

Influence of Socio-Cultural Factors on Transition of Learners from Primary to Secondary Schools in Central Division, Narok County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the social cultural factors influencing the transition rate of pupils from primary to secondary schools and to suggest strategies that would help raise the transition rates. The study was conducted in public primary and secondary schools in Central Division of Narok North District. Descriptive survey design was used involving both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the respondents from the twenty four (24) primary and four (4) secondary schools within the Division. Simple random sampling was used to obtain the individual schools and respondents to participate in the study. Two (2) primary school teachers were selected from each school. All the twenty four (24) primary school head teachers, four (4) secondary school principals and two (2) Quality Assurance and Standards Officers in the selected zones were chosen. A total of 68 class eight pupils and 44 form one students were randomly selected from the sampled schools. Data were collected using questionnaires and an interview schedule. A pilot test was done in one secondary and three primary schools. It was established that a number of social cultural factors hindered learner transition to secondary schools. The study recommends the need to protect children from unlawful practices that prevent them from pursuing secondary education. Parents and pupils should be sensitized about the benefits of education. Guidance and Counseling in schools should in turn be strengthened to assist the pupils who have personal challenges to build their self confidence and self esteem.

Keywords: *Transition, Moranism, Drop out, Free Primary Education, Retention, Wastage.*

Background of the Study

Education is the most basic insurance against poverty. It empowers people with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to shape a better future (UNESCO, 2011). Mattei (1996, as cited in Kadenyi & Kariuki, 2011), points out that education should be a process of bringing oneself in touch with personal potentialities and of opening the way for actualizing those potentials. In line with this demand World nations have hence invested heavily in the sector to enhance improved access. UNICEF (2011) affirms that the journey towards the achievement of universal quality education for every child has been long following decades of reaffirmations and commitments. It however notes that a total of 67 million children of

primary school age and a further 72 million of lower secondary school students were still out of school by 2009. The notable factors responsible included: lack of fees, biased selection processes, opportunity costs and other social factors. Lewin (2007) had earlier noted that within the commonwealth countries alone about 45 million children were still out of school at the primary level with almost 140 million missing access to secondary education. This situation may also be true for Kenya and specifically for Narok North District.

Kenya's focused attention on increasing resources to the education sector cannot be underestimated. Since independence the country has seen impressive gains in educational access at all levels, resulting from substantial investment of resources in education and other government policies (UNICEF, 2009). All levels of the education sector depict increased student enrollment and teacher employment in the schools. This, Oketch and Somerset (2010) acknowledge as a big achievement considering that at the early years of Kenya's independence, getting a place at a secondary school was a privilege restricted to a favorable few. In 1971, for example, only about 14% of the pupils sitting the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) performed well enough to gain a place at a Government maintained secondary school the following year. For majority of the candidates, primary education was terminal since they could not enter a secondary school of any kind. It is in accord with these arguments that the study sought to establish influence of socio-cultural factors on transition rate of pupils from primary to secondary schools in Central Division of Narok North District. Oketch and Somerset (2010) in their case study, enquired by researching into the secondary school patterns among the pupils who graduated from some schools in Kenya at the end of 2007. Their findings revealed that, partly as a consequence of the introduction of the Free Secondary Education (FSE) Programme at the beginning of 2008, the overall transition rate was high and relatively uniform. This is in agreement with His Excellency President Kibaki's assertion in February 2008 that Free Secondary Education (FSE) had improved secondary schooling with increased enrolments from 779,000 in 2002 to 1.2 million in 2007 to over 1.4 million in 2008 (Kibaki, 2008).

An increased enrolment, however, may both be a blessing and a danger to the education system. Lewin (2007) while looking at the negative impact argues that low transition may retard the gains achieved so far as increasing numbers of children shall be excluded from realizing their development potential. Exclusion of this nature may create social and political tensions in the society. Such worries are shared by Tuju (2012, p.13) in *The Daily Nation* article which states that having a large number of children who miss secondary school may be tantamount to 'condemning some to early marriages, banditry, cattle rustling and increased runaway insecurity in the nation.' The current study shares these sentiments in the sense that such school drop outs may end up living a wasted life for missing secondary education which, according to The Gachathi Report of 1976, is responsible for the growth of individual towards maturity and self fulfillment (Republic of Kenya, 1976). Ogola (2011) compares failure to attain individual fulfillment to a disappointment experienced by people who have lost hope of getting water when the only source they depended on has dried up. Failure to access this important level of education therefore signifies unfulfilled objectives, goals and aims both to the individual and to the society especially when hundreds of thousands are involved as was the case in the year 2010 when 206,282 students were feared locked out from secondary school, (Nzioka, 2010 p.8). In Narok District this translated to about 41% of previous year's class eight candidates missing secondary school. This creates an educational

gap and is a clear sign that the pupils are not able to reap the intended benefits of education that the system purports to provide.

Statement of the Problem

As enshrined in Kenya's Economic Blueprint, "The Kenya Vision 2030", the country endeavors to attain a globally competitive and prosperous status providing quality life to all its citizens (Republic of Kenya, 2007). To achieve this dream the nation requires well educated and highly trained personnel who should progress with their education to acquire knowledge, skills and required competencies. This is only possible if learners get an opportunity to proceed with their education beyond primary into the secondary level of education, and subsequently into higher levels. The situation may be more complicated in ASAL regions like Narok where transition to secondary school is still low (Narok North District Development Plan 2008-2012); (Narok North District Education Office, 2011). Failure to proceed to secondary schools deprives the nation of human resources that can participate actively both in shaping her future and in propelling the county government development agenda. A concern that calls for attention is what happens to those who are left out of full basic education, and what the future holds for them when they drop out at an age when they are ill-equipped with skills and competencies required for national development of the 21st century. Furthermore, the future of these dropouts, some of them probably with special needs, remain bleak in the modern world as the nation incurs losses in educational investments that may not clearly be justified. This study investigated the influence of socio-culture on learner transition to secondary schools in Central Division, Narok North District.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. Determine the socio-cultural factors influencing the transition rate of pupils from primary to secondary schools in Central Division, Narok North District.
- ii. Suggest strategies to help raise the transition rates of learners from primary to secondary schools in Central Division, Narok North District.

Conceptual Framework

Socio-cultural factors as an independent or 'cause' variables may singly or together, directly and indirectly combine to affect transition, which is a dependent or 'effect' variable through the impact they create on the learners' academic achievement. They may enable a learner to proceed with education to higher secondary classes or to repeat/ terminate. The socio-cultural factors at home may limit or enhance the learners' participation in school leading to poor or regular attendance. This in turn affects performance which is considered a major determinant of transition to the higher levels. The factors may influence the pupil's decision to drop out of school or the parent's decision to withdraw pupils from progressing in school. In short, a positive interaction between the variables is likely to create higher chances for the learner's advancement to secondary school while a negative one increases the likelihood of terminating school attendance. This is presented in the model shown in figure 1.1.

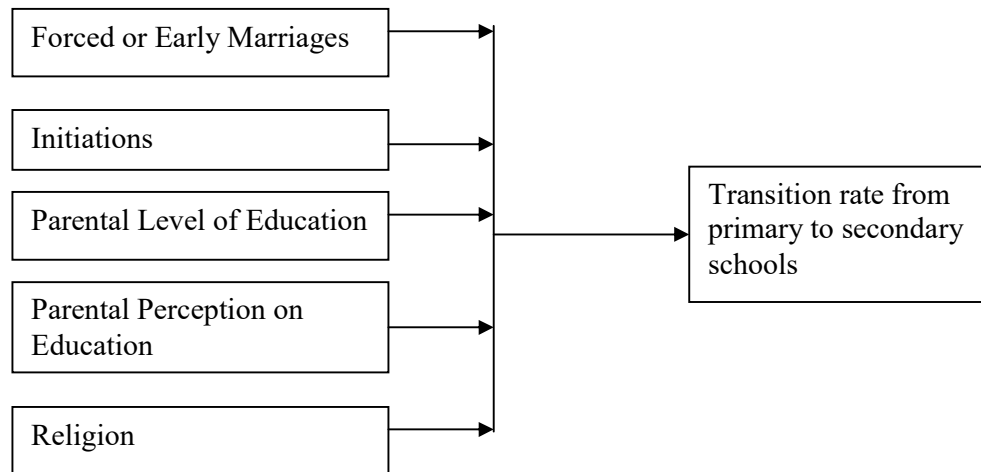


Figure 1.1 Socio-cultural Factors influencing Transition of Learners to Secondary Schools

Literature

Forced or Early Marriages

Most parents in Africa still hold traditional beliefs of preferring a particular sex to acquire education. High education priority is given to a boy child as compared to a girl child (Nyawara, 2007). Anderson, as quoted by Chimombo (2005) observed that girls/women have less access to education sector than boys/men hence parents decide that schooling is not relevant or worthwhile for the economic roles of their female children who shall move into their husband's families when they marry and that gains in productivity or income due to education will accrue to the families of their son's in-law rather than to them. A report by the World Bank (1995) revealed that most countries give few education opportunities to girls since the parents' demand for education of their daughters is low reflecting both cultural norms and girls' work in and around the home. Westaway et al (2009), in a study conducted in Uganda among the fishing communities found out that early marriages and pregnancies often lead to dropouts and often cases are sorted out through paying of fines to avoid imprisonment and conflict with the authorities. Forced or early marriages were investigated in this study to ascertain whether they influence transition rate of learners from primary to secondary schools.

Initiations

Most communities, especially the pastoral groups are ready to give their daughters into marriages immediately after circumcision in order to get high bride wealth. A case study conducted by Nyabanyaba (2009) on factors influencing access and retention in secondary schooling for orphans and vulnerable children in Lesotho found out that traditional rites help pull out students from school and suppress any desire for advancing to the next level since the recognition and respect accorded to those out of school is higher than respect accorded to those in schools. In Kenyan districts such as Kajiado, Tharaka and Turkana, underage girls are married off to old men after circumcision and also due to unwanted pregnancies. This, according to the Strategic Public Relations and Research Company (2005) increase absenteeism in schools and kills any desire to progress further in education. Graduates of an

initiation are considered adults and that they are entitled to some degree of freedom in making decisions. Girls are expected to assume adult life after graduating from an initiation and be given off for marriages. The circumcised youths not only look down upon their uncircumcised peers but also despise teachers. This creates a sharp decline in their academic performance and they are likely to play truant and eventually drop out of school. Female circumcision leads to loss of interest in school afterwards hampering any desire for further educational progress since the girls are then classified as adult women ready for marriage.

Parental Level of Education

Studies have indicated that there is a close relationship between the parental level of education and participation by their children in educational matters. The World Bank (1995) notes that literate persons are more likely than illiterate ones to enroll and retain their children in schools. Whether parents are educated or illiterate affects demand for education in the household. According to Onyango (2000) better educated parents appreciate the value of education more than illiterate ones and normally assist their children to progress in education both morally and materially. A UNICEF report as in Onyango (2000) found out that in Sub-Saharan countries and two Indian states children of educated women are much more likely to go to school hence the more educated the women are the more probable it is that their children also benefit from education. UNESCO (2011) notes further that in Latin America children whose mothers have secondary schooling remain in school for longer periods than those whose mothers lack secondary education hence are more likely to progress to secondary education.

Parental Perception on Education

It is a common belief that education sometimes comes into conflict with what the society expects. As Chimombo (2005) states, sometimes at home, conflict arises between what is taught at home (in initiation ceremonies) and at school which may lead to parents opposing their children's continued attendance at school especially girls. Nyawara (2007) decried unequal opportunities which require that women conform in what is considered suitable feminine work, occupation, attitudes towards education and modernization, a perception that increases dropouts and influence transition negatively. A report in *The Daily Nation* quotes findings by the Kenya National Examinations Council stating that very few parents feel concerned about their children's education and make any meaningful follow up on their learning (Muindi, 2010 p.1.). In fact, nomads consider education as irrelevant to their lifestyle as it distances children from their culture and many who have gone to school no longer like herding livestock (Abdi, 2010).

Religion

The society has some customs in certain areas which restrict access to religious privileges to certain classes in the society. Ohba (2009) found out that some faith-based schools sometimes exclude 'non-believers' while some secondary school teachers also reported that for some Muslim children, their religion posed a problem in relation to integrating with classmates, hence affecting their performance which eventually led to drop out (Evangelou, Taggart, Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, and Blatchford, 2008). Similar findings by Appleton et al (1990, as cited in World Bank Report, 1995) links a religion like Islam with low female participation in schools. Islamic education is preferred for daughters to western education which is feared, promotes values and behaviors which are contrary to the people's cultural norms. Interpretation of the Qur'an regarding the status of women in society influences access to

girls' secondary education in Kenya (Shiundu, Achola, Mondoh, Opata, & Ng'ongah, 2007). Practices such as veiling and seclusion of women influences girls' secondary education with some parents keeping away their daughters from non-Muslim schools where they are not allowed to practice their religious rights such as wearing the *hijab* (veil). Possible contribution of religion to low transition was considered in this study.

Methodology

A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was employed to get a snapshot of the current behaviours, attitudes, opinions and beliefs in the population. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) state that survey research require the collection of standardized quantifiable information from all members of a population or a sample. Both Qualitative and quantitative approaches of data collection were used. The study targeted primary school head teachers, teachers, class eight pupils, the secondary school principals, form one students and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs). Two (2) zones were selected using simple random sampling. Ten percent (10%) of the entire standard eight pupils and form one students population in the schools for each group was selected to ensure proportionality in representation. According to Gay et al. (2009:133) for a survey study, a sample of at least 10% of the population is acceptable as a representation of the population.

The total sample therefore comprised twenty four (24) primary schools, four (4) secondary schools, twenty four (24) primary school head teachers, four (4) secondary school principals, forty eight (48) primary school teachers, sixty eight (68) class eight pupils, forty four (44) form one students and two (2) QASO officers. This made a total of one hundred and ninety (190) respondents which is 15.7 % of the total population. The study used questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data. The reliability was established through a pilot study using 23 questionnaires. The internal consistency method was employed in pre-testing the instruments using the Cronbach alpha coefficient. Reliability of 0.7 and above yielded by the instruments was accepted to prove them reliable as recommended by Nachmias and Nachmias (1976:467). Qualitative data were analyzed inductively through content analysis while quantitative data were analyzed by the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS, v 16.). Cross tabulation between various factors and the demographic factors was done to establish the relationship and the variation between the various factors under study

Findings

Table 1: Pupils' and Students' Responses on Social Cultural Reasons for Failure of the Pupils to Join Secondary School

	Reasons for failure to join Secondary School	Yes	Not Sure	No
a)	To give chance to a brother/sister to continue with education	68(68.7)	17(17.2)	14(14.1)
b)	Fear of sexual harassment	37(37.4)	30(30.3)	32(32.3)
c)	Parents favour certain sex for education	52(52.5)	14(14.1)	33(33.3)
d)	Cultural rites and customs (such as <i>moranism</i> , female circumcision)	52(52.5)	22(22.2)	25(25.3)
e)	Some religions teach against formal education	26(26.3)	33(33.3)	40(40.4)
f)	Lack of role models in the community	60(60.6)	10(10.1)	29(29.3)
g)	Lack of community support for the disabled	79(79.8)	6(6.1)	14(14.1)
h)	Parental care and child upbringing	51(51.5)	12(12.1)	36(36.4)

Table 1 indicates that lack of community support for the disabled was the key factor with 79(79.8%) of the respondents indicating it as a reason for pupils not joining secondary school. This was followed by 68(68.7%) who indicated that they were required to give a chance to their brothers and sisters to proceed to secondary school instead. Cultural rites were supported by 52(52.5%) in agreement followed by 52(52.5%) of the learners who perceive favour that parents extend towards some children as a determinant of transition as 51(51.5%) blame general parental upbringing to low rate of entry to form one. The QASO officials indicated that *moranism* or male cultural warrior hood and circumcision of both boys and girls affected the transition rates particularly when it was done towards the end of December. The pupils lacked motivators and they lost interest in education. They noted that standard eight pupils were viewed as having acquired adequate education in the community and this made them lose interest of proceeding with their studies to secondary school.

Thirty seven 37(37.4%) of the respondents indicated that sexual harassment was a factor hindering transition. Religious teachings had the lowest effect on why the pupils are unable to proceed on to high school with only 26(26.3%) agreeing that it was a factor. It was also revealed by majority 60(60.6%) of the pupils that lack of role models who should motivate them to work harder played a role too.

The study sought to establish the relationship that existed between gender and the social cultural factors of the pupils and the students. This was to establish whether the factors depended on gender or the effect was across, more on the boys or the girls in the Division. This was presented in table 2.

Table 2: Cross Tabulation between Selected Cultural Factors and Gender

Reasons for failure to join secondary school	Male			Female		
	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure
a) To give chance to a brother/sister to continue with education	31(31.3)	8(8.1)	10(10.1)	32(32.3)	11(11.1)	7(7.1)
b) Fear of sexual harassment	20(20.2)	10(10.1)	21(21.2)	18(18.2)	13(13.1)	17(17.2)
c) Parents favour certain sex for education	20(20.2)	8(8.1)	21(21.2)	25(25.3)	8(8.1)	17(17.2)
d) Cultural rites and customs (e.g. <i>moranism</i>)	22(22.2)	11(11.1)	17(17.2)	29(29.3)	12(12.1)	8(8.1)
e) Lack of role models in the community	27(27.3)	9(9.1)	14(14.1)	28(28.3)	2(2.0)	19(19.2)

Most of the female pupils 32(32.3%) indicated that some pupils were required to give a chance to their brothers or sisters to continue with their education, 11(11%) of the female respondents expressed their disagreement with the statement. Among the boys 31(31.3%) indicated that it was true that some pupils were required to give chance to a brother or sister to continue with education while 10(10.1%) were not sure. The study established that most of the boys 20(20.2%) compared to only 18(18.2%) of the girls indicated that there was fear of sexual harassment in the schools which contributed to the low transition rates. Most of the girls 25(25.3%) noted that parents favour certain sex for education, only 20(20.2%) of the boys responded in the affirmative. There was a similar response when the respondents were asked about cultural rites and customs and whether they affect transition. Among the girls 29(29.3%) agreed that the cultural rites were a factor affecting transition of pupils from primary to secondary school against 22(22.2%) of the boys. A total of 28(28.3%) of the girls agreed that pupils lacked role models in the community as a closer view, 27(27.3%) of the boys indicated the same.

Table 3: Head Teacher's Views on Social Cultural Factors Influencing Transition

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Initiation ceremonies	8(33.3)	11(45.8)	2(8.3)	2(8.3)	1(4.2)
Religious practices /	--	6(25.0)	5(20.8)	8(33.3)	5(20.8)
Forced or early marriages	11(45.8)	9(37.5)	--	3(12.5)	1(4.2)
Parent educ. level	5(20.8)	16(66.7)	3(12.5)	--	--
Peer influence	5(20.8)	11(45.8)	6(25.0)	2(8.3)	--
Parental perception of formal education	8(33.3)	4(16.7)	3(12.5)	8(33.3)	1(4.2)
Size of the family	6(25.0)	12(50.0)	3(12.5)	3(12.5)	--

Table 3 indicates that all the factors that were provided, initiation ceremonies 19(79.1%), forced marriage 20(83.3%) parental level of education 21(87.5%), peer influence 16(66.6%), parental perception of formal education 12(50%) and size of the family 18(75.0%) have a role to play in affecting transition of pupils from primary to secondary school. Only one factor; Religious practices 6(25.0%) seemed to have little effect on the transition. This could be attributed to the fact that Central Division is in a district with low literacy level; 40.5% and 50% for women and men respectively according to the Narok North Development Plan 2008-2012, (Republic of Kenya, 2009). Literacy level of the parents could have contributed to the support given to children and determine how long children access schooling.

Table 4: Teacher's Views on Social Cultural Factors Influencing Transition

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) Initiation ceremonies	12(25.0)	16(33.3)	3(6.3)	7(14.6)	10(20.8)
b) Religious practices / barriers	2(4.2)	5(10.4)	6(12.5)	17(35.4)	18(37.5)
c) Forced or early marriages	9(18.8)	28(58.3)	--	3(6.3)	8(16.7)
d) Parental level of education	20(41.7)	14(29.2)	3(6.3)	6(12.5)	5(10.4)
e) Negative peer influence	7(14.6)	25(52.1)	2(4.2)	10(20.8)	4(8.3)
f) Parental perception of formal education	22(45.8)	12(25.0)	2(4.2)	8(16.7)	4(8.3)
g) Size of the family	15(31.3)	19(39.6)	4(8.3)	7(14.6)	3(6.3)

From the results presented in table 4 it is shown that forced or early marriages had the highest effect on transition with a response rate of 37(77.1%), followed by parental level of education, size of the family and parental perception of formal education, all with 34(70.9%). There was also evidence that negative peer influence had an effect on the transition rate with a total of 32(66.7%) while initiation ceremonies had 28(58.3%). Once again religious practices and barriers scored lowest with only 7(14.6%) agreeing.

Table 5: Principals' Views on Social Cultural Factors Influencing Transition

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) Initiation ceremonies	1(25.0)	3(75.0)	--	--	--
b) Religious practices / barriers	--	--	2(50.0)	2(50.0)	--
c) Forced or early marriages	1(25.0)	2(50.0)	1(25.0)	--	--
d) Parental level of education	--	2(50.0)	1(25.0)	1(25.0)	--
e) Negative peer influence	1(25.0)	2(50.0)	--	--	1(25.0)
f) Parental perception of formal education	2(50.0)	1(25.0)	--	1(25.0)	--
g) Size of the family	1(25.0)	2(50.0)	--	1(25.0)	--

From the results presented in table 5, it is clear that all the principals 4(100 %) agreed that initiation ceremonies influenced the rate of transition from primary to secondary school. There was similar agreement on four factors; Parental perception of education, Forced and early marriages among the pupils, Negative peer influence and, Size of the family, all with

3(75.0%) agreement. A total of 2(50%) of the respondents agreed that parental level of education influenced the transition rates while 1(25%) was not sure and 1(25%) disagreed that the parents' level of education affects the rate of transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools.

Discussions

Various factors including, lack of community support for the disabled, the girls being denied the opportunity to give a chance to a brother/sister to continue with education were supported with others saying they were unable to proceed with education because the parents gave educational preference to a certain gender. Results indicated that drop outs occurred as a result of peer influence due to the socio-cultural practices which are highly cherished by the community. This could be aggravated by lack of role models in the surrounding community who could be emulated. Sexual harassment and religious teachings however were seen to have the weakest effect on why the pupils were unable to proceed to high school.

The findings further revealed that initiation ceremonies such as female circumcision rites called for early or forced marriages especially among girls who were forced by parents and relatives to stop attending school to get married. This finding agrees with the Strategic Public Relations and Research Company (2005) which noted that female circumcision leads to loss of interest in school and hampers any desire for further educational progress. It also appeared that cultural *moranism* still led to early termination of education among the boys as school-going boys got lured by the kind of respect accorded to those who maintained the cultural practice.

The results of this study also showed that some parents do not perceive formal education positively. Many parents opt to marry off their young girls instead of sending them to school as revealed by 20(83.3%) of the head teachers, 37(77.1%) of the teachers and 3(75%) of the secondary school principals. Many school-age children are still at home probably as a result of the low literacy level of most parents in the Division. This makes it unlikely that many parents could support their children's endeavor to pursue formal education, especially the girl-child. These views are similar to those presented by Nyawara (2007), Ngugi (2002) and Chimombo (2005) who noted existence of gender bias in education. More girls 25(25.3%) than boys 20(20.2%) indicated that parents favour a certain gender in providing education. Still, more girls 32(32.3%) compared to boys, 31(31.3%) indicated that failure to proceed with education may be as a result of giving a chance to a brother or sister to continue schooling. The responses may indicate that high education priority was given in favour of the boy child as compared to the girl child.

Conclusion

Kenya is very diverse; hence it is not possible to conclude that the factors influencing transition to secondary school apply uniformly across the country. It is vital that children who wish to access secondary education get support from their families and guardians. However, cultural attitudes often remain a major barrier for many children; most girls are married off immediately or soon after initiation. Some boys on the other hand prefer joining the *moranism* instead of proceeding with schooling after their initiation. The study also revealed that there is parental preference to certain gender when giving priority to education. Attitudes about the relevance of secondary education must be challenged and parents and guardians made to understand the importance of secondary education if transition is to be facilitated.

Recommendations

In order to address the issues with transition in the Division, Stakeholders in the area such as educational officers, religious bodies and NGOs should team up in a bid to provide appropriate guidance and counseling and sensitization to the community on the importance of schooling not only to the child but to the entire community. Policies and programmes of adult education by the government should be rolled out in all parts of the country to create attitudinal change among illiterate and ignorant parents in favour of child education. Awareness campaigns should be employed to guide and counsel the school pupils and their parents to ignore cultural practices such as *moranism* and female circumcision that encourage children to drop out from schools. The government and private sector are critical in addressing the barriers children face in accessing secondary school education. This would provide gender balance in education provision to all children.

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