

# Parental Perception towards Free Primary Education Policy Implementation among Pastoralists in West Pokot County, Kenya

Barmao Kipkorir Paul\*

Department of Education, Administration and Policy Studies, School of Education, Moi University, Kenya

\*Corresponding author: Barmao Kipkorir Paul

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## Abstract

Pastoralists are a group of people who inhabit harsh and remote regions of Kenya. Pasture and water for their animals dominate their priorities. This paper is premised on the findings of a study that sought to establish parental perceptions towards the implementation of free primary education among pastoralists in West Pokot County, Kenya. Respondents were the parents, teachers and pupils from selected schools in the county. The study was guided by the Rational Action Theory advanced by Goldthorpe. A pragmatic research paradigm, in which a descriptive research design was employed, was adopted. The target population comprised 60,000 pupils, 503 head teachers and parents in 503 primary schools. The study used a sample size of 300 pupils, 50 head teachers and 50 parents selected using purposive sampling technique. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a questionnaire. Pearson correlation and regression analyses were computed to test the level of association between variables and to test the hypotheses respectively. Qualitative data were analysed through reporting themes that emerged. The themes emerging from secondary data were identified to augment the primary data. The results of correlations indicated that the Pearson correlation coefficient between parental perception and free primary education policy implementation was 0.792, indicating a strong positive association between parental perception and free primary education policy implementation in the county. Further, results of the regression coefficients revealed that parents' perception ( $\beta=0.027$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) was significant to free primary education policy. Although parents of pastoralist communities in West Pokot County are positive towards the FPE implementation, more resources need to be directed to them to realize a more gainful venture in education in the region.

**Keywords:** Pastoralists, Perception, Pasture, FPE Policy, West Pokot, Implementation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Endemic conflicts in pastoralist regions complicate implementation of development strategies [1, 2]. Such conflicts bring about insecurity and instability in the region and only provoke high mobility in search of pasture, water and shelter. Pastoralism is considered an ancient mode of living with nomadic herding of animals along grazing lands that are mostly on semi-arid terrain. The pastoralist communities benefitted little in development during the colonial and post-colonial period but instead received very little attention from the political establishment. The effects of colonial government over the pastoralist were to limit their movement within state boundaries and defining of new conflict zones based on the administrative regions. Pastoralists' community is one group that has a small percentage of its population having access to basic education. Empirical researches have revealed that it is often the impact of drought; poverty and regional marginalization that inhibit school going children to access to primary schooling. Understanding the needs

of communities under pastoral system is vital to coming up with interventions to improve access in the education sector.

Krätli [3] posits that pastoralist's fundamental inadequacy lies in its economic inefficiency, health and nutritional problems. However, such an opinion is challengeable if it does not account for the pastoralist coping strategies that have seen them counter the adverse environmental condition. Much as it is true they lack social amenities like water, electricity and information, these communities seem to possess great survival skills that the policy makers may borrow in developing life skills that are about to be included as part of a curriculum. They should not be excluded from participation and ownership of educational programs through overreliance of a top down management approach.

Perhaps an important argument being asserted by Savverio (ibid) is the necessity of ensuring that rich and up to date information about pastoralists gets its

way into the education system. Therefore it follows that even policy makers ought to have the latest research findings instead of propaganda or unfounded beliefs before creating normal and alternative programs for such communities. A lot in the literature on Pokot communities brings out a perception that the community is resistant to change. The Pokot pastoralists are a proud people who are reluctant to give up their way of life. Part of this reluctance is a response to the harsh condition of their environment, but some is because of misguided advice in the past from outsiders. This would most likely be an incorrect way of looking at the problem of access to primary schooling.

There is need to establish whether it is the community resisting change or change resisting the community. Educational change requires careful planning and adequate representation of all change agents. New ideas require innovative approaches where meaning is constructed over time until participants gain a common understanding. In the education sector, participation in a change process may require educational practitioners to closely re-evaluate educational approach and monitor the progress as it becomes clear through the process of discovery.

Many things make the pastoralists look receptive and capable of adapting change. They put on clothing from modern materials such as *Shukas* and *atteng* (skin) which are available within their grazing land. They also use sandals made of rubber and plastic jerry cans besides being in possession of firearms. Consequently, these populations seem to be so advanced in their coping strategies as manifested in consistent practice of traditional medication, trade and raids. The Pokots are not defeated by the challenges posed by recurring drought, nor by security that have complicated customary drought coping strategies. Rather, time and again they show their resilience, determination and capacity to innovate new responses to drought.

The impact of the new commitment to FPE can be judged at one level by the more than doubling of government recurrent expenditure devoted to education. Between 1990/1 and 1997, this proportion rose from 11% to 24%, much of the increases going toward new teachers' salaries. Primary education's share of total educational expenditure went up from 45% to 65% in the early years of FPE, not least because of the conditions attached to external funds, which themselves constituted about 40% of the primary education budget [4, 5]. The larger external financial undertaking has been reflected in a larger donor role in the policy arena as well, though this influence had been present well before the introduction of FPE.

In Tanzania, Free Primary Education was announced in 2001, largely as part of the PRSP process, having been incorporated into the Education Sector

Development Programme, which has provided the framework for partnerships with the international development community since its appraisal in early 1999. In 2001, the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) was launched, and tuition fees and other mandatory cash contributions to schools were abolished. This was consistent with the EFA target of ensuring the enrolment of all 7-13 year-olds by 2006. A gross enrolment ratio of 98% in 1980 had declined by the early 1990s to below 70%, and in 1999/00, the year before FPE was introduced, the gross enrolment rate was even lower, 63%, the net enrolment rate reaching only 46.7%.

There were severe shortages of classrooms, desks, instructional materials and teachers' housing, as well as insufficient numbers of teachers to cater for the school-aged population [6]. The first year of operation of the reintroduction of FPE in Tanzania clearly illustrates its great potential for the long-term development of the sector, but it also bears foreboding, with similar lessons from the past. It is recognized that primary education is insufficient in and of itself, and that for it to fulfil its macro, poverty-alleviating purpose, it is important that it be relevant and include practical skills. It is also recognized that its reintroduction requires that simultaneous attention be given to all the inter-related policies: recruiting and upgrading teachers, monitoring and supervising their professional development, the predictable and regular disbursement and appropriate use of capitation and development grants, school and financial management training, empowerment of school committees, etc.

Capacity limitations, however, as elsewhere, constrain such simultaneity. In addition, given the gradualist approach taken by the PEDP, complementary basic education must be more than a second-best solution to out-of-school youth. In the balance, as ever, will be not only quantitative expansion and the qualitative content of basic education, but also the balance between what is essentially a centralized approach and the necessary decentralized empowerment for its appropriate implementation [7].

In Uganda, Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced in January 1997. Education was seen as an important foundation of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan, the indigenous PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan), of which the Education Sector Investment Programme (ESIP) was a key building block. Tuition fees were abolished for 6-12 year-olds, and this was intended to apply to a maximum of four children per family. In addition, disabled and orphaned children were to be given special consideration. In practice, however, it was applied virtually to all children in this age group. Primary enrolment in 1996 was 2.7 million. By 2002, this had surged to 7.2 million pupils. Gross enrolment in 1995 was 74.3%. By 2000/1, gross enrolment had reached

135.8%, indicative of the considerable number of over and under-age pupils enrolled. Net enrolment in the same year was 109.5%. UPE had been achieved.

The commitment to UPE can be seen in the budget hikes given to education. Whereas in 1992, education comprised 12% of the Government's budget, by 1998, it had reached 25%, a figure which has been relatively stable since that time [8].

The challenge of sustaining UPE is related to the matching of the quantitative expansion with qualitative improvement as well as in improving access to post primary schooling. The systematic monitoring of various qualitative indicators has underlined many of these challenges, such as reducing pupil-teacher, pupil-classroom and pupil-book ratios. Whilst improving, there is still a long way to go from the figures of 57:1; 98:1 and 97:1, respectively, for years 2000/1. Similarly, whilst the enrolment figures are extremely encouraging, it is also recognized that some of the targets, such as a 100% survival rate for P7, is simply unrealistic, moving from rates of 72-73% for current P1-P3 cohorts.

Various measures have been introduced to help qualitative improvement. Teachers' needs are now being met in some respects through hardship allowances given to teachers in remote areas. The policy dilemma of moving toward increased post-primary access whilst still addressing primary quality will remain for some time. In April 2002, the MoEST instituted a Task Force to design a Post-Primary Education and Training (PPET) policy and cost framework to make provisions for absorbing the UPE bulge into the post primary sector on quality of education. At that time, the available post-primary schools and institutions could absorb 40-50% of the 400,000 students sitting for primary Level examination PLE [9].

Following the election in Kenya at the end of 2002, in early 2003 the NARC Government announced its intention to introduce free primary education. This entailed the abolition of tuition fees, a part of the increasing costs of education to parents which had accounted largely for the decreasing primary and secondary school enrolments in the 1990s. Following this announcement, enrolments surged from about six million to about 7.2 million pupils, resulting in a gross enrolment rate of 104% compared with 87.6% in 2002. Whether other costs, such as exam fees, have been abolished has been clarified, and it is likely that new policies will be devised to deal with the overall costs of primary education.

Other measures have already been taken, such as reducing the number of subjects, increasing the pupil-teacher ratio from 32:1 to 40:1, empowering districts to select teachers, and the introduction of multi-grade and shift teaching in some schools.

However, a decision was taken that no additional teachers would be appointed until there had been a mapping of overall teacher requirements [10].

In the past, there has been a strong focus towards attainment of EFA by 2015 and more particularly the Universal Primary Education (UPE). However, as much as many policy initiatives have targeted access, retention equity, quality and relevance of education system, the success entirely depends on whether interventions carried out respond to challenges facing the pastoralist communities. Historically, education policies have tended to neglect pastoralist areas. Education participation and attainment in pastoralist areas has been low in relation to other areas in Kenya [3]. The colonial government was not interested in pastoralist communities which led to low rates of formal education. There was also low missionary activity in this area. Even after independence, little was done to rid disparities and marginalization of pastoralist communities. The status quo is at the moment putting the government on its toes in an attempt to formulate a working policy for the marginalized groups an exercise which is not easy. A ministry for ASAL regions has since been established to address the challenges of the region.

Constant review of the education policy for the nomads have been necessitated by the fact that the existing system of formal education is designed for sedentary groups, implying that the pastoral groups would have to settle down if their children would have to go to school. According to Gura [11], educational programs for nomads have failed primarily because decision makers have sought to use education as a tool for transforming nomadic population into sedentary ones. This may have made parents to see no value in education which appears to be in immediate conflict with their lifestyle and socio-economic activities.

Based on the backdrop of dynamic evolution of pastoralist lifestyles in response to constant environmental changes, there is need for review of policy from time to time in order to come up with interventions suitable at any one time. The characteristics inherent in a particular community may have a direct or indirect influence on the performance of education policy. Policy analysts should consider a number of aspects within the context of social, political, economic, demographic and cultural issues which are likely to affect the decision making and even implementation process of education policies. In an attempt to formulate education policy for the pastoral community, it is important to understand the environment and economic challenges the pastoralists go through. According to Mahmoud [12], the world is changing drastically and every nomad everywhere should feel the impact. They have been at the mercy of shifting commodity prices, traffic regulation and trading patterns over which they have little or no control.

Gatimu [13] states that the decisive feature of educational policies and reform of the 1990s is the political consensus, shared by government and opposition, about education's strategic importance for economic growth, social integration and democracy, and on the necessary fundamental policies. However, within the Kenyan political context and divergent party manifestos, political conflict and misunderstanding tends to complicate the coming up of a policy. Education reform becomes complicated because it involves and affects a large number of interest groups.

According to Gura [11], policy processes include some perspective at the expense of others and it is the perspective of the poor and marginalized that are often excluded. Just as important, policy requires an understanding of more complex underlying practices of policy framing - the way boundaries are drawn around problems, how policy problems are defined, and what is included and excluded. In essence, policy processes should take into account how problems and policy solutions come to be defined, by whom and for whom.

There are elements in policy and in policy making and of which, according to this discussion, must be clearly articulated in order to improve the process. Some of these elements are: agents of change or resistance to change; social, political and institutional influences; donor and external influences; innovations and knowledge; policy drivers and communication and dissemination. Policies do face contradictory responses based on different institutions and their individual views. Recipients may be divided along conservatism and radicalism even with the same institution. Furthermore, diversity of influence affecting policy development ranges from politics to donor and external influences. Policy makers sometimes find it difficult to reconcile the demands by donors and the educational needs of the people

## **MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The descriptive survey design is used when one wants to study large populations by studying samples drawn from it. The descriptive survey design is most suitable for collecting data that describes the nature of existing conditions or identifying the standards against which existing conditions can be compared better [14], is less complicated, less expensive and is adequate. In educational research, more so when focusing on the impact on policy and

practice, research paradigms represent a crucial element in the research project as they influence both the strategy and the way the researchers construct and interpret the meaning of the reality. The research paradigms have a philosophical underpinning and orient the researchers' point of view on the reality as given by nature or constructed by human agency. Depending on the research paradigm, the researchers have been for long divided into two camps: the tenants of the quantitative methods and the tenants of qualitative ones. They have been arguing from opposing stances which method is superior. The quantitative method privilege the numbers, while the qualitative uses the words, therefore it seems like a war of numbers versus words. Lately, a third way is advocating for a mixed methodology, as more beneficial to research. This study, arguing that the different perspectives of research can be considered more as complementing rather than contradicting each other, adopted a mixed methodology.

This study embraced the pragmatic world view which is a combination of constructivism and interpretivism. A descriptive research design was employed, allowing the use of qualitative techniques through use of interview schedule. Qualitative techniques enabled the researcher to obtain information regarding implications of FPE policy among the Pokot pastoralists. On the other hand, interpretivism was used to interpret a cultural action which influences the Pokots' education. Also, quantitative techniques in which large quantity of data were interpreted qualitatively using quantitative methods. The use of both techniques stated above was done either concurrently or sequentially.

### **Study Location**

This study was conducted in West Pokot County. West Pokot County is one of the 14 Counties in the Rift Valley region. It is situated in the North Rift along Kenya's Western boundary with Uganda border. It borders Turkana County to the North and North East, Trans Nzoia County to the South, Elgeyo Marakwet County and Baringo County to the South East and East, respectively. The County lies within Longitudes 340 47' and 350 49' East and Latitude 10 and 20 North. The County covers an area of approximately 9,169.4 km<sup>2</sup> and stretches a distance of 132 km from North to South. The county has administrative units as illustrated in Table-1.

**Table-1: Area and Administrative Units by Sub-Counties of West Pokot**

Sub-County	Divisions	Area (Kms <sup>2</sup> )	No of Locations	No of Sub-Locations
West Pokot	Kapenguria	335.6	9	28
	Sook	750.5	6	23
	Kongelai	736.4	4	16
South Pokot	Lelan	313.4	3	13
	Chepararia	495	4	15
	Tapach	205.2	3	9
Pokot central	Sigor	1582.8	8	30
	Chesegon	797.3	5	17
North Pokot	Kacheliba	925.4	5	18
	Alale	1571.5	5	18
	Kasei	1035.9	3	12
	Kiwawa	230.7	4	15
	Konyao	189.7	2	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9169.4</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>222</b>

The county has a total of 503 primary schools, 69 secondary schools and 479 Early Childhood (ECD) centres. There are 11 tertiary institutions which cater for both primary and secondary graduates. These comprise 5 polytechnics and 4 middle level colleges and Kapenguria Extra Mural Centre, a centre for The University of Nairobi. The school enrolment rates in the county are generally low owing to a number of factors among them high poverty levels, insecurity and negative cultural practices (cattle rustling, FGM, and early marriages). The primary school enrolment in the County was 138,130 compared with the overall population of 177,091 based on the 2009 census data. This represents 78 percent gross enrolment rate (West Pokot County Integrated Development Plan, 2013-2017).

### Sample Procedure

A sample frame was drawn from the target population. A sampling frame is a list of cases or individuals from which a sample can be selected to form the units of observation in a study [15]. According to Mugenda and Mugenda [15], for a population of less than 100, 100% of the population is taken to calculate the sample size; for a population of between 100 to 1,000, 30% of the population is taken; for a population of 1,000 – 10,000, 10% of the target population is taken to represent the target population; and finally for any

target population above 10,000, 1% is taken to calculate the sample size to be employed in the study.

There are 503 primary schools in West Pokot County and a sample of 10 percent of the schools was done. 50 schools were randomly selected. Head teachers were purposively sampled from the sampled primary schools. The researcher purposively picked a parent from the selected schools. The sample size of students was arrived at by use of the formula indicated by Reid & Boore [16]. The formula is as follows:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where: n- Sample; N- Population size; and e- Accepted level of error taking alpha as 0.05

Therefore, the sample size of students that participated in the study was done using the above formula is as follows:

$$n = 60000 / [1 + 60000 \times (0.05 \times 0.05)] \\ = 300$$

The total number of respondents was 300 students, 50 purposively sampled head teachers and 50 parents from the sampled schools. One County Director of Education was purposively selected. Table-2 shows the distribution of respondents as per categories.

**Table-2: Respondents' Categories**

Category of Respondents	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Students	300	Reid & Boore (1991) formula
Head teachers	50	Purposive sampling
Parents	50	Purposive sampling
County Director of Education	1	Purposive sampling
<b>Total</b>	<b>401</b>	

### Sampling Procedure

Social, cultural and economic issues surrounding the state of FPE program is illuminated strongly by use of qualitative means. This therefore

called for the adoption of purposive and judgmental sampling in order to have access to informants considered to have more in-depth information than others. According to Mugenda and Mugenda [15],

qualitative investigation requires more intellectual strategy rather than simple demographic stratification where the researcher should actively select the most productive sample to answer research questions. This study deemed it necessary to sample subjects like the teachers, education officials and local leaders for their special expertise and experience. Traditionally, the ethnographic study focuses attention on community selecting knowledgeable informants who know well the activities of the community. These informants are asked to identify other informants who represent the community often using chain sampling. In addition, Creswell [14] avers that purposive sampling emphasizes on a criterion based selection of information-rich cases from which a researcher can discover, understand and gain more insight on issues crucial for this study. Sampling process therefore selected individuals, groups and organizations that would provide insight into the phenomena under study.

#### Data Collection Instruments

An instrument is the means through which the researcher collects data from the sample population and as is stated by Kothari [17] in social science research, the most commonly used instruments are questionnaires, interview schedules, observation forms and standardized texts. The purpose of the instruments

in research is to measure the variables of the study and help in yielding accurate and meaningful data for decision making [18]. This study utilized questionnaire, structured interview schedule and document analysis in data collection. After data collection, responses from all questionnaire items were cross-checked to facilitate coding and processing for analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20.0 (SPSS v 20.0) Computer programme. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed to test strength of the relationship between variables. Simple linear regression analysis was computed to determine the statistical relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Analyzed data was presented in form of tables and charts.

## FINDINGS

### Parental Perceptions of FPE Policy on Access to Free Primary Schooling

To determine the parental perceptions of FPE policy on access to free primary schooling among pastoralist communities in West Pokot, the participants were asked to respond to items in the questionnaire on a Likert scale of 1-5. The results are presented in Table-3 below.

**Table-3: Parental Perceptions of FPE Policy on Access to Free Primary Schooling**

Parental Perceptions of FPE		SA5	A4	U3	D2	SD1	M	SDV
		%	%	%	%	%		
Parents perceive free primary education as undermining their way of life	Head teacher	5.3	53.8	0.0	2.2	38.7	3.70	.774
	Parents	40.9	46.3	5.3	7.5	0.0	4.01	.634
	Pupils	39.8	60.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.505	.686
Parents in the pastoralist communities perceive FPE as a way of empowering the girl child	Headteacher	61.2	28	4.3	6.5	0.0	4.032	.865
	Parents	38.7	36.6	8.6	7.5	8.6	3.473	.502
	Pupils	55.9	37.6	0.0	0.0	6.5	4.323	.470
Parents perceive that FPE ensures availability of instructional material in schools	Head teacher	53.8	46.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.172	.732
	Parents	34.4	44.1	9.7	4.3	7.5	4.580	.538
	Pupils	54.8	33.3	0.0	6.5	5.4	3.989	.759
Parents perceive FPE as a way of ensuring quality Education in Primary schools	Head teacher	44.1	34.4	0.0	12.9	8.6	4.505	.503
	Parents	31.2	29	10.8	16.1	12.9	3.968	.667
	Pupils	24.7	26.9	15.1	17.2	16.1	4.559	.521

Generally parents perceive free primary education as undermining their way of life. Head teachers agreed with this statement at 59.1% (30) with a mean of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.490. When asked whether parents in the pastoralist communities perceive FPE as a way of empowering the girl child, the head teachers agreed at 89.2% (45) with a mean of 4.032 and a standard deviation of 0.865. On the issue of whether parents perceive that FPE ensures availability of instructional material in schools, the head teachers agreed at 100% (50) with a mean of 4.172 and a standard deviation of 0.732. Lastly, on whether parents perceive FPE as a way of ensuring quality education in primary schools, 78.1% (35) of the head teachers agreed with a mean of 4.505 and a standard deviation of 0.503. This implies that the pastoralist communities of

West Pokot value their culture and do not want it to be eroded by having new education system denying them the chance to manipulate their children for their good. These results support the view that the Pokot pastoralists are a proud people who are reluctant to give up their way of life. Part of this reluctance is a response to the harsh condition of their environment. Another reason is because of misguided advice in the past from outsiders. From the results on whether Parents perceive free primary education as undermining their way of life, as presented, it was found out that 87.2% (39) of the parents agreed with this assertion with a mean of 4.01 and a standard deviation of 0.634.

On the question of whether parents perceive that FPE ensures availability of instructional material in

schools, the parents agreed at 78.5 % (35) with a mean of 4.580 and a standard deviation of 0.538. Lastly when asked whether parents perceive FPE as a way of ensuring quality education in primary schools, the parents agreed at 60.2 % (27) with a mean of 3.968 and a standard deviation of 0.667.

These findings are supported by Lanyasunya [19] who observed that traditionally girls are viewed to be inferior and, therefore, discriminated upon right from birth. Parents fear losing honour, prestige and bride-price. A large number of parents, especially illiterate ones, have low academic expectations for their children. Some believe that education is for boys only, others think that boys like studying more than girls, that boys are more brilliant than girls and perform better than girls. Parents’ and teachers’ perceptions of adult roles for girls, their marital and maternal obligations to their families make them believe that girls do not require much formal education as these roles do not require going to school.

On the question of whether parents perceive free primary education as undermining their way of life. Pupils agreed at 100% (220) with a mean of 4.505 and a standard deviation of 0.686. When the pupils were asked whether parents in the pastoralist communities perceive FPE as a way of empowering the girl child, they agreed at 93.5% (42) with a mean of 4.323 and a

standard deviation of 0.470. On the question of whether parents perceive that FPE ensures availability of instructional material in schools, the pupils agreed at 88.1% (193) with a mean of 3.989 and a standard deviation of 0.759. Lastly, when asked whether parents perceive FPE as a way of ensuring quality education in primary schools, the pupils agreed at 51.4% (23) with a mean of 4.559 and a standard deviation of 0.521. This implies that free primary education policy has improved the availability of instructional materials in primary schools. These findings are supported by MOE [20] which stated that subsidizing public education is motivated by strong government desire to raise access to education for all groups in the society and hence increase enrolment, enhance student retention and transition and improve equity in education.

**Correlation and Regression Analysis**

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the variables. The measures were constructed using summated scales from both the independent and dependent variables. Since the highest correlation coefficient is 0.801 which is less than 0.9 as proposed by Hair *et al.*, [21], there was no multicollinearity problem in this research. In addition, a simple linear regression analysis was computed to determine the statistical relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Tables 4 and 5 show the results.

**Table-4: Parental Perceptions and Access to Primary Schooling**

Parental Perceptions	Access to primary schooling
Pearson Correlation	0.792
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01
N	350

Note: Correlation is significant at \*\*p<0.01

**Table-5: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.878	0.642		1.010	.316
	Parental perceptions	0.019	0.103	0.027	0.09	.000
<sup>a</sup> Dependent Variable						

Parental perceptions and access to primary schooling had a correlation of r=0.768; p< 0.01 which was significant. This indicates that a 1% change in parental perceptions would lead to 79.2% change in access to primary schooling. Results from the regression model indicated that there was a significant relationship between parental perceptions (p = 0.000) and access to primary schooling. This was interpreted to mean that parental perceptions can lead to access of free primary schooling among pastoralist communities in West Pokot.

**DISCUSSION**

The study findings indicated a significant relationship between parental perceptions and access to

free primary education. Also the head teachers’ response indicated that parents perceive free primary education as undermining their way of life. The pastoralist communities of West Pokot value their culture and do not want it to be eroded. Traditionally, girls are viewed to be inferior and, therefore, discriminated upon right from birth. Parents fear losing honour, prestige and bride-price. A large number of parents, especially illiterate ones, have low academic expectations for their children. Some believe that education is for boys only, others think that boys like studying more than girls, that boys are more brilliant than girls and perform better than girls. Parents and teachers perceptions of adult roles for girls, their marital and maternal obligations to their families make them believe that girls do not require much formal education

as these roles do not require going to school. Nonetheless the parents in Pokot value their daughters much more than any valuable thing in their land. This has been aggravated by the fact that the girls are a sure way of quickly acquiring wealth from marrying off the girls.

Further, the findings on pupils' response on parents' perception of free primary education as undermining their way of life indicated that the pupils agreed totally that implementation of FPE undermines their way of life. When the pupils were asked whether parents in the pastoralist communities perceive FPE as a way of empowering the girl child, they agreed at high levels. On the issue of whether parents perceive that FPE ensures availability of instructional material in schools, the pupils agreed with majority of them praising the government for the same provision under free primary education. Lastly, when asked whether parents perceive FPE as a way of ensuring quality education in primary schools, the pupils agreed at 51.4% with a mean of 4.559 and a standard deviation of 0.521. This implies that free primary education policy has improved the availability of instructional materials in primary schools. These findings are supported by MOE [20] which stated that subsidizing public education is motivated by strong government desire to raise access to education for all groups in the society and hence increase enrolment, enhance student retention and transition and improve equity in education.

## CONCLUSION

From the study it has been established that the parents of pastoralist communities have a positive perception towards the implementation of free primary education. However, their attachment to their cultural practices renders the process of accessing education with myriad problems. The study has shown that the pupils in West Pokot have a positive perception and desire to pursue education for the sake of improving their life and away from their traditional way of herding and competing for scarce livestock in their regions.

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