

**BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE UPTAKE OF EDUCATION IN SAMBURU COUNTY,
KENYA**

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to establish the barriers to effective uptake of education Samburu County, Kenya. It was a cross sectional study and the data was collected using structured questionnaires, focused group discussions, structured observation checklist and key informant interviews. The study targeted primary pupils and secondary students as well as the parents, guardians, sponsors and other caregivers. The study revealed that truancy, teenage pregnancy, poverty, nomadic, retrospective culture, understaffing, poor infrastructures in schools, negative attitude towards education and separation of families are the barriers to effective uptake of education in Samburu County Kenya.

Introduction

The Kenyan government is very committed to elevating the education standards across all the forty seven counties and this have seen the introduction of measures such as the payment of registration fees for candidates sitting for their KCPE and KCSE education by the government, free day secondary education for day scholars, procurement of course books for schools to ensure ratio one to one, introduction of Tusome Program in some counties such as Samburu and Laikipia to increase literacy levels in grades one, two and three, Greatness United (G-United), an annual national volunteer program aimed at increasing education outcome in grade two and three as well as the construction of at least one TIVET institution in each sub-county across the country. All these interventions aims at increasing the transition rates from primary schools to secondary schools and consequently to tertiary institutions. However, uptake of education in Samburu County continues to face several barriers.

Truancy

Some of the students abuse drugs such as marijuana, miraa amongst others. the availability of illicit liquor commonly known as “changaa” in most areas within the county in sufficient quantities makes it readily available for school going students hence both girls and boys over indulge in abusing in equal measures. This consequently results into regular and consistent absenteeism from school whose wider impact is deterioration in the performance in class work. In extreme cases results into school dropout which further results into increased crime rates such as rape incidences in the community.

Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is another menace that affects the education of the girl child in this part of the county and it has become very endemic and perennial problem. This menace at times is propagated by some male teachers who prey on their female students or pupils and leave the helpless girls to carry the burden of an action of two individuals single handedly. Some of the parents upon realization that their daughter is pregnant they sought to settle the issues locally and they are paid some little cash and fail to report the matter to the law enforcing agencies for legal actions to be taken against the perpetrators of the evil act even in circumstances where there is prime facie evidence rather than circumstantial one enough to incriminate the suspects. This method of settling

such issues denies the victims' access to the gates of justice. Some of the parents also help in flopping of their daughters hence they drop out of school at a very tender age.

Poverty

Poverty is another serious contributor to poor uptake of education in this part of the country. Majority of the people here entirely depends on livestock for daily living and in the event of drought such parents are sent behind the bars hence not able to provide their children with basic requirements needed in schools such as school uniforms and even putting food on the table becomes a nightmare and no learning or comprehension can take place when the learner is on an empty stomach, hence they choose to stay at home with the hope that some relief might be obtained in the cause of the day from well-wishers and international agencies such as the world food program. During such times some students ends up absconding the schools to accompany their parents to look for small contracts such as crushing ballast which they sell to earn a living and majority of the families spends less than one dollar per day an indication of the epitome of poverty at its peak. The hand to mouth lifestyle is to some extend attributed to the unemployment which is currently on rise.

Nomadic lifestyle

Since time in memorial the inhabitants of Samburu County attach a lot of importance to livestock as they are the measure of wealth an individual owns and they would do everything at their disposal to keep their livestock healthy. However, the problem comes in during droughts which mostly last for a couple of months which forces them to migrate with their livestock to neighboring counties in search of pasture and water. During such relocation, the school going boys and girls in most cases accompany the livestock hence they temporary drop out of school until such a time when it starts raining again and grass regenerate. When they get back to school its very obvious that that they cannot catch up with their peers who remained in school while they were away. Natural calamities such as droughts therefore deprives the children at times the opportunity of being in schools. Pastoralist kind of life in some parts of Samburu north makes some children not to step even in a class and all they know is how to assemble and use firearms as they herd their cattle.

Retrogressive cultural practices

Some socio-cultural practices are a hindrance to uptake of education in this particular county. For instance, the education of the girl child is not prioritized since they are looked at in terms of the number of cattle, goats, camels and sheep that they can fetch in terms of bride price once they have undergone the female genital mutilation and they are married off mostly to old persons enough to be their grandfather. This retrospective practice gives boys more opportunity to access education.

Understaffing

Understaffing has remained a major problem in almost all schools across the country. In some schools in Samburu County where is an enrollment of three hundred pupils but only four teachers employed by the teachers' service commission. Understaffing affects the contact hours that the learners have with the teachers and consequently the quality of teaching and education that they are exposed to. Some of the school heads resort to employ even form four leavers who lack the basic expertise needed to teach hence diluting the quality of education further by feeding the learners with adulterated contents.

Poor and inadequate infrastructures in schools

Majority of the schools in this particular county are poorly equipped and lack basic infrastructures such as libraries where the learners can borrow books from or even go and study in during their own free times. In some cases the schools does not even have windows and doors for the classrooms hence putting the properties of the schools such as the desks at risk of being stolen especially at night when the school close for holidays some of which are very long like the December holiday. Nevertheless, some schools have very few desks forcing the learners to squeeze themselves in one desk and such conditions does not provide ample learning environment. The learners to text book ratio is equally very low making it difficult for the learners to undertake homework given to them by the teacher since there are very few copies especially for the course books.

Negative attitude towards education

Livestock takes precedence over any other thing irrespective of its value to majority of the communities in this particular county. The community members are very ignorant about the value of educating their children as a result some of the parents keeps their children at home to herd the cattle at a time when they should actually be in school.

Separation of families

Even though most cultures values family as the basic unit of any society, this seems to be different in this county. Whenever there is a small family feud, it's very easy to hear a woman saying, "Am going to Kitala" it might sound like a place but in reality it means going to look for another man to marry her. This act as seen one woman having several children with different fathers and this interferes with the learning of the children since the children tend to follow their mothers wherever she goes and changing their names to match the manyatta name where the mother gets married again.

Conclusion

In summary, truancy, teenage pregnancy, poverty, nomadic lifestyle, retrogressive cultural practices, understaffing, poor and inadequate infrastructures in schools, negative attitude towards education and separation of families are some of the barriers hindering uptake of education in Samburu County. Once they are addressed the county will register higher transition rates from one level of education to the next with many students reaching the tertiary levels.