

Implications of Free Primary Education Policy on Access to Primary Schooling among Pastoralist Communities in Kenya

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Abstract: The complex relationship between pastoral communities and their socio-economic background casts more doubts as to how the local people are involved in policy process of improving access to Primary Schooling, Mugwe, 2006. The study reiterates the usefulness of case studies for educational research given its variety and complexity in making formative evaluation and in educational policy making. This is in agreement with Cletus, B [34] which emphasizes the critical role of evidence-based policy and practice. Investigation was carried out to examine implications of Free Primary Education (FPE) on access to schooling. The study adopted ethnographic research design that utilized purposive sampling technique and saturation procedure to select a total of 170 respondents that included head teachers, teachers, parents, school dropouts, educational managers, community leaders, and Non-Governmental Organizations drawn from Turkana South sub-county. Purposive sampling was used to select individuals, groups and organizations that would provide insight into the study. Data was collected using focus group interviews, structured and unstructured interviews, observation, and document analysis. Subsequently, data was collected by use of questionnaire that was sent to head-teachers and education officials and was used only to validate the qualitative data. The collected data was coded, analyzed, described and summarized. The statistical package for social scientists (SPSS) 12.0 for Windows was used to analyze coded information for the purposes of checking for internal consistency, creation of composite scores, and correlation. The study identified various implications of FPE on Primary Schooling for pastoralists as the following: increased enrolment; shortage of teachers; high transition rate; poor handling of children with special needs; increased dropout rate and lack of funds for school feeding program. The findings also concluded that if the roles of various stakeholders were properly articulated, it would improve access to Primary Schooling among pastoralist communities.

Keywords: Free Primary Education Policy; Access; implications; Pastoralists; Schooling.

INTRODUCTION

Pastoralists groups in Africa are characterized by constant conflicts, mistrust and violence between their neighbors because of battle for pasture and water. In the past, pastoralists in East Africa have engaged in cattle rustling and aggressive confrontation as a strategy for survival [1].

Most countries in Africa have educational programs centrally controlled but others are moving towards decentralization whereby local education authorities and district education boards are given more responsibility in supervision. According to Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper [2], there is need to focus on Universal Primary Education (UPE) of the hitherto overlooked arid and semi-arid areas in order to improve equity and reduce poverty. This is in tandem with the

process of achieving Millennium Development Goals and the Government's commitment to international declarations, protocols and conventions as resolved in world conferences on EFA, Jomtien-Thailand, 1990, and Dakar-Senegal, 2000.

The Kenya Government Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 provides government's legal framework for development of education geared towards meeting the needs of the 21st century. The paper gives suggestions for elaborate education policies and interventions that are in tandem with MDGs, EFA goals. The government of Kenya has reiterated its commitment to attainment of EFA by 2015 and achievement of a 100% literacy rate for its population.

Research on implications of FPE policy must address glaring statistics of poor enrolment to formal schooling among marginalized regions. UNESCO [3] reports a very low Net Enrolment rates to formal schooling among nomadic pastoralist groups at 14% as compared to 92% nationally. According to Oxfam [4], more than 72 million children in the developing world are going without education.

The poor enrolment impedes the basic human right which is fundamental in preparing members of pastoral communities to effectively participate in national leadership and promote real solutions for access to schooling in their communities. Pavanello, S [5], argues that empowering these communities with relevant skills development depends on the level of access to education. The author further agrees that ascending to national leadership in all spheres of disciplines reduces pastoralists' vulnerability.

The complex relationship between pastoral communities and their socio- economic background casts more doubts as to how the local people are involved in policy process of improving access to Primary Schooling [6].

According to Manasi [7], apparently those in charge of education policy have been more concerned with perceived quality issues at the expense of access.

Statement of the Problem

The need for implication of FPE on access to Primary Schooling among pastoralists' communities to form key policy decision is underscored by statistics indicated by MOEST [8] that six counties from semi-arid and arid pastoral communities which comes bottom nationally in gross and net enrolment to primary schooling are Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Turkana, Samburu and Tana River. The details are further illustrated in the graph below.

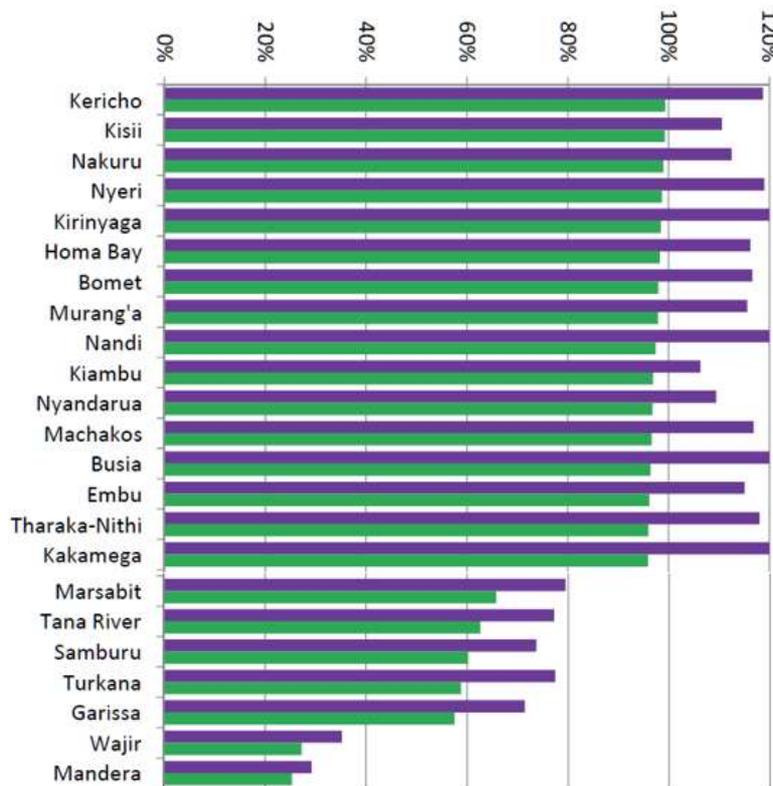


Fig-1: Primary Gross and Net Enrolment Rates by County, 2014
Source: Adopted from MOEST [8]

The figure above, showing regional disparities in gross and net enrolment rates put emphasis on the need for access to Primary Schooling to be investigated against the backdrop of emerging trends, existing educational policy, strategies and interventions. Most counties in Kenya scores over 100% in both gross and net enrolment rate as compared to the bottom counties that are mainly pastoral communities scoring between 20% and 80%. Educational policy that brings solutions

to one group may do contrary to the other. In this respect, it is essential to address educational disparities through policies that build on the rubrics of demographic environment of Pastoralists.

Education sector in Turkana County is characterized by low net enrolment rates averaging 58.8% and making the county the last five nationally based on the index. The illustration above implies that

pastoralists' communities, including those from Turkana County, are yearning for effective policy options that would deal with one of the lowest enrolment rates in the country. There is doubt, however, as to whether the positive trend meets the desirable outcome and if the gains are equally distributed among the pastoralists groups.

It is important, therefore to link interventions to these factors and constantly review policy in the context of inherent conditions that describes pastoralist community of Turkana.

The purpose of this study therefore was to investigate implications of FPE on access to Primary Schooling among pastoralists with a view to examining implications of Free Primary Education Policy on access to primary schooling among pastoralists. As reiterated by Okwach [9], "Educational reform programmes should be informed by systematic policy research and analyses, and not political decrees as in the past".

Schooling and Pastoralists

Over the past decade, there has been much development on FPE policy by governments and donors. This study seeks to examine some of the pertinent issues concerning implications of FPE policy in Kenya. It is important to this study to establish the gaps in actualization of the policy among pastoralist communities in Kenya. Mbatha M., [10] reiterates that the FPE has been received with mixed feelings from different sections of the society and that while some have expressed feelings of discontentment, failure, betrayal among others, many low income members of the population view it as a God sent opportunity.

Nomadic pastoralists are broadly defined as ethnic or socio-economic groups who constantly travel and migrate in large or small groups in search of means of livelihood within a community or country or across international boundaries, Awogbade [11]. These are people who derive most of their subsistence and income from keeping livestock under natural pastures, with humans and livestock co-existing in a symbiotic relationship, Sandford [12]. The success of pastoralism stems from well-adapted principles and strategies designed to overcome the harsh and variable conditions dominant in arid areas [13].

According to Chelimo [14], pastoralists are predominantly livestock keepers who derive their livelihoods essentially from livestock, cattle, camels, sheep, goats and donkeys. This poses a serious setback on the children who migrate with cattle in search of water and pasture during the dry season if they have to benefit from a sedentary school system. Consequently, sustainability of natural resources that sustains the pastoral economic background may be under great

threat as sedentary settlements haphazardly cut trees for charcoal.

Endemic conflicts in pastoralist regions, as reiterated by Markakis [1], complicate implementation of development strategies. Such conflicts bring about insecurity and instability in the region and only provoke high mobility in search of pasture, water and shelter. The effect of colonial government over the pastoralist was to limit their movement within state boundaries and defining of new conflict zones based on the administrative regions.

Understanding the needs of communities under pastoral system is vital to coming up with interventions to improve access in the education sector. Saverio [15] states that pastoralist's fundamental inadequacy lies in its economic inefficiency, health and nutritional problems. However, such an opinion may be easily challenged if it does not account for the pastoralists coping strategies that have seen them counter the adverse environmental conditions.

In the educational setting, participation in a change project may require leaders and policy makers to closely re-evaluate educational approach and monitor the progress as it become clearer through the process of discovery or iterative development [16].

Access to Primary Schooling

Apparently, many countries that have formulated policies to improve access did so in response to The Conventions on the Rights of the Child (November 20, 1989 (UN General Assembly), and the World Declaration on Education for All (1990 Inter-agency Commission and Governments). However, translating such commitments into realities has been elusive and the question partly lies in the government's commitment to enforce legislation and policies in totality.

According to Markakis [1], there is a gross disparity in access to education based on regions. Inequality of educational opportunities is the basis of widened differences in income and power distribution. As Kenya strives for universal enrolment in the primary level, some regions have surpassed the 90% enrolment target. By contrast, Pastoralist communities records lowest enrolment rates.

Educational development regarding governance of public schooling must identify critical issues in policy that need to be addressed in future [17]. The process must undertake the difficult task of finding out how policy must be changed to encourage greater inclusion of otherwise excluded regions and groups.

Kareithi [18] has argued that during the colonial period, the government policies interfered with the working of the society's coping strategies necessary

for policy implementation. For example, border conflicts impedes symbiotic relationships between societies. This argument strengthens the need to incorporate the local leadership structures and developing and running of educational strategies.

Past Research in Relation to Access to Primary Schooling among pastoralists

Not many research studies have specifically focused on the plight of Turkana Pastoralist community within the context of access to Primary Schooling. However, one recent study was reviewed; one touching on the dynamics of female education by Johannes [19]. The study highlighted that pastoralism by its very nature is a form of adaptation to an increasingly arid and unpredictable environment by moving livestock according to the shifting availability of water and pasture but did not dwell on the implications of Free Primary Education Policy among pastoralists.

Conceptual Framework

Educational policy may be referred to formal statements of action to be taken. Hsu [20] refers to policy as implicit and explicit specification that guides dealing with a recognized problem or a matter of concern and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals.

According to Adan [21], the search for appropriate and correct models and policies for socio-economic development is gaining momentum all over the world. A good model that can bring solutions to pastoralists' plight should begin by understanding the problem, exploring all possible solutions and making a rational choice based on its wholesome benefits and practical interventions. Such a model must address the issue of rigid educational policies that might be at odds with reality of statistical disparities against access to Primary Schooling among pastoralist communities.

This study therefore holds the conceptual framework that successful education programs and strategies for maximum access to primary schooling must develop interventions that seek to address emerging issues and gaps in Primary Schooling among Pastoralists. The trends in access to education should dictate development of educational strategies and interventions for the universal primary education to be realized. Governance and involvement of social power structures in implementation would impact on the success of such programs. It is important for stakeholders to assess the implications of policy with a view to develop relevant interventions that adequately respond to the dynamics of access. The conceptual framework is further illustrated in the figure-2 below:

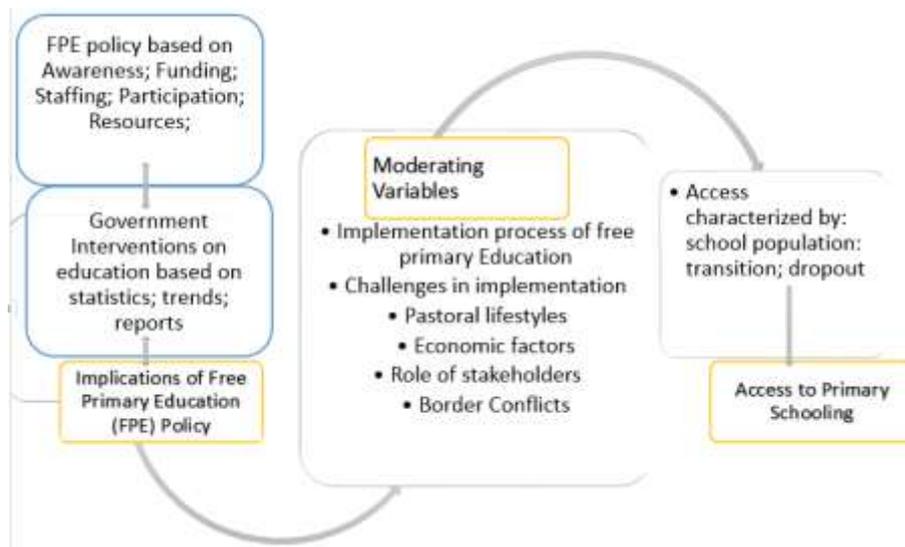


Fig-2: Conceptual Framework on Implications of Free Primary Education Policy on Access to Primary Schooling among Pastoral Communities

The conceptual framework for this study holds the view that strategic educational policies should be an ongoing process with constant reviews and improvement. Through the attempts to implement the policy, new situations and issues arise, which demand reflection and adjustments, even reformulation of policy. Within these interactions, there are complex mechanisms which require corrective measures from time to time.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative study was utilized in order to present a detailed analysis of implications of FPE for pastoralists that would offer answers which may not be found through having some few elites fill questionnaires.

The issues surrounding the local leadership's structures and beliefs required a study to be done in a natural setting and gaining access to participants and all

stakeholders in FPE program so that the findings will not be out of context.

In order to understand the social cultural setting influencing experiences, perceptions and interpretations of Education Policy among pastoralists, an ethnographic study research design was adopted. Data was collected from focus groups, observations field notes, structured and unstructured interviews. The focus was to derive meanings from local stakeholders without predetermined theoretical perspective on how the policy interacts with their community.

The topic under study required flexibility of approach to allow discovery of unexpected and in-depth investigation of policy implications on access to Primary Schooling. According to Kombo, & Tromp [22], when the majority of respondents are semi-illiterate, flexibility in the choice of language used is important to the study. The choice of research assistant, therefore, considered picking a reliable person from the local community.

In spite of the tremendous benefits for this methodological approach in dealing with complexity of social truths and making related formative study, the design demands technical skills for direct access to respondents' sources of information. This, however, necessitated training of a research assistant for thoroughness and command of logistical dynamics in Turkana South Sub-County.

Interview involved engaging participants by posing questions from the interview schedule and

listening to them attentively to their responses. The study considered asking follow-up questions and probes based on the responses in order to gain more insight and perspectives into how pastoralists in the region view and participate in FPE program. According to Natasha [23], "probes are neutral questions, phrases, sounds, and even gestures interviewers use to encourage participants to elaborate on their answers and explain why or how"

One of the most common methods for collecting data in an ethnographic study is direct, first-hand observation of daily participation [24]. The study prepared observation guides to be used concurrently with other methods for collecting data. It involved recording field notes relevant to research questions and keeping them in separate envelop from those of other methods. The study planned observation of community's daily activities in relation to Primary Schooling at different times of the day in order to capture how children and parents participated in educational activities in primary schools.

Turkana South Sub-County borders East Pokot, Pokot Central, Pokot North and West Pokot to the South, Samburu North district to the South East, Lake Turkana to the North East.

Fact sheet in Turkana, C. G. [25], indicates that enrolment and retention of pupils especially in primary is greatly impeded. The report highlights the problem of access to pasture during the dry season as a key source of conflict between the pastoralists of Turkana and the neighboring communities.

Table-1: Area of Turkana South Sub-County by Division, Location and Sub-location

Division	Area (km ²)	Locations	Sub-locations
Lokichar	4536.6	3	7
Kainuk	1684.1	2	6
Katilu	1143.1	1	4
Total	7363.8	6	17

Source: Turkana, C. G. [25] County Development Plan

Turkana definitely forms significant determinant if Kenya may attain Free Primary Education as entrenched in the vision 2030. Unfortunately, illiteracy level is one of the major setback in the region, Comboni Missionaries [26].

Sample Size

Saturation, as discussed by Marshall *et al.* [27] is applicable to all qualitative research that employs interviews as the primary source of data. This method guided determination of sample size. The study focused on collection of data to the point where nothing new was being introduced.

Marshall [28] asserts that an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that

adequately answers the research question. In this study, subjects were stratified heterogeneously according to perceived experience and interaction with the Education Policy in keeping with the recommendations by Trochim [29]. Consequently, the study adopted the argument by Mason [30] which states that determining the sample size in the majority of qualitative studies should generally follow the concept of saturation, when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation.

Primary data was therefore collected from a total sample of 170 respondents. The sample constitutes the following: 10 head teachers; 5 education officials; 20 teachers; 20 community leaders; 20 parents; 25 community members; 5 NGOs representatives; 25

school drop outs and five focus groups with an average of 8 members.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demography Information of the Respondents

Demographic analysis that was considered crucial to the study was gender, age and level of education as per the following description.

The study established that 85.3%, of the respondents were male while 14.7% were female. Furthermore, 4.2, 64.7% of participants were aged between 34 and 41 years and generally most of the stake holders in this study area are aged above 30 years.

On the level of education, all the thirty five educational officials (12.9 %) and teachers (7.6 %) were either of diploma or degree level. However, of the hundred and thirty five (79.4 %), other stake holders, only thirty eight (22.4 %) had formal education of diploma up to masters level. Forty two of the

participants (24.7 %) had no formal education. The results tend to suggest that formal education among the target population is minimal.

Implications of FPE on Access to Primary Schooling among Pastoralists

The researcher identified from various data collection schedules seven key implications of FPE on access to Primary Schooling among pastoralists. As shown in Table-2 below, 90.0% of the participant concurred that FPE has led to an increase in number of children accessing primary education. 90.0% of the participants consequently agreed that FPE has led to understaffing of teachers. 80% of the participants noted that understaffing in turn has disadvantaged children with special needs. 75.3% were of the view that FPE has led to high transition from ECDs to primary. 64.7% of the participants however decried that fact that FPE has not set aside funds for school feeding programme, a major boost to enrolment.

Table-2: Implications of FPE on Access to Primary Schooling among Pastoralists

	Yes	No
Increase in number of children accessing primary education	90%	10.00%
FPE has led to understaffing of teachers	90%	10.00%
High transition from ECD to primary education	75.30%	24.70%
Understaffing has led to disadvantaged children with special needs	80.00%	20.00%
High drop- out rate, desirability and affordability have affected implementation of FPE	44.10%	55.90%
FPE has not set aside funds for school feeding programme	64.70%	35.30%
Recruitment of teachers from non-pastoralist communities (foreigners)	44.70%	55.30%
FPE has led to establishment of mobile schools	29.40%	70.60%

Source: Field Data

Enrolment in Nine Selected Schools in Turkana South Sub- County

The study analyzed enrolment statistics of nine selected schools in the region and found out that enrolment is very poor. Comparatively, records in pre-

school category in the same primary schools were also analyzed since there is direct correlation with the primary enrolment. Enrolment in both pre- school and primary schools in pastoralist areas in the County at the time of the study is as shown in table-4 below.

Table-4: Enrolment in Selected Nine Selected Schools in Turkana South

					GIRLS	Ratio of
PRIMARY SCHOOL	BOYS PRIMARY	GIRLS PRIMARY	TOTAL	BOYS PRE- PRIMARY	PRE- PRIMARY	Pre- primary to primary
LOCHWAA	57.3 %	42.7 %	274	48.3 %	51.7 %	
LOCHEREMOIT	54.2 %	45.8 %	262	52.3 %	47.7 %	83.21%
KALAPATA	68.1 %	31.9 %	182	54.5 %	45.5 %	60.44%
LOMELEKU	41.3 %	58.7 %	75	42.9 %	57.1 %	84.00%
NALEMKAIS	59.2 %	40.8 %	71	61.3 %	38.7 %	87.32%
LOMOKOMOL	44.0 %	56.0 %	50	49.1 %	50.9 %	220.00%
LOMERIMUDANG	61.5 %	38.5 %	174	52.0 %	48.0 %	58.62%
NAKWAMORU	51.4 %	48.6 %	554	53.6 %	46.4 %	50.54%
JULUK	62.2 %	37.8 %	482	60.0 %	40.0 %	62.24%
TOTALS	57.0 %	43.0 %	2124	53.4 %	46.6 %	68.55%

Source: Field Data

From table-4 above, there are relatively more children in pre- primary school than primary school since one year enrolment in preschool is 1,456 (68.55% of primary) pupils as compared to primary school enrolment of 2,124 students in selected schools. Besides, Lomokomol Primary School has more children in Pre School (220.00 % of primary) than primary school enrolment. This was attributed to high dropout rate since the implementation of FPE in 2003. Percentages of girls in pre- school (46.6 %) are slightly higher than those in primary (43.0 %), an indication that girls face more risk of dropout than boys do. Kalapata Primary School had the lowest (31.9 %) percentage of girls in primary but considerably higher percentage (45.5 %) in pre- school. The primary school net enrolment rate of 26 % in Turkana South, implies that only 2,124 of the 8,170 students who are supposed to be in the nine schools do have access to Primary Schooling.

According Oxfam [31], enrolment rates is very low in the District despite the Free Primary Education (FPE) initiative that brought back approximately 1.3 million additional children to the formal schools within less than two months in Kenya after it was launched. The FPE program has achieved limited success as regard to enrolment due to a number of problems such as insecurity, the nomadic nature of pastoralists and harsh environment. Furthermore, the study found out that child labor is so pronounced among pastoralists as children are considered source of labor in livestock keeping.

Implications of FPE on Access to Primary Schooling among Pastoralists

This study showed that 90.0% of the participant concurred that FPE has led to an increase in number of children accessing primary education. 90.0% of the participants consequently agreed that FPE has led to understaffing of teachers. 80% of the participants noted that understaffing in turn has disadvantaged children with special needs. 75.3% were of the view that FPE has led to high transition from ECS to primary. 64.7% of the participants, however, decried the fact that FPE has not set aside funds for school food programme.

The study also listed the implications of FPE on Primary Schooling for pastoralists as the following: increased enrolment; shortage of teachers; high transition rate; poor handling of children with special needs; increased dropout rate and lack of funds for school feeding programme. These findings corroborate recommendation by Wadi [32] on the need to re-examine the policy decision and to determine what adjustments or what new policies should be substituted for the original choice if assessment reveals deficiencies in outcomes and in implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The fact that there is there are relatively more children in pre-primary school than primary school, there is need to take advantage of this situation to improve access through extensive enrolment and retention campaigns in Primary Schooling.

Funding is one factor that can bring about radical changes to enhance access to Primary Schooling. In order to mitigate the harsh environment, classrooms and dorms should be very comfortable to encourage children and parents to embrace schooling. Special grant should be allocated to curb hardships faced by teachers and shortage of infrastructural facilities in order to create conducive environment for implementation of FPE. In order to respond to higher transition rate from ECD to Free Primary Education, the government should consider recruitment of more teachers in Turkana South Sub-County.

Furthermore, there should be clear plans to strengthen administrative structures and processes in the region to allow for more participation and enhance ownership of FPE by pastoralists.

The programs run by NGOs/ CBOs e.g. RSRI, Mobile Schools and ECD centers must receive full government support in order to increase enrolment in primary schools. The study concluded that such programmes had an enormous potential to contribute to the access and provision of quality basic education to children of pastoralists in the region. There is, however, need to need to strengthen the role of stake holders in management of policy rather than being teacher and education officials' affair. Most committees are considered semi- illiterate and are not consulted in crucial issues like financial management. An increased community involvement is vital in improving their children's enrolment and transition rates and that the relationship between the school and its neighborhood is very crucial for its sustainable progress and development. There should be an elaborate and concerted effort to stop the high dropout rate through stringent measures such as follow-up and punitive measures against pastoralist parents who force.

Establishment of more boarding schools, night schools and flexible schools should be a top priority in providing FPE to pastoralist community of Turkana South Sub-County. Night or evening schools, or a flexible school timetable are useful methods for encouraging the primary education of pastoralist children, as they minimize the dropout of children through labour commitments or other aspects of pupils' life conditions. They also reduce the economic disadvantage of turning child labour away from the pastoral economy, and they limit the consequences of children's education becoming unappealing to their families [33]. The following interventions are necessary to enhance FPE, namely: establishment of mobile

schools; incorporating the community's core activities in learning; designing the learning calendar to suit the community's seasonal migration pattern; linking the community's immediate problems to learning; and establishment of schools in favorable climatic places.

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