

## **A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE EFFECT OF CHILD LABOUR ON PARTICIPATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In spite of the recorded tremendous achievements realized through the offer of primary based education that is free or highly subsidized, there remains a great number of factors that affect how children participate in school activities in the primary schools in Kenya. Child labour is termed as one of the most pertinent issues that affect the contemporary society in the world today. However, many people have given this issue a diminutive attention, even though it is a detrimental concept to the development of children in countless ways. Children are normally termed as the bridge that links one generation to another. This means that threatening today's child by not giving appropriate nurture as well threatens the society of tomorrow. Child labour affects children in a negative way; specifically their participation in school. Research that is reported has shown that most children, especially coming from economically challenged background are exposed to work that leads them to participate poorly in their schooling activities. This paper provides an impressive discussion of critical analysis on how child labour affects the level to which children participate in the primary schools. Specifically, it shows how child labour affects enrollment, attendance, transition and completion. To this point, it remains crucial that there is a need for an approach that is consultative, which will ensure that every stakeholder be it government, parents, administrative authorities, school administration and teachers is involved to promote the participation of children in schools as well as access to quality education. The submission of this study remains that; considering the reported experiences regarding what pupils undergo due to their exposure to child labour, it is needful that programs be developed and implemented, which will ensure that the participation of children in school is appropriate, despite their diverse background and circumstances. The researchers carried out this study qualitatively by critically analyzing the effects of child labour on participation of children in primary school. This method was essential for this study because it allowed the researchers to bring out the critique of the effects of child labour as a positive method through which enrollment, transition, completion and attendance can easily be related to child labour in Kenya. The critique helps in justifying the reasons as to why child labour needs to be considered as a vice, and get eliminated so that children can acquire quality education.

**Key words:** Child labour, participation, enrollment, attendance, completion, attendance, transition

## 1.0 Introduction

Work has been in existence since the beginning of history, and is considered as part of success of humanity. For example, in traditional set up in Africa, labour was usually divided on gender and age basis, among men and women. Men's work included community defense, clearing and hunting, while women were gathering roots and fruits, caring for children as well as household chores. Children learnt how to work through imitation, instructions as well as apprenticeship. Therefore, children engagement in labour is not new, only that it has taken a new dimension that leaves children exploited economically. The ILO (International Labour Organization) (2002) has given estimations that approximately two hundred and fifty million children are exposed to child labour, of which, the majority of them work under conditions that are harmful. This means that children subjected to labour face circumstances that detriment their intellectual, physical as well as moral development.

The activities to which children get engaged in by their parents to assist them or to help them in learning about tasks that come with graduation to adulthood are termed to be child work, and are acceptable in the process of upbringing. However, when work deviates from the upbringing routine to responsibility, this moves towards being termed as child labour, especially when parents make their children do hard work at a tender age, work on a full-time basis, have long hours of work, work exerting undue social, psychological and physical pressures. Child labour is as well associated with work involving various countless responsibilities, that which is denying children the opportunities of pursuing their education, and at the same time interfering and undermining the dignity as well as the self esteem of children (NCPD, 1999).

The situation of child labour in Africa is worse as compared to other parts of the world, due to high levels of poverty as well as other socioeconomic factors. These factors normally force children to be involved in heavy responsibilities when very young, and the work they engage in is hazardous, hence; their lives are left in jeopardy. African children are involved in domestic work, including work in agriculture-based farms, activities that are commercial, industrial work, in addition to quarrying and begging along the streets of towns. Hard work has negative effects on children because it hinders them from active participation in school, mainly due to pressure given to them by parents. A study carried out by Emily & Claudia (2005), on schooling processes in Ghana, whenever a new sibling was born in a family, this threatened the life of a young girl by exposing her to dropping out of school. In Tanzania's countryside, an approximate number of 25,000 children are said to be engaged in work carried out in hazardous conditions (Lloyd and Brandon, 1994).

Child labour has its history dating back to the days of pre-independence in Kenya. This period saw Kenyans living in the settlements of the white send their children who worked in the settlers' homes as well as farms so that the families could get money to meet poll taxes that had been imposed on Africans. The information that is available today shows that; there are escalating and widespread numbers of children, who are made to perform hard work in both rural and urban settings, which poses a threat to both the economic and social developments. A survey conducted by the MPND (Ministry of Planning and National Development) (2007), in the period 2005/2006, there existed

approximately 3,768,911 children who were at the age of between 5 and 17 years who were exposed to child labour, the majority being in subsistence as well as commercial farming, domestic work as well as in fishing activities. The children involved in child labour were found to be out of school for the better part of the year. Child labour affects the participation of children negatively making them either not be enrolled in school, low attendance, failing to undergo transition to secondary schools after primary school due to low performance, or even total failure to complete school.

## **2.0 Statement of the problem**

There are many recorded achievements realized through Kenya's offer for primary based education that is free or highly subsidized, however, there remains rampant factors affecting how children participate in school activities in the primary schools in Kenya. A survey conducted by MPND (Ministry for Planning & National development) (2007) capturing the years 2005 and 2006 found out that an approximate value of 3.9 millions of children in Kenya were subject child labour. This figure represented 20.9% of the population that was working. The year 2008 saw the report reveal that at least 2 million children in Kenya live as child labourers. The Kenyan government has been making efforts for ensuring that child labour becomes a historical thing in the country. This first saw the introduction of UPE (Universal Primary Education), MDG (Millennium Development goals, EFA (Education For All) as well as the recent Vision 2010. The very first step was realized in 2003 when Kibaki's Government started offering primary education that is free as a way of improving the level of literacy in the country.

However, in spite of the efforts by the government and other renowned stakeholders, there still remains about six million people in Kenya, who lack even basic education, owing to the fact that they never attended any school. At the same time, not all children at the age of going to school get enrolled, and to those enrolled, attendance failure is of a very high rate. Worse off, some of those enrolled and attending do not complete school and leave school at standard eight level or before, while others still face tremendous problems when in transition from one level of education to another. This study presents an analytical discussion on how child labour affects participation in primary schools, with specific reference on how child labour affects enrollment, attendance, transition and completion in schools in Kenya (Fabian and Dunlop, 2002).

## **3.0 Purpose of the study**

This study was carried out with the purpose of critically analyzing the effect of child labour on the participation of children in the Kenyan Primary schools. Key areas include analyzing critically the effect of child labour on enrollment, to critically analyze the effect of child labour on completion, to critically analyze the effects of child labour on attendance, and also to critically analyze the effects of child labour on transition in Kenya.

#### **4.0 Objectives**

1. To critically analyze child labour and its effect on enrollment in primary schools in Kenya.
2. To critically analyze child labour and its effects on completion in primary schools in Kenya.
3. To critically analyze child labour and its effect on attendance in primary schools in Kenya.
4. To critically analyze the child labour and its effects on transition in primary in schools Kenya.

#### **5.0. Significance of the study**

This study would be significant to government, parents, children among other education stakeholders in that they would be enlightened on the effects of child labour on the participation of children in the Kenyan Primary schools. From the results, the government and other policy makers would be able to draw up strategies towards elimination of child labour in Kenya.

The findings of this study would also be important to future researchers in that they may use them as a foundation of their literature review or to support their findings in related studies on effect of child labour on participation of children in Primary schools.

#### **6.0 Research Methodology**

The researchers carried out this study qualitatively by critically analyzing the effects of child labour on participation of children in primary school. This method was essential for this study because it allows the researchers to bring out the critique of the effects of child labour as a positive method through which enrollment, transition, completion and attendance can easily be related to child labour in Kenya. The critique helps in justifying the reasons as to why child labour needs to be considered as a vice, and get eliminated so that children can acquire quality education.

The attempt of the researchers helps in seeking justification of historical views and approaches of child labour, practices as well as those issues associated with the concept as a way of broadening comprehension by education stakeholders, and allow for the provision of suitable recommendations for dealing with problems associated with child labour.

#### **7.0 Critique literature**

##### **7.1 Child labour and its effect on enrollment in primary schools in Kenya**

Enrollment of children in primary education is a way of providing them with the basic skills of reading, mathematical as well as those of writing and interpreting and presenting the information learnt. The skills are provided subject wise via imparting an elementary comprehension of subjects including history, social sciences, music, art, natural sciences as well as geographical education. However, in spite of the requirement for enrollment, a large number of children still remain uneducated, particularly in those countries that are developing, a large number of them in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (Kabeberi, 1990).

In Kenya, the primary works in which children get involved in normally in the informal segment, mainly; they are made to carry out family works, both in agriculture that is commercial as well as in

subsistence farming. These include; working on rice, tea, sugar as well as coffee plantations. Other activities include; fisheries, herding, and other domestic activities that are inclusive of transport, mining, and construction. Child labour also contributes the rise of street children because the majority of them are in those areas out of escaping from their homes due to abusive labour (Burrell and Bubb, 2000).

Mary (2007) in her study has asserted that the income of a family and residence, in addition to a child's gender strongly determine whether a child of Kenya will be in school or not. Children coming from households that are rural have a greater likelihood of being away from school as opposed to those in the urban areas. Additionally, children brought up in families that are poor have a higher possibility of failing to be enrolled in school as opposed to their rich counterparts. Emily & Claudia (2005) also found out that the enrollment of boys and girls nationally is equal, but remarkable inequalities are observed at all levels.

Kenya has insisted on an education policy for the provision of free education since its introduction by the Government of Kenya in 2003. However, a notable number of them, and those needed to get this education remain out of skill, though there are gains that have been realized in the period ranging from 1998 to 2009. A survey by KDHS (Kenya Demographic and Health Survey) (2009) shows that for many children at the age of 6 and 13, the rate of enrollment augmented to 94% from 87% at in the period ranging from 1998 to 2009. However, out of those enrolled, 8,000 among those sampled remained out of school. A report by MSPNDV (Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030) (2010) showed that of the total number of students who were expected to be enrolled in school by then, 11% were found to be out of school by 1998, and engaged in home-based activities, and the share went down by 2% in 2009. This demonstrates clearly how child labour affects the enrollment of children in primary schools, which calls for a notable action among stakeholders.

## **6.2 Child labour and its effect on completion in primary schools in Kenya**

The rate of school completion ratio shows the total numbers of pupils/ students who successfully graduate from their last years of school in comparison with the numbers of children that are expected to graduate at a particular age in a community. The role of MDG (Millenium Development Goals) is to make sure that all children of the state are able to complete their primary school course successfully by the year 2015. In communities where children are able to get enrolled to school at the age that is termed as official for attending school, and are not subjected to child labour normally complete school successfully. On the other hand, when children get enrolled later than required, they are prone to low participation in their schools, and if the cause was child labour, then the completion rate of school by children is low (Burrell and Bubb, 2000).

In Kenya, some children fail to get enrolled to attend school because their parents need them to provide labour in order to help in home-based chores or even to earn income for the family. Additionally, some families are never able to raise the money required for paying the school fees of their children at school, buying school uniforms and textbooks that are needed. For others, there is

the obstacle of the distance that children are needed to walk/travel in order to access education. Most importantly, some, though attend school, do not complete due cultural bias in their communities. For instance, the pastoral communities except in this era have always believed that boys should know how to tend animals at an early age while girls should be ,married off at early ages. Such factors contribute to children dropping from school at a tender age, hence; though they were enrolled and attended, their completion is affected. However, a report by UNESCO (2008) showed that the rate of completion schools in Kenya has been on the rise since 2003, and that there is a high probability of urban children to complete school as opposed to their rural counterparts. This again calls for the government of Kenya and all stakeholders in education to address child labour so that children can complete school as required.

### **6.3 Child labour and its effect on attendance in primary schools in Kenya**

Child labour is currently termed as an obstacle on Kenya's way to the goals of millennium development, which encompasses the provision of universally free education in primary school for children. Attendance of school is a crucial baseline determinant of success attained by children in school. With the technological advancements that are taking place in the current era as well as economical changes, children are required to attend school at a higher rate in order for them to access quality schooling. This makes them to get equipped with skills that will bring success to their future lives, and also be able to participate in their country's economic development. Such essential skills are only accessible in learning institutions, and in which, full participation of pupils is required (ILO, 2002).

Children need to attend school regularly and as per the requirement for school rules and calendar because this provides them with an appropriate foundation in their lives. Children who end up missing school on a regular basis tend to lag behind in completing assignments, understanding the content of a subject, and more worse, do poorly in examinations. Research has suggested that; pupils missing school on a regular basis are at a risk of engaging in criminal activities and other unacceptable behaviors. Every school is expected to provide records for attendance of pupils in school, and the best way to deal with absenteeism is that; a parent should be able to provide a valid reason for a child's absence to the teachers. However, parents are not at all times compliant, especially when they have exposed their children to labour. Child labour is a major factor that contributes to poor attendance, when children are engaged in work that will give them a responsibility beyond their free time, and that will make them act more or less like mothers and fathers at a tender age. This implies that child labour should be addressed so that children can attend school as required by the Government, and acquire the necessary skills (Kenya Demographic and Health Survey), 2009).

### **6.4 Child labour and its effect on transition in primary schools in Kenya**

The process by which a child moves from one educational level to another is referred to as transition, is one fundamental part of development in education. It is among the good indicators of

either unbalanced or balanced development of education between any two levels. However, it is notable that; a vast number of primary school graduates do not normally continue with their education to high school globally (Fabian and Dunlop, 2002). Low rates of transition are put into consideration in the majority of the countries because of the great emphasis placed on secondary school education, owing to that it empowers individuals both economically and socially. In the primary school, many pupils are known to take education as an activity to occupy them so that they are not idle. With this; the majority of them are always hoping to continue learning to the highest possible levels by undergoing selection, so that they can meet their goals in life.

In developing as well those that are developed, those children whose families have a good socioeconomic status have a high likelihood of staying in school, as opposed to their counterparts. For such families, of education are met with ease, and also, those works that children may get involved in the form of child labour can easily be met. It does not always happen this way because the majority of those who drop out of school are more or less likely to have been involved in child labour. Also, girls born of those mothers that are working are prone to the risk of being left to handle home responsibilities as well as taking care of their siblings. When children get overworked in such a manner, their performance at school becomes undesirable; hence; transition to the next educational level gets affected tremendously (NCPD, 1999).

### **7.0 Recommendations**

1. The government should take disciplinary actions against parents who subject their children to child labour.
2. Policies governing child labour should be formulated and presented to parents, teachers and all education stakeholders to promote a collective action.
3. Parents should be trained on the importance of quality education for all children and the impact of child labour on participation of learners.
4. Education for children should be funded adequately so that parents are able to take their children to schools instead of subjecting them to child labour.
5. County/Ward/Other administrations should monitor children within their areas to identify any cases of child labour and address them appropriately.
6. Children should be enlightened regarding their education rights so that they can as well liberate themselves from any form of abuse.

### **8.0 Conclusion**

All people, including men, women and children have always been involved in work since the beginning of time. Work is an essential component that aids in promoting the development of children, especially in the traditional African times when parents liked children to learn by imitation. However, over the time, parents have been taking children as laborers, giving them work that hinders their enrollment in school, attendance, transition as well as completion of school. The Kenyan government has been making efforts of ensuring that child labour becomes a historical

thing in the country. There has been the introduction of UPE (Universal Primary Education), MDG (Millennium Development goals), EFA (Education For All) as well as the recent Vision 2010.

However, in spite of the efforts by the government and other renowned stakeholders, not all children at the age of going to school are enrolled, and to those enrolled, attendance failure is of a very high rate. Some of those enrolled and attending do not complete school and leave school at standard eight level or before, while others still face tremendous problems when in transition from one level of education to another. Therefore, there is a need for policies governing child labour should be formulated and read out to parents, teachers and all education stakeholders in order to promote a collective action, that will bring down child labour and promote the participation of children in primary schools.

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