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Exploring the responses to and perspectives on formal education among the Maasai pastoralists in Monduli, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Although extensive research has been conducted on education practice among the Maasai pastoralists, there has been no detailed exploration of their responses to and perspectives on formal education. Employing an *interpretivist qualitative approach*, this study explored various responses to and perspectives on the current practice of formal education among the Maasai in Monduli, Tanzania. The study drew primarily on interviews with two Maasai chiefs and 18 elders, as well as focus groups with 30 parents, 20 students, and 20 out-of-school morans and girls. The results revealed mixed responses to and contested views on formal education among the Maasai, ranging from positive and negative responses to the complementary response (coexistence of two knowledges). The findings suggest the need for a dialogue among various sections of the Maasai population to reach a consensus on an alternative educational option, which can work best for all segments of people in the community.

1. Introduction

While the world has moved towards 2030 agenda, a shared global vision for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs), there has been a growing concern for pastoralists who are still excluded from formal education (Dyer, 2013, 2016). This is mainly because in many countries, providing formal education to nomads and pastoralists in the current era of globalisation is a challenge of enormous proportions (Krätli & Dyer, 2009). All over the world, pastoralist communities are denied formal education, which is a fundamental right for every human being as stated in SDG-4 that aims to ensure inclusive, equitable quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. It is estimated, for instance, that of the 101 million children out of school, and the 776 million adults who cannot read and write worldwide, the majority are from indigenous, nomadic, and pastoralist ethnic groups, as well as religious and linguistic minorities that are found within their national states (Carr-Hill, 2012). As such, nomads and pastoralists are among the most marginalised ethnic groups in the world that have widely been recognised as the 'hardest populations to reach' and that require urgent global concern (Krätli & Dyer, 2009; UNESCO, 2010; Dyer, 2013; Raymond, 2015).

The latest estimates by Carr-Hill (2012) showed that about 21.8 million pastoralist children were out-of-school worldwide, whereby about 4.3 million of whom are 'missing children' uncounted in Education for All (EFA) estimations of out-of-school children. Yet, such EFA global figures obscure disparities that exist between and within nations. In Benin (West Africa), for instance, nearly 90% of Peul pastoralist children of the primary school age had not attended school (UNESCO, 2010). Also, a gross enrolment rate (GER) for Garissa, Kenya (East Africa) shows that 87 per cent of pastoralist children were outside of the formal education system by 2008 (Osman, 2009). Moreover, in Uganda, about 85% of Karamojong pastoralists aged 17 to 22 had fewer than two years in school, compared to a national average of over six years (UNESCO, 2010). In particular, in Tanzania, the Maasai had been reported to have the highest illiteracy (75%) and lowest enrolment rate (5%) in formal education, which is among the lowest in the World (FitzGerald, 2008; Raymond, 2015). Consequently, in many countries, statistics show that the pastoralists are at the bottom in terms of access, enrolment, performance, gender equity, and transition to the next levels of education (Kelleher, 2007; Malinga, 2009).

Notwithstanding the existing challenges at both national and global levels, various initiatives, including mobile schools, alternative basic education (ABE), open and distance learning (ODL), and boarding schools have been implemented in various countries to include pastoralists in education (Krätli, 2000; Krätli & Dyer, 2009). Nevertheless, research on these initiatives indicates that despite the high levels of investment and rapidly rising national enrolment ratios, they have been unsuccessful in many countries (Krätli, 2000; Carr-Hill & Peart, 2005; Malinga, 2009). Three sets of factors are suggested as contributing to a dismal performance of several intervention strategies in pastoralist

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areas. There are contextual issues such as students' mobility and the remoteness of the areas (Krätli, 2000), as well as scattered populations, long distances, and harsh environmental conditions in pastoralist areas (Krätli & Dyer, 2009). There are also critical challenges within the school system itself such as an inappropriate curriculum, dilapidated school buildings, and inadequate facilities (Carr-Hill & Peart, 2005). The third set of factors is associated with problems within the pastoralists such as cultural conservatism, resistance to change, poverty, illiteracy, and a child labour economy (Krätli, 2000).

Despite this, research shows that education provision among the pastoralists has been dominated by hegemonic discourses which, in turn, have influenced the practice of education in pastoralist communities (Krätli, 2000; Dyer, 2001). To some development theorists, for example, pastoralism is viewed as a stage in socioeconomic evolution signalling an intermediate stage between hunting/gathering and sedentary agricultural life (Dyer, 2001; Idris, 2011). To others, pastoralism has widely been seen as an irrational and backwards way of life, which is expected to die a natural death (Semali, 1994; Dyer, 2001). Influenced by these hegemonic discourses, the government's effort for the pastoralists in Tanzania has focused on including the Maasai in the mainstream education and modernising them so they live a settled and sedentary lifestyle (Krätli, 2000; Bishop, 2007). This approach is based on a popular discourse among educational planners and policy makers that tend to be urban elites with little knowledge of and tolerance for pastoralist lifestyles (Bishop, 2007; Raymond, 2015), thereby posing both practical and ideological challenges for these communities (Krätli, 2000).

Though various initiatives have been undertaken, it is evident that the Maasai's voices in and views on formal education practice in their community have largely been overlooked. As such, there is a notable paucity of studies investigating the Maasai's responses to and views on formal education practice in Maasailand. This is mainly because the provision of formal education for pastoralists may mean different things, in different contexts, and to different people with diverse needs and aspirations (Kariuki & Puja, 2006). This article seeks to contribute to the literature in relation to the evolving pastoralists' perspectives, which are largely absent in the current policy debates and discourses, as well as intervention strategies for education practice in their communities. Unlike previous studies which focused on the state of education provision and delivery modalities to pastoralists, this study provides new insights into the Maasai's experiences of and views on formal education as a step forward to informing future educational policy and practice in their community. This is crucial given that understanding the pastoralists' views is vital to the success of any intervention strategy for education practice in their community (Mbilinyi et al., 1999). The main purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the Maasai's responses to and views on formal education in their community.

2. Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is underpinned by a postcolonial theory, which examines critically how Western theories have dealt with alternative voices and diverse ways of knowing (Said, 1978; Mapara, 2009). The theory, for instance, asserts that there exist multiple forms of knowledge with different ways of knowing (Dei, 2012; Shizha, 2013) emanating from multiple sites and sources (Semali, 1999; Dei, 2000, 2005). As such, postcolonial theory was useful for this study since it rejects the hegemony of Western knowledge and calls for the deconstruction of knowledge universalism (Bhabha, 1995; Shizha, 2006). The study also employed postcolonial theory to accord agency to the Maasai by presenting them as subjects of history and not as subaltern subjects that cannot speak (Spivak, 1995). Through the postcolonial lens, the study has analysed the Maasai's voices and views against hegemonic discourses that have for a long time been used to undermine them in formal education. In that way, the theory has problematised the marginalisation of the Maasai voices in Tanzania's formal education system.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1. Data collection

This study employed an *interpretivist* qualitative research approach, which informed all research procedures and methods for data collection as well as data analysis techniques. Within the interpretivist qualitative paradigm, reality is socially constructed and hence, multiple constructions of reality exist. Since knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, researchers need to understand the complex world of lived experience from the participants' point of view (Schwandt, 2000). Also, the qualitative research approach provides more opportunity for researchers to form relationships with the participants in the field as well as to establish trust and rapport (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2012). More importantly, the approach is useful since it provides researchers with rich and complex data that no other means may offer (Hatch, 2002; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Thus, using qualitative research approach for exploring the Maasai's perspectives in this study was dictated by the need to obtain an in-depth understanding of the meanings, interpretations, and subjective experiences with regard to education practice in their community (Reeves et al., 2013).

The main research question of the study was: 'What are the Maasai's responses to and views on the current practice of formal education in their community?' In order to address this question, I employed in-depth interviews and focus groups to generate data. In-depth interviews were used to elicit data from two (2) Maasai chiefs as well as eight (8) male and 10 female elders about a range of topics in question. In interviews, both semi-structured and unstructured approaches involving a one-to-one interview with open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to voice their experiences without any constraints from me (Creswell, 2012). Equally, focus groups were used to generate data from 15 male and 15 female parents, 10 male and 10 female students, and 12 unschooled morans, and 8 unschooled Maasai girls. Focus groups, which comprised between five and six members for each session provided forums for discussing the conflicting views that individuals and groups hold among themselves on formal education in their society (Crang & Cook, 2007). Moreover, both interview and focus group sessions in the home and school premises for the elders, parents, out school-morans and girls, as well as students lasted between one and two hours. Besides jotting down notes on the notebook, also all research proceedings were recorded by a digital voice recorder.

3.2. Study site and sampling procedures

My fieldwork, which took place between 2014 and 2015 and was conducted in predominantly pastoralist areas of Monduli District located in the north-eastern part of Tanzania. Monduli was chosen as a general area of study because the district constitutes the majority of Maasai pastoralists (80%) that are highly disadvantaged in formal education than other ethnic groups in the country (FitzGerald, 2008; Tanzania Education Network [TEN], 2009; Raymond, 2015). Since it was not possible to visit all places in Monduli, I selected two sites, namely Meserani and Engaruka for fieldwork. Meserani was chosen as a site of study because the area is situated on the highways from Arusha to Singida and Serengeti National Park and hence, I expected to understand the views of the Maasai who are profoundly affected by the influence of globalisation and modernity. By contrast, Engaruka was included as the site of the study because of its remoteness from urban centres and hence, I expected to solicit the views from the Maasai who are not highly affected by influences of globalisation and modernity.

A *criterion purposive sampling*, which involves searching for cases that meet a certain criterion (Patton, 1990; Lodico et al., 2006) was used to select two chiefs and elders for interviews because I believed that they were well knowledgeable about specific issues related to the topic in question. Also, I employed a *purposeful random sampling* to pick up some participants from a large population of parents and students in

the community and school settings respectively (Patton, 1990; Creswell, 2012). As Ary's et al. (2010) argue, the purposeful random sampling is used when the potential purposeful sample is too large as it was the case for the Maasai parents and students that took part in this study. Likewise, I applied a *snowball sampling strategy* to locate participants like out-of-school morans and girls in two different sites where human settlements were scattered. The strategy is useful when participants possess similar traits and are not centrally located but scattered in different sites (Ary's et al., 2010).

3.3. Researcher's positionality

As a person from the *Fipa* ethnic group and a doctoral researcher, I was ascribed to subjective positions by the participants in the field. The participants, for instance, positioned me both as an outsider and insider in some ways. As an outsider, they saw me as an educated Swahili person, an urban resident, and someone belonging to the dominant population in Tanzania, mainly because of wearing distinctive clothes alongside speaking Kiswahili. This identity positioned me as an outsider with a different status, and often, in a different hierarchy with the Maasai who live in rural areas. By contrast, an insider position occurred when the Maasai saw me as their colleague, a Tanzanian, and African who is related to them in some ways. In this respect, while I did not directly share a Maasai identity, the insider status ascribed to me by participants made us to have common ground from which to base our research and negotiate power relations. However, given that most people in the Maasai community speak Maa as opposed to Kiswahili, I recruited two native Maasai speakers as research assistants who assisted me not only in gaining access to the research sites and participants but also acted as translators during the research process. Finally, the gendered nature of the Maasai community influenced the way I interacted with both men and women in relation to my sex in the field. While my identity as a male person, for example, allowed me to enter freely in male's private spaces and my positionality as a researcher allowed me to talk to the Maasai women, the same identity restricted me from participating in female's private spaces. Thus, I had to observe the community's traditions and customs when interacting with the Maasai women.

4. Data Analysis

Although a thematic analysis approach was employed to analyse field data for this study, the analysis itself did not follow fixed canons and rigid processes. However, the analysis of field data for this research was guided by certain steps, rules, and procedures, which according to Miles et al. (2014), help to establish shared ground rules for reporting the findings, drawing conclusions, and verifying their sturdiness and rigour. Therefore, in this study, managing and analysing fieldwork data involved various stages as follows:

First, I transcribed verbatim all tape-recorded data from interviews and focus groups with the participants in the field. After that, I translated all transcribed data verbatim from Kiswahili to English since most data were recorded in Kiswahili. Second, I employed Word 2016 and Evernote software to store, arrange, and organise the vast body of raw data into manageable units ready for analysis. In the third stage, I did what Ary et al. (2010) call 'immersing in the data' by reading and re-reading the transcribed and translated texts as well as handwritten notes from diaries so that I could familiarise myself with and obtain a general sense of raw data from the fieldwork. The process of data immersion went hand in hand with highlighting the texts that contained some key themes as well as writing notes, memos, and summaries.

The fourth stage involved coding field data to retrieve meaningful materials and analysable chunks of data. Given that no computer program can analyse data for a researcher (Creswell, 2012), I applied both hand-coding and the NVivo 11 software to develop codes based on the underlying concepts, main ideas in the research questions, and other themes identified when reading through the data. While coding, I searched for patterns of ideas repeated in various situations and with various participants, by comparing and contrasting them to create categories and identify major themes from the raw data (Crang and Cook, 2007). In the fifth stage, I conducted what Fife (2005) calls 'the analysis of analysis', by putting together the already analysed bits of information to create sub-themes which were used alongside major themes in the research report. Finally, when reporting the findings, not only did I build directly out of the analysed research materials, but I also offered personal reflections and new insights as revealed from raw data and in the light of the available literature and past studies in the field.

5. Ethical Considerations

Besides securing research approvals from the University of Sussex in the UK (where I was a doctoral student) and the University of Dar es Salaam (my local institution mandated to offer clearances in Tanzania), I also obtained research permits from respective local government authorities in Monduli District. Moreover, I obtained permission from local leaders to hold interviews and focus groups with participants in their respective localities. Equally, I sought informed consent from the participants so that that they could volunteer to take part in interviews, informal conversations, and focus groups. Lastly, necessary procedures were taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, including anonymising their names during the interviews and focus groups, as well as data analysis and report writing. Since the participants did not raise any ethical concerns in relation to privacy and confidentiality, information about research sites and places has not entirely been anonymised per se.

6. Results and Discussion

Three clusters of the Maasai's responses to and perspectives on formal schooling were identified and discussed in terms of themes as follows:

a) Maasai's negative response to formal education
b) Maasai's positive response to formal education
c) Maasai's complementary response to formal education

6.1. "This formal education is dangerous, ruthless, and totally evil": Maasai's negative response to formal education

The negative category of response is associated with individuals who are completely against the provision of formal education in the Maasai community. Although the participants offered various reasons for their stance, to a large extent, their explanations are to do more with the need to continue maintaining the traditional knowledge, pastoral culture, and pastoral mode of life in their society. In supporting this view, the Maasai women maintained that:

The schooled individuals do not want to be called 'Maasai' because they believe that we are not civilised and educated like them. Thus, we are against formal education because it spoils Maasai children in such a way that some of them avoid introducing their parents to their friends and colleagues on the pretext that they are poor and illiterate (A focus group discussion with female Maasai parents, Group B, Meserani, 10/11/2014).

A related view was raised by one male Maasai elder who provided some derisive remarks about the schooled morans in their community as follows:

Once a moran get educated, he starts looking cattle keeping with contempt. For instance, some of them view herding livestock in the bush as absurd. For them, livestock keeping is a waste of time. Thus, a moran would start telling his father to sell cattle for they are a burden to him (A personal interview with a male elder 7, Meserani, 28/10/2014).

As shown in the above extracts, the spoiling effect of formal education seems to be dominant among the schooled Maasai because individuals who come into contact with the formal education tend to develop some negative attitudes towards other people and hence, become culturally alienated. The participants' views concur with Fanon (1952) observation that an alienated black man subjectively and intellectually behaves himself like a white man since he does not think of himself as a black man, but he thinks of himself as a European. For Bhabha (1994), cultural alienation makes a colonised feel uncanny or unhomely, thereby leading to identity crisis. As such, some Maasai parents have negative attitudes towards formal education because they consider it as a threat to their socio-cultural fabric, which has for a long time been instrumental in maintaining peaceful coexistence and unity in their community.

Furthermore, some elders and parents were of the view that the Maasai children who are sent to school are the ones that get lost because after going there, they mix with students from other tribes, thereby losing their 'Maasainess'. According to the male parents,

When the Maasai children reach higher levels of education, they do not like to return home and live with their parents, relatives, and families in the countryside. Thus, formal education makes our children averse to their local environment while being attracted to live in urban areas (A focus group with male parents, Group D, Engaruka, 02/11/2014).

A similar sentiment was shared by female parents and elders who had some reservations regarding the schooled Maasai children in their society. According to them,

Some schooled Maasai individuals currently working as medical doctors and nurses in Monduli town have deserted their families and rejected their tribe. After receiving education and getting employed in salaried jobs, most of them rarely get back home to support their parents, colleagues, and relatives. Instead, they break ties with their families and relatives in the countryside and completely think no more of them (A focus group with female Maasai parents, Group E, Engaruka, 08/11/2014).

You may educate your child by using all your efforts and resources; you sell all your livestock to educate him/her, but eventually, once one gets a job, he/she disappears to distant places without remembering his/her parents (A personal interview with a female Maasai elder 3, Meserani, 13/10/2014).

As shown in the quotes above, it is promising to see that participants' views corroborate Kaunga (2005) observation that it has been hard for the Maasai to fully embrace formal education because of the belief that most of those who had benefited from formal schooling not only rarely come back home to help their families but also start viewing pastoralism as a primitive way of life. Equally, Bishop's (2007) study in Engare Naibor, Monduli reported similar results as some parents objected to sending their children to secondary schools because of the fear that they would be lost to Maasai society if they continue with further education. This suggests that a notion of 'going astray' is still active in the minds of some Maasai parents who continue to be unwilling to send their children to school since a type of education that they receive cannot allow them to return to their homeland upon completion of their studies.

For that matter, the Maasai pastoralists with negative perspectives on formal education believe that a person who is raised through the medium of traditional knowledge is much better than the schooled one. One male elder who was so critical of the formal education in the Maasai community provided some scathing remarks worthy of quoting here:

There is not a fool like a schooled person; I can assure you this truth. This formal education is dangerous, ruthless, and totally evil. Why do I say this? A person is quite aware that in his/her society, people live in this or that way, but once one gets schooled, he or she begins ignoring a traditional life left in his/her society. Has such individual not gone astray? (A personal interview with a male Maasai elder 4, Meserani, 09/10/2014).

As the extract above shows, for some Maasai elders and parents, negative views on formal education are associated with the loss of culture and identity, which has also been a major concern among the postcolonial scholars who contend that since the colonial period, formal education has involved itself in corrupting the thinking of the colonised people through distancing them from their sociocultural milieus (Said, 1978; Shizha, 2013). Moreover, in her study of the Maasai pastoralists in Monduli, Bonini (2006) observed that some parents denounced formal schooling because it acculturated their children by providing them with alien ideologies, which in turn, corrupted their minds and thinking. This implies that despite having corrupting influences on an individual's mind, formal education also acts as an important instrument for enacting the plight of 'exile' in which a sense of self among the schooled Maasai people becomes constructed to weaken the traditional culture in their community.

Likewise, other Maasai have the negative response to formal schooling since they view it as an instrument for lowering 'respect' in their society. The Maasai women, for instance, stated:

We are against a schooled education because it makes the Maasai girls lack respect. For example, some of them wear short and tight clothes in front of their fathers, and eat food with their dads while our culture does not allow that (A focus group discussion with female Maasai parents, Group A, Engaruka, 08/11/2014).

I think formal education spoils our daughters and make them unable to respect their parents. Once some Maasai children are back from school, they become disrespectful and ill-mannered. We can see respect declining to them, and they cannot listen to their parents. Thus, formal education teaches our children behaviours that are unacceptable to traditional culture (A personal interview with a female Maasai elder 1, Meserani, 06/10/2014).

A similar feeling was shared by boys at Noonkodin School who raised their concerns that formal education has affected the dressing style of Maasai society negatively, thereby making some girls to wear outfits that are unacceptable to their culture. This is what they said:

Nowadays, some school girls wear trousers, and others wear miniskirts and tight clothes. They have imitated these different styles of dressing after getting used to wearing uniforms and modern clothes in formal schools. This is contrary to our culture that requires women and girls to wear clothes that cover all parts of their bodies. We believe this change is detrimental to our culture as it makes school girls wear disrespectful clothes (A focus group discussion with the Maasai boys (morans), Group A, Noonkodin, 21/01/2015).

As the excerpts above show, respect [ɛnkányɨ̀t] is a guiding moral principle for the Maasai's identity, gender, and interpersonal relationships across diverse sexes and age-groups. As a part of respect, traditional dressing among the Maasai serves as an important marker of gender identity and relationship between men and women since each sex and age-group has their own type and style of attire used for wearing. As such, it is no wonder to see that women's remarks above share the same views with men/boys on being against the wearing of disrespectful clothing among the school girls since female's dressing embodies the traditional mores of the Maasai community. Generally, female participants' views reflect a gerontocratic and patriarchal nature of Maasai society, in which women are regarded as a male's property with no decision-making power about their own lives, bodies, and wellbeing (Raymond, 2015).

As for the Maasai girls too, the lack of respect is associated with their failure to observe the traditional practices on marriage issues. This is mainly because the traditional Maasai culture requires girls to be chosen spouses by their male parents, while girls and their mothers have no say over matters pertaining to courtship and marriage. According to the Maasai girls,

The Maasai parents believe that once schooled; girls begin to ignore Maasai culture and traditions. So, some Maasai elders and parents are frightened that after receiving education, their daughter will refuse to

marry a fiancé that they have chosen her (A focus group discussion with the Maasai school girls, Group C, Noonkodin School, 28/01/2015).

Some people in our community believe that if a girl goes to school and get educated, she cannot marry a person chosen by her parents, but must reject him. Thus, a Maasai parent becomes aware that if his daughter goes to school, she will become clever. To prevent this, a parent decides to marry his daughter early before she becomes enlightened so as to obtain wealth (A focus group with the Maasai school girls, Group D, Engaruka, 06/03/2015).

When asked why the Maasai do not prefer to send their daughters to school, the elders commented that girls in their community are regarded as important assets that can be used to generate wealth in a household. Some views of the Maasai elders are worth quoting here:

Many parents are hesitant to educate girls for they expect to marry them and obtain cattle. If a parent does not have a girl child, he is poor because girls are a vital source of wealth in our community. Thus, a Maasai parent who has many girls in his family is rich and has many friends (A personal interview with a Maasai elder 15, Engaruka, 17/12/2014).

When I talk of bride price for daughters, I am talking of wealth. The bride price is wealth. Within our society, a girl child has been authorised directly as an asset. Therefore, if you have five or six girls in your family, for example, you are directly a rich person (A personal interview with a Maasai elder 5, Meserani, 10/10/2014).

The remarks above indicate that some parents are still reluctant to send their daughters to school based on the belief that they can marry outside of Maasai society without their consent and hence, deprive them of the bride wealth. According to (Krätli, 2000), some pastoralist parents view sending girls to school not as a good investment since their daughters are expected to move with the benefits to a different household after marriage. Parsitau's (2017) recent study among the Maasai pastoralists in Kenya revealed a similar result that many girls were only perceived by their parents as a valued commodity that could bring wealth in the form of livestock and money in their families. For that reason, in some pastoralist households, a woman is supposed to be less educated than her husband since a girl's education will reduce the choice of potential husbands, particularly within the pastoral context (Krätli, 2000). In an effort to counter the spoiling effect of formal education, therefore, the Maasai parents are obliged to arrange the marriage of their girls at a young age so as to accumulate more wealth.

Lastly, for the Maasai individuals with the negative perspective, indigenous education is the best and abandoning to educate their children through it is detrimental to the Maasai culture and identity. This observation was also evident in the remarks by one unschooled moran who proudly described that he preferred traditional to formal education as quoted below:

I like livestock keeping more than schooling. I love the traditional knowledge. I would like to continue being a moran like now. I do not like a school life at all. I feel proud to live in my community as a moran, and executing my duties to the community without any problems (A focus group with the unschooled morans, Meserani, 12/10/2014).

As the quote above shows, most unschooled morans I met in Maasailand boasted of having profound traditional Maasai knowledge in spite of not attending formal schooling. Other morans, for instance, claimed in a focus group that "*All morans you see here are pastoralists that live in the bush and have never participated in formal education because our education is found there.* This remark indicates that a failure to know how to read and write for some morans does not mean that they are not educated per se, but they have extensive knowledge learnt through the medium of traditional education and rigorous training in the bush environment.

6.2. "A society cannot produce a leader like a President or Prime Minister by tending cattle in the bush": Maasai's positive response to formal schooling

The Maasai with a positive response supported the need for their children to receive formal schooling as opposed to other options of education. The findings revealed that two main factors: a) internal forces such as the shortage of land pasture and frequent droughts; b) external forces like education and trade have influenced some Maasai pastoralists to have positive attitudes towards formal schooling. Some of the Maasai elders, for instance, were of the opinion that:

These days, weather has changed much quite different from the past. We are in a hard time since there is not enough rain and cattle do not get enough grass. The so-called development has penetrated in our society causing all the trees to be cut down, thereby leading to the absence of rain. People have angered God and hence, we are punished for destroying the natural environment, which brings the rain in our society (A personal interview with a local Maasai chief 1, Meserani, 04/10/2014).

You know in the past we used to keep a large numbers of cattle because there was an abundant land. But in recent years, land is very limited and as a society, we are suffering from acute shortage of land for livestock keeping. Currently, many people are striving to educate their children in formal schools as a response to limited land for grazing areas. We believe that formal education can act as an alternative for our livelihoods outside pastoralism (Personal conversations with a male Maasai elder 7, Engaruka, 11/12/2014).

As the excerpts above show, due to increased pressures from the climate change, shrinking land for grazing pastures, and frequent droughts, some Maasai have now shifted their focus from pastoralism to formal education as one of the coping strategies. In that way, a combination of these forces, as Archambault (2017) argues, has made formal education no longer be viewed by the Maasai pastoralists as antagonistic to their traditional culture as it used to be in the past, but rather as one of the ways in which they can protect their livelihoods and identity from further encroachment. Thus, as one of the coping strategies, formal education is perceived by some Maasai elders and parents as a profitable investment with tangible benefits for their community, families, and children.

Subsequently, some Maasai parents have directed their efforts towards formal education because of its perceived benefits, including the possibility of future employment opportunities for their schooled children. In the view of some Maasai participants,

Formal schooling is currently beneficial to us since our children can get employed in various sectors such as teaching, military, and nursing. Some of them can return to work in our areas, and in this way, acting as an inspiration to others (A focus group with the Maasai women, Group G, Engaruka, 12/11/2014).

You know, people have now become ingenious since they have seen the fruits of education from other Maasai parents whose children are schooled. Some few schooled Maasai children have got jobs and are working as senior officials in the government and in the private sector (A personal interview with a male Maasai elder 8, Engaruka, 05/11/2014).

As shown in the quotes above, the notion of 'schooling for employment' is shared by many Maasai pastoralists who believe that formal education would open new job opportunities for their children upon completion of their studies. These results agree with Bishop's (2007) study, which discovered that the changing ideas about formal education among the Maasai was influenced by the possibility of and the benefits which resulted from formal employment. Nevertheless, a closer examination of the results shows that the Maasai's positive view on formal education is related mainly to its tangible benefits through employment opportunities of their children as opposed to the value of education for life. Given that some Maasai parents perceive formal schooling as a 'means to life', and not as 'life itself', when there is little prospect for employment opportunities, they are unlikely to send their children to school.

Likewise, some participants have a positive response to formal education because they consider it as providing leeway to the alternative incomes and improved life outside pastoralism. Commenting on

this idea, some Maasai elders stated that:

Today, we prefer to educate our children in formal schools because it yields many fruits in our society. In the past, for example, people could neither build decent houses nor know how to do business; but today, the schooled Maasai can cope easily with life's challenges using the alternatives means of incomes without relying only on livestock keeping (Personal conversations with a male Maasai elder 12, Engaruka, 05/11/2014).

These days many people in our society have realised that formal schooling is an important pillar for them and their children if they want to live a better life. Right now, the Maasai are clever and everyone is struggling to send their children to school. This is because they see how the Maasai children from other families who are employed are supporting their parents during the drought periods as opposed to depending entirely on livestock as the main source of income (Personal conversations with a male Maasai elder 2, Meserani, 10/10/2014).

As shown in the excerpt above, the Maasai's views towards formal schooling have changed in recent years due to intensified life challenges confronting them, thereby leading to an ardent need for diversifying their sources of income. In her ethnographic study at Engare Naibor in Monduli, Bishop (2007) also reported similar results that many Maasai valued formal schooling since they believed that it could offer them with new opportunities for livelihood diversification outside pastoralism. This suggests that some Maasai pastoralists are now considering the diversification into alternative sources of incomes as a positive contribution of formal schooling to the development of their society. This new 'development' is manifested in the way that some schooled individuals in Maasailand have embraced new changes by constructing modern housing using bricks and corrugated-iron sheets (See Fig. 1 below for details).

Furthermore, some Maasai pastoralists have become positive towards formal schooling because they believe that this sort of education can enable them to acquire basic literacy skills (reading, writing, and arithmetic) necessary for assisting them in different situations. As for reading and writing literacy, for instance, the participants maintained that:

Formal education is useful for our lives because we do not know how to speak Swahili but when we go to the hospital, our schooled daughters who know Kiswahili use to escort us. So, most Maasai families whose children are schooled, do not get trouble to communicate with doctors and nurses when they go to the hospital (A focus group with female Maasai parents, Group E, Engaruka, 15/12/2014).

You know, nowadays many people in our society have mobile phones and use them to communicate with different people who are non-Maasai. Other people will call you through a phone but others will write you a message in Kiswahili. Thus, since most of us do not know how to read and write in Kiswahili, we normally use our schooled Maasai children to read text messages and write responses through mobile phones on our behalf (A focus group with male Maasai parents, Group B, Engaruka, 13/11/2014).



Fig. 1. Some Maasai see the construction of houses using bricks and corrugated-iron sheets as a new development brought up by formal schooling.

As the quotes above show, some Maasai consider reading and writing literacy skills as essential for increasing their confidence to interact with non-Maasai outside of their traditional spheres. These results corroborate previous studies, which revealed that the Maasai parents believed that schooled children would help them to communicate with non-Maasai when they attend local hospitals (Carr-Hill, 2006; Bishop, 2007). Carr-Hill's (2006) study, for instance, reported that some pastoralist parents opted to send at least one child to school so they can be able to read notices, instructions, and religious texts. These findings suggest that the mastery of Kiswahili is becoming increasingly essential for the Maasai not only because the language is a lingua franca in the country but also the only means of communication with non-Maasai outside traditional spaces such as shops, transport facilities, and hospitals.

As for arithmetic literacy, some Maasai believe arithmetic skills have streamlined the counting task since those parents who have not attended school can use their schooled children to count the money once they sell their livestock at the local markets. According to the participants,

In the past, the Maasai used to sell cattle, and in order to count their money properly, an individual had to go to the bush and hide himself so that he cannot be seen. When he arrives there, he spreads the money across the ground and start counting. But nowadays, formal education has simplified a counting task because once a Maasai gets schooled, he counts the money quickly. Even the Maasai elders that have not gone to school do normally use their schooled grandchildren to help them count the money when they sell their livestock at the local markets (A focus group with male parents, Group A, Meserani, 18/10/2014)..

The extract above indicates that nowadays, arithmetic literacy has become inevitable for the Maasai since it allows them not only to improve their business and commercial skills essential for alternative livelihoods outside pastoralism but also to communicate with non-Maasai people in business matters. These findings concur with Bishop's (2007) study, which reported that the schooled Maasai were called upon to assist their parents in purchasing things outside the traditional sphere like hybrid seeds and maize from Mairoua trading centre. Similarly, Carr-Hill's (2006) study reported a similar finding that some pastoralists needed adult education to gain literacy and acquire numeracy skills for business and animal management.

Lastly, some Maasai pastoralists have positive perspectives on formal schooling since they regard it as desirable for facilitating their access to leadership positions in political posts and in the government machinery. Emphasising the importance of formal schooling in facilitating access to the leadership positions, the participants remarked that:

Formal education is a good thing for each tribe because a society cannot produce a leader like a President or Prime Minister by tending cattle in the bush. This is principally because such kind of leadership positions requires individuals who are educated (Personal conversations with a local Maasai chief 1, Engaruka, 18/12/2014).

Unlike in the past when local leaders did not how to read and write, at present, a local leader must know. If a local leader does not know how to read and write, how will he/she manage to handle letters sent to him/her from the government? Hence, without formal education, an individual can neither be appointed nor elected in various posts in the local government (A focus group discussion with male parents, Group F, Meserani, 20/10/2014).

As shown in the extracts above, the participants' views are in line with previous studies in Maasailand, which demonstrated the change in attitudes among the Maasai who viewed formal education as a means of accessing leadership positions outside the traditional institutions (Bonini, 2006; Bishop, 2007; Archambault, 2017). However, while

access to political leadership posts is necessary to leverage the Maasai's lobby for their cultural rights in the government machinery, this access excludes women who are still not allowed to take part in traditional decision-making institutions. This observation was also reflected in the words of male Maasai elders who repeatedly said, '*The Maasai cannot be led by a woman even a single day*'. This is mainly because the socio-cultural structures and patriarchal system among the Maasai make it hard for women, including the schooled ones to access leadership positions in their society (Raymond, 2015; Parsitau, 2017). These results, therefore, suggest that in a culture where traditional decision-making institutions are monopolised by men like Maasai society, access to political leadership posts intends to reinforce gender inequality further.

6.3. "If you have cattle, it is nice to have a modern life too": Maasai's complementary response to formal schooling

Unlike the preceding two responses, a complementary response stance consists of individuals that support the existence of both traditional and formal education in their community. Some Maasai believe that it is better for their society to allow the coexistence of both bodies of knowledge rather than abandoning either of the two so they can preserve their culture and survive in a rapidly changing world with several vagaries. According to the Maasai elders,

In order to preserve our traditions, language, and customs, we should continue educating our children through the medium of traditional education. But also, since traditional education is not sufficient to cope with new vagaries in our environment, we now rely heavily upon formal education to assist us in coping with unpredictable weather conditions in Maasailand. Through formal education, it is easy for a person to earn his living through other means of livelihoods, while also continue keeping cattle (Personal conversations with a local Maasai Chief 1, Engaruka, 17/12/2014).

We cannot stop training our children through the medium of traditional education because abandoning it would imply that a Maasai tribe with its culture will get lost and remain a history. Thus, the best way is to integrate both two types of education systems in meaningful ways for the benefits of our current and future generations (A personal interview with a female Maasai elder 10, Engaruka, 16/12/2014).

As shown in the quotes above, some Maasai elders and parents have become aware that they need both traditional and formal education so that they can effectively manage not only uncertainties in their local environment but also new changes taking place worldwide. Previous research reported a related finding that some Maasai supported the continuation of both traditional and formal education because of being aware of the deterioration of the traditional land and a limited possibility for sustaining their livelihoods depending solely on livestock keeping (Raymond, 2015). This is mainly because the Maasai have found that their indigenous education is no longer adequate to allow them to make their way in the contemporary world (Dyer, 2016). In that way, formal education is expected to play a key role in assisting the Maasai not only to defend their rights to land resources and integrate them into a modern world but also to tackle some government policies that encourage further political and economic marginalisation of their society.

Subsequently, in the participants' views, adopting both types of education systems may be the best way of maintaining their culture and identity, while also integrating themselves into the broader national and international world. One female elder, for instance, stated:

Abandoning our traditional education is wrong. Some people say just get educated through formal schooling, but I would like to say formal education is good at its own part, and traditional education is good at its own part too. Formal education, for example, helps to interact with non-Maasai tribes easily using Kiswahili learnt in formal schools (Personal conversations with the female elder 7, Engaruka, 29/11/2014).

Closely related to the views above is the way some Maasai see both traditional and formal education as complementary to each other because the latter usually builds on what a child already has, meaning that both bodies of knowledge systems have strengths and drawbacks. This was reflected in the participants' comments as described below:

We would say that formal education is good, but it is good for someone who holds traditional education. If a child ignores traditional education, he/she cannot be successful even in formal education. So, it is good to start raising a child through traditional education so that when he/she joins school, the child uses the knowledge developed from traditional education (A focus group with female parents, Group A, Meserani, 09/10/2014).

Formal education is good and traditional education is good too. If a child does not hold traditional knowledge, attaining formal education alone is not sufficient since the former provides an individual with an opportunity to make better use of the latter so that it yields expected fruits. Without traditional education a child cannot have a good foundation that is essential for allowing him/her to utilise formal education for the benefit of the whole community (A focus group with Maasai women, Group D, Engaruka, 20/11/2014).

As the extracts above show, some Maasai pastoralists view Indigenous and Western education systems as complementary rivals, which can coexist and benefit from each other to advance new knowledge and mutual understanding. The participants' perspective is shared by some postcolonial theorists that regard both Indigenous and Western knowledge not as fundamentally different, but as complementary forms of knowledge systems that can coexist in meaningful ways (Kapyrka & Dockstator, 2012; Mawere, 2013). This implies that instead of disregarding either of the two bodies of knowledge systems, the strengths of each rather than weaknesses can be tapped to complement each other (Semali, 1999; Maweu, 2011). Therefore, notwithstanding their conceptual distinctions, a complementary perspective seeks not only to eliminate superfluous demarcations between Indigenous and Western education but also to open up a constructive dialogue across diverse bodies of knowledge systems.

More importantly, some Maasai would like to carry on with both forms of education systems, so they can reap the benefits of each type of education. This participants' perspective is largely based on the belief that there exist some benefits, which can only be earned by maintaining both types of education systems in their community. Emphasising the importance of benefiting from both types of education systems, one Maasai chief noted,

If you have cattle, it is nice to have a modern life too. At present, we need cattle, and we need formal schooling too. In the bush, for instance, I have a boma with cattle and goats, and here in the village centre, I have my plot for business activities. Today, elders see that it is better to send children to formal schooling and profit from both sides. If I go to pastoralism, I earn some incomes, and when I come here in the village centre, I earn some incomes as well (A personal interview with the Maasai Chief 1, Engaruka, 15/12/2014).

The Chief's remark above indicates that some Maasai view formal education as a diversification strategy for benefitting from new opportunities in the modern world, while also maintaining their investment in livestock keeping. Bishop's (2007) study among the Maasai in Engare Naibor reported a related finding that some Maasai individuals expressed the desire to invest in formal schooling while maintaining their investment in pastoralism as they needed both the school and cows. These results also agree with previous studies, which observed that the Maasai have become aware that since it is hard to survive through pastoralism alone (Carr-Hill & Peart, 2005), sending children to school will equip them with knowledge useful for sustaining pastoralism (Aikman, 2011). This implies that some Maasai parents like a type of education system that would allow them to reconcile the needs of pastoralism with those of the formal schools so that they can benefit from both systems in meaningful ways.

A related view was shared by male Maasai parents who remarked that:

As parents, we usually advise our children that while you are in school, you should apply the pen, but when in the community, you should apply the stick by observing the traditional instructions. We do so that we can benefit from both the school and livestock keeping in our community (A focus group with male parents, Group C, Engaruka, 04/11/2014).

As the quote above shows, the participants' remarks that their children should apply the pen in school and apply the stick in their community underscores the necessity of retaining both types of education so as to maintain their ethnic identity, while also profiting from the modern world. According to Archambault (2019), education has been re-aligned with cultural rights and is becoming increasingly viewed by the Maasai as one of the mechanisms in which they can protect their identity and culture from further erosion. As such, the pen and stick have been used here symbolically to represent the possibility of mutual coexistence between formal education (pen) and traditional education (stick) respectively for the sake of allowing the Maasai to participate in the modern economy, while preserving their pastoral ways of life.

7. Conclusion

The findings demonstrated mixed responses to and contested views on formal education among the Maasai, varying from positive and negative responses to the complementary response (coexistence of both). The results, for example, showed that individuals with the negative response to formal education prefer a traditional education to formal education since the former equips them with the knowledge and skills essential for their survival within the pastoral economy, whereas the latter is viewed as detrimental to their culture and pastoral ways of life through both physical and cultural alienation of their children. By contrast, the Maasai with a positive response to formal education regard it as a strategy not only for opening up various life opportunities for their families and children but also for facilitating alternative livelihoods outside pastoralism (Idris, 2011). Considering that the Maasai continue to lose their livestock due to the climate change, diminishing land resources, and frequent droughts, some of them have directed their efforts to formal education as a part of mitigation and adaptation strategies (Parsitau, 2017). Yet, another intermediate group with a complementary response prefers the coexistence of both traditional and formal education systems with a view to benefitting from both forms of education in productive ways. This means that as their society become integrated into the national and global economies resulting in massive privatisation of their land, some Maasai have turned to formal education both as a way of preserving their traditional culture and also as a means of providing them with educated intermediaries in the discourse of politics and government (Archambault, 2017). Generally, these results suggest the need for a dialogue among various segments of the Maasai population to reach a consensus on an alternative educational option, which can work best for all people in the community.

However, participants' mixed responses and contested views raise an important question that has a bearing on the way a Western education maintains its hegemony through a discourse of hope in the Maasai community. The fieldwork data, for instance, showed that through a camouflagic discourse of possibilities for better lives, formal schooling has managed to maintain its hegemony over the Maasai by promoting unreasonable hopes to elders, parents, and their children. In this way, hope offers a softer reading of how the Western hegemony is maintained not only through the institutionalised power of the education system, but also through the very human need to hope (Bainton, 2007). While some Maasai pastoralists have high hopes of better lives inside and outside pastoralism accrued to them for securing formal education, it is not clear how their dreams may be realised since under current labour market conditions, investment in education does not directly guarantee employment as it did in the past (Bishop 2007). Equally, a general trend in Tanzania and evidence from the field shows that the schools that the Maasai children attend do not deliver on the promises of formal education since they do not pass their examinations and join further education and training, thereby making them unable to access the labour market, the modern world, and the benefits these might bring.

Accordingly, though many educational delivery approaches among the pastoralists have been tried, only ABE and ODL tend to have the capacity to overcome physical constraints associated with mobility and offer an accredited formal education, which complement a situated learning within a mobile livelihood context (Dyer, 2013, 2016). Yet, like mainstream schooling, these provision modalities neither challenge the relevance of existing national curricular content for pastoralist learners nor resolve a problem of what knowledge is desirable for individuals seeking to remain within pastoralism (Krätli, 2000; Dyer, 2013). What clearly comes out from both traditional and non-traditional Maasai pastoralists is the need for a *complementary* education, which has the potential not only for sustaining pastoralism and traditional knowledge but also for supporting mobile livelihoods and improving people's lives. Besides offering the Maasai pastoralists with a genuine hope through allowing them to maintain close links to their land and cattle, complementary education might also allow them to complement their situated livelihood learning with formal education necessary for managing climate changes and competing with others in the world outside of pastoralism. Despite this, the most critical factor in designing an appropriate education model for the Maasai pastoralists should be having true localised and communitised schools that would allow their children to maintain their engagement with the situated livelihood learning within their communities, whatever the approach and curriculum might be.

8. Study's Limitations

First, due to practical constraints, this study could not cover in detail the limitations of indigenous knowledge in times of multiple stresses on pastoralism, and how this might be a driver for the Maasai's participation in formal education. For that reason, future research is needed to generate qualitative data that will provide a more explicit discussion of what the Maasai pastoralists think about the limitations of their traditional knowledge and how have these been the driver for their increased participation in formal education in recent years.

Second, this study focused mainly on the Maasai's views on formal education broadly conceived in terms of primary and secondary levels of schooling in the form of day and boarding schools, which exist in their local areas. However, this was done in a nuanced way of viewing formal education in its generic sense and hence, the Maasai's views focusing on a specific approach to education provision, which they would prefer in their community were not explored. Further research, therefore, is needed to provide insights into the Maasai's views on and attitudes towards different education delivery modalities such as day-schools, boarding schools, open and distance learning, and mobile peripatetic schools.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Joseph Christopher Pesambili: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors report no declarations of interest.

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