



# 2<sup>ND</sup> International Annual October Conference on Education and Lifelong Learning 2015

“Post 2015 Development Agenda:  
Moving Education Forward”

**CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS / WORKING PAPERS / VOLUME ONE**



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# SCHOOL OF EDUCATION FUNDAMENTAL STATEMENTS

## **Vision Statement**

To be a globally competitive hub of education development  
professionalization of educators, educationalists, researchers and mentors

## **Mission Statement**

To provide exemplary leadership in transformative skill-based education  
services founded on quality teaching and learning, research, innovation,  
and life-long community service

## **Philosophy**

Quality education for the service of humanity

## **Core Values**

Honesty, respect, integrity, team spirit, democracy, inclusivity, transparency  
and accountability

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## MESSAGE FROM CONFERENCE CHAIR

The School of Education, Kenyatta University successfully hosted the 2nd International Annual Conference on Education and Lifelong Learning at Kenyatta University, on 8th-9th October 2015, dubbed “*the KU October Conference on Education*”. The conference was graced by renowned educationalists, namely, Dr. Evangeline Njoka (Chief Guest Speaker and First Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO); Prof. Kabiru Kinyanjui (Keynote speaker and International Development and Education consultant); Prof. Alemayehu Bishaw (Keynote Speaker and Associate Professor, Dean Graduate Studies, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia); Dr. John Mugo (Guest Speaker and Director, Data and Voice, Uwezo, East Africa) and Dr. Hellen Amunga (Host Speaker and Lecturer, Department of Educational Communication and Technology, Kenyatta University). These high profile speakers provided the framework for thematic discussions guided by expertise, experience and knowledge in education and the various thematic areas of the conference.

The conference was organised to fall in October, which is the month the World Teachers’ Day (October 5) is celebrated globally. The conference theme titled, “*Post 2015 Development Agenda: Moving Education Forward*” helped to accommodate a variety of relevant sub-themes that allowed the authors to address salient concerns in education in context of accomplishments of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and recasted in the era of Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The sub-themes covered in this issue focus on educational processes including pedagogy, curriculum development, use of technology and innovation, equity and inclusiveness, educational management and transformation, as well as planning for the overall quality of education. In this context, the conference was able to pursue its core objective of providing a structured platform via which education scholars, policy makers, practitioners, and students disseminate and share knowledge generated through research in the field of education under the chosen broad theme.

Being a relatively young conference that was launched on 31st October 2014, it is indeed a great pleasure to witness the fruition of this publication which adds value to our October Conference which, without doubt, enhances the mandate of disseminating evidence-based knowledge, elicit wider feedback from readers and motivate further discussions and research on topical educational issues. This publication goes a long way to strengthen the processes of conferencing beyond the event of the conference *per se*. I therefore take this opportunity, on behalf of the Conference Committee and on my own behalf, to wish you meaningful and enjoyable readership and welcome you to the forthcoming Annual October Conference.



**Prof. Fatuma Chege**

Chairperson, Conference Organising Committee &  
Dean, School of Education, Kenyatta University

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# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

**2nd International Conference on Education and Lifelong Learning  
8th -9th October 2015**

**School of education, Kenyatta University**

**THEME: POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: MOVING EDUCATION FORWARD**

**Sub-themes:**

1. Education and Emerging Issues
2. Research in Education Policy and Planning
3. ICT, Virtual Learning Technology in Education
4. Quality Education and Transformative Leadership
5. Education and Equity, Gender, Culture and Marginalisation
6. Teaching in Diversity and the Teaching Profession

# SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS IMPEDING CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. A CASE OF TURBI DIVISION, MARSABIT NORTH SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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## Abstract

Early childhood is a critical period in which the foundation of children's education and development is laid. It is a right of every child to be enrolled, retained and complete school. Despite the many global initiatives aimed at improving children's access to education, there are still many children out of school globally. The purpose of this study was to explore the socio-economic factors impeding children's access to early childhood education in Turbi Division, Marsabit North Sub-County. Results had shown that majority of children in the division do not have access to early childhood education. Results also revealed that several socio-cultural factors such as: Participation in traditional ceremonies; involvement in livestock rearing; early betrothal of girls; Female Genital Mutilation practices; and parents fear of early pregnancy were hindering children's access to early childhood education in the division. Some of the important strategies that could be used to improve children's access to early childhood education include: Establishment of mobile schools; organizing education awareness forums; Soliciting support from many stakeholders; and reviving village mobile schools where children can learn within their villages.

**Key Words:** Early Childhood Education; Access; Socio-cultural factors; Children.

## Introduction

Early childhood education lays a strong foundation of children's future education and development. It is a right of every child to be enrolled, retained and complete school. This is because education is a means of opening up opportunities, decreasing disparities in income levels and promotes high standards of living. Early childhood education provides the basic foundation for the acquisition of cognitive, physical, social, emotional and religious skills (El kind, 1981; Wadsworth, 1989). Similarly, the quality of early childhood programmes leads to lasting impact in terms of acquisition of basic skills, reduced repetition, and improved performance (Schweinhert, Bames and Weikart, 1997).

Despite the many global initiatives aimed at ensuring that all children have access to early childhood education, there are still over 57 million children out of school globally (UNESCO, 2013). Literature review has further shown that by the end of 2015 many countries would still be below the 80per cent target of universal early childhood education and that most of the countries with many school age children out of school are from Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2013). This imply that achievement of global declaration on Education For All (EFA) by 2015 will not be realized.

## Research Problem

In Kenya the nomadic pastoralists comprise 25 per cent of the population and occupy largely Arid and Semi Arid Land (ASAL) areas (Ministry of Education, Kenya 2006). In ASAL areas even those children enrolled in school continue to experience challenges which cause them to drop out of school. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Education Act 2013 underscore the right of every child to free and compulsory basic education. The same view is also expressed in the Kenya Vision 2030 initiative which highlights access to education to reduce illiteracy (Republic of Kenya, 2007).

Early childhood education is a right of every child (UNCRC, 1989; Children's Act 2001, Education Act, 2013. Marsabit county children's access to early childhood education iss low (Uwezo, 2011; KNBS, 2009). Studies conducted on Early Childhood Education (ECE) have focused on literacy and numeracy skills, household income levels and access to

secondary school education but not on access to early childhood education. Owing to the significance of ECE there was need to establish the factors hindering children's access to early childhood education. The study also determined the strategies that could be used to enhance children's access to early childhood education.

## Research Objectives

1. To establish children's access to early childhood education in Turbi Division, Marsabit North Sub-County.
2. To determine the socio-cultural factors that impede children's access to early childhood education in Turbi Division, Marsabit North Sub-County.
3. To explore strategies that could be used to enhance children's access to early childhood education in Turbi Division, Marsabit North Sub-County.

## Research Methodology

Descriptive research design was employed in the study. The dependent variable was children's access to early childhood education while the independent variables were socio-cultural factors impeding children's access to early childhood education. The study was carried out in Turbi Division in Marsabit North Sub-County. The target population was school going children in 156 households drawn from five villages in the Turbi Division.

Purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to select location of the study, parents, teachers, chiefs and area education officers. The sample size was 50 per cent of the 156 households. Interview schedule and focus group discussions were used to collect data from parents, teachers, chiefs, and area education officers. Content validity and test-retest method were used to test the reliability and validity of the instruments. Data was collected in stages and analyzed using qualitative and descriptive methods. Descriptive statistics were generated and results presented using tables and text.

## Results and Discussions

They are discussed in the following subsections:

### Children's access to early childhood education

The first objective of the study was to establish children's access to early childhood education in Turbi Division, Marsabit North Sub-County. To achieve the objective, the total number of children per households was established by

asking parents if any of their children aged between 4-12 years was not in early childhood centres or schools. The choice of 4-12 years was in view of the fact that in ASAL areas, it was common to find children over eight years old in a pre-primary school.

### Average number of children per household

The average number of children per household was established by gender and results are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Average number of children per households

|            | Total Number of children | Number of Boys in Households | Number of Girls in Households | Number of Boys out of school | Number of Girls out of school |
|------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| N          | Valid                    | 78                           | 78                            | 78                           | 78                            |
| Mean       | 4.90                     | 2.76                         | 2.14                          | 1.64                         | 1.15                          |
| Mode       | 3                        | 3                            | 2                             | 1                            | 1                             |
| Minimum    | 2                        | 1                            | 0                             | 0                            | 0                             |
| Maximum    | 10                       | 6                            | 6                             | 6                            | 3                             |
| <b>Sum</b> | <b>382</b>               | <b>215</b>                   | <b>167</b>                    | <b>128</b>                   | <b>90</b>                     |

The results show that on average, each household had five children, that is three boys and two girls. The results also show that on average, every household had two boys and one girl out of school. The results also show that the maximum and minimum numbers of children in the households were 10 and two respectively. The households had a population of 382 children; out of which 215 (56.3 per cent ) were boys while 167 (43.7 per cent ) were girls.

### Number of children out of school

The number of children out of school by gender was also determined and the results are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** Distribution of children out of school by gender

| Gender       | In School  |            | Out of School |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|
|              | Frequency  | Percent    | Frequency     | Percent    |
| Boys         | 87         | 53.0       | 128           | 58.7       |
| Girls        | 77         | 47.0       | 90            | 41.3       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>164</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>218</b>    | <b>100</b> |

Table 2 indicates that there were more boys out of school in the households, compared to girls. The results also show that there were more children out of school than those in school in the study area. The findings of this study concur with that reported by UNESCO (2013), which revealed that globally, there were 57 million children out of school. The boys out of school constituted 49 per cent and the girls 51 per cent. The same study revealed that in Kenya, there were over one million children out of school, mainly from ASAL and disadvantaged urban settlements.

### Children's position of birth and access to school

This study was to establish whether parents gave preference of school attendance to first born, middle born or last born children and the reasons why. Table 3 below presents the results.

**Table 3:** Children's position of birth and access to school

| Position of Birth | Number of Children not Enrolled in School | Boys Not Enrolled In School | Girls Not enrolled In School |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| First born        | 99  | 58                          | 41                           |
| Middle Born       | 53  | 27                          | 26                           |
| Last Born         | 66  | 43                          | 23                           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>218</b>                                | <b>128</b>                  | <b>90</b>                    |

From Table 3 above, it can be observed that the majority of children not in school were first born followed by last born. It can also be observed that there were more boys not in school than girls. This is because the community attached a lot of significance to roles and responsibilities and performance of traditional values based on the seniority of birth. This was because the children were expected to participate in traditional ceremonies of their families which without the first born boys, families were not supposed to

participate in accordance with cultural values. The first born boys were required to participate in these ceremonies.

#### **Average number of children not in school**

The study also sought to find out the average number of 4-12 year-old children out of school in the study area. To determine the number of children out of school, parents were asked to give the age and gender characteristics of their children between the ages of 4-12 years not in school and Table 4 below presents the results.

**Table 4:** Average number of children 4-12 years out of school

|                |       | Boys 4-12 years not in school | Girls 4-12 years not in school |
|----------------|-------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| N              | Valid | 78                            | 78                             |
|                |       |                               |                                |
| Mean           |       | 1.4286                        | 1.2941                         |
| Median         |       | 1.0000                        | 1.0000                         |
| Mode           |       | 1.00                          | 1.00                           |
| Minimum        |       | 1.00                          | 1.00                           |
| <b>Maximum</b> |       | <b>4.00</b>                   | <b>3.00</b>                    |

As shown in Table 4 on average, there were about two boys and one girl (4-12 year olds) not in school per household. The results imply that the number of 4-12 year-old boys not enrolled in school was higher than those of girls of the same age range. According to global initiative on out of school children in UNICEF regional report (2014), large number of over age children in school could be a result of late entry to school occasioned by poor parental beliefs in education, poverty, lack of schools and unregistered births. Similarly, children who enter school late are also likely to drop out of school (Hunt, 2008; Lewin,

2007). The current study confirms the fact that many children were not enrolled in school and those enrolled entered school late.

#### **Socio-cultural factors hindering children's access to early childhood education**

After determining the number of children aged 4-12 years not in school, the researcher also sought to determine the socio-cultural factors that impede children's access to early childhood education in Turbi Division, Marsabit North Sub-County. The socio-cultural factors are the beliefs and practices of the community

which affect their day to day activities. To understand the socio-cultural factors impeding children's access to early childhood education, parents, head teachers, teachers, chiefs and area education officers were interviewed. Table 5 presents the results from data analysis.

**Table 5:** Socio-cultural factors hindering children's access to school

| Socio-Cultural Factors   | Number of Parents | Percent of Cases |
|--|-------------------|------------------|
| Traditional ceremonies   | 73                | 94.8%            |
| Meeting livestock demands  | 73                | 94.8%            |
| Girls' early marriage  | 62                | 80.5%            |
| Parents' fear of early pregnancies (disgrace)  | 20                | 26.0%            |
| FGM still rife, and after the exercise, they are supposed to be married and bring wealth | 73                | 93.6%            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>406</b>        | <b>74.9%</b>     |

As shown in Table 5, from interview conducted with parents, the main social cultural factors which hindered children's access to early childhood education were: Children's participation in traditional ceremonies; meeting livestock demands; girls' betrothals for marriage leading to early marriage; parents fear of early pregnancies, and practice of FGM.

**Traditional ceremonies**

During interviews it was revealed that children's participation in traditional ceremonies, particularly the first born males, was compulsory. It was found that there were different types of ceremonies such as: 'Sorio', the sighting of new moon, and almado ceremonies which come twice, monthly and once yearly respectively. During each of this ceremony the presence of male children, particularly the first born son, was mandatory and each family must ensure their presence and participation. However due to the frequent nature of these ceremonies many parents expressed difficulty of enrolling their first born sons in schools. This makes successive generations of children miss opportunity of getting access and completing school.

The responses from teachers on socio-cultural factors hindering children's access to school were

similar to those raised by parents. However, they further reported that it was not uncommon to find parents coming to school to ask permission for their sons to attend cultural ceremonies. The area education officers concurred with parents, head teachers and teachers' views on the socio-cultural factors hindering children's access to school. They also cited vastness of the division, the mobile lifestyle of the community and their strong cultural believes as the socio-cultural factors impeding children's access to school. The education officers further reported that lack of role models hindered children's access to school. The few elites from the area had migrated in search of jobs or escaping the harsh weather and environmental conditions.

The chiefs were also asked whether socio-cultural factors hindered children's access to school. Their responses were similar to those of parents, head teachers, teachers and the area education officers. They reported cultural ceremony, livestock herding, early engagement and marriage as the main socio-cultural factors hindering children's access to school. They also observed that it was difficult to convince parents to enrol all their children in school. One chief observed:

*"The parents still hold onto their traditional practices and are dependent on their livestock. They are active at indentifying who among their children can be outstanding in the area of livestock husbandry and spare these children for livestock herding. Their traditional values and livestock are their main priority, but nowadays even though they do not enrol some of their children in school, they are beginning to see the benefits of formal education". (Chief 2, Village X).*

The chiefs further pointed out that it was difficult to monitor if parents enrolled their children in school because most of the time they were on the move every two to three months. This poses a great challenge to children's education.

**Meeting livestock demands**

Similarly the results from interview with parents had revealed that 94.8 per cent of them reported that children were engaged in looking after livestock hence hindering their access to school. The parents had reported that they were nomadic pastoralists who kept camels, goats and sheep. Livestock forms the economic lifeline as well as the fulfilment of religious and cultural values as a result of which the parents' engaged their

children in herding family livestock. The first born males were considered heirs to the family wealth and therefore expected to take responsibility of looking after the livestock. All children were expected to help parents in herding, watering and other works related to livestock. The parents further expressed that they must plan on the division of labour between different categories of livestock and school. Parents further revealed that they usually give priority to their livestock needs as source of livelihood.

### Care of siblings

According to the results from interview with parents, 78.2 per cent of the parents' said caring of siblings hindered children's access to early childhood education. The parents reported that children attend to their younger brothers and sisters when parents go to look after the livestock. Other activities include running errands for parents and even neighbours.

### Girls' early marriage

The results from interviews with parents showed that about 80 per cent had reported that early betrothal for marriage hindered girl-child's enrolment in school. Marriage proposals usually come from the clan from which the parents' clan marries and therefore traditionally they were not allowed to turn down the requests. Such early engagement could make parents not to enrol girl children in school for fear of removing them from school later when the time for marriage comes.

One parent expressed the following in relation to betrothal of their daughters:

*"We consider early engagement and marriage of our daughters a blessing and sign of good luck to the family because we consider this as being saved from the disgrace of pregnancy before marriage. Our cultural traditions require us to accept marriage proposals from the clans which marry our daughters. Turning down such marriage proposals will lead to long standing rifts which could only be settled through payment of fine in terms of livestock or failure to pay will lead to disruption of ties for marriage between clans". (Parent2, Village Y).*

According to the teachers, parents make decision on which of their children will enrol in school early so that they can evade challenges that they might be subjected to when they withdraw them later from school due to early marriage or leave school to look after livestock.

### FGM still rife, and after the exercise, they are supposed to be married to bring wealth

The analysis of results showed that 93.6 per cent of the parents interviewed had reported that their daughters undergo FGM. They said that there was nothing wrong with them practising the rite of passage. They believe the practice hinders early sexual involvement and upholds moral behaviour. Sex before marriage is highly disapproved and FGM is believed to be done in the best interest of their daughters to prevent early pregnancy and loss of virginity. A grandmother in one of the villages commented:

*"The practice of FGM was inherited from our forefathers to prevent disgrace to the family. All the females in the community undergo the rite of passage. We don't want our girls to adapt immoral behaviours and that is why we circumcise them. Girls were taught good behaviours from childhood. Even those who go to school undergo the practice over the school holidays and continue with the school when term begins but circumcision will not prevent them from going to school unless when they are to be married". (Parent 4, Village Z).*

According to the head teachers, Female Genital Mutilation was compulsory for all girls. Like the parents, they said the practice was performed on all girls above ten years. The head teachers further reported that the practice was performed in secrecy at the age when the child was most vulnerable and could not understand demerits of the practice. This could be probably the reason why the practice goes on uninterrupted. Studies conducted elsewhere had revealed that children were socialized early in life. They were taught different appropriate behaviours for their gender within their cultures as early as 5-6 years (Burn 1996).

Similarly, in concurrence with the above studies in the current study children were socialized early on family traditions, values and behaviours. Parents expected their children to adhere strictly to these traditional values and customs. A study conducted by Fant (2008) in Ghana had also identified factors such as preferences for gender, early engagement, domestic responsibilities, and culturally constructed beliefs on gender as factors perpetuating biasness in school access revealed similar findings to the results of this study. Similarly, a study done by Njoka et al (2012) on the effect of gender on girl child's access to education identified factors such as domestic chores, FGM practice and orphan hood.

## Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from study findings. Firstly, majority of children in the division do not have access to early childhood education. This is because the study had established that in the study area there were more children out of school (57.1 per cent) compared to those in school (42.9 per cent). It was also ascertained that the majority of children out of school were boys (57.1 per cent) compared to girls (41.3 per cent) and were first and last born.

Secondly, many socio-cultural factors hindered children's access to early childhood education. It was clear from the study findings that children's participation in traditional ceremonies denied them access to school. The study findings had also indicated that children, especially first and last born, were involved in looking after livestock and were subjected to early betrothal and marriage; and FGM. There was also parents' fear of girls' early pregnancy and this denied them access to early education. The study had established from teachers that parents often came to school to request permission for their sons to participate in traditional ceremonies.

Many strategies should be used to improve children's access to early childhood education. The strategies include: Establishment of mobile schools; organizing education awareness forums; soliciting support from many stakeholders; and reviving village mobile schools.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were drawn for different key stakeholders:

### 1. Teachers

Teachers should work in collaboration with many stakeholders to ensure that children enrolled in school do not drop out due socio-cultural factors. The teachers should also organize community sensitization outreach programmes to enlighten them on the benefits of early childhood education.

### 2 Parents

Parents should ensure that all their children are enrolled in school. The findings of the study show that nomadic pastoralist do not enrol all their children in school, specifically first and

last born, because they are required to look after animals and participate in traditional ceremonies.

Parents should shun cultural practices which deny children access to education. The study found that early betrothal, early marriage and FGM were prevalent. Parents should also stop favouring the boy child over the girl child when it comes to access to education.

Parents should also stop engaging their children in child labour. The study found that low income families encourage their children to do child labour to supplement family income, hence denying them access to school.

### 3. School Management Boards (SMBs)

The SMBs should organize education awareness forums for community members to enable them to understand the importance of early education. The SMBs should also work with many stakeholders to provide the required resources. The study revealed that some children drop out of school due to lack of fees and other basic needs.


### 4. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

The National Commission for Nomadic Education Kenya through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the county government should establish local committees to ensure children are enrolled, retained and complete school. The local committees will also ensure the operationalization of Nomadic Education Policy Framework on the enrolment of children in early childhood centres.

The Government should abolish laws that are detrimental to children's access to school. The study revealed that practices such as observation of traditional ceremonies, early marriage, early engagement for girls, FGM, marriage and fear of early pregnancy which deny many children's access to education. The Government should eradicate practices which militate against children's access to education and help Kenya realize the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and Vision 2030 initiatives.

### 5. County government

The county government should also spearhead mobilization and awareness in order to empower and enlighten the community on the importance



of early education. The study found that parents were not enthusiastic about children's enrolment in school at the grassroots level.

The county government should support the establishment of more mobile schools to enable children access education in nomadic communities =. The study found that mobile schools were not enough and some of them had been closed down due to lack of teachers.

The county government should also put in place appropriate strategies on poverty eradication. The data generated from the study established that the majority of the parents were in low income bracket and there was need to formulate intervention programmes to improve income levels by creating conducive environment for livestock trade, enhancing livestock management skills and providing financial assistance.

## **6. Faith based and non-governmental organisations**

These organisations should facilitate community mobilization and education forums, monitor mobile schools, provide resources and document indigenous knowledge of these communities. The efforts by these stakeholders will contribute enormously towards children's access to early childhood education.

## **7. Local community**

The community members should attend education forums aimed at capacity building. The community members should also be helped to understand educational needs of children and prioritize these needs in their pattern of movement to enable their children access early childhood education. The study found that the community prioritizes the welfare of livestock over the education of their children.,

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