

## Nomadic Education Policy's Effectiveness in Enhancing Access to Primary Schools by Learners in Balambala Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya

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### Abstract

Primary schools in Kenya play a vital role in providing a strong foundation for education by imparting fundamental skills like reading, writing, and communication. Unfortunately, low access, retention, and completion rates have contributed to high levels of illiteracy in the country, according to the Republic of Kenya (2019). The purpose of the study was to investigate nomadic education policy's effectiveness in enhancing access to primary schools by learners in Balambala sub-county, Garissa County, Kenya. The design used in the investigation was descriptive. The target population was 33 public primary schools in Balambala Sub-County. The specific respondents were the 199 Sub-County Director of Education, Sub-County Director of TSC, Headteachers, teachers, Student Council representatives, and the Board of Management of Primary Schools. The data collection was achieved by utilizing questionnaires and interview guides. The researcher issued questionnaires and sufficient time was provided to allow them to respond to the instruments accurately. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, mean, and standard deviation, and inferential statistics like single regression. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically as per the research objectives. A pilot study was conducted with 40 participants from ASAL Primary schools in Dadaab Sub County. Data was presented using tables, figures, and charts. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.750$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between the implementation of the nomadic education policy and access to education. Notably, the study revealed positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of nomadic education policies, particularly in improving access and retention rates in schools. The study recommends that a longitudinal study should be conducted to assess the long-term impact of education policies and integrated solutions on access and retention rates in primary schools in Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) regions.

**Keywords:** *Nomadic Education, Policy Effectiveness, Primary Schools, Balambala Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya*

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### 1.0 Introduction

Ensuring access to and completing primary school education is a crucial policy priority for many countries striving to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDGs). In line with this, World Bank (2022), asserted that while providing handouts to the needy improves the quality of their lives; you change the World when you provide them with education. The significance of Education lies in its inherent capacity to promote fairness, diversity, and enduring peace,

rendering it a fundamental right for all individuals (UNESCO, 2020). Free primary Education was initiated in Tanzania in 2001, resulting in a rise in gross enrollment ratios. In 1994, free primary Education was initiated by the then multi-party government, while in Uganda, UPE was introduced in 1997. According to UNESCO (2012), the dropout rate among African school children is 42%, whereas, in countries like the USA, it is less than 10% before the completion of primary Education. In Tanzania, free primary Education was introduced in 2001, which increased gross enrollment ratios.

Primary schools in Kenya play a vital role in providing a strong foundation for education by imparting fundamental skills like reading, writing, and communication. Although the current study appreciates the great strides to realize the EFA goal in Kenya, it argues that a homegrown solution is necessary to achieve 100% success. Though well-meaning, global solutions need to consider the individual country contexts. The Kuno Case, where the NACONEK identified the specific challenges for an Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) third-world Country context in education participation, then developed and implemented the National Integrated Water, Food and Energy Solutions for Schools (NIWFESS) project is an example of a homegrown solution. The project was premised on the assumption that adopting an integrated approach to provide water, food, and energy solutions in ASAL areas would enhance education outcomes. By the very nature of their definition, ASAL areas are disadvantaged, and many of the poorest households are domiciled there. The current study hopes that assessing the effectiveness of the integrated approach can provide a solution to the challenge of school participation in ASAL regions in Kenya.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG) aims to ensure that every girl and boy attain free, fair, and quality primary and secondary education by 2030. Despite significant efforts by state and non-state actors globally to improve education participation and prevent dropouts, many countries still struggle to identify and address the exclusion of children from the school system. For example, over the past 20 years, the World Bank has invested US\$24 billion in education projects, with a substantial portion allocated to basic education. Similarly, Kenya's education sector received the largest share of the national budget in 2023-24.

However, despite these investments, the UNICEF (2021) report on Kenya shows that 5% of children are out of school, 15% are not retained, and 21% do not complete the primary cycle. The challenges are particularly severe among the poorest quintile, with 14% out of school, 31% not retained, and 42% not completing primary education. These disparities highlight significant inequalities in access, retention, and completion of education in favour of the richer urban population. This study aims to address these inequalities by exploring how integrated solutions such as effectiveness of nomadic education policy can enhance access to basic education for learners in Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) primary schools in Balambala Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya

### **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

To investigate nomadic education policy's effectiveness in enhancing access to primary schools by learners in Balambala sub-county, Garissa County, Kenya.

### **1.3 Research Question**

To what extent has the nomadic education policy and practice influenced learners' access to primary schools in the Balambala sub-county, Garissa County, Kenya?

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

The Education production theory considers schools as producers of education services, employing the education production function in microeconomic theory. This function, originating from the analysis the relationship between inputs and educational output, addresses issues of equal opportunity in the United States during the 1960s. The model asserts that the quality of education output depends on the quantities and types of inputs used, influencing factors in learners' completion or dropout before the school cycle concludes (Asplund et al., 2021).

The primary phase of educational production occurs during compulsory schooling, with higher secondary and tertiary education enhancing general knowledge and specialization. Basic cognitive skills crucial for human capital formation are acquired in primary and lower secondary education (Heckman, 2000). In essence, Education Production Theory provides a framework for understanding how various inputs, particularly socioeconomic and parental factors, influence educational outcomes, thereby highlighting areas for intervention to enhance educational access and retention in ASAL schools in Balambala Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya.

### **2.2 Empirical Review**

Globally, the challenges faced by nomadic communities in accessing education have been recognized as a complex issue. Pastoralist communities across different continents, such as the Tuareg and Bedouin in North Africa and the Basarwa in Botswana, share common challenges of constant migration and limited access to formal education. The global discourse on nomadic education underscores the need for context-specific solutions that consider nomadic life's unique socio-cultural and environmental aspects (Ismail, 2004).

In the broader African region, the role of implementors varies based on cultural and contextual factors. Collaborative efforts between governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities play a pivotal role in implementing effective education policies for nomadic groups (Dyer, 2016). The regional perspective highlights the significance of engaging local stakeholders in the implementation process to ensure cultural sensitivity and community engagement.

The challenges nomadic communities face in accessing education are a global and regional concern. The issues are deeply rooted in Kenya, particularly in the Balambala sub-county, Garissa County. National statistics reveal persistent under-enrollment and non-completion of school among children in ASAL regions, placing them at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in more stable regions (Ayiro & Sang, 2017). Similar challenges are observed in other arid and semi-arid regions, necessitating a regional approach to addressing nomadic education, as seen in studies in Nigeria. The local perspective emphasizes the urgency of tailored solutions considering migration patterns, resource limitations, and cultural norms.

In the Balambala sub-county, Garissa County, identifying effective implementors is essential. Understanding the local dynamics and involving parents, elders, and peers in transmitting knowledge is crucial for successful policy implementation. Recognizing the cultural significance of informal education channels within the community is vital for bridging the gap between formal education systems and traditional practices.

In Balambala sub-county, Garissa County, Kenya, the challenges of nomadic education are deeply rooted in the local context. National statistics reveal a persistent under-enrollment and

non-completion of school among children in ASAL regions, placing them at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in more stable regions (Ayiro & Sang, 2017). The local perspective emphasizes the urgency of tailored solutions that address the barriers faced by nomadic learners in the region, considering factors such as migration patterns, resource limitations, and cultural norms.

### 3.0 Methodology

The design used in the investigation was descriptive. The target population was 33 public primary schools in Balambala Sub-County. The specific respondents were the 199 Sub-County Director of Education, Sub-County Director of TSC, Headteachers, teachers, Student Council representatives, and the Board of Management of Primary Schools. The data collection was achieved by utilizing questionnaires and interview guides. The researcher issued questionnaires and sufficient time was provided to allow them to respond to the instruments accurately. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, mean, and standard deviation, and inferential statistics like single regression. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically as per the research objectives. A pilot study was conducted with 40 participants from ASAL Primary schools in Dadaab Sub County. Data was presented using tables, figures, and charts

### 4.0 Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Response rate

The researcher administered 2 interview schedules to the sub county director of education, 33 questionnaires to Headteachers, 33 questionnaires to student leaders, 83 questionnaires to teachers, and 48 questionnaires to BOM members. A total of 199 instruments were issued. Table 1 displays the findings of the response rate.

**Table 1**

*Response Rate*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Returned	163	81.91%
Unreturned	36	18.09%
<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>100%</b>

A total of one hundred and sixty-three (163) surveys were completed and returned resulting to a response rate of 81.91% as in Table 1. The study's response was deemed to be adequate as advised by Saunders et al. (2009) who posited that a success rate of 50% and above is appropriate for statistical analysis. This indicated a robust engagement from the stakeholders involved in primary education within Balambala Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya.

#### 4.2 Reliability Results

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability was used to conduct the pilot study. Table 2 displays the findings.

**Table 2**  
*Reliability Analysis*

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Comment
Nomadic education policy	0.737	Reliable
Access to primary education	0.865	Reliable

The nomadic education policy's effectiveness had a coefficient of 0.737 and access to primary education had an alpha value of Cronbach's 0.865. Therefore, the reliability of the survey items in this study was deemed reliable in line with assertions by Sekaran and Bougie (2013) who posited that a Cronbach alpha of 0.7 and higher is deemed sufficiently high.

### 4.3 Results of Nomadic education policy's effectiveness

The study used both questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data. Analysis of the responses from the respondents revealed the following. Table 3 displays the findings.

#### Quantitative Findings

**Table 3**  
*Effectiveness of Education Policies*

Statement	Mean Score
Implementation plan significantly influences access	4.2
Equitable teacher staffing policy enhances access	4.5

Analysis of the data through SPSS resulted in a mean score of 4.2 which indicates that stakeholders perceive the implementation plan of education policies to significantly influence access and retention of learners in school. Equally, the mean score of 4.5 suggests that there is a strong belief in the positive impact of equitable teacher staffing policy on enhancing access and retention of learners in schools.

#### Qualitative Findings from Interview Schedules with Sub-County Education Officers

Interviews with Sub-County Education Officers provided additional qualitative insights into the effectiveness of the nomadic education policy. Several key themes emerged from these interviews. Interviewed Sub-County Education Officers highlighted that the nomadic education policy has fostered greater engagement between schools and nomadic communities. Respondent X stated,

*"There is now a stronger relationship between schools and nomadic families, which has led to increased trust and cooperation."*

The collaborated findings by Al Salman et al., (2022) in their paper that sought to characterize components of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital in the context of relationships between duck herders and other actors and sought to find the essential role of the combination of the three types of social capital for livelihood outcomes, particularly in facing vulnerabilities due to the pandemic. They found that social capital plays a vital role in a livelihood system, within which access to livelihood assets depends on social relations.

Despite the positive impacts, officers noted several challenges. These included logistical difficulties in reaching remote areas and the need for more culturally relevant teaching materials. Respondent Y remarked,



*"While we've made progress, the unique needs of nomadic children require continuous adaptation of our approaches."*

This is not unique to the region alone with a study of various cases of minority by Postiglione, (2013) revealing that other minority regions faced unique challenges like linguistic and cultural barriers, differences between the school environment and the minorities home environment, and differences in emphasis of education between environments which consequently led to a decline in student performance.

The importance of ongoing professional development for teachers working with nomadic populations was emphasized. Officers indicated that specialized training has been essential for teachers to engage with nomadic students effectively. Respondent Z explained,

*"Teachers trained in culturally responsive pedagogy have been more successful in improving educational outcomes for nomadic children."*

A study by Dyer (2016) on evolving approaches to educating children from nomadic communities collaborated with these findings. She did a case study analysis of mobile pastoralists in Kenya, India, and Afghanistan, and of sea nomads in Indonesia which highlighted a need to address equality, equivalence, and learner progression more closely, rather than adopting strategies for education inclusion that reinforce nomadic groups' sociopolitical marginalization.

Officers stressed the need for policies to be flexible and adaptable to the shifting lifestyles of nomadic communities. They advocated for more flexible schooling schedules and mobile schools.

Respondent Y shared,

*"Our policies must evolve to accommodate the mobility of nomadic families; otherwise, we risk losing the progress we've made."*

This was in line with the findings of a study by Tugjamba et al (2021) into how herder communities adapt to climate change and the potential role an ecosystem services approach could play in informing the development of effective adaptation strategies. A study by Ngugi (2017) also found that despite the mobile school intervention, the level of participation of nomadic pastoralists' children in education is still minimal with a need to address obstacles to policy and grass root levels including teaching capacity, food security, and insecurity related issues in general.

Interviews revealed several success stories where specific interventions led to remarkable improvements. For instance, the introduction of mobile schools and community-based schooling initiatives were frequently mentioned as effective strategies. Respondent X highlighted,

*"Mobile schools have been a game-changer, bringing education directly to the children, regardless of their location."*

This reiterated findings by Learning Policy Institute (2017) on community schools as an effective school improvement strategy. Their report established that while community schools vary in their program offerings and their modus operandi, they all had integrated student supports; expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities; encouraged family and community engagement; and engaged in collaborative leadership and practices.

These qualitative insights complement the quantitative data, providing a richer understanding of the nomadic education policy's effectiveness. They underscore the importance of community engagement, teacher support, policy flexibility, and the need to address implementation challenges to sustain and enhance educational access and retention for nomadic learners in Balambala Sub-County.

#### 4.4 Correlation Results

Correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between nomadic education policy's and access to primary education. Findings indicate a significant positive correlation between the effectiveness of integrated solutions and access to education ( $r = 0.750, p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that as integrated solutions improve, access to education also increases. Table 5 displays the findings.

**Table 5**

*Correlation Results*

		Access to primary education	Nomadic education policy's effectiveness
Access to primary education	Correlation	1	.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	163	163
Nomadic Education Policy's effectiveness	Correlation	.750**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	163	163

Table 5 findings indicate a significant positive correlation between the effectiveness of integrated solutions and access to education ( $r = 0.750, p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that as integrated solutions improve, access to education also increases.

#### 4.5 Summary of the Findings

Qualitative findings indicate that the nomadic education policy has significantly improved access to primary schools. Increased enrollment rates and the positive impact of the policy on teacher distribution have been observed. Head Teachers' responses reinforced these observations, with many affirming that the implementation of education policies has positively influenced access and retention of learners. Teachers agreed that the acceptance of the formal national curriculum and the provision of a curriculum reflecting nomadic socio-economic life have positively impacted access and retention. The Board of Management supported these findings, noting that the equitable national teacher staffing policy and the provision of inclusive early childhood education policies have further enhanced access and retention. Correlation analysis indicates a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.750, p < 0.001$ ) between the implementation of the nomadic education policy and access to education, suggesting that areas with better policy implementation tend to have higher access rates.

#### 5.0 Conclusion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of education policies and integrated solutions in enhancing access to primary education in Balambala Sub County, Garissa County, Kenya. The study revealed positive perceptions regarding the

effectiveness of nomadic education policies, particularly in improving access and retention rates in schools.

## 6.0 Recommendations

This study recommends that a longitudinal study should be conducted to assess the long-term impact of education policies and integrated solutions on access and retention rates in primary schools in Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) regions.

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