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Multigrade Teaching and Learning in Pro-Poor Private Schools;

Nyeri County

Challenges and Policy Implications for Pastoralists-Based Schools

Abstract

Attainment of universal primary education envisaged within Dakar framework is becoming elusive in many countries. Data shows that out- of- school children have stagnated at 57 million by 2011 (GMR, 2013/14). Global Monitoring Report (2012) noted that some countries in sub- Saharan Africa have achieved noticeable achievements in levelling education for all targets. However, some countries are still lagging behind on NER and GER. Some countries have a net enrolment of less than 70% while others have NER of above 90%. This means that 30% of school-going children are uncounted for. In many cases, the net enrolment ratio is lower than the gross enrolment ratio. In Kenya, the GER has grown to 113% by 2012, currently estimated at 9.3 million. Despite the progress made in primary school enrolments, over 1 million children still remain out of school (GMR 2013/4 despite the free primary education policy of 2003. As 2015 deadline for EFA approaches, it is important for countries to re-think on what can work, what did not work and what worked. It is important to consider how to reengineer the momentum and think strategically and innovatively. One way of thinking ahead the 2015 target year would be to critically assess innovative ways of, and engage in multi- mode approach of teaching and learning in regions where learner population is low and where the teacher shortages has persisted. This approach has been used by private schools for the poor mainly as a reaction towards lack of teachers or lack of enough pupils to warrant employment of many teachers.

Since Kenya does not have a policy on multigrade, there is need to have policy considerations to address the multigrade policy for inclusion in the education sector policy frameworks. This will go a long way in addressing the needs of excluded marginalized children especially in pastoralists' communities. Demand for education among pastoralists, including children and adults actively involved in pastoral production, is rapidly increasing. Education is seen by impoverished households as a way out of poverty, and by the households actively involved in this production as a way to support their production system in an increasingly globalized world. Pastoralists no longer resist the idea of formal education, as they commonly did fifteen or twenty years ago. Children and adults now fully understand the importance of education and are enthusiastic about learning. Despite Policy documentation and budgetary allocations, there is documented regional disparities in access and participation that hide underneath national achievements over time. The disparities if not addressed can perpetuate intergenerational inequalities.

This paper describes how multi- grade approach has been used in pro-poor private schools, the challenges, policy implications and lessons learnt for replication in pastoralists' communities.

Key Research Questions

The main key question is how the multi grade approach is being used in pro-poor private schools, the challenges, policy implications and lessons learnt.

Research Design

This study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect process and analyse data. This study takes a descriptive survey design. This design enabled the researcher to collect diverse information from the respondents drawn from a Kieni East constituency in Nyeri County.

Sampling Techniques and sample size

Purposeful sampling procedures were considered to target only those private schools that had lost over 50 per cent of their children to private schools between 2012 and 2013. The number of private schools picked was 13. The headteacher and 2 teachers were picked, a male and a female. In total, 39 respondents were considered for this study.

Research instruments

The main research used was an interview schedule and a questionnaire. The interviews targeted the owners and the questionnaires targeted the teachers.

Conclusions and recommendations

Despite enormous challenges and variability in implementation and impact, multigrade practice experience in the pro-poor schools studied indicates that;

- *Children in multi-grade level classrooms learn the skill of working in groups as well as working on their own, sooner than children in single-grade classrooms*
- *Children in multi-grade classes learn to become independent learners and develop the skills of producing independent projects and interacting in a variety of group activities*
- *Differentiated timings can enable the teacher to meet individual differences*
- *Since the teacher pupil ratio is small, the teacher can introduce difficult concepts with ease.*

Key Terms:*EFA, Multi-grade, Multi-mode Approaches, cost- effective, policy implications, lessons, Nyeri*