

Critical Home-based Challenges Inhibiting Effective Participation of Pupils in Rural Public Primary Schools in Narok North Sub-County, Narok County, Kenya

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Abstract

The thrust of this study was to examine the critical challenges inhibiting effective participation in education by pupils from rural public primary schools in Central Division, Narok North Sub-County, in Narok County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design. Combinations of stratified and purposive sampling strategies were employed to select 60 class teachers, 30 headteachers, 120 upper primary school pupils (class 5-8) and two Quality Assurance and Standards (QUASO) officers yielding a sample size of 212 respondents drawn from 15 primary schools in the study locale. The main data collection instruments were questionnaires, interview guides and observation checklist. The study revealed that the main home-based variables negatively influencing enrollment and participation in public primary schools in Narok sub-County were: poverty, low premium attached to education, language barrier, inadequate parental involvement in the education of their children and poor of health of pupils. It was recommended that concerted efforts among key education stakeholders particularly parents and members of the provincial administration should be empowered to enable them dismantle the home-based bottlenecks and effectively provide for their children's education [179 words].

Keywords: Home-based challenges effective participation, pupils, Narok County, Kenya.

I. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

As the post-2015 goal-setting process continues, education has increasingly been discussed as not only a development goal in its own right, but also as a key way of reaching other development goals (United Nations, 2013). And for a 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 Recent *Draft Executive Summary for the United Nations World We Want Post-2015 Global Consultation on Education* positions education as both a human right and the foundation for development (United Nations, 2012, 2013).

This high premium attached to education is stressed against the backdrop that the deadline for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals that called for increased access to quality basic education and training which have been domesticated in Kenya elapsed in 2015 (World Education Forum, 2000; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). This broad Vision of education and the holistic approach to sector development was fully embraced by Kenya as a critical vehicle for realizing Vision 2030, the road map for development (Gikondi et.al, 2010; Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; Orodho, 2015).

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) unequivocally promises all Kenyans unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on the progress made thus far in order to exploit the full potential of education for each and every child, youth and adult in the nation (Republic of Kenya, 2010a, 2012a, and 2012b). In addition, the Basic Education Act of 2013 reiterates the fact that basic education which has been made free and compulsory in Kenya should be operationalized through the legal framework enshrined in the Act (Republic of Kenya, 2012a). Both the Constitution (2010) and Basic Education Act of 2013 guarantee and provide legal mechanisms of ensuring that every Kenyan citizen gets access to basic education and other economic and social rights that hinge upon the citizens access to, and performance in, education, as much as on the application of knowledge, attitude and skills gained through the educational experience (Republic of Kenya, 2010a 2010b, Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012; UNESCO, 2012; World Bank, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2013; Waweru & Orodho, 2013).

However, the EFA agenda and the education-related MDGs are unlikely to be achieved by the end of 2015 as initially envisaged. More than 57 million children and 69 million adolescents still do not have access to

effective basic education. In 2011, an estimated 774 adults, of whom almost two-thirds were women, were illiterate. Non-completion of formal schooling, insufficient levels of basic skills acquisition and the quality and relevance of education are also still of key concern. At least 250 million children are not able to read, write or count well even after having spent at least four years in school. Nonetheless, there are still notable inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes at all levels of education particularly for the most vulnerable groups and minorities. Gender inequality is also still of particular concern as only 605 countries had achieved gender parity at the primary level and 38% at the secondary level by 2011 (Republic of Kenya, 2012).

The first attempt by the post-colonial administration to address the challenges in the education in the country was the establishment of the Kenya Education Commission, popularly known as the Ominde Commission in 1964 (Republic of Kenya, 1964). The Commission in its report observed that even at this early stage of the country's development, there were glaring disparities between pastoralist districts (ASAL) and the rest of the country which posed a serious challenge for the government. The Commission therefore recommended that the government should strive towards raising enrolment in the ASAL districts where the percentage fell seriously below the national average of 57.9% in 1964 (Republic of Kenya, 1964).

According to EFA Global Monitoring Report (2012), one million children are still out of school in Kenya. Though this is a significant improvement from the previous years, this is still the ninth highest of any country in the world. The report also notes that primary education is not of sufficient quality to ensure all children can learn the basics. For instance, among young men aged 15-29 years who had left school after six years of schooling, 6% were illiterate and 26% were semiliterate. The figures were even worse for women with 9% illiterate and 30% semiliterate after being in school for six years.

The proportion of illiterate or semiliterate women after six years of schooling has worsened in recent years; in 2003, 24% were in this situation; compared with 39% in 2008. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) affirms the right of all Kenyans to education. The ASAL regions have a myriad of obstacles to UPE and EFA goals which, among others include: poverty, insecurity, low levels of parental education, absence of role models, scarcity of water and long distances between home and schools. These problems persist despite concerted efforts by all stakeholders to remove all barriers to equitable access to schooling for all children thus denying children in ASAL areas their right to education.

Enrolment and wastage continue to dominate educational discourse as issues of great concern for policy makers. UNICEF (2006) found out that millions of children make their way through life impoverished, abandoned, uneducated, malnourished, and discriminated against, neglected and vulnerable. Most of these children live in the least developed countries, the poorest communities and the most impoverished households, and in the rural areas. The emerging scenario is that despite the immense international and national commitment to ensure that every child has access to and completes primary school education by 2005; millions of children are still at risk of being excluded from the classroom (UNICEF, 2014). This shows that about 71% of children of school-going age were at home. Worse still, even those children who were enrolled in school are often absent in school or even drop out of school altogether. This worrying trend motivated the undertaking of this study given that the Government of Kenya and other stakeholders continue to invest enormous resources in education in Narok North Sub County.

1.2. The State of Art Review

The Government of Kenya, in Sessional Paper No 1 of 2005, committed itself to provide universal access to basic education and training in order to ensure equitable access to education and training for all children to enroll in school. This determination to ensure EFA and MDGs are realized is further reflected in the KESSP and MOE Strategic plan (2006-2011).

Pupils' state of health also affects their participation and achievement in school. Past and present nutritional status is linked to better school performance and they also attend school more regularly (Lockheed, Verspoor M. et al, 1991). On the other hand, pupils with inadequate diets fall ill more often and thus are not able to attend school regularly. School learning is a joint process involving the home and school (Lockheed, et al., 1991). This is evident in the early years of formal schooling. Family background affects the probability that children will enroll in school and complete various levels of education.

The occupational and educational level of parents' shapes the school attainments of their children (Smith & Cheung, 1986). Children from literate homes enter school with greater vocabulary than those unfamiliar with books. Children from college graduate parents assume that academic excellence is their right while other children struggle to achieve. In this struggle some children give up and drop out of school, and more so when there other competing needs such as family survival are in play (Sava & Orodho, 2014; Orodho, Waweru, Ndichu & Thinguri, 2013).

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Despite the tremendous effort made by the Government of Kenya through the introduction of Free Primary

Education in 2003 and the international protocols on education such as Education for All, these efforts have not yet impacted positively on overall enrolment and participation of pupils in primary schools in Narok North Sub-County of Narok County. In Central Division of Narok North Sub County, for instance, town schools are overenrolled leading to double shifts in a number of schools. However, in the rural areas in the same Division, enrollment is still an issue of great concern. A report by the DEO reveals that of the 68,857 children who were eligible to enroll in primary school in 2006, only 20,010 were actually in school. There remains a puzzle regarding what could be the contributory factors causing dismal access and participation amongst pupils in primary schools in Narok North Sub-County, Narok County, Kenya.

1.4. Purpose and Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study was to critically examine the home-based challenges inhibiting effective participation of pupils in rural public primary schools in Narok North Sub-County, Narok County, Kenya.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the Achievement Motivation Theory propounded by McClelland (1961). The major tenets of the theory are that people's motivation patterns reflect their cultural environment including family, the school, church and work place. The theory further states that for a country to develop socially and economically, it must be composed of people with modern values, beliefs and behavior. McClelland studied three basic needs: the need for achievement, the need for belonging and the need for power.

Advanced societies contain high proportions of individuals with a high need for achievement while less developed societies contain lower proportions. This opinion is shared by Ingemar and Saha (1983) who found out that there are consistent patterns between levels of education and economic levels of development among countries. For instance, school enrolment rates at all levels of education are considerably lower for less developed countries.

This theory is applicable in this study since pupils who fail to enroll or remain in school have a low need for achievement. It also implies that the society in which these children live has a low need for achievement and therefore, the children are not given the necessary ere supports to enable them discover the value of schooling. The society also does not provide the children with the right role models. As a result, the children do not see the need to enroll in school or work hard once enrolled.

II. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The cross-sectional descriptive research design was used in this study. The design was considered appropriate because the study focused on the current status of education in the study locale of Narok North sub-County, Narok County, Kenya (Orodho, 2009, 2012; Orodho, Ampofo, Bizimana & Ndayambaje, 2016). A cross sectional descriptive research survey is characterized by systematic collection of data from members of population through questionnaires and interviews.

2.2 Target Population and Sampling

The study targeted co-educational rural day primary schools in Central Division, Narok North Sub-County. Central Division comprises of for zones with a total of fifty public primary schools in the study locale. Of these schools, only five are in town. The schools have a population of 1,069 class seven and eight pupils and 466 teachers. The subjects of the study will be drawn from the four zones. Combinations of stratified and purposive sampling strategies were employed to select 60 class teachers, 30 headteachers or their deputy headteachers, 120 upper primary school pupils (class 5-8) and two quality assurance and standards (QUASO) officers yielding a sample size of 212 respondents drawn from 15 primary schools in the study locale for the study.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaires and interview schedules were the main data collection instruments used in this study. The questionnaires were piloted to determine their validity and reliability before data collection exercise begun. The content validity was determined through peer review by experts in the field while the reliability test using a test-retest method yielded a coefficient of .89 which was above the .75 level suggested by Orodho (2012). The questionnaires were administered to pupils and teachers while interviews were conducted among headteachers and QUASOs. The quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Computer Programme to yield both descriptive and inferential statistics (Orodho, Khatete & Mugiraneza, 2016; Orodho, Ampofo, Bizimana & Ndayambaje, 2016). The qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically in line with the emerging research themes (Orodho, Wenceslas, Odundo, Waweru, & Ndayambaje, 2016).

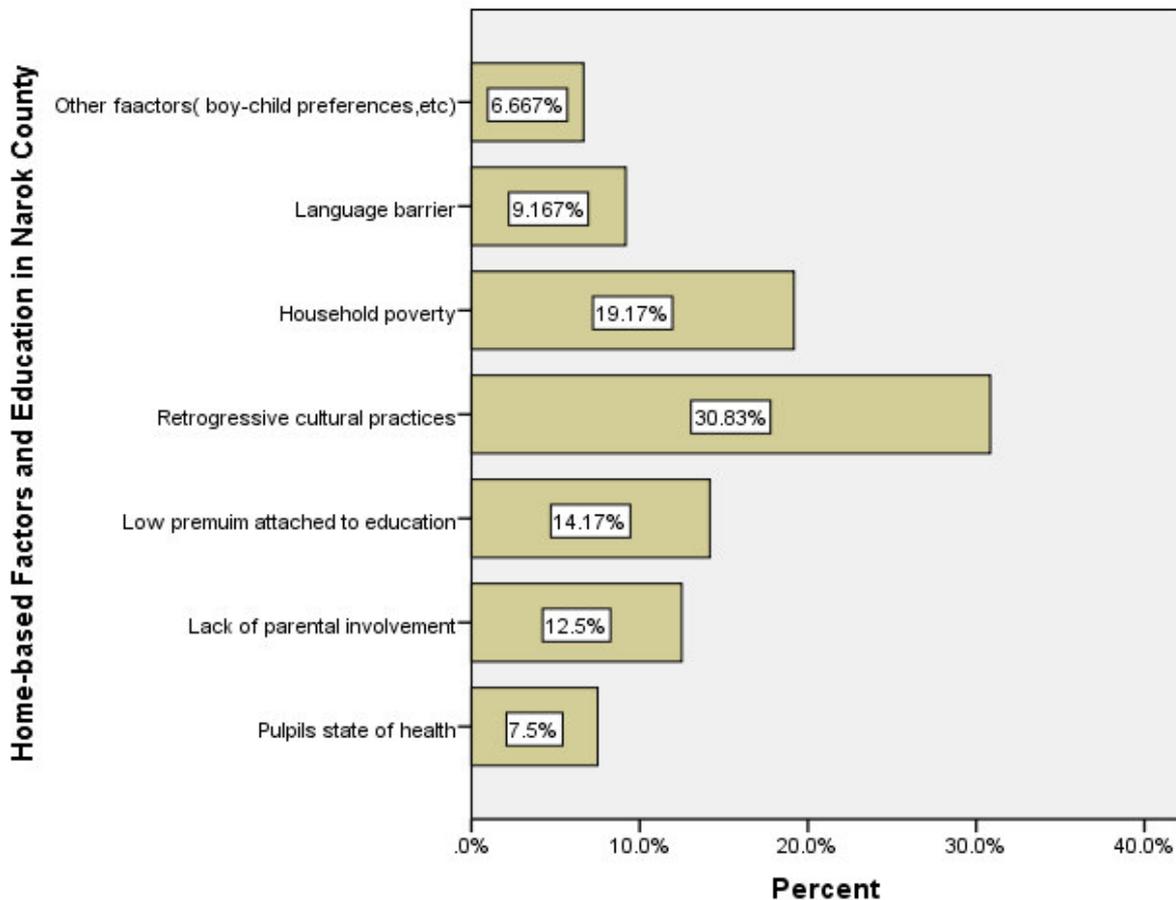
III. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The students and teachers were requested to indicate the main home-based challenges inhibiting effective participation in education by pupils in primary schools in the study locale. The results are portrayed in Figure 1 reveal that the most highly ranked home-based challenge affecting enrollment and participation of pupils in primary schools in the study locale, cited by nearly one third of all respondents (30.83%), was retrogressive cultural practices, which affected both genders in different ways.

The second highly ranked variable, cited by 19.17 % of the respondents was household poverty. This was followed in third and fourth position by low premium attached to education and lack of parental involvement in education, cited by 14.17% and 12.55%, respectively. The factors that were ranked least were: language barrier, pupils' state of health and boy-child preference, reported by 9.16 %, 7.5% and 6.66 %, respectively.

Figure 1: Homebased factors influencing education in Narok County



3.2 Discussion

The results are in tandem with findings from other scholars who found that retrogressive cultural variables were a setback to attaining education, especially among nomadic pastoralist communities (Orodho, Waweru & Getange, 2014; Sava & Orodho, 2014). This explains the low enrolment and high dropout rates in the Sub-County since the social climate in school is not conducive for the development of the need for belonging and learning. This also explains why pupils frequently absent themselves from schools. The other socio-cultural factor is political interference. The need for power is the desire to influence others and to control one's environment. The need for power takes two forms: personal -domination for its own sake and institutionalized power. Institutionalized power is concerned with the attainment of organization goals. On the basis of achievement of primary schools in Narok North Sub—County in national examinations, it is evident that very little has been done to achieve institutional goals-academic performance. This therefore means that the need for institutionalized power (attainment of the desired academic results, high retention and enrolment rates) is lacking

in primary schools in the Sub—County.

The fact that household poverty was the second highly ranked factor hindering effective enrollment and participation in primary schools in the study locale is not unique to Narok County. Clemens (2004) as well as Orodho, Waweru and Getange (2014) cite that neither proximity to a school nor public education spending has a significant influence on decisions to enroll children in school in developing countries, which are determined considerably more by parental income and education level. According to Clemens, the major factor that determines whether the child would learn is the economic status of parents. The government may subsidize the cost of educational programmes, or even offer educational programmes without any payment, but if the parents have low income, they may not enroll their children in school (Orodho, Waweru and Getange 2014).

Arnold (1993) notes that the decision by parents to enroll their children in schools dependent on the costs of educating their children and by the perceived benefits of education. So people can be willing to pay highly for good educational programmes or institutions whose educational outcomes (perceived benefits) are high. To such parents, the cost of education is not a problem as long as they are able to pay for it. The parents who do not value the benefits of education, the cost involved becomes an issue even when they can afford it.

The children being used as sources of cheap labor instead of hiring or employing people to do the work is the other poverty trickledown effect on education. Children are denied access to education through wrong decisions made by their parents. The perceptions, practices and attitudes held by the society in which the child is brought up play a significant role on whether the child will enroll in school or not (Orodho, Waweru & Getange, 2014). Transition from one level to another may be affected by poverty which leads to a learner lacking basic needs such as clothing, food and shelter, attitudes held by learners and parents/ guardians.

To reiterate, some parents may not enroll their children in school to receive education, simply because they do not feel that education is of any importance to the children. It is also arguable that certain parents may not enroll their children in schools, because the children are assisting them to do household chores. Becker (1964) aptly argued that education was referred to as an economic good because it was used for consumption and investment. On the same note, Schultz (1981) found that education of children is an investment in human capital. In other words, what Becker and Schultz were saying was that when people spend money for educational services, they were investing in the learners and the acquisition of skills, knowledge and values which were used in beneficial activities to benefit them and their families at household level.

The need for belonging is an attraction to another person or group so as to feel accepted as a member of the group. People with this need have a strong desire for reassurance and approval. They also conform to valued norms and have a sincere interest in the feelings of others. These people also have low absenteeism and perform better when their efforts are appreciated. This need for belonging seems to be lacking among teachers in Narok North Sub-County in general and this can apply to parents and pupils as well.

The teacher should use a simple language, provide opportunities, relate the course content to their lives and interests, and motivate them while teaching by showing the worthiness and practical value of the subject matter being taught. This was possible if learner's experience was the starting point (Nasibi, 2003). Kundu and Bose (1986) said that the child's language development was influenced to a great extent by his home environment. The child hailing from a lower socio-economic background will be restricted in the use of language. This might be because the child does not spend adequate time with their parents. The child was also restricted in their social contacts. Education makes a two-pronged attack on society-social control and social change. By transmitting to the individual the ideas and ways of the group, education was an important agency of a social control which is an influence exerted by society upon its members for the purpose of maintaining the solidarity of the group.

Lack of parental involvement in the education of children is another bottleneck to achieving sustained enrollment and participation in schools. Many other scholars have noted that while education preserves, transmits and stimulates the wholesome culture, the society also, according to its changing conditions, expects the school to review and plan its work according to the demand aspirations of the changing society (Orodho, Waweru, Ndichu & Thinguri, 2013). The whole planning of the school, including the curriculum should reflect the changes in social values, norms and patterns. Lack of finances for meeting educational needs may also hinder transition of pupils from one level to another.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The gist of this study was to determine the main home-based factors influencing pupils' enrollment and participation in primary schools in the study locale. The findings of the study lead to two main conclusions. First, most cited home-based factors such as language barrier, poor health status of pupils due to malnutrition, peer influence, lack of parent involvement in education, absenteeism and household poverty call for parents to do their part, release them early enough from home and feed them balanced diet were found to be negatively influencing pupils access to school as well as their participation. Secondly, it was also evident that parents have

abandoned their role of guiding and counseling their children against associating themselves with bad company, yet such bad company ruins morals and encourages such practices as early child labour and uncontrolled domestic labour.

4.2 Recommendations

From the findings and discussion, it was recommended that:

1. Parents should ensure their children go to school always to avoid absenteeism so that learners may go through all teaching and learning experiences since they are these experiences that account for sustained enrollment, retention and active participation.
2. Parents to embrace the value of education for their children and reduce absenteeism through provision of basic needs such as balanced diet and clothing (especially uniforms) which pupils used as an excuse to avoid attending school regularly.
3. Parents should be more involved in school activities and monitor their children's learning activities through regular checking of their written work, regular consultation with teachers on performance of pupils.
4. Parents should collaborate with school management and gain skills to enable them guide and counsel their children against immoral conduct which leads to drug abuse and irresponsible behavior such as sexual immorality, a cause of early pregnancy and sexual diseases.

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