

School -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 school-based variables inhibiting effective participation in education by pupils from rural public primary schools in Central Division, Narok North Sub-County, 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. The main data collection instruments were questionnaires, interview guides and observation checklist. The study revealed that the main school-based factors that negatively influenced pupils participation and overall performance in primary schools were : low community support and parental involvement pupils school activities, lack of housing for teachers, fatigued pupils due to travelling long distance from home to school and back , high pupil teacher ratio, high teacher absenteeism, and high teacher turn-over without replacements. It was recommended that the government through the County Education Officers should rationalize teacher postage and replacement, encourage community to take an active role in their children's education and empower teachers both in and out of school to be able to undertake their teaching roles more effectively for enhanced academic outcomes. [204 words].*

Keywords: *School -based variables, effective participation, pupils, primary schools, 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). According to Rose (2013) and United Nations (2013), 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. 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).

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, 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).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 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).

However, the EFA agenda and the education –related MDGs are unlikely to be achieved by the end of 2015 as initially envisage .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). It is against this backdrop that this paper was premised as an attempt to examine school-based factors influencing pupils' access and participation in public primary school education in Narok County, Kenya

1.2 The State of the Art Review

Literature is prolific which attempts to examine the factors influencing pupils' access and participation in primary school generally (Orodho, 2013; United Nations, 2013). According to EFA Global Monitoring Report (2012) and United Nations (2013) over 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 Global Monitoring Report (2012) also documents 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.

Studies have also attempted to examine the factors that could be contributory to the low access and participation in basic education globally, nationally and locally (Lockheed, Verspoor, et al, 1991, Orodho, 2013). 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 (Verspoor, 2001). 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 (Verspoor, 2001). 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 are other competing needs such as family survival are in play (Sava & Orodho, 2014; Orodho, Waweru, Ndichu & Thinguri, 2013).

School based-factors on students' academic performance in public Secondary schools. Studies done in the Great Britain particularly in London, by Bell and Rhodes (2003) whose objective was to explore school determinants on examination performance, revealed that school facilities include the administrative offices, classrooms, staffrooms, laboratories, equipment, libraries, hostels or dormitories, staff houses and even school grounds were positively related to students overall performance in national examinations. In order for a school to advance the learning opportunities offered to a student, it has to adequately utilize the facilities available.

Similarly research done in America by Orloskey (2007) whose purpose was to look at management of school based assets came up with tangible conclusions. For instance, he asserted that libraries, hostels or dormitories determine the students' school time management and eventual academic performance. If these facilities are used responsibly such that teaching/learning takes place without a hitch, academic performance

may be improved. However, due to over-enrolment most schools are overstretching the few facilities they have leading to poor academic performance in schools. It is the duty of head teachers to ensure that facilities are acquired and are effectively used for better performance. School facilities determine the academic performance and in India as pointed out by Pandey (2005), research revealed that staff houses are vital to academic performance as staff would be within reach.

In Africa especially in Kenya, experience of facilitators was considered a school based factor and studies done by Ojera and Yambo (2014) as well as Orodho and Waweru(2015) when they considered instructional leadership styles and principals level of experience, contended that principals and teachers experience in school is of paramount significance to students educational outcomes.

Yambo (2012) argued that an effective teacher, is a teacher whose students achieve larger gains. He added that in order to advance students achievement, teachers and other staff must be professionally competent and experienced in instruction and assessment tools appropriate to the curriculum for their particular students. In addition, they must have high expectations of the students learning. According to Onyango (2001) planning for material resources in school involves identification of resource requirements, assessing quality in terms of the needs, establishing criteria for standards, determining the cost per unit and use of materials whether by individual or groups. Studies done by Yambo and Tuitoek (2014) as well as Orodho (2015) suggested that one of the duties of head teachers in Kenya is to develop school's physical facilities. Yambo and Tuitoek (2014) argued that in dealing with physical facilities a head teacher must know educational programmes, the population to be served by the facilities and the financial resources available, or else the school may continue to perform poorly in examinations like a case in some schools in Eldoret West Sub-County. The same sentiments were advanced by Orodho (2015) study in Northern Kenya.

According to Odhiambo (2005), he observed that the most important purpose of a school is to provide students with equal opportunity for learning and this can be achieved effectively, if teachers are knowledgeable, skillful and dedicated to their work, i.e. teacher's commitment. Teachers therefore, need to be well managed; the head teachers' responsibility in human management involves leading and motivation of staff, delegating responsibilities effectively and conflict management. However, with the current situation over-enrolment in secondary schools, teacher/ student ratio is likely to be high leading to increase in teachers, high workload and finally poor academic performance even if the above are done.

Comparing studies in Kenya and London, Olembo and Cameron (1992), found that one of the most important roles of the head teachers is to supervise curriculum implementation, planning, adoption, and classroom management, arrangement of instruction programmes and out of class activities in any scholar Educational system. Bell and Rhodes (2003) stated that the responsibility of a head teacher is to ensure that curriculum is well managed through appropriate delegation to other teachers, meaning that head teachers are not only responsible for articulating the school curriculum and co-curriculum, but also to delegate, coordinate curriculum implementation, monitoring the implementation and evaluating whether the implementation is effective or not. With the over-enrolment in secondary schools, teachers are expected to have heavy workload resulting to negative impact on curriculum implementation hence poor academic performance.

A recent study by Gatheru (2008) in Narok County, Kenya, established that due to over-enrolment in public secondary schools, teachers are somehow overwhelmed and not able to give individual attention to students. Sometimes teachers do not mark assignments and this may contribute to poor academic performance. It is prudent for a principal to establish and clearly communicate goals that define the expectation of school with regard to academic achievement, and if principal can make teachers and students support these goals, and then the motivation to achieve those goals can be followed.

Most review of effective school literature point to the consensus that culture and climate are central to academic success. Studies done both developed and developing countries by both Mackenzie (2009) and Purkey and Smith (2001) Stated that student's chance for success in learning cognitive skills is heavily influenced by the climate of the schools. School factors press in the direction of academic achievement helps shape Environments (climate) in which students learn. An academically effective school would likely have clear goals related to students' achievement teachers and parents with high expectation and designed to maximize opportunity for students to learn (Orodho, 2015).

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.

1.3 Purpose and Objective of the Study

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

1.4 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, Wenceslas, Odundo, Waweru & 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 four 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 was 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 subjects.

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

The students and teachers were requested to state some of the most critical school-based factors that negatively influence students' access and participation in primary school education in Narok County. The cited factors that were mentioned by both students and teachers were ranked and displayed in Figure 1. The results in Figure 1 indicates that the main school-based factors, arranged in descending order of frequency of response were: low community support to schools, lack of teacher housing in schools, fatigue due to long traveling from

home to school, high-pupil-teacher ratio, high teacher turn-over, high teacher absenteeism, long distance to school and lack of boarding facilities for students of either gender.

The results displayed in Figure 1 indicates that the school-based factor inhibiting pupils performance in primary schools in the study locale was the low community support for their childrens education which was ranked top on the list by 27.91 percent of all the respondents. The factor which was ranled at position two with 16.281% of the respondents was lack of teacher housing in schools, making teachers to operate either travel long distances to school or get accommodatde in housing structures that are not conducive to thhier professional preparations to teach. The third highly ranked factor , cited by 13.95 % of the respondents, was fatigued pupils after either travelling long distance to school or having assisted in household chores before school. At the number four positions were the high pupil-teacher ratio as well high teacher turn-over, cited by 9.302 % of the total sample. The other cited factors were high teacher absenteeism, and lack of boarding schools cited by 6.977% and 4.651%, respectively.

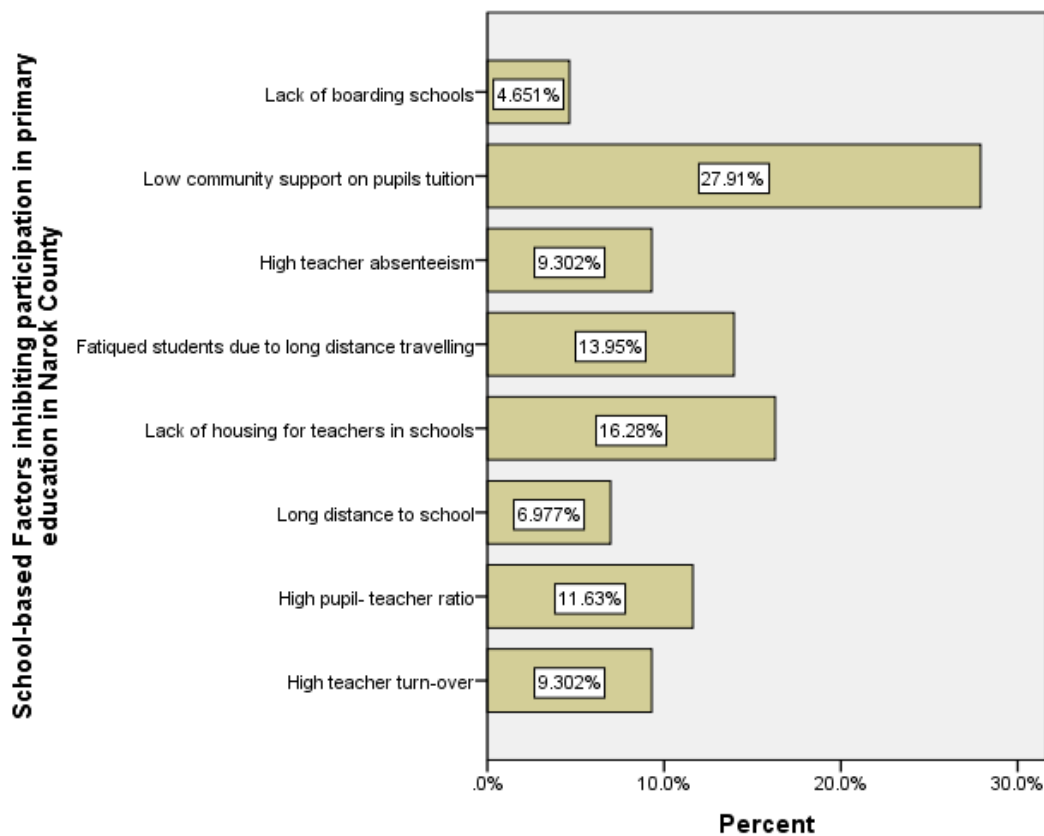


Figure1: School-Based Factors inhibiting participation in primary education in Narok County,

3.2 Discussion

The results are in tandem with findings from other scholars who found that school-based factors were among the critical factors that impeded pupils' access and active participation in primary school education(Orodho, Waweru & Getange, 2014; Sava & Orodho, 2014). This explains the low enrolment and performance in national examinations by pupils in Narok County. This also explains why pupils frequently absent themselves from schools.

With regards to low community support for their childrens education, the results are in line with studies conducted elsewhere which indicate some communities still use their children as sources of cheap labor instead of hiring or employing people to do the work is the other poverty trickledown effect on education(Kantim & Orodho,2016) . In such a scenario, 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 other school-based factors that negatively affected pupils' access and participation in primary school education in the study locale were teacher based in nature. It was evident that the high teacher turn-over and subsequent high-pupil teacher ratio were impacting negatively on pupils' accesses and participation in primary school education in Narok County. It was established that cases of teachers being transferred from schools without replacement led to inadequate teachers which negatively affected effective teaching and learning- hence resulting into poor academic performance. It was also reported that most teachers gave assignments to their pupils but were unable to mark them due to the high teaching load. This finding is consistent with studies conducted by Orodho (2015).

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 school -based factors influencing pupils' enrollment and participation in primary schools in Narok County, Kenya. The findings of the study lead to two main conclusions. First, most cited school -based factors such as fatigued pupils due to travelling long distance from home to school and back, low community support for education were basically home-based factors that directly affect school processes. Their intervention call for parents to do their part, release them early enough from home and feed them on balanced diet to enhance their participation in school. Secondly, the other factors were basically teacher based in nature. The teachers were not adequately catered for to enable them undertake their teaching duties effectively. The implications is that when teachers are not housed in schools or nearby market centers to enable them work on their school tasked, when teachers are transferred and not replaced causing strain on the remaining teachers who have to shoulder a heavier workload, then logically one would not expect them to produce high educational outcomes in terms of enhanced pupil participation.

4.2 Recommendations

From the findings and discussion, it was recommended that:

1. The Central Government, through the County Education Officers should ensure that there is rationalized teacher postage in schools to avoid situations whereby some schools are over-staffed while others are grossly understaffed.
2. The shortages of instructional resources, especially text books should be closely be monitored by the school management committees. The committees should ensure that funds meant for textbooks were used for that purpose and not diverted by unscrupulous headteachers.
3. 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.

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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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