

Influence of Cultural Practices on Transition Rate from Primary to Secondary Schools in Isinya Sub County, Kajiado County, Kenya

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Abstract

Education is a fundamental human right because it empowers individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to increase production and income, as well as enabling individuals take advantage of employment opportunities in order to reduce poverty (UNESCO, 2010). It is the valuable thing that society can give its membership. It helps fight ignorance and the acquisition of knowledge creating a better citizenry in terms of prospects in life (Fanuel, 2011). This research paper presents findings of a study on the factors influencing low transition rates of pupils from primary schools in Isinya sub county, Kajiado County. The study was guided by the following objective: To investigate the extent to which cultural practices influences the transition rates from primary to secondary schools in Isinya sub county, Kajiado County. The study was prompted by the fact that transition in Isinya Sub County is low compared to the neighbouring sub counties. There was also no evidence of researchers who had carried out a similar study in Isinya Sub County, Kajiado County. The study employed a mixed methods approach research design since the target population consisted a total sample of 173 respondents was engaged from the sample drawn. These included 28 secondary school principals, 39 head teachers and 106 learners. Stratified random sampling method was used to pick the respondents. Questionnaires were the major tools for data collection. The implications and findings of the study were analysed and formed the basis for the study recommendations and conclusions. From the findings there was a notable gap on cultural factors and lack of peer role models were also established to weigh in heavily in inhibiting education transition among learners in the area of study. Key recommendations have been made to the said effect and it is the hope of the researcher that this work will not only serve for the intended academic purpose but largely inform relevant departments on the need to address the burden of transition in the county of study.

Keywords: Transition rate, cultural practices, Stratified random sampling

1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right because it empowers individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to increase production and income, as well as enabling individuals take advantage of employment opportunities in order to reduce poverty (UNESCO, 2010). It is the valuable thing that society can bequeath its membership. It helps fight ignorance and the

acquisition of knowledge creating a better citizenry in terms of prospects in life (Fanuel, 2011). Under the education for all (EFA) program driven by UNESCO, many Countries have committed to having universal environment in primary education by the year 2015 and this has made it compulsory for children to receive primary education in many countries, (Karlusky, 2010).

Globally, measures to improve education have been put in place to improve the standards and quality in educational outcomes (Kenny C, 2010). According to World Bank (2015), many countries over the world have embraced the notion of basic education to include secondary schooling that is significant of individual's future life. The transitional toolkits like the National Alliance for Secondary Education and

Transition (NASET, 2015) articulate guide on secondary education for constructive change on transition practices and policies worldwide. Secondary schooling is a bridge between primary and university education that caters for students of age brackets of between 15-18 years. It plays important role in creating the country human resource based at a higher level than primary education.

In Kenya, Secondary education examination marks the termination of the four years of secondary education in the Kenyan education system which basically used for selection into university and the tertiary training colleges (MOE, 2013). Secondary education is regarded to as the route to economic prosperity, the key to scientific and technological advancement, and the means to combat unemployment and foundation to social equality. Transition from secondary education into university education is of great importance since higher education institutions plays a crucial role of building capacity for generation, adaptation, processing, dissemination and utilization of knowledge and innovation into social and economic development (G.O.K, 2016). The transition of the students from primary school system to secondary school system then form the backbone of an individual student to the said benefits of education system to the individual, family and to the society in general.

In Isinya Sub County predominantly occupied by the Maasai people has a various challenge. Some of the challenges the researcher seeks to find out are vast distance between schools of about 30 kilometers apart, cultural practices that affect the education system, low teacher-learner ration especially in rural schools, prevalence of high levels of poverty which affect the education of the learners hence affect the transition to various levels of education.

Objective

To determine the extent to which cultural practices influences the transition rates from primary to secondary schools in Isinya sub county, Kajiado County.

2. Literature review

The cultures of the Maasai people who are the indigenous people and majority occupants of Isinya Sub County have the following characteristics that affect their way of life.

a) The Maasai people way of life.

The Maasai people are a semi-nomadic Nilotic ethnic group. Because pastoralism is their way of life, the Maasai live mainly in the grasslands of the Great Rift Valley. They have been nomadic for quite a long time but are now semi-nomadic due to modernization coupled with foreign land tenure systems. The language of the Maasai people is known as Maa.

The community's way of life has been changing with time due to loss of land. Large tracks of land have been excised off by the Government as National parks and game reserves. This excision denies them grazing rights in these areas and they have thus been forced to adopt a sedentary lifestyle. The community is not afraid of living side by side with wild life even the fiercest among them like lions and cheetahs. The Maasai do not kill wild animals for meat perhaps because they have enough livestock for meat supply. The community places a great premium on their old age tradition of having warriors – who were the army. The young people between the ages of 20 and 30 years protect the community from external attacks. The Maasai are also known for the famous traditional dance that involves swinging the neck plus jumping in some uniform motion in one spot. Only men danced and jumped in this characteristic manner. The women sang by swinging their necks clad with all sorts of ornaments / necklaces.

People of the Maasai tribe live in small settlements of approximately 10-20 huts per village. A number of households constitute a Manyatta (Kituyi Mukhisa 1990). The kraal (a traditional homestead or group of huts) is surrounded by a thorn bush fence, which acted as the barbed wire, guarding the people and their animals against enemies. Women are the architects and builders of these traditional houses and it was indeed a taboo for a man to be found performing that role. The huts are built using branches, twigs and grass with a cement of cow dung made soft using cows' urine. The mixture is as strong as cement after it gets dried in the sun and does not smell. In the inside animal skins and cushions of dry grasses are used for beddings. The family sleeps on these beds of woven branches cushioned with dry grass and animals' skins. People particularly adults cannot stand straight up while inside of the hut due to its height. The only openings that there are in the hut include the doorway and a small opening made either in the roof or wall which allows smoke from a continually blazing fire inside to escape. Dried cow dung is used to fuel the fire.

Their rites of passage and traditional ceremonies are well defined and taken very seriously. Elders play a very important role in the community when it comes to these rites and they were highly respected (Kituyi Mukhisa 1990). Some rites are meant to cleanse young people of their wrongdoing so that they do not move on to adulthood without sanctity. Children and/or young people who have gone through the various rites of passage are appointed to take others through the same. They are to act either as mentors or simply associate to help each other grow up in obedience to the requirements of the traditional laws.

The role of everyone is clearly defined. The women and girls primarily, it is their responsibility to milk the cows, fetch water and firewood, and prepare food for the family. For the boys, fifteen is the coming of age and several rituals are performed before they become circumcised and end up as Morans (young warriors). The Morans were traditionally allowed to invade other communities to 'repossess' the cows and this would not according to them amount to stealing.

Knowledge was passed from generation to generation orally. Nothing at all was written. Even today, very little has been documented. The transmission of knowledge was done through a number of ways including story telling especially by grandmothers. Boys and girls gathered at the grandmother's hut in the evening and stories would be narrated. The stories were systematic and each carried an important theme and lesson.

b) Leadership systems of the Maasai

The Maasai community is paternal meaning that most major decisions are made by and in favor of the man. Duties and responsibilities were clearly segregated. The elderly men managed the day-to-day affairs of the community. They gave direction on the way things are supposed to be. They were advisors whenever hard decisions were to be made and mediators in case there was conflict to be resolved. Some of the decisions they made involved issues of marriage for instance setting the bride price and determining course of action in case of a family relations dispute, deciding whether to advance to war against an aggressor, setting the age sets and age groups and determining where one should stop and/or the other begins, define what behavior is considered defiant and the remedy or corresponding punishment, setting standards of acceptable behavior for all members of society, setting precedence on emerging issues (equal to making new laws) and the like. At the family level, there was minimal consultation. The man directed and would announce whatever had to be done. At the community level the story is pretty much the same. Other people may be allowed to give their views but the ultimate decision rested with the elders. The women took care of children, cooked for the family, fetched water and fire wood, made and maintained the houses. The girls assisted women to perform their roles as the former get mentored to take up those roles in future. The warriors known for their famous name of morans served as the army protecting the community from all intrusions and attacks. The role of herding was primarily theirs and they shared this responsibility with the boys as they mentor them.

Selection of leaders among the Maasai people was a very important exercise. No one insinuated that they aspired to lead. There was no clamor for position in society. The others saw leadership qualities in a person and pushed or passed recommendations to have him as their leader. It was the prerogative of the elders to select the leaders into various positions and the criteria was very clear. History formed some important consideration in that one's parents must have been good people. One also had to be hardworking, honest, generous, kind and peace loving. In this regard therefore not, everyone qualified to be a leader. People understood that leadership came with a lot of responsibility to serve the others. Most often those appointed had to be persuaded and urged to accept the positions because of the burden that it entailed. Leadership involved coordination of community activities, assisting the poor, resolving conflicts and being involved in decision making in times of uncertainty. The leaders genuinely pursued goals that enhanced the general good of the subjects and they did not expect anything in return. The community was very superstitious and the functions of leadership could not be so separated from religious activities. This trend coupled with water tight systems to enforce honesty ensured that no leader was corrupt in any way. The leadership principles were enshrined in a set of oral traditional beliefs transmitted through myths, proverbs, saying.

3. Methodology

This study used the convergent and concurrent research model which is a design used for analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. A researcher uses the concurrent research design when the aim is to merge the quantitative and qualitative data to address the study objectives (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research involves field work, which means that the researcher must go to the settings or institution to observe behavior, experiences and perspectives in their natural settings (Mirriam, 1998 cited in Buthelezi, 2014).

4. Results

Culture and Effect on Learning

The community of study is deeply cultured, traditional ceremonies and festivals are common. These are often matched with practices such as female genital mutilation, early and childhood marriages which further exacerbate the plight of the girl child. These practices largely affect the education and transition of children; as children take time away to attend to the cultural activities, among them never return to school. Those who get married or pregnancy are rarely rescued and efforts on school re-entry are minimal in the area of study. From the study the researcher found out that early marriages and teenage pregnancies are the most prevalent. This is a resultant of many cultural ceremonies and the perception created after attendance of these activities. Apathy for education was also very high due the importance the community puts to the cultural activities as the traditions which are highly valued. The male learners were more prone to this problem compared to their female counter-parts. Female genital mutilation though prevalence was also high, the responds feeling was its effects was not very high as compared to teenage pregnancies, early marriages and apathy for education.

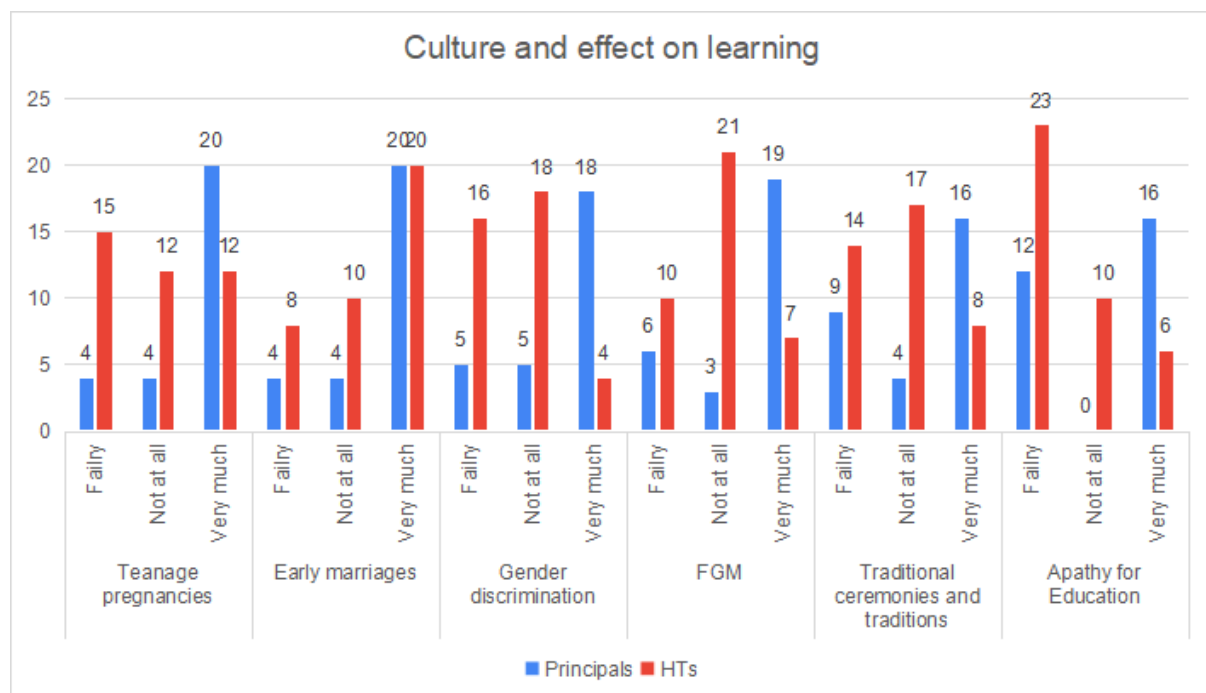


Figure 1: Culture and Effect on Learning

a) Discussion Cultural factors and their effect on Education and transition:

Teenage pregnancies, early marriages, gender discrimination, FGM, traditional ceremonies and traditions apathy for education were seen to greatly affect education and transition. The fact that the community of study is deeply rooted in culture further aggravated the situation through numerous traditional ceremonies and activities.

Use of peer role models; as a way to encourage other learners, peers who have excelled academically are used to motivate others. This is practice that is not common in the community under study may inhibit positive encouragement on learning and thus transition.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study was able to establish the challenges of school transition as set in the sample size and study area. The objectives of the study as well as the questions set therein have been to a large extent been addressed by the study.

6. Recommendations

To address the challenges sighted in the study and in cognizant to the suggestions provided by the respondents, the study recommends the following:

- I. Community sensitization on education. There is need for community sensitization on education and specifically the role of parents in educating their children. Whilst the researcher acknowledges the various gaps that may inhibit learning and transition, he feels that community attitude especially that of parents on the education of their children is paramount and comes out as priority one.
- II. Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials; as sighted to be one big challenge to teachers as well as learners, the issue around teaching and learning materials cannot be over emphasis. The researcher calls on relevant parties to consider this a clarion call and pay the needed contribution to improve on the situation. Primarily, the researcher calls on the following:
- III. Ministry of Education- ensure adequate fund allocation to schools to enable provision of materials especially the day secondary schools and the primary schools.
- IV. School Management Boards: foster alternative resource mobilization beyond depending on government and parents to enhance teaching/ learning materials provisions i.e. startup income generating activities for the schools.
- V. Parents and General Community; Consider provision of materials to their children as their innate responsibility regardless of whether government or other parties shall or not provide same.
- VI. Partners and donor community: consider supplementing Government and parents' efforts in provision of learning materials and support transition of learners.
- VII. Collaboration from relevant sector players; the challenges of transition as sighted in the research are far beyond the capacity of any one party to address single handedly. Transition is an influence of many factors including resources, culture and even attitude. These will be addressed well by different sector players in both the public and NGO

sector. The researcher thus recommends the need to take a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing transition.

In conclusion, the survey was able to establish the challenges affecting Education transition in the area of study. The lack of materials, parents' aloofness in the education of their children, lack of role models is some of the drawback to transition whose need to address is now rather than later. As a human and constitutional right, every individual (and community by extension) deserves a quality education, which of course incorporates quality transition and the area under study is not an exception.

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