

Title: Pastoral community perspectives on formal education for girls : an ethnographic study of Monduli District in Tanzania

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Abstract:

Education provision for pastoral communities in general and girls in particular is a global concern and urgent (UNESCO, 2010). Despite some progress in various countries; reaching indigenous groups, particularly pastoralists, with education is challenging all over the world. Children are not yet participating in education and girls are more likely to be out of school than boys. While we are approaching the deadlines for attaining Universal Primary Education and the second Millennium Development Goal set in 2000, this study focuses on a pastoral community in Tanzania, where the majority of girls have few opportunities to access and participate in formal education. In Monduli district, Arusha region, only 49.6% of girls participate in primary education. Although various initiatives have been taken to ensure their participation; none has fully succeeded in enrolling and retaining girls in school. They are criticized for not taking into account the socio-cultural and contextual challenges girls face in participating in education. There has neither been adequate involvement of the community nor consideration of their views on education provision. This study sought to explore the pastoralist community's perspectives on girls' education in Monduli district in Tanzania. The study explores the pastoral community's attitudes to formal education for girls, parents' and girls' aspirations as regards education, the type and level of community involvement in education provision for girls and the kind of education the community considers valuable for girls. The study is informed by the post-colonial analysis of the impacts of colonialism in post-colonial states, the postcolonial feminist theory of gender inequality in 'third world' countries and the capability approach for explaining people's (girls') functioning and wellbeing. The post-colonial theory provides an understanding of the pastoral community in post-colonial Tanzania and the impact of Tanzania's education system on formal education for pastoralists. The post-colonial feminist theory provides an understanding of women and girls' situation in a patriarchal community, what perpetuates gender inequality and its influence on girls' education. The capability approach explains the role of education in developing girls' capabilities and functioning. The study is also underpinned by interpretive hermeneutic epistemology and intensive fieldwork, including an ethnographic study of one rural village from April to June 2013. Formal discussions were held with thirty participants selected through opportunistic procedures, since every community member would influence the study. Methods such as participant observation, informal conversations, ethnographic interviews and documentary review were used to collect data. Peoples' views are presented and analysed thematically guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines, with the support of NVivo 10 software. The findings show that the community maintains various norms and practices that influence its views on and aspirations for girls' education, which is contested and less valued by some members. Early marriage and fathers' domination and reluctance to educate girls form part of the opposing views. Conversely, government and NGO sensitization, some fathers' positive views and aspirations, desire for better life and new hope accrued from education by poor parents constitute views that support girls' education. Girls aspire to take advantage of various career opportunities which they believe will help them earn a living wage, live the life of their choice and contribute to the family's income. Girls believe education will help them escape from oppressive traditions and practices. The findings further show that the community participates in education through various school committee meetings, and by contributing their finance and labour for various activities. However, the top-down approach is used resulting in the failure of most plans for educating girls. Traditional leaders are rarely involved in education provision for girls. Pastoral communities value both traditional knowledge and formal education in order to cope with the changes occurring in the community and wider society. Women and girls value education as it will enable their views and demands to be heard and considered. Implications of the study are considered for parents and the pastoral community, for Tanzanian policy and practice and for international agendas. Implications for theory, research methodology and possibilities for future research are also considered. The study concludes that although girls value and are willing to participate in education; they are constrained by some community members' negative perception, poverty and women's lack of voice. Consideration of these issues is important for achieving UPE and MDGs. Girls need to be provided with education that will develop the capabilities they value for their functioning locally and internationally. The government should do more attend to what pastoralists consider valuable and develop more realistic ways of involving the community in providing education for girls at all levels.