# Review of Social Economic Factors and Status of Primary Education in the Northern Region of Kenya

Gichuhi Loise
School of Education, University of Nairobi

**Email Address:** loise.wambui@uonbi.ac.ke

**Abstract**

*Achieving the ambitious sustainable development goal number 4, and to bring the 59 million children out of school globally back to the classroom, requires substantial increases in the effectiveness of resources and equitable distribution of education resources to all children. The purpose of this study was to analyze and unpack the existing data to identify the social economic factors and the status of primary education in the Northern Regions of Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to assess the social-economic push and pull factors influencing access, retention and completion of pupils in the primary school sector; and to determine the options available to participation in primary education in the Northern Region of Kenya. The study utilized the inclusive literature review design. The document analysis method was used to review academic, and international and government education policy documents and records. Findings indicated that both supply-side and demand-side factors are major barriers to education participation in the Northern Regions of Kenya. A major recommendation is the need for the government and others education stakeholders to address the barriers at the same time to contextualize education to the pastoralists' lifestyles and creation of a flexible system that addresses the society needs at the same time meet the curriculum objectives.*

**Keywords*:*** Primary Education, Budgeting, Equity, Equality, Participation, Northern Region of Kenya

## INTRODUCTION

Providing education is not only a moral obligation of duty bearers, but it is a practical solution too for many who's the only asset they can have is human capital. Education is viewed as one of the most important vehicles to propel people from one level of income to the other. Education has economic, social, and political dimensions needed for both economic growth and development (Grant, 2013). The Kenyan education sector transformative agenda is stated in various policy documents since independence (Onjoro, n.d.). The priority to provide education, therefore, is driven by various variables; political, social, cultural, and economic (Chitescu & Lixandru, 2016). Many countries, including Kenya, gave formal consent on the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) recommendations as well as the recommendations of the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000). According to UNESCO (2009), it is the duty of the government to provide inclusive education to every citizen. The government commitment through this ratification: and other policy-driven initiatives have driven the momentum towards education investment and provision. There have been government initiatives towards education sector growth. For example, The Constitution of Kenya 2010 underscores the responsibility of the government to provide inclusive and quality education which is fundamental to the success of the growth of the country (GoK, 2010; MoE, 2012). To reemphasize government ‘s

education sector commitment, Vision 2030 was designed and education is impeded as one of its goals; coming up with a development vehicle, articulates the need for all citizens to have enhanced entrepreneurship, innovation and lifelong learning opportunities (GoK, 2007). To achieve these milestones, the government through the Ministry of Education (MoE) developed an implementation blueprint, the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2013-2018 as a pathway for development of the education and training sector. This guides the implementation of Free Primary Education (FPE) from financial, policy and capacity perspectives (RoK, 2015). It is notable, however, with a 15-year FPE investment; access to primary education has increased but left the marginalised regions in the northern parts of Kenya still with low access, retention, performance and completion (RoK, 2016). This paper analyzes and uses the available data to examine the social economic factors that may be hindering school participation for so many children in the northern Kenya.

**Overall Objective**

The overall objective of the study is to analyze and unpack the existing data to identify the Supply-side and Demand-side social economic factors and the status of primary education in the Northern Region of Kenya.

**Specific Objectives of the Study**

- To examine the social-economic push and pull factors influencing access, retention and completion of pupils in the primary school sector in Northern Region of Kenya.
- To determine options available to participation in primary education in the Northern Region of Kenya.

**Justification of the Study**

The right to education is documented and guaranteed by a series of human rights treaties and protocols. Since Dakar 2000, there has been tremendous progress in both quantitative and qualitative growth in education across much of the developing countries. It is notable that many of these developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have implemented FPE programmes. Kenya has taken several steps towards development of education development. Some of the major milestones are documented in a number of documents namely: Sessional Paper Number 1 of 2005; Sessional Paper Number 14 of 2012; The Constitution of Kenya (2010) and the Kenya Vision 2030 (RoK, 2012). Even though the national policies document the importance of education in national development, communities in Northern Kenya sill have low levels of education access, retention and completion. Several reasons for low education participation have been cited; economic, cultural, social, geographical, environmental, and political (Chitescu & Lixandru, 2016). This calls for innovative strategies to address issues affecting education demand and supply.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, the number of children and youth out of school (OOSC) are about 258 million of which 59 million children are of primary school age (UNESCO-UIS, 2018). Children who are out-of-school are the most vulnerable and are likely to continue being marginalized and excluded from political and economic participation. In majority of countries the Sub-Saharan Africa carries the highest numbers of children excluded from schooling (GPE, 2019). Over a fifth of children between ages 6 to 11 are out of school in Sub-Saharan Africa and especially in conflict-affected regions. UNESCO-UIS (2016), reports about 22 million OOSC of primary age, live in conflict-affected areas; the majority of these children are found in sub-Saharan African countries.

Despite the FPE programme introduced in 2003 and appended in the 2010 Constitution, in Kenya, 852,000 children of school-going are out of school (MoE, 2016). However, the FPE programme contributes greatly towards achievement of sustainable development goal 4 (SDG 4). This goal aims for quality, inclusive and equitable education that is relevant to the needs of the country (UNESCO, 2016). Implementation of FPE in Kenya reversed the trend of declining primary school enrolment experienced since the 1990s. For example, the Net Enrollment Rate (NER) was 61.7 and 74.17 in 2002 and 2003 respectively. In a span of 5 years, 2009 to 2014, the primary school enrollment increased by more than 8% with an annual growth rate of 1.6% (MoE, 2015). The Gross Enrollment Rate was 103.6% in 2015 and 104.2% in 2016, a slight increase, while NER increased from 88.4% in 2015 to 91.2% in 2016, an increase of about 3%. Moreover, Gross Intake Rate (GIR) has stabilized at 100% while the Primary Completion Rate (PCR) had gained 1% to settle at 84% between 2015 and 2016 (MoE, 2016).

In spite of the impressive GER and NER figures at national levels, there are fundamental regional disparities (MoE, 2016). In order to understand the real regional disparities issues, it is important to unpack the available data.

Oloo and Odek, (2012) in their study noted the importance of FPE in Kenya as a fundamental policy that can empower many of the country's poor and give them a chance to a better future. Increased access to primary education increases life opportunities (The Commonwealth Education Hub, 2016). Education should equip learners with skills, which they need to lead a healthy, productive and meaningful life. According to the World Bank (2018), access to education is only necessary but not sufficient, learning outcomes must be checked in order to equip the learners with prerequisite skill for the world of work. Of importance is that, student's learning outcomes are not likely to change unless all stakeholders take learning seriously and prioritize to solve inherent barriers. World over, provision of education is a multi-stakeholder's responsibility; the different private sector's players, as well as the public sector, has had a share of percentage in the provision of education in Kenya. The greatest percentage share is however taken by the government. The quality divide is indicative of who provides education in Kenya. In Kenya, apart from the low-cost-private schools, many of the private schools are comparatively better in infrastructure and quality outcomes compared to many public schools that have continued to suffer qualitatively despite government increased capitation (Baum & Riley, 2019). According to Kimenyi (2013), the learning environment in some schools is bad; marginalized and vulnerable children must be protected and given value-for-money quality education. Kimenyi (2013) reiterates that:

> "very little value … is added in many of those schools. It beats reason why a government would be investing such large sums and yet not focus on what happens in the schools" (para. 13)

Most schools are overcrowded with class sizes up to 60 students per teacher (Oloo & Odek, 2012); and in many cases, students perform at below the expected levels. Citing and expanding on the work by Uwezo Kenya (2011), Kimenyi (2013) writes that,

> Only three out of 10 children in Class Three can read a Class Two story (in English), while slightly more than half of them can read a paragraph. Four out of a 100 children in Class Eight cannot read a Class Two story…. (In) numeracy … 30 percent of Class Three children are unable to complete Class

Two division, and 10 percent of Class Eight children cannot do Class Two division. (para. 10-11)

Encouraging enrolment in Kenyan primary sector has generally come through supply-side factors rather than demand- side factors: creating new schools within a reasonable home- to- school distance, hiring more teachers, or activating community support (RoK, 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly based on document analysis. The document analyzed are mainly academic, and international and government education policy documents and records. Reviewing such literature allows the researcher to analyze trends and critique the ideas from a point of knowledge. Document analysis method helps the researcher to holistically conceptualize emerging ideas from existing literature and synthesise it to create trends and conclusions (Torraco, 2005).

### Research Design

This study is based on an inclusive literature review design to understand participation in education. This design helps the researcher to generate new forms of knowledge and trends for a given topic or idea. The design allows the researcher to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to draw conclusions that can be used in policy frameworks and implementation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This paper, we argue that leaving children off the school system can create a lost generation of children and youth whose life opportunities are compromised. It is well documented and recognized that education investment can fundamentally raise peoples' aspirations, set values and enrich lives. In order to realize greater equity and inclusion in education, there is a need to increase efforts to collect and analyze data on the most marginalised segments of the population (UNESCO, 2014).

It is documented that the number of primary schools in Kenya grew from 2009 to 2014 at an annual rate of 5.1% where public schools grew at rate of 3.2 % which is much lower than that of private schools of 12% (RoK, 2015). During the same period, private schools increased from 19% to 26% which indicates a quantitative growth in the number of private schools. Table 1 shows the growth of schools from 2009 to 2019.

**Table1: Number of Public and Private Primary Schools; 2009-2019**

| Year | Public | Private |
|---|---|---|
| **2009** | 18,543 | 4,377 |
| **2010** | 19,059 | 5,055 |
| **2011** | 19,848 | 5,534 |
| **2012** | 20,307 | 6,241 |
| **2013** | 21,205 | 6,821 |
| **2014** | 21,718 | 7,742 |
| **2015** | 22,414 | 8,819 |
| **2016** | 22,939 | 10,263 |
| **2017** | 23,139 | 8,310 |
| **2018** | 23,336 | 8,447 |
| **2019** | 23,286 | 9,058 |

*Note: Reprinted from Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2016.); Economic Survey (2015); Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2014); Economic Survey (2018); Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education (2019)*

Table 1 shows exponential growth in the numbers of both private and public primary schools. This growth, unfortunately, does not translate to growth in numbers of pupils in some regions, for example, out of the 47 counties, 30 counties recorded GER and NER above the national average. The other remaining 17 counties' GER and NER rates were below the national average (MOE, 2015). UNICEF (2018) indicates that majority of the out-of-school children are in Nairobi, Turkana, Wajir, Garissa and Mandera, this is despite the fact that the five counties represent only 16 % of the population of Kenya. In Mandera, for example, it is reported that almost 15 % (79,500) of the children are not in school, particularly those aged between 6-9 years. Table 2 shows some of the counties that performed below the national average.

**Table 2: Primary School Enrollment Rates by Targeted County in 2014**

| County | GER (%) | NER (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Mandera | 29.2 | 25.3 |
| Wajir | 35.2 | 27.7 |
| Garrisa | 71.4 | 57.5 |
| Samburu | 73.7 | 60.1 |
| Tana River | 73.9 | 62.6 |
| Marsabit | 79.5 | 63.8 |
| Turkana | 77.4 | 58.8 |
| Kenya | 103.5 | 88.2 |

*Note. Adapted from Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2016.); Economic Survey (2015); Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2014); Economic Survey (2018)*

From Table 2, it is evident that Mandera County has the lowest GER and NER among the targeted 17 counties that recorded rates below the national average (of 103 % and 88.2% respectively) (worst GER and NER in the country), 29.2 % and 25.3% respectively followed by Wajir with a GER of 35.2 and NER of 27.7. This can only mean the majority of the children eligible for schooling are not in school. The reasons for exclusion may be fundamental and complex. Inclusivity of all children in the education sector is of central importance to Kenya's vision 2030 and SDG4 on inclusive and quality education for all. Bringing and maintaining all children in the education sector has great inter-generational benefits. Documented evidence shows that Kenya had over 1.2 million children out of school (OOSC) by 2014 (MoE, 2015). It is further noted that the majority of the OOSC are found in the counties with the lowest GER and NER (MoE, 2015). Table 3 shows some numbers of OOSC in the worst-performing counties.

**Table 3: OOSC Figures in the Worst Performing Counties by 2014**

| County | OOSC (No's) |
|---|---|
| Mandera | 233,895 |
| Wajir | 136,929 |
| Turkana | 109,414 |
| Garrisa | 74,005 |
| Samburu | 25,956 |
| Marsabit | 25,415 |
| Tana River | 24,046 |
| Kenya | 1,292,675 |

*Note. Reprinted from Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2016.); Economic Survey (2015); Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2014); Economic Survey (2018)*

To understand declining student retention and transition rates, it's of critical importance to understand why students don't enroll in school and if they enroll why they drop

before the final school year. Are there characteristics of likely- to- drop –out students? Studies show that there is seldom one single reason for a child to drop out of school. Instead, the process is shaped by many factors that interact in ways that are both complex and dynamic. In many developing countries, not significant attention has been given to strategies that can improve primary school retention and progressions. There are still high numbers of children out of school and some within schools have a high risk of dropping out (UNICEF, 2018; MOE, 2017).

Bringing all children to school has faced several bottlenecks despite the fact that Kenya has designed and implemented policy frameworks for inclusive education for all. In order to realize the set international and national goals of education, there is a need for deliberate strategic efforts to understand the factors that hinder enrolment and those that push children out of school. Northern Kenya region faces both demand and supply driven bottlenecks required for the input of equitable and quality education. In this paper, we have broadly categorized them as demand- side and supply- side factors. The following section digs deeper into each factor.

**Supply-Side Factors Affecting Participation in Education**

**a) A dearth of teachers, availability and effectiveness**

A teacher is a role model. A teacher has more than one role. The multifaceted nature of their work impacts the lives of children in a diverse way. The process of curriculum implementation benefits so much from a teacher. The process of implementation is more effective if the teachers are trained. A well-trained teacher is the most important ingredient that can affect teaching and learning in schools. Trained teachers, that have all the necessary teaching and learning materials therefore, set the pace of performance and can be a catalyst for retention, completion and transition. Northern Kenya has had issues of recruitment and perennial shortage of teachers and maintaining the supply of teachers to sustainable levels has proved difficult over time. Apparently, these are the same counties with the lowest GER and NER in Kenya. Table 4 shows the number of teachers in selected counties in northern Kenya.

**Table 4: Number of Teachers in Selected Counties in Northern Kenya**

| County | Public | | | Private | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | TSC | BOM | Total | TSC | BOM | TSC | Total |
| Mandera | 1042 | 170 | 1212 | 0 | 342 | 1042 | 1533 |
| Marsabit | 1157 | 162 | 1319 | 0 | 308 | 1157 | 1627 |
| Samburu | 1026 | 69 | 1095 | 0 | 135 | 1026 | 1230 |
| Tana River | 1162 | 118 | 1280 | 0 | 166 | 1162 | 1380 |
| Turkana | 1579 | 652 | 2231 | 0 | 649 | 1579 | 2880 |
| Wajir | 938 | 285 | 1223 | 0 | 237 | 938 | 1460 |
| Garrisa | 902 | 213 | 1115 | 0 | 1498 | 902 | 2613 |
| Kenya | 201,622 | 40, 449 | 242,071 | 0 | 75,400 | 201,622 | 317,477 |

*Note. Adapted from Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2016.); Economic Survey (2015); Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2014); Economic Survey (2018)*

Although majority (201,622) of public schools' teachers is employed by Teachers Service Commission, there are about 40,449 teachers employed by school Board of Management (MoE, 2014). Out of the 317,477 teachers in the region, 75,400 (23.8%) teachers are employed by private schools. This has necessitated the National Council for Nomadic Education (NACONEK) to propose radical changes in the recruitment and training of teachers (Daily Nation, 2018) to bridge the teacher gaps that have

persisted for long in the region. The teacher gap (about 3,311 needed) has continuously affected the learning outcomes for the majority of children (NACONEK, 2018). Available data shows that over 2,000 non-local teachers have left the Northern Region since 2015 and government efforts to replace them have been unsuccessful (NACONEK, 2018). With the prevailing and persistent teacher shortages, the pupil-teacher ratio is adversely affected. This, despite the low levels of enrollment, affects the provision of quality education in the region. Apart from teacher shortages, learning outcomes are also affected by a shortage of textbooks and learning materials

**b) A shortage of textbooks and learning materials**

Evaluation of Education for All goals targeted for 2015 reported a picture of under-achievement by many countries. The findings emphasized the fact that, increasing enrollment is not sufficient for progress in the education sector, it is only a necessary condition. Children are completing primary school education without learning the basic skills they need to succeed in life (UNESCO, 2014a). Pupils with little learning materials exposure are inadequate in the functional mastery of knowledge and skill required expected of them. After 13 years of Free Primary Education in Kenya, and billions spent every year on textbooks, most public schools had not attained the expected 1:1 pupil to textbook ratio. Most schools posted on average between 3:1 and 5:1 and some schools even 10:1. Table 5 shows public primary schools' textbook ratios for targeted counties in the Northern region of Kenya.

**Table 5: Public Primary Schools Text Book Ratios**

| County | Public Primary Schools Text Book Ratios | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | English | Kiswahili | Maths | Science | Social Studies |
| Mandera | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 2.6 |
| Marsabit | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 2.6 | 2.6 |
| Samburu | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 3.3 | 1.0 |
| Tana River | 1.6 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 2.5 | 2.4 |
| Turkana | 2.9 | 3.1 | 2.9 | 4.2 | 4.1 |
| Wajir | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.2 |
| Garrisa | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 0.2 | 2.0 |
| Kenya | 1.7 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 2.3 | 2.1 |

*Note. Adapted from Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2016.); Economic Survey (2015); Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2014); Economic Survey (2018)*

Checking the ratios against the national levels, and the expected 1:1 ratio, the counties are doing very well. The recommended ratio according to UNESCO and World Bank ranges from 1:1 to 3:1. Use of textbooks in Kenya has been taken very seriously with the hope of ensuring the effectiveness of instruction and quality education achievement. A 2018, status report (MoE, 2018) on book distribution to schools shows that primary learners now have textbooks in all the subjects under the new plan started in January 2018. The plan, which is a departure from the previous system in which head teachers bought the textbooks, was meant to address concerns that the pupil-textbook ratio was as high as 5.1 in some schools in spite of government expenditure of Sh15 billion annually on the materials. With the government introducing a new cost-effective re-tendering process that is aimed to save billions of money that have been uncountable, it is hoped that all children will have a textbook for the 5 curriculum subjects. This according to the government will save money that can be channeled to other education projects like infrastructure (GoK, 2017).

**c) Limited schools and learning spaces**

Though the population of pastoralists' communities is not exactly captured in the census data, the government reports about 13 districts with about 7 to 8 million people (18 %) of the population of Kenya occupied by nomadic. Majority of them (60%) live in the North Eastern region of Kenya (GOK, 2002). According to the Ministry of Education, the nomadic education policy framework should consider flexible modes of delivery that allows children to also perform duties at home (MoE, 2008). This flexibility means that some school quality variables are likely to be compromised. The curriculum is timed in such a way that all children are expected to be in school from 8 am to 330 pm in order to cover the expected content and other extra-curricular activities. Unless the government allows the pastoralists to practice own curriculum, it might continue to be difficult and challenging for the children to acquire the necessary skill for the world of work. The kind of school facilities and learning space teachers and students are exposed to have a direct relationship with student's motivation and performance. The teachers are motivated in their instruction practices when the teaching and learning environment is contextual of the standard. Table 6 shows regional based number of primary schools, enrollment and average school size.

**Table 6: Number of Primary Schools, Enrollment and Average School Size**

| County | Schools | | Enrollment | | Average School Size | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Public | Private | Public | Private | Public | Private |
| Mandera | 189 | 40 | 82,699 | 8,866 | 438 | 288 |
| Marsabit | 169 | 40 | 49,386 | 9,625 | 283 | 239 |
| Samburu | 142 | 16 | 45,468 | 2542 | 319 | 162 |
| Tana River | 159 | 19 | 46,895 | 2,773 | 296 | 146 |
| Turkana | 324 | 45 | 159,946 | 45,636 | 440 | 1,021 |
| Wajir | 204 | 27 | 59,258 | 6,974 | 435 | 147 |
| Garrisa | 184 | 68 | 51,866 | 72,637 | 282 | 1,066 |
| Kenya | 21,718 | 7,742 | 8,359,488 | 1,591,258 | 385 | 206 |

*Note. Adapted from Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2016.); Economic Survey (2015); Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2014); Economic Survey (2018)*

From Table 6, it is evident that some schools have an average school size way above the national level of 385 for public and 206 for private. Mandera (438, 288), Turkana (440, 1,021) and Wajir (435 in public schools) are way above the national level. It is worth to note that some of the schools in the targeted counties in the northern region are temporary schools. This has a marginalization connotation and can affect the students further especially because school spaces are expected to liberate them from progressive marginalization. Table 7 is a picture of the status of classrooms in 2014.

**Table 7: Status of Classrooms, 2014**

| Primary | Permanent Classrooms in use | Temporary Classrooms in Use | Total Classrooms in use |
|---|---|---|---|
| Public | 186,259 | 44,118 | 230,377 |
| Private | 50,130 | 23,640 | 73,770 |

*Note. Adapted from Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2014)*

From Table 7 it is difficult to know which county has which type of classes. This is further broken into counties and Table 8 indicates the number of temporary schools per county in the targeted counties.

**Table 8: Number of Permanent and Temporary Schools per County; Public and Private**

| County | Public Permanent Schools | Public Temporary Schools | Private Permanent Schools | Private Temporary Schools |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Garissa | 1,219 | 125 | 932 | 144 |
| Mandera | 1,337 | 283 | 224 | 42 |
| Marsabit | 1,160 | 116 | 271 | 42 |
| Samburu | 896 | 320 | 92 | 43 |
| Turkana | 1,911 | 524 | 253 | 288 |
| Wajir | 1,257 | 210 | 214 | 33 |
| Tana River | 1,310 | 226 | 126 | 28 |
| Kenya | 186,259 | 44,118 | 50,130 | 23,640 |

*Note. Adapted from Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2016.); Economic Survey (2015); Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2014); Economic Survey (2018)*

Despite multi-billion government investment in education, the number of schools that have temporary infrastructures has remained exceedingly high (MoE, 2015). Although the public temporary schools are only 4% of the total number of national temporary schools, this is uncalled for. It is worth to note that even the private sector that complements the provision of education, has a high number of temporary schools like in Turkana with 288 and Garissa with 144 temporary schools. Turkana County with the highest number of permanent schools (1,911) is the same county with the second highest number of temporary public schools and the highest number of private temporary schools of 288. Most of the schools are overcrowded, lack water, toilets and lighting. These affect teaching and learning and makes children perform dismally. Overcrowding in schools especially in public schools has been a perennial challenge in Kenya (African Population and Health Research Center, 2020). Overcrowded schools raise pupil-teacher ratio and this has an impact on teaching and learning expediencies.

**d) Long distances to schools**

Distance to school may indicate an indirect cost or a direct cost in situations where users pay transport fees Distance to school has a multidimensional impact on access, retention and performance. In schools where children have to walk long distances to and from school, absenteeism is high. Majority (70%) of children travel more than 5 kilometers to reach school (GPE, 2017). Majority of teachers and students are fatigued by the time they reach school. This affects the contact hours and daily output. For young children, it is extremely cumbersome for them to walk to school and back (MoE, 2019). And if there are no feeding programmes, some children are forced to walk back home for lunch and in most cases fail to return back to school in the afternoons. Many parents deny their children the right to schooling because of distance to school. Girls are affected most. The fear of child abuse becomes a challenge and especially if the school are sparsely distributed. The age of the child will, therefore, determine the mode of transport. Very young children like ages 3 to 5 years may not go for far distant schools, but ages 7 and above may access far distant schools.

Interventions can be more effective at improving access, retention and learning outcomes when many catalysts of change are brought together. We, emphasize, therefore, that supply-side interventions alone are necessary but not sufficient for 100 per cent effectiveness. Some of the interventions cited were enhancing quality of mobile schools to enable them still practice their nomadic lifestyles at the same time getting education for their children. Some of the interventions documented are feeding programs, mobile schools and boarding schools. There is need for the government

together with other education partners, to continue implementing the low-cost boarding schools' interventions in all ASAL regions (MoE, 2019). This will cater for long distances, feeding programs, any insecurity concerns especially for young children and girls. To complement government supply-side interventions, demand-side interventions are necessary.

### 5.2 Demands-Side Factors Affecting Participation in Education

**a) Household income level**

The poverty levels in many households play as a barrier to education investment. Education is expensive and lack of resources can hinder participation. Notable, the size of the household income has a direct effect on the household decision to enroll a child in school, holding all other factors constant. When all other factors are controlled, a higher level of household's income means a higher chance of a child enrolling in school. Low household income means unlimited resources are available for all competing needs. This means the household must stretch the available resources to all competing needs, in the process education might be compromised especially if the benefits of educating children is not well documented (Gichuhi,1995).

In spite of aridity, and all the poor characteristics of this region, the north is a significant contributor to Kenya's fiscal strength. The ASAL area accounts for 50-70per cent of the country's livestock production and is home to 90percent of the wild game that sustains the tourism industry (GoK2006). Despite this, individual returns seem very low. The economic activities are incapable of sustaining livelihoods, as 13.3 percent of all adults in NEP live on help from local and international NGOs. Attempts to settle pastoralists have made them less efficient in using the semi-desert terrains and more dependent on emergency relief food. While populations from other districts have diverse sources of income, NEP is largely dependent on livestock and do not exploit existent credit facilities. For example, only 4.5 percent of the poor and 1.1 percent of the non-poor sought credit in 2005, against a national average of 35 percent (KNBS, 2007; GMR, 2010). This makes parents to face fundamental choice questions of whether to enroll all their children or just some. A parental choice to enroll a child to school can sometimes be gender biased depending on boy-girl preferences. As shall be seen in the next section, if this poverty dynamics are combined with social cultural beliefs and practices, girls are under privileged (UNICEF, 2016). Evidence in the literature confirms that, although parents have a commitment to educate their children, they kind discriminate in education's resources distribution (Glick & Sahn, 2000; Kingdon, 2005). Cutting the cost of schooling like offering free primary education can significantly raise school participation. But even with the FPE policy in Kenya, many children (1,292,675) are still out of school (MoE, 2016). This indicates that FPE is just a necessary but not sufficient ingredient to 100% participation. FPE reduces the direct cost of education. Other household variables like opportunity cost can hinder education participation. In an environment where livestock farming is a major activity, it takes an educated parent or guardian to know the benefits of education and willingly be able to enroll their children to school.

**b) Social cultural beliefs and practices**

**i) Early pregnancies and early marriages**

Early marriages have a negative impact on schooling for girls. It is reported (UNICEF, 2016) that about 23% of girls are married off before they reach 18$^{th}$ year. Legally, 18 years of age, is the adult starting age in Kenya. Gichuhi (1995) and Gichuhi (2007) reported mixed findings that many girls in rural areas are most times traded for

financial gains. In many households, especially in rural areas, parents and guardians justify economic transactions with girls from a multidimensional combination of cultural, traditional and religious arguments. The prevalence to child marriage varies from region to region. Apparently, Northern Eastern Kenya leads with the highest prevalent rates of child marriage at 56% (KDHS, 2014) followed by Costal region at 41%. This trend impacts negatively to the girl's education.

**ii) Gender of a child**

Documented evidence has shown that being a boy in a household increase the propensity of accessing school and being retained there to completion. Some parents, intuitively, value the education of a boy child more than that of a girl child. Gichuhi (2007) study in Nyeri found that the gender of the child can determine whether a child goes to school or not and especially in income-poor households. Gichuhi (2007) further documented this mainly among the Muslims households and in rural areas. This is further emphasised by (FAWE, 2002) that Muslims households are very restrictive to the girl- child -distance to school and especially in the midst of the boys. According to Holmes (2003), boys' education is expected to have higher future than that of girls. Girls are assumed they will get married and their education benefits benefit the husband's family. This only lowers the education of girls especially in regions where the value of girls is not a priority (ADESO, 2015).

Africa parents are more concerned about the role for girls at home who according to Abena (1991) and Atayi (2008), little education is needed for that role to be effective. Another observation in Tajikistan (Falkingham and Baschieri, 2006), since many girls are likely to be married off, they need to be exposed to religious classes to learn relevant skills for future married life. This is a recipe for girls dropping out. Traditional values can impact education differently and it can vary from location to location. UNESCO (2010) indicates the inherent traditional values in rural areas that create barriers to girl's education. ADESO (2015) reiterates the importance of girl's education in northern part of Kenya where girl's remains underrepresented in the classrooms and low expectations made of girls by teachers, which reduced their confidence and desire to remain in school (EDT, 2016). This factor ties also with distance to school and cultural practices that are hindering girl's participation in education (EDT, 2016).

**iii) Sex of the household head**

The head of the household is an important variable in an African setting. This is because all decisions must be made by him or her or the head must be consulted (Gichuhi, 2007). The relationship between this variable and child education participation varies from households to households. Sometimes it is difficult to determine the causality of this variable since there are unqualified mixed findings. There are times when children from female-led households do extremely well and vice versa. Gichuhi (2007) study indicated a significant and a positive relationship on the sex of the household and schooling of a child. Other studies attach a lot of weight to mothers even when they are not household heads (Cochrane, 1979). A Colombia study on the sex of the household and schooling (Ribbero, 2000) found that living with a married mother is related to high levels of children schooling. This data was very scanty in the targeted counties. Moreover, the discussions on sex of the household head and school related decision-making is mixed in the northern region of Kenya. A qualitative assessment (The BOMA Project, 2028) reported mixed findings. In some households, men make all decisions related to school fees and related supplies and also provided the funds, although in other households, men consulted with their wives. However, this is changing after some empowerment intervention, while the men still provide the funds and make most final decisions regarding school fees, which are

considered a large household expenditure, some women now contribute to the cost of the fees. All women make decisions on smaller school expenses related to uniforms, shoes and books, though (The BOMA Project, 2018). This is likely to have a positive impact on girls' education when mothers take lead and contributes to their daughters' education (Gichuhi, 2007)

## CONCLUSION

Participation in education will not change unless the government and all other education stakeholders take education investment seriously. There is a need for a paradigm shift to re-conceptualize and re-orient education investment to the changing realities and opportunities in the lives of the citizens and the wider socio-economic and cultural environment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is enough evidence, historically, to suggest that schooling of those people who practice nomadic lifestyles is effective when education providers and curriculum designers are more empathetic and supportive of the pastoralist households and their pastoralist livelihood. It is essential to contextualize education to the pastoralists' lifestyles and create a flexible system that addresses the society needs at the same time to meet the curriculum objectives. Education policymakers should, therefore, design a well informed and an appropriate curriculum that is cost effective. The curriculum should be flexible to the lifestyles of the nomadic communities. This obviously calls for good planning and especially in teacher education development that can fit well in the environment.

Since movements and settlement patterns interfere with education provision and opportunities, mobile schooling and cheap boarding schools should be enhanced in order to meet school participation targets. It is suggested that teachers seeking employment in the Northern region should benefit from post or pre-service training on teaching and expectations of mobile communities These counties are not unique in the development and status of education. They mirror many other counties in Kenya where the education status is wanting. Economically, socially and politically, any country or county can do better if it takes the education of the citizens seriously. As the government works towards 100% access and completion in the primary sector, there are various variables that must be addressed. The quality and relevance of education is significantly a catalyst for better standards of living. Parental perceptions towards quality education are a major determinant of education participation. The relevance of education and learning outcomes are major components parents consider in enrolling their children to school.

Dealing with systematic drivers of low levels of education participation in the northern region of Kenya, it is important for the government to understand the context of the region to create targeted interventions. This can be done in collaboration with local leaders and other stakeholders who understand their culture and can influence opinion on the benefits of education. It is important to consider targeted interventions and best practices and create community quality dialogues to have buy-in on government intervention projects.

Children must be prepared and sensitized for schooling. They must be ready to go to school. It is important for low-cost boarding schools to be increased and maintained to attract more children, especially in the region. This must be accompanied by a well

managed and maintained school feeding programs. Since the region has a systematic shortage of teachers, it is important to recruit teachers and create a supplementary curriculum to equip the teachers with skills and must be motivated to work in the region. Hardship allowance given to teachers in difficult circumstances must be checked to keep the teachers in the region and especially those not born in the region.

Accountability and transparency are important for cost-effectiveness and ensuring value for money. There is a need to have a paradigm shift in management and school governance. Parents must take great responsibility and take school budgets seriously. Tracking school income expenditure is one way of creating an accountability path and bringing everyone together for the same goal. The government through the grassroots structure should enact seriously The Marriage Act 2014 to reduce child marriages and by extension early pregnancies.

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