

Promoting participation in primary education among the Maasai pastoralists in Longido district, Tanzania

Cecilia Peter Swai

PhD (Education) Thesis

University of Dar es Salaam, School of Education, 2017

The purpose of this study was to investigate the promotion of participation in primary education among the pastoral Maasai communities in Longido District. Specifically, the study explored the pastoralists' views on the value of primary education, assessed the levels of participation, examined the challenges experienced by pupils, explored the pastoralists' preferences on education and finally examined the educational intervention programmes availed to pastoralists. The study was guided by the theory of social justice and interpretive paradigm whereby social reality was constructed by the people who have experienced it. The study used a qualitative research approach and a multiple embedded case study design. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the study participants who were school heads, pupils, parents and educational officers. Face to face semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and documentary were used in data collection process. Data were analysed qualitatively using cohort formula analysis and thematic analysis method. NVivo software programme assisted in getting the themes emerged from the study. The study revealed several key issues. Firstly, the pastoral Maasai had low and negative perceptions on the value of primary education. This made them to assign a high priority to herding livestock than education. They associated education with cultural alienation and loss of labour power. Secondly, children participation in education was very low both in transition and completion rates. For example, less than half of the enrolled children in Grade One in 2008 completed Grade Seven in 2014. Thirdly, pupils experienced several social-cultural and economic challenges in participating in primary education; the major challenge being shortage of essential needs. Fourth, the study findings revealed that parents who had enrolled their children to school suggested several reforms on how to improve participation in education. These include intensive government support to schools, to establish a strong relationship between school and community and to ensure that children have mastered the reading, writing and numeracy skills before completing primary education. Fifth, research findings further revealed that boarding and satellite schools were the only opportunities available for widening the possibility of participation of

pastoralists in education. The study calls for education stakeholders to carry on sensitization campaigns to every individual, family and pastoral Maasai community on the value and role of primary education. The campaign should go hand -in -hand with the use of role models and abandoning the cultural norms that negatively affect participation in education. It is also proposed that there is a need for government to enforce compulsory law to parents whose school-aged children are not in school. Moreover, efforts in construction of new and enough boarding schools should be made as it is one of the most effective practices of promoting pastoral Maasai participation in education. Further, a clear national policy should be developed by government in order to promote pastoral participation in education. The study has provided a useful knowledge of social justice education among the pastoral Maasai and a model that can be employed by the government and other educational stakeholders in promoting participation of pastoral Maasai in education. With regard to further research, the study recommends that a similar study be done on participation in primary education among the other marginalized communities.