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Abstract

Purpose: This study examined the persistent educational marginalization of youth in Northeastern Kenya, a region historically overlooked since the colonial era. The study also looks at the government's and non-governmental organizations' attempts and opportunities to enhance the education sector using the devolution structure included in Kenya's new constitution.

Methodology: A mixed-methods research design was proposed to investigate these issues comprehensively. Quantitative data, analyzed through descriptive statistics, explored enrollment patterns, dropout rates, and resource distribution, while qualitative thematic analysis captured the lived experiences of affected communities, cultural attitudes towards education, and the effectiveness of government policies.

Findings: Findings indicated that insecurity, forced migration, and a lack of culturally sensitive policies perpetuate educational inequality in Northeastern Kenya. Limited awareness of the region's unique needs further hampers development efforts.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study recommends leveraging Kenya's devolved governance structure to direct targeted resources, retain teachers, and foster community engagement. Addressing security concerns and integrating cultural practices into education policy are vital for improving educational outcomes in this marginalized region.

Keywords: *Marginalization, Education, Insecurity, Equity, Devolution*

Back ground information

Education marginalization in Northern Kenya is a multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive approach involving improvements in infrastructure, government policies, cultural change, and increased community involvement. Addressing these challenges will require sustained investment, collaboration between the government, NGOs, and local communities, as well as a concerted effort to ensure that education is accessible and equitable for all children, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. The 2010 Constitution ushered in a new era of Kenyan politics and put an end to a troubled past. However, it also opens up new channels for marginalization and regional imbalances to arise because of the new county structures, even as it offers significant improvements in how the nation's affairs are conducted and allows people more voice and involvement through the devolved system. The standards for evaluating the advancement of Education for All are still the objectives set at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000. A lot has been accomplished. The fact that some of the poorest nations in the world have made progress in a variety of areas shows how effective policies and strong national leadership can have an impact. Because young girls and women continue to face structural disadvantages, gender is still a focus area. Disadvantages stemming from poverty and social discrimination must also be addressed by strategies meant to equalize educational opportunities.

Literature review

In April 1964, the Ominde Commission was established to examine the education system and offer suggestions for improving its relevance to the nation. The Commission supported free primary education as the way forward for Kenya's educational system because it was one of the main recommendations about the necessity of universal education in the nation. Additionally, the Commission suggested that additional funding be allocated to educationally marginalized areas that is, to areas with enrollments below the national average. The Commission suggested that initially, greater funds be allocated to secondary and college education rather than primary schools to meet the nation's workforce needs (Cooksey et al., 1994:202).

For the simple reason that their parents cannot afford to keep them in school, thousands of children in northern Kenya are denied the opportunity to receive an education. A. Y. Abdi (2012). Girls' education is generally seen in our areas as being less valuable than that of boys, and customs like early marriage further compound this disadvantage. It takes political will supported by workable policies to reach marginalized children (Abdi, I., 2010). When governments gathered in Jomtien, Kenya, in 1990 for the World Conference on Education for All, they realized that severe disparities were impeding educational advancement, especially for girls. They urged active commitment to reach underserved groups, such as the poor, remote rural populations, especially pastoralist communities, and those impacted by conflict, and stated that consistent measures must be taken to reduce disparities (UNESCO 1990).

In northern Kenya, the pastoralist lifestyle passed down from grandparents, unjust economic arrangements, and unethical community practices all contribute to marginalization in education. Anderson, D. (2005). A minor economic shock brought on by a disease, conflict, or drought can push parents to adopt coping mechanisms that are detrimental to the welfare of their kids. In our society, girls are frequently the first to experience the consequences. Anderson, D. (2005). For many of these kids, combining employment and education is a losing battle. The northeastern pastoralist community experiences extremely high levels of educational marginalization because their livelihoods require them to move around a lot and because their children must travel great distances with their animals in search of pasture and water, depriving them of access to high-quality education. ALRMP, 2004. To assist this community, the Kenyan government implemented mobile schools, and various communities in the northeast are currently testing the idea. According to Ruto et al. (2009), the government has little involvement in pilot mobile schools, which are primarily the product of nongovernmental organizations like the Catholic Church, Aga Khan Foundation, ALRMP, and Oxfam International. For schools to fully benefit from mobile learning, they need a lot of resources as well as the full support and dedication of the government and non-governmental organizations (Abdi, 2010). Less success has been achieved in implementing mobile schooling for nomads, and the community continues to be marginalized (Souza, 2006). According to Ruto et al. (2009), mobile schooling is essentially an attempt to adjust education to the socioeconomic lifestyle of nomadic people by enabling the teacher or teachers to travel with the students and their families. In the Northeast, camels or donkeys are used to transport and pack school supplies. The teacher or teachers would instruct various age groups or grade levels during designated times of the day, allowing children to participate in family business of caring for their livestock. Learning would take place at a makeshift school at various locations along the migration route or under the shade of a tree or a tent (Abdi, 2010). Furthermore, some contend that the curriculum is unrelated to the particular needs of pastoral nomads because Kenyan schools follow a single, standard curriculum created by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) despite contextual variations (Ruto et al. 2009); as a result, most pastoral nomads might not view education as a worthwhile investment. This disparity could be a factor in parents' lack of dedication.

Theories

Educational marginalization in Northern Kenya can be explored through several theoretical frameworks that help explain the social, economic, political, and cultural dynamics that contribute to the unequal access to education in the region. These theories shed light on the structural barriers and contextual factors that perpetuate educational disparities. Below are some of the key theories that are relevant in understanding educational marginalization in Northern Kenya:

1. Social Reproduction Theory (Pierre Bourdieu). Social Reproduction Theory, proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, posits that education systems often reproduce social inequalities and cultural

norms that favor certain groups while marginalizing others. In the case of Northern Kenya, the dominant cultural and economic practices (such as pastoralism, early marriages, and gender inequality) create barriers to education, particularly for girls and marginalized communities. **Application:** In Northern Kenya, where communities are largely pastoralist, education is often seen as secondary to traditional ways of life. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital can be used to explain how families in the region may prioritize practical skills over formal education, and how those with more educational capital (from wealthier or urban areas) are better able to succeed in the educational system. This cultural bias towards pastoralism or traditional practices can marginalize education, especially for girls and those in poor, remote areas.

2. Critical Pedagogy (Paulo Freire). Critical Pedagogy, as developed by Paulo Freire, emphasizes the need for education systems to empower marginalized groups by addressing social inequalities and allowing students to critically engage with their lived realities. It argues for an education system that challenges the status quo, promotes social justice, and transforms the oppressive conditions that create inequality. **Application:** In Northern Kenya, education could be seen as a tool for empowerment if it is adapted to the local context. Critical Pedagogy would suggest that education systems in the region should acknowledge and incorporate local knowledge and culture (e.g., pastoralism and indigenous ways of learning), while also equipping students with the skills to critically examine their socio-economic and political realities. For instance, a curriculum that addresses gender inequality, economic marginalization, and local conflicts could help students better understand their social context and the need for change.

3. Dependency Theory (Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein). Dependency Theory argues that underdeveloped countries, or regions within countries, remain in a state of perpetual economic and educational underdevelopment due to their dependence on wealthier, more developed areas. This theory suggests that the economic and political systems are structured in a way that ensures peripheral regions are kept in a subordinate position. **Application:** Northern Kenya, historically marginalized by the central government, experiences a form of "educational dependency" where the region's education system remains underdeveloped due to lack of investment, resources, and infrastructure. The central government's neglect and the region's reliance on aid from NGOs and international organizations have not been sufficient to provide equitable access to quality education. The region's dependence on external support and resources perpetuates the educational disparity, leading to systemic inequality.

Research gaps

Educational marginalization in Northern Kenya has been the subject of various studies, but there are still several research gaps that need to be addressed to fully understand the complexities and devise effective solutions.

1. Impact of Pastoralism on Education. While there is some research on the influence of pastoralism on education in Northern Kenya, there is a need for more detailed studies that explore how the mobility associated with pastoralism affects school attendance, performance, and dropout rates. Additionally, studies that analyze how the education system can adapt to these nomadic lifestyles would be valuable. Examining the effectiveness of mobile schools, flexible learning schedules, or community-based education models that can accommodate pastoralist lifestyles while providing quality education.

2. Gendered Barriers to Education. Although gender inequality is often highlighted as a barrier to education in Northern Kenya, more research is needed to explore the nuanced gender-specific challenges, especially at the intersection of ethnicity, poverty, and cultural norms. Additionally, there is a need for more research into the effectiveness of gender-sensitive educational policies and interventions. Investigating the social, cultural, and economic factors that prevent girls from attending or completing school, and assessing the impact of programs aimed at promoting girls' education in the region, such as mentorship or scholarship programs.

3. Effectiveness of Government Policies. There has been limited research on the effectiveness of government policies like Free Primary Education (FPE) and the provision of resources in Northern Kenya. While these policies are intended to reduce educational inequalities, little is known about how they have been implemented and whether they have successfully reached marginalized communities in the region. Conducting in-depth evaluations of how well government education policies are implemented in remote areas, including their impact on enrollment, retention, and educational outcomes. Research also examined the allocation of resources to marginalized regions and whether it is adequate.

Research design

A **mixed-methods** approach was ideal to capture both broad statistical trends and in-depth contextual factors. The design involved:

Quantitative Data: To gather broad, measurable information on educational access, enrollment rates, drop-out rates, and literacy levels.

Qualitative Data: To gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of marginalized communities and explore the specific challenges and barriers that hinder education.

Population and Sampling

The **study population** focused on marginalized communities within Northern Kenya, specifically in regions like Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Turkana, and Marsabit. These areas are characterized by educational disparities, and the study aims to understand the various factors contributing to educational marginalization.

In this study, the goal was to sample approximately 300 sample are collected and **200 people** from the marginalized communities of Northern Kenya, ensuring a diverse representation of key stakeholders in the educational process. The sample included:

- **50 Primary School Students**
- **100 Teachers (Primary and Secondary)**
- **50 Parents and Community Leaders**

Selection Criteria: These were children attending primary schools across different regions (Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Turkana, and Marsabit). Efforts were made to select students from both rural and urban schools, ensuring representation from a variety of local communities.

Stratified Random Sampling: To ensure a representative sample from each of the five regions, 10 primary school students were selected from each region. Schools were selected randomly, and within each school, 10 students were randomly selected to participate in the study. The study sought to understand the students' educational experiences, challenges they face in attending school, and reasons for school dropout.

Teachers (100)

Selection Criteria: Teachers from both primary and secondary schools in the targeted regions were sampled. These teachers varied in terms of experience and subject taught to provide a well-rounded view of the educational challenges and opportunities in Northern Kenya. Teachers were stratified based on school level (primary and secondary). From each level, 50 teachers will be randomly selected from the five regions. For instance, in each region (Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Turkana, Marsabit), 10 primary school teachers and 10 secondary school teachers were selected, totaling 50 teachers per region. The study investigated challenges such as resource limitations, student attendance, teacher retention, and the impact of geographical, cultural, and security issues on teaching.

Parents and Community Leaders (50)

Selection Criteria: This group included parents whose children were enrolled in primary and secondary schools, as well as community leaders who influence or have a role in local education policies or community attitudes towards education:

Purposive Sampling: Since this group needs to be carefully selected based on their roles, purposeful sampling were used to identify parents and community leaders who are involved in education-related decision-making. In each of the five regions, 10 participants were selected, with a mix of parents (5) and community leaders (5) per region. Community leaders could include local elders, village chiefs, and religious leaders. The focused on understanding the socio-cultural and economic factors influencing educational decisions at the household and community levels.

Additionally, community leaders were asked about their perspectives on the role of education in their communities and the effectiveness of educational policies.

Data Collection and Analysis

Surveys and questionnaires were administered to the students and teachers to collect data on enrollment, attendance, dropout rates, and the challenges they face in accessing education. Additionally, interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents, community leaders, and teachers provided deeper insights into the socio-cultural, economic, and geographical barriers to education. For quantitative data, descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages, means) were used to analyze patterns in school enrollment, dropout rates, and resource availability. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes around educational challenges, cultural attitudes, and the impact of government policies.

Discussion

In education, there is no one-size-fits-all plan for overcoming marginalization. Underlying issues like gender inequality, social inequality, and geographic gaps must be addressed by policies. Abkula, D., Birch, and D. Hujale (2010). Equalizing opportunity entails addressing unequal power dynamics in each of these domains. The disparities that marginalized people experience begin in early childhood and persist into school age. They are very resistant to change and very involved (Carr-Hill, R. & Peart, E., 2005). However, a persistent political commitment to social justice, equal opportunity, and fundamental rights can lead to progress. Some of the most marginalized children may be able to access education through more adaptable methods of instruction and multigrid teaching in isolated locations.

The Kenyan government appears to pledge to address the concerns of curriculum accessibility, equity, and general educational relevance for all students, particularly under the recently enacted constitution (Abdi, 2012). Political brinkmanship and corruption in the appropriation of scarce public resources have been the main issues (Gathaka, 2012). Northeastern is a prime illustration of the consequences of historical discrimination and incompetence in government. To fully address the complex needs of people in the northeast, a multifaceted approach is required. Therefore, in addition to the need for sufficient food, safety and security, political empowerment, economic vitality, and sociocultural activities that are in line with contemporary society, education in the Northeast must be addressed.

In Kenya, boarding schools are widespread, especially in Northern Kenya, where primary schools are exclusively for one sex. These public, single-sex boarding schools have been effective in educating young people throughout the country. G.S. Eshiwani (1985). Students nationwide believe that boarding schools offer consistency and stability (Gachanga, T. 2014). For students who might not otherwise have access to these services, schools can offer meals and health programs (GoK, 2012). Increasing enrollment and maintaining attendance is a crucial objective,

especially for underprivileged kids. In an area where there is a persistent food scarcity that causes malnutrition, several health issues, and occasionally famine-related fatalities, a meals program component is crucial for both day and boarding schools (Serna, 2011). The government recognizes that school meal programs will have a positive effect on teachers' and students' access to and retention in school (Ministry of Education, 2008). School-age children's overall academic success is correlated with their health and nutrition (GoK, 2012).

In northeastern Kenya, various communities are experimenting with the idea of mobile schools. With little assistance from the government, nongovernmental organizations (such as the Catholic Church, Aga Khan Foundation, ALRMP, and Oxfam International) are the ones who started the pilot mobile schools (Ruto et al., 2009). In order for schools to fully benefit from mobile learning, they need a lot of resources as well as the full support and dedication of the government and nongovernmental organizations (Abdi, 2010). According to research, other nations, like Nigeria, have successfully adopted mobile schooling for nomads (Souza, 2006).

In the northeast, camels or donkeys are used to transport and pack mobile schools. The teacher or teachers would instruct various age groups or grade levels during designated times of the day, allowing children to participate in the family business of caring for their livestock. Learning would take place at a makeshift school at various locations along the migration route or under the shade of a tree or a tent (Abdi, 2010). Furthermore, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) created the standard curriculum that Kenyan schools follow. Despite contextual variations, some contend that the curriculum is unrelated to the special requirements of pastoral nomads (Ruto et al. 2009); as a result, most pastoral nomads may not think about attending school.

A significant turning point for the Kenyan people was the adoption of the new Constitution on August 4, 2010, which replaced the one that had existed since the country's independence in 1963. This event is known as the "rebirth of the nation" (Creste, 2010). The decentralization of governance from a strong central government to a local, people-centered management framework is a significant feature of the new constitution. People believe that decentralization will change the way resources are managed and enhance education in northern Kenya by doing away with the national government's long-standing condescending attitude. Northern County's devolution was "a gift from God." It gave the county a fresh start and gave people a sense of identity and value, which sparked renewed optimism for a prosperous future. Additionally, it gave the locals a chance to map out a potential strategy for resolving the issues of marginalization.

Challenge

Access to basic livelihoods is made extremely difficult in the northeastern region due to the government's lack of funding for much-needed development projects (such as roads, clean water, hospitals, etc.). While marginalizing areas thought to be in the opposition or politically unviable, state resources and infrastructure development are directed toward areas where national political

leaders have political support or can win electoral votes. In order to secure a large number of votes in general elections, national leaders have primarily targeted densely populated areas.

Nomadic pastoralists are unlikely to have a place they would consider their permanent home because of their constant mobility. As they travel long distances with their livestock, men are occasionally compelled to spend months apart from their families. Children are unable to attend traditional schools because they are compelled to travel hundreds of kilometers in harsh jungles with their families on these nomadic expeditions for several months at a time. Due to their lack of literacy, parents are also unable to provide for their children's formal education while they are traveling. Thus, livestock is the only asset that parents can leave to their offspring as an inheritance. The children are not given the opportunity to receive a formal education since they are left to care for their livestock, get married, and start families after being initiated into youth and adulthood (e.g., circumcision and FGM) (Birch, Cavanna, Abkula, & Hujale, 2010). They have been living nomadic lifestyles for generations, and they will continue to do so if their opportunities and living conditions do not change. The Kenyan government hasn't worked hard to develop the area, provide alternative sources of income, irrigate the land to prevent the need for constant movement, or introduce creative ways to educate the adults and children in this area because of neglect and marginalization.

The majority of communities in the northeast engage in female genital mutilation. For centuries, the Somali community in Kenya (as well as those in native Somalia) has engaged in infibulation, the most severe type of female genital cutting (FGC) (Jaldesa, Askew, Njue, & Wanjiru, 2005). According to the belief that female genital mutilation is a rite of passage, aids in maintaining girls' sexual purity, and gets them ready for marriage, these practices are frequently ingrained in the culture of some communities (Jaldesa 2005). In pastoralist communities, FGM has a major influence on the education of girls, especially when combined with early and forced marriages. Girls are only allowed to perform basic household tasks, such as cooking, taking care of their siblings, and walking great distances to find water; education is viewed as secondary and out of reach. These stated views present a difficult situation for girls' education and paint a rather bleak picture for girls in northeastern Kenya. Due in large part to the link between the practice and cultural beliefs, the northeastern region of Kenya has made very little progress in ending the practice, while other regions have made significant strides.

Conclusion

In the context of the new Kenyan Constitution, a new sense of hope has emerged against the historical backdrop of overt and covert discrimination, marginalization, and isolation in northeastern Kenya. The Kenyan government should enact laws that tackle the region's intricate problems to recognize years of disregard for the northeastern area. The northeast should not be treated on the same level as the other regions, and the government should make amends by implementing a comprehensive, multifaceted policy framework when allocating resources. With

willing partners like non-governmental organizations, the Kenyan government must lead a coalition of stakeholders to implement an action-based policy framework for change in the lives of the marginalized communities in the northeast. People in the northeast have an opportunity to actively participate in determining their future with the concept of devolution, which aims to make representation and resource distribution easier.

Recommendation

The three northeastern county governors must urgently pursue a bold and ambitious agenda in the areas of education, security, and the economy. People will have more opportunities for economic viability if the agenda starts to change the area. Enforcing attendance and granting access to education are essential for constructing the future. Additionally, adult education is a worthwhile endeavor.

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