they were still virgins i.e. still young. This was the most likely reason why many men sought to select their spouses even before birth by asking pregnant women to give them their children as wife in case the born child happened to be a girl.

Circumcision and female genital cutting (‘FGC) were also identified by majority as common cultural practices in the area and therefore critical factor negatively affecting child education in Isiolo Central Division. The Muslim-Somali culture exposes girls to FGC at a very early age i.e. between 8 and 10 years.

This is meant to control any overrated sexual urge by the girls and to bar them from engaging in sexual intercourse before marriage. It was meant to maintain virginity and respect among women of this culture.

Naming ceremonies were mentioned by almost half of the respondents as common while graduation to adulthood was identified by some (18%). Naming ceremonies were carried out after birth and were not expected to have a high impact on Free Primary Education (FPE). Graduation to adulthood which was marked by the FGC ushered the initiates to adulthood. After graduation, majority of the initiates found it unnecessary to continue with their education. Such individuals proceeded to establish their own families and started participating in community roles depending on their gender.

The level of participation of the respondents in these cultural activities was also probed and the results summarized. The majority of the respondents had participated in marriage ceremonies (33%) and

circumcision (28%). Others included naming ceremonies (21%) and graduation to adulthood (6%). Participation was either direct where majority of the respondents had been involved in circumcision and FGC where they attended the ceremonies involving others. These being community activities, respondents were clearly exposed to their cultural activities at a tender age. These activities/ ceremonies made the community to develop different expectations on the initiated which affected the way

they socialized and pursued their life aspirations like education. Majority of the respondents almost all of them were supposed to act as adults. After FGC for example girls were expected to be married off hence compromising their education prospects. The study also sought to understand the domestic activities in which the respondents were involved in and how they impacted FPE. The results are captured in Table 3.

Table 3: Other Household Duties Performed by Respondents

Career	Frequency	Percent
Hearding	11	14
Fire wood collection	10	13
Fething water	42	54
Hunting	4	5
Farming	10	13
Trading	4	5
Others	3	4

From the household duties cited in Table 3, fetching water is an activity usually done by females is the major activity. This is followed by herding normally carried out by male children. Fire wood collection and farming is also an important activity in the communities reached. From the results in Table 3, there seems to be a clear gender difference between boys and girls in the family activities they were involved in. It was no surprise that most of the respondents (54%) were involved in fetching water since the area is dry. Other activates done by them included herding (14%), firewood collection (13%) and farming as indicated below. Girls were responsible for most domestic chores. They were overstrained due to the heavy domestic load, which left them with l little time to play or rest, socialize or do their homework. Boys helped parents with fencing and herding and did homework.

About two thirds of respondents, constituting 62% reported that the domestic activities they carried out had no impact on education of the learners. However, among those who deemed domestic chores as an inhibiting factor, about 20% identified absenteeism as the major impact these activities had on their education. This made them to miss lessons and consequently poor performance as reported by a few of them (2%).In addition, few of the respondents (6%)stated that they had to drop from school occasionally due to heavy burden of domestic activities they were assigned. This had made them to repeat classes.

The results of an interview with one of the parents, one of the parents was categorical that:

Education as I see it has the power to transform lives. It broadens people's freedom of choice and action, empowering them to participate in the social and political lives of their societies and equipping them with the skills they need to develop their livelihoods. For the marginalized, education can be a route to greater social mobility and a way out of poverty.

The foregoing citation echoes the findings of Gikondi (2010) and United Nations (2013) which separately contest that education is a very important asset for the future development of the learner since it empowers them to participate in the social and political lives of their societies. Similarly, Njeru and Orodho (2003) in a national study in Kenya and Adan and Orodho (2016) earlier established that millions of children in arid and semi-arid areas in Kenya could be in situations where they are denied their human right to education for the simple reason that their parents cannot afford to keep them in school.

During interviews with parents, one of the parents stated:

Our own societies tend to negatively affect the education of our own children. Social and cultural barriers to education

form a formidable obstacle. In our pastoralist community, we do not value the education of girls compared to that of boys. Traditional practices such as early marriage add another layer of disadvantage.

The foregoing citation indicates that children from such communities face deeply entrenched obstacles to equal opportunity in education. They are denied an opportunity to learn in their own language and face social stigmas, and as a result they are set on an early pathway to disadvantage. Millions of children with disabilities across the world also face far more restricted opportunities than their peers, as do children living in regions affected by conflict. This is consistent with the study by Adan, and Orodho (2016) on effects of inter-clan conflict on quality school outcomes in secondary school among nomadic pastoralists' communities in Mandera County, Kenya.

The proportion of repeaters was high. This was attributed to the poor performance as a result of missing classes because of the underlying reasons such as nomadism, supplementing family labor like herding water collection and farming. Through the strategy of reducing wastage by creating awareness was seen as helping in increasing the student's performance. It compromised completion of primary schools since learners who repeated many times ended up reaching marriage age before they completed primary schools. Their participation in class was also reported to be lower compared to the other relatively young learners as they feared making mistakes and being mocked. Majority of the interviewed learners (89%) reported that they liked school and spoke about the teachers being friendly and cooperative. They also appreciated the guidance and counseling they received from the teachers. Cordial relationship between pupils and teachers and the competitive spirit of academic excellence among pupils (classmates) are some of the aspects pupils liked most about their education and school.

The parents' attitude was important in shaping that of students since parents with negative attitudes towards education hardly sent their children to school and if they did, they constantly engaged them to livelihood support activities making them miss classes. Majority of the parents (93%) interviewed indicated that they wanted their children to attend school so that they can improve their future lives. On top of gaining knowledge and skills, most of the respondents (81%) indicated that educated community members would act as positive role models and would encourage children to aspire to go to school. This perception is particularly useful considering that the majority of community members, who include the parents, had low levels of academic attainment themselves.

The parents seemed not to have a negative attitude towards education and were also not willing to subsidize the free government initiatives on

education, especially the Free primary Education (FPE)

Some of the parents interviewed regarding the policy narrated that:

FPE means getting education without paying any levies such as examinations fees, building and activity funds. It also meant that all teaching and learning materials such as books, pens, pencils, geometry sets and rulers are provided by the government.

A few pupils added that it was education for all because even those who could not afford fees in the past could now go to school however; some of their colleagues still could not attend school owing to cultural social and economic limitations.

The responses to the questions on what the learners wanted to become in future indicated that the pupils valued qualities of honesty, hard work and helping people. The idea of role models seemed to feature prominently as majority of the pupils (78%) seemed to be modeled by people they saw; many pupils had watched the work of nurses and teachers and that is why many wanted to become like them.

In general, all respondents (100%) gave positive reasons for attending school. They stated that school

was important as it inculcated knowledge and skills and prepared the pupils to be self-reliant and responsible members of the society. They further indicated that in schools, children learnt good discipline and character development, became well informed, and gained the ability to interact well with others in the outside world. As a result, they will become resourceful and beneficial to both the community and the nation as a whole.

In the bid to satisfy the requirements of the large families amidst dwindling economic opportunities all members including school going children were involved in economic activities such as herding, fetching water and firewood. This often impacted negatively on children's school attendance and consequently their performance. Families with single parents especially women were more disadvantaged since women culturally were not entitled to family inheritance and were simply sold off for cattle and wealth at as early as twelve or thirteen years.

The results are consistent with what Adan and Orodho (2016) and Muola (2010) regarding households headed by individuals with educational attainment at secondary level or above were better off than those headed by individuals with primary level of education. Most families headed by people with little or no education were poor, as do households headed by women, generally. Therefore, poverty is mainly associated with lack of education, lack of infrastructure and an overall development strategy that seems to favor the already relatively well

endowed areas at the expense of marginalized areas. North Eastern Province was, for example, identified as the poorest province.

To the community, marriage, especially when it took place while the girls were still virgins, was the most important virtue for the girls. As girls reached standard four, or between 12 and 14 years of age, they were withdrawn from school to be married off to wealthy old men in the community in exchange for dowry. Those who remained in school were under constant pressure from their peers and from some community members including their own parents, to drop out of school.

Girls were taken through FGC when they were very young. They were, subsequently, married off at a very early age. Boys were expected to marry and establish families almost immediately after circumcision. During circumcision the initiates were given a herd of cattle to start accumulating wealth for the family they were to establish. This led to low value attached to education as in these communities' economic empowerment supersedes academic achievement.

Due to the parents' negative attitude towards girls' education, girls suffered from domestic work overload, a situation that reduced their interest in pursuing education. Girls were confined to unending kitchen duties and other domestic chores, which boys did not do. This left little time for school work. A majority of parents believed education could 'spoil' their girls, and lead them to become commercial sex workers. A prevalent idea was that girls will bring shame to the family if allowed too much freedom compared with boys, who were seen to handle freedom with integrity.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusions

This study is anchored on the declaration of education as a basic human right especially among children, [UN 1948] and as ratified by subsequent international agreements especially by the UNESCO and UNICEF. Furthermore, education also has been recognized by families and individuals as a way of transiting from poverty and freeing individuals from enslavement, [Bagunywa, 2006]. But that even despite prevailing international agreements and national and local circumstances where primary education had been made free, children from rural and arid regions were not benefiting as much from that provision, [UWEZO KENYA, 2008 and subsequent reports].

While some countries have made impressive efforts to back up such words by extending educational opportunities to their most marginalized populations, action has generally fallen far short of the commitments made at Jomtiem and Dakar. Marginalization has remained a peripheral concern. The assumption has been that national progress in education would eventually trickle down to the most

disadvantaged. After a decade of steady but uneven national progress, it is time to abandon that assumption. In many countries, large swathes of society are being left behind as a result of inherited disadvantages. Breaking down these disadvantages will require a far stronger focus on the hard to reach.

The students were inspired by their local role models but the purpose of gaining education still remained instrumental as a vehicle to a career. Various socio-economic and cultural factors were found to hinder pupil's enrolment and participation in education. Such factors included early marriages, circumcision and child labor.

In spite of the success of the FPE program some areas still continue to require strong support if they are to meet the present challenges and achieve education through the FPE program. The impact of a wide range of actors such as social cultural beliefs and practices, poverty and drought continue to deny students access to education despite being a basic human right offered free by the government. Isiolo Central Division still experience low access, retention and participation and poor performance in national examinations.

Parents play an important role in ensuring that the children attend school. At the same time, the school environment encourage or discourage children from attending school. In order to address these concerns and improve access and retention there is need to create awareness among parents and stakeholders on the importance of education of their children regardless of sex, adopt appropriate teaching and learning strategies such as mobile schools, alternative teaching approaches that use local resources, emphasize on local benefits, and increase deployment of teachers.

4.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. There is need to sensitize parents and communities to discard socio-cultural practices that prohibit effective participation of girls and boys in education like early marriage for girls and Female Genital Cuffing (FGC) in some communities in Kenya and enforce legislation against the violation of the children's right to education.
2. The recently created Ministry of development Northern Kenya is a welcome government move to empower communities in the area economically. A lot of government support is required by these communities to help them to meet the present challenges and overcome a wide range of externalities such as poverty, drought and social cultural beliefs and practices that hinder children access to FPE.
3. In order to attract and retain children in school within the famine-prone areas, there is need to expand the current school-feeding

program. This initiative will improve both access and retention and therefore lead to better performance in examinations, especially among the socio-economically disadvantaged children.

4. Often, nomadic communities have to move from one place to another in search of pasture. In order to ensure children, get education within these communities, it is important to develop and enhance use of alternative modes of provision of education, such as mobile schools among nomadic communities, whenever appropriate.
5. There is need to revise the existing academic curriculum to make it relevant by localizing it. This will involve using local materials, local examples and therefore demonstrate how communities can use the acquired education to solve local problems. This will increase the ASAL community's interest in education.

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