

Indigenous Knowledge Practices for Sustainable Lifelong Education in Pastoralist Communities of Kenya.

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Abstract

Despite setting high hopes on education, very few pastoral nomad children in Kenya transition from primary education to secondary education. This article argues that the national Kenyan compulsory formal curriculum fails to accommodate the needs of pastoralist communities. Literacy rates are particularly low among the Turkana people, pastoralist nomads who live in the Northwest of Kenya. Low literacy has resulted in an acute shortage of local teachers, a state of affairs which exacerbates the situation. Nomadic communities like the Turkana people rarely attract national discussions on education curriculum even as their children continue to perform poorly on national examinations. The author of this article demonstrates the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge and mother-tongue instruction in the curriculum for pastoralist schools. Based on his own research in Turkana County, he identifies two main problems besides the shortage of teachers, namely the inappropriateness of the materials used for instruction, which do not reflect the pastoralist children's local Indigenous culture and everyday environment; and the failure to use Turkana mother tongue in early childhood education, which would support children's literacy development, and thus serve to improve literacy rates in the community as a whole. The author presents a family literacy project he was involved in which has made a promising start in addressing these two issues. Stories were collected from parents and elders and made into storybooks, thereby creating tailor-made, meaningful instruction materials. The author expresses his hope that this article will stimulate critical discussions in Kenya which will respect the participation of pastoralist nomadic communities in making decisions about education policy.

Keywords: Indigenous education · Indigenous knowledge · Early childhood education · Family literacy · Turkana language · Mother tongue · Language of instruction

Full text:

https://www.saide.org.za/documents/2019_Ngasike_IndigenousKnowledgePracticesFo.pdf