

Determinants of Children's Access to Early Childhood Education among Nomadic Pastoralists of Marsabit North Sub-County, Kenya.

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Abstract

Education has been regarded as the most powerful tool for acquisition of knowledge and skills pertinent for transformation of lives. Both locally and globally many commitments have been made to improve education for all children. Through the initiation of free primary education in 2003, Kenya strived to open access for all children particularly for the hard to reach groups like the nomadic pastoralists. However, inspite all the initiatives and commitments, there are still 57 million children of school going age out of school. The current study explored the determinants of children's access to early childhood education among the nomadic pastoralists in Turbi Division, Marsabit North Sub- County. The study was guided by Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Mixed methods research design was employed in the study. The target population was parents, head teachers, teachers, chiefs and area Education Officers in Turbi Division. Purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample villages. From the five villages sampled, 50% (78 out of 156 households), 67% (4 out of the 6 head teachers from 6 primary schools), 64% (16 of the 25 ECE teachers), 40% (2 out of 5 area chiefs) and two Area Education Officers were selected giving a. total sample of 90 respondents. The sample size was 102 respondents including 78 parents, 4 head teachers, 16 teachers, 2 chiefs and 2 Area Education officers. Interview schedule and focus group discussion were used to collect data. Data was analyzed by both qualitative and quantitative procedures. Descriptive analysis was done using SPSS v21 giving means, percentages and frequencies. Data was presented in tables and charts. The results showed that majority of children in the division did not have access to early childhood education. Factors affecting children's access to early childhood education were categorized as socio-cultural, socio-economic and environmental. Socio-cultural factors such as participation in cultural ceremonies, livestock labour needs, early betrothal for marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, fear of early pregnancies and care of siblings hindered children's access to early childhood education. Socio-economic factors that hindered access to early childhood education included parents' occupation, parents' level of education and income. Environmental factors that hindered children's access to education included; distance from home to school, harsh climatic conditions and rough terrain. The study recommends that varied strategies matching nomadic lifestyle like mobile and trailer schools should be used to improve children's access to early childhood education.

Key words: Determinants of Children's Access, Early Childhood Education, Nomadic Pastoralists, Marsabit North Sub-County, Kenya

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