

KEMI –TORNIO UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**THE ROOTS OF ILLITERACY AMONG THE MAASAI MEN IN KAJIADO NORTH
DISTRICT IN KENYA**

Onginjo Stephen

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ABSTRACT
Author: Onginjo Stephen
Title of Thesis: Illiteracy among the Maasai men In Kajiado North District
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Thesis Description: The thesis researches on the reasons the roots of illiteracy among the maasai men in Kajiado North District in Kenya.
Theoretical summary: Illiteracy is defined as “The inability to read and write a simple message in any language. It is also termed as the condition or quality of being ignorant or unknowledgeable in a particular subject or field. There are quite a number of certain kinds of illiteracy that are such as, cultural illiteracy and scientific illiteracy. Education is today recognized as essential as underscored in the Kenyan policy statement: education is necessary in generating a pool of highly qualified personnel in various specialized skills. Greater numbers of graduates will generate the potential for promoting higher productivity of capital and other resources in their individual, capacities to enhance poverty reduction, and sustain livelihood.
Methodological summary: The research method was both qualitative and quantitative using focused interviews and inductive content analysis, such as questionnaires, discussion materials, internet sources and observations. Both the questionnaires and the personal interviews were conducted on a one to one basis with the respondents.
Main results: Currently, illiteracy is still rampant in many parts of the republic of

Kenya. These are mainly due to factors such as the economical situation of the area, poverty, unequal distribution of resources, political patronage, ignorance as well as cultural reasons.

Conclusions: The vision 2030 by the Kenyan government against an illiterate free state can still be achieved if the state can in co-operate all the stake holders towards eradicating this common enemy of development.

The Government needs to first put its house in order in order to achieve this goal as explained in this research paper.

Key words: Illiteracy, roots, Maasai, Kajiado north district, discussion

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Dedication

To our heavenly Father who gave me the strength during the onset of my studies period to endure through thick and thin in this beautiful country to the very last moments of the end of the same.

Thank you Lord!

John 7:37-38

It is to my family ,though –my mother ,my grandparents, my siblings ,stretched across oceans –that I owe the deepest gratitude and to whom I dedicate this paper. Without their constant love and support, without their willingness to let me sing their song and their toleration of their occasional wrong note, I could never have hoped to finish. If nothing else, I hope that the love and respect I feel for them shines through on every page.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Illiteracy is defined as “The inability to read and write a simple message in any language. It is also termed as the condition or quality of being ignorant or unknowledgeable in a particular subject or field. There are many kinds of illiteracy, and an example of them, are such as cultural illiteracy and scientific illiteracy. On the other hand the term literacy means working with written language and calculations that has remained core to definitions of the same. At its most basic, literacy is the ability to decode and encode written text and do arithmetic for example, reading, writing and numeracy. Considerations of the use that literacy is put into, have introduced the concept of functionality in the definition of literacy. Functional literacy is seen to be the ability to use reading, writing and calculation skills to carry out everyday tasks in one’s society that require possession of such skills.

This Bachelor`s thesis topic is on “The roots of illiteracy among the Maasai Men in Kajiado North District in Kenya”. The research topic is illiteracy. In this paper, the author wishes to tackle the menace of illiteracy and its effects. The author`s task will be to find out the “core of illiteracy among the *Maasai* men and in particular, in Kajiado North District”, a certain community of nomadic people living in Kenya. According to the (World fact book), men of over 15 years in Kenya, which is about 90.6% of the Kenyan population can read and write, While the rest of the population can not, or are rather illiterate (The World Factbook).

The author wishes to re- visit the various causes of illiteracy among the target group and facts behind this mainly due to ; the economic infrastructure of the region, poverty levels, cultural reasons, unequal distribution of resources to name but a few. The research will take place in Kenya and the participants will be the maasai men between the ages of 20-40 years. Their cultural background will not be considered as influential for a number of reasons. First the Bachelors thesis does not want to give the impression that belonging to a particular group has an effect on the research carried out. Avoiding stereotyping is of a particular importance.

Secondly, finding interviewees was a challenging task and for that reason no specific criteria were applied in the selection process, but it can be argued that the interviewees share a particular culture as they meet the criteria imposed by the study to be of that particular community.

The Bachelors thesis aims at presenting the target group`s view on illiteracy from individual, social and future perspective. The findings can be useful in assisting the *maasai* men manage the transformation from illiteracy to literate and minimise the potential difficulties related to the same. For example this can influence decisions about joining school or getting some kind of education or give more insight on how the target persons can bridge this gap in future and be self reliant and productive in their societies. The idea for the topic of the Bachelor`s thesis is based primarily on the researcher`s knowledge of the target group, and the researcher`s interest in the subject. The findings of this Bachelor`s thesis can be adapted to conduct further investigations and research the results of illiteracy of which might be beneficial in coping with illiteracy on individuals point of view.

The recognition of difficulties and taking action to minimise this effect on the individual, might prevent future personal crisis and more complicated problems. The results of the Bachelor`s thesis could be useful in real life situations as they give more information on certain challenges from the *maasai* men`s own perspective. Situations in which literacy skills are required are multiple and change over time especially with changes in technology, which has led to the concept of multiple ‘illiteracies’. On the other hand, the concept of critical literacy is borne of the social political considerations of the purpose of literacy, which are a process and a tool for the self-liberation of the downtrodden of every society.

2. KENYA AS A COUNTRY

Kenya is an independent country in East Africa bounded in the north by Sudan and Ethiopia, in the east by Somalia and Indian Ocean, in the south by Tanzania, and in the west by Uganda. Kenya is divided into eight administrative provinces (Coast, Central, Eastern, Nairobi, and Rift valley, North Eastern, Western and Nyanza) with Nairobi as the capital city (Kochung Edward

2000, 5). The capital city Nairobi has a unique location which is next to national park, and is the only city in Africa that has a national park within its jurisdiction, something that makes it a unique city.

Kenya is famous for her safaris and world famous wildlife reserves such as the Tsavo National park, The Maasai mara National park, Nakuru National Park, and the Aberdares National Park, that are the major tourists attraction from all over the world. Lake Victoria, which is the second world's largest tropical lake, is situated to the south west of the country and is shared by both Uganda and Tanzania. The Capital City Nairobi is the regional commercial hub; the economy of Kenya is the largest by GDP in East and Central Africa. The service delivery is a major economic driver, mostly the telecommunications sector and attributes to 60% of GDP. Kenya is a member of the East African community, as well as the Commonwealth Nations.

According to Brass et al. Kenya is twenty-second in size among the nations of sub-Saharan Africa. For administrative purposes, Kenya is divided into seven provinces, with the capital city, Nairobi, also having special status as a province. The provinces are divided into 40 districts that in fact form the primary unit for program purposes, as well as socioeconomic and demographic data collection and analysis. Like many other countries of the region, Kenya's land area is remarkably diverse, with inhospitable deserts in the north, broad semiarid plateaus in the south, and rich, rolling highlands in the center (Brass et.al 1993, 8).

Brass et. al adds that , there are seven main geographic regions: the coastal region, the coastal hinterland and Tana Plains region, the eastern plateau region, the northern plainlands region, the Kenya highlands region, the rift valley region, and the western plateaus region (Nelson, 1983). The coastal region— which includes Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu, and Mombasa plus parts of Garissa, Tana River, and Taita districts— lies along the Indian Ocean. Rainfall is sufficient for agriculture to be practiced in a narrow plain and low plateau area inland from the shore (Brass et.al 1993, 8).

Brass et al argues that, the southern part of the country is heavily populated, due partly to better rainfall. Historically, Arab trade flourished along the coast, particularly around Lamu. The coastal hinterland and Tana Plains region, which borders the coastal region, comprises parts of Tana River district and the southern portion of Northeastern Province (parts of Garissa and Wajir

districts). There is very little rainfall in this region, and thus, little agriculture, except along the Tana River. Most of the inhabitants these areas are pastoralists, thus moving further inland, one reaches the eastern plateau region, a series of plains comprising the northeastern part of Eastern Province, as well as the southern portion of Rift Valley Province. Rainfall is unpredictable and relatively sparse, particularly in the northern section, which is semi-desert (Brass et.al 1993, 8).

According to Brass et al, the northern plain lands region covers the northernmost sections of Northeastern, Eastern, and Rift Valley Provinces. It is a very arid region inhabited primarily by nomadic pastoralists, except for some agriculturalists around Mount Marsabit and the base of the Ethiopian foothills, where rainfall is heavier. The Kenya highlands region, which borders the east and west sides of the rift valley in the western and central part of Kenya, is composed of the southwestern portion of Eastern Province, as well as most of Central Province and the western portion of Rift Valley Province. The area, which is characterized by relatively high altitudes, good soil, lower temperatures, and more rainfall, is intensely cultivated and many of Kenya's export crops are grown there. The rift valley region, lying primarily in the eastern portion of Rift Valley Province, is part of the Great Rift Valley that extends through much of eastern Africa. The population is primarily pastoralist in the northern and southern sections, which receive little rainfall and are semi-desert.

The parts of Nyanza Provinces are mainly a series of plateaus that form part of the Lake Victoria basin. Brass et.al adds that, the region is characterized by relatively good soils and sufficient rainfall for agriculture, and thus supports a fairly high population density (Nelson, 1983). Kenya is still mainly an agricultural country, with some 80 percent of the population living and working on 17 percent of the land. Overall, population density is a low 38 persons per square kilometer, but the rich, high-potential agricultural districts of the west and central regions show densities of 200 to 300 persons per square kilometer (Brass et.al 1993, 9). The vast majority of Kenyans are small-scale farmers, but larger-scale farms dominate in the export-oriented sector of agriculture— chiefly coffee, tea, cereals, and livestock products. Ethnically, Kenya consists of some 70 tribes belonging, for the most part, to the Bantu, Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic, or Cushitic

language groups. The Bantu-related group includes the Kikuyu (the largest single tribal group) and others of the central region as well as the Luhya.

The Luo are the largest single Nilotic group and are concentrated in the western region. The smaller tribes making up the other language groups tend to be concentrated in the north, the northeast, and the coastal regions, with smaller enclaves scattered elsewhere in the country. Kenya is religiously quite diverse, although the majority of Kenyans state that they are Christian (Brass et.al 1993, 11). There have been decades of missionary activity, except among nomadic pastoralists in the northernmost regions, and centuries of Islamic influence resulting from trade in the coastal region. Most Kenyans practice a combination of one of these two religions, along with an indigenous religion. Most pastoral groups adhere primarily to indigenous religious beliefs (Nelson, 1983).

About Kenya

Kenya's economy depends heavily on Agriculture, although there are other sources of revenue that come from other sectors. Some of these sectors are such as Horticulture, Mineral extracts as well as Tourism. Lately, tourism sector has been doing a booming business and this has seen the economy of the country rise gradually due to success in the industry. This positive move has seen the opportunity of job creation for her people in various regions where there are tourist's attractions.

Kenya has some of the major processing industries in East and Central Africa that deals mainly with the processing of raw materials into domestic and industrial products that are for daily use and consumption. Such companies are such as Unilever Kenya limited that deals with the production of all domestic products, The Kenya power and lightning company, which is a state co-operation dealing with the production and supply of electricity to the national grid, the Kenya breweries Limited, that is responsible for the productions of all types of wines and liqueurs, among others.

Map of Kenya



Figure 1; Illustrates the Map of Kenya



Figure 2: Illustrates the Kenyan neighboring countries.

2.1 Maasai cultures, customs and traditions

According to Nasieku, Tarayia, there is a myth that the *maasai`s* came to the world with very many cattle, and that all the cows belong to them. This is the reason why the *maasai`s* have huge large herds of animals. They believe that the rain God (Ngai) entrusted them the cattle, when the earth and sky split, and that wealth is measured in number of cattle. Since cattle were given to the *maasai* (masai), they believe it's okay to steal from other tribes (Nasieku G, Tarayia, 2004, 185). Nasieku, Tarayia adds that, due to their unique and distinct culture, the *maasai* people of east Africa are among the most well-known to outsiders of all of the ethnic groups in Kenya and Tanzania. Many travelers of the late 19th century, the so-called "explorers," told tales of the courage and bravery of the *Maasai* people. Thomson describes how, in 1883, the *maasai* entered through his camp and ordered about the whole caravan, including himself, as if they had been masters and the travelers were slaves! (Nasieku G, Tarayia, 2004, 185).

The Maasai identify themselves as all those who speak the *maa* language and uphold the culture of pastoralism. However, a wide variety of dialects exist in the *maa* language. Different branches of Maasai peoples are known by different names, though they are basically, all one people. The Maasai share their present expansive semi-arid lands with wild animals. Extensive and biologically diverse ecosystems form part and parcel of the pastoral lands of East Africa (Nasieku G, Tarayia, 2004, 186).

For Nasieku, Tarayia, a few of these areas have been classified as "Global Biosphere Reserves" by the U.N. Scientific Education and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). They are protected by international conventions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Some of these areas include Amboseli on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, and the Ngorongoro Crater in northern Tanzania. Maasai Mara is in line for the same status in due course. Pastoralism, the socio-economic lifestyle of the Maasai, promotes an integrated natural resource protection strategy, peacefully co-existing with the rich east African wild flora and fauna, thanks to the traditional, nature-friendly Maasai cultural practices (Nasieku G, Tarayia, 2004, 187).

Nasieku, Tarayia argues that, the *maasai* generally do not hunt wild animals or use them for food, as their cattle provide them with sufficient meat and meat products. However, the *maasai* are in constant war with the lion (king of the jungle) as each of the courageous warrior party tries to prove his prowess over the other. When the lions hunt for the *maasai* cattle, the *maasai*, especially the warrior group, hunt for the lions and make sure they find and kill the offending animal or animals. They also kill lions just to demonstrate their fierceness to their age mates and other members of the tribe. The killing of a lion is a source of prestige and the death of the 'king of the jungle' is not in vain. Even in death, the *maasai* put its mane to use by wearing it on their heads during ceremonies and important occasions. The land is further subdivided into grazing areas. One area is grazed during the rainy season and the other during the dry season (Nasieku G, Tarayia, 2004, 187).

The forests and trees according to Nasieku, Tarayia are used for a multitude of rituals, and importantly, as a pharmacy. Trees and certain plants are used to extract medicines that have assisted the community in healing a wide array of ailments since long before the arrival of Western medical science in the *maasai* land. To this day, the community is proud of its (pharmaceutical) herbal medicinal knowledge. The *maasai* have a wealth of experience in determining which plant is suitable for a certain ailment. Forests are the traditional pharmacy for the *maasai*. Basic medical skills are shared by *maasai* of all ages and both genders, and the majority can correctly prescribe treatments for simple ailments. Cultural wisdom requires men and women of all ages to possess these basic skills in case of unforeseen emergencies (Nasieku G, Tarayia, 2004, 189).

Land use among the Maasai

The *Maasai* people are tied to and are very much dependent on land and livestock for their upkeep and livelihood. The livestock depend on the land for sustenance. The people's movement is dictated by the livestock's needs such as pasture, water, and salt licks. The proximity of these requirements determines how long people remain settled in a given place. The *Maasai* people

use their land principally for pasturing livestock. Natural resource management is a practice little recognized, but obviously employed throughout *Maasai* territories.

The principal land use activity of the *Maasai* is livestock production, appropriately described as pastoralism. Mobility is an essential management strategy to allow for maximized forage and ecosystem productivity. Periodic, controlled pasture burning ensures that diseases are kept under control and livestock have fresh, lush grass during different seasons. Wildlife grazing alongside livestock enriches pasture composition and variety. Nutrients are exchanged by the mixture of grazers and browsers, both domestic livestock and wildlife. Undoubtedly, this mode of land use is most sustainable and pastoralists are aware of this benefit (Maasai People Traditions and Culture, 1998).

The areas that are known as *maasai* land in Kenya are areas that are inhabited by the higher population of maasais who are nomadic and pastoralists by way of life. Some of the areas that have high concentration of the *maasais* are such as Kajiado District, Narok, Transmara, Ngong, Magadi, and Laikipia. On these areas, the *maasais* were the first people to settle there and therefore took control of the area. Though a minority group in Kenya, they have a population of 600,000 in the area that they inhabit. The *maasais* have huge chunks of land, and majority of the maasai families own such for the sole reason of grazing grounds for their large herds of livestock. There are instances where individuals own up to 400 hectares of land, which is equivalent to an area of a small city in Europe.

3. EDUCATION IN KENYA

Kenya education system has created two categories of education in urban and rural areas. There are distinctive differences between the schools in urban areas and those in rural areas as regards teaching facilities, quality of teaching, and quality of schooling. For example in schools where pre-schools are located, it was unusual to find four children sharing one reading book, and a child in grade two had two exercise books for all the subjects. In urban schools, children were driven to school by car and collected after school. These schools also had tap water, electricity, and other amenities. Each child had his or her own desk, own text books and one exercise book for every subject. A school in Kenya can be described with the help of the following groups

- Those who are driven to and from school in private and government vehicles
- Those who take buses or *matatu* to and from school
- Those who walk to and from school at least 5 kilometers without breakfast

However, there are also children who sleep in the streets and do not know what an inside of a school looks like. The situation described above is mainly a result of the economic situation and the cost sharing system in education. The government has now realized the effects of cost sharing as can be seen in the draft of interim “Poverty reduction strategy” (PRSP)

The government in this draft has acknowledged the devastating impact of poverty on schooling in the last two decades.

3.1 Pre-School education in Kenya

In Kenya, children begin school at the age of six and majority of these children spend the fifth year of their life in preschool programmes. Pre-school education varies from nation to nation.

Countries have different ages for compulsory education, therefore also the definition of preschool varies. In western countries, parents have traditionally been favoured as the primary educators of their children. The social welfare in Scandinavian countries has been very supportive to parents who remain with their young children, offering them a paid leave from work (Kochung Edward 2000, 5).

Although there is an increased demand for Pre School in Kenya, the services for the pre school children with special needs are scarce. The scarcity of pre school programs is caused by the lack of state incentives for the providing appropriate education for pre school children with special needs, lack of systematic procedures for early identification, and lack of access to information by parents regarding preschool special education (Kochung Edward 2000, 5).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of early childhood education, it is neglected in many countries. It is almost impossible for developing countries to invest money in pre-school programmes when they have problems with providing quality education even in primary and secondary schooling.

These countries do not understand that a lot of school wastage could be avoided by providing early childhood education. In Kenya, as in many African developing countries, the government's priority is the provision and expansion of primary education and higher learning. The situation has left the pre school programme understaffed and at least paid in public school system (Kochung Edward 2000, 13)

According to research findings of the study done by the World Bank on early childhood development in Kenya, pre school education in Kenya has become popular in urban communities. The increased interest in pre school education in urban areas is due to its role in providing early childhood education to young people as well as the government policies. Another reason is that pre school education is prerequisites in entering grade one in urban areas, where there is high demand for quality education (Kochung Edward 2000, 12).

In rural areas pre school education is still optional. Pre-school programmes in Kenya are organized by the local authorities, individuals, churches and non governmental organization. The majority of pre schools programmes in urban are privately owned with business orientation. In

rural areas pre-schools programmes are organized by the community, based on the fact that 80% of the population live in rural areas with low income. The majority of preschools are operating without buildings. Churches are used in most preschools centres and sometimes preschool children get their education under trees (Edward Kochung 2000, 12).

The government recognition of Pre School is early reflected in the establishment of preschool education boards at national and district levels. The government has provided a guideline for pre school education .The guideline defines the objective that preschool education is supposed to achieve. These include:

- Provision of formal education towards the child`s imagination, mental and physical growth
- To provide a child with an opportunity to enjoy and learn through play
- To help the child to build good habits for the living as an individual and a member of a group and
- To enrich a child`s experience so as to enable a child to cope better with primary school life.

According to Edward Kochung, although the Kenyan government has shown concern for preschool education, its finding has been poor. The government inability to provide funding for preschool programmes makes it impossible to control the quality of these programmes. For example, while the requirement is that children in pre-school programmes should get food and have regular health checks, these are not done. Also the requirement that there ought to be a sufficient area available and materials for playing are poor implemented (Kochung Edward 2000, 13).

As the Kenyan economy is going down, there is a great likelihood that the number of children with development disabilities due to poor nutrition and lack of early stimulation .Poor health services and the fact that many children are born outside hospitals will continue to contribute to development disabilities. The change in family structures and child rearing practices are also likely contributors to these problems.

3.2 Special Education

The development of special education is becoming a higher priority in most countries. Kenya is a signatory to the world declaration on education for all and its priority emphasizes education for all regardless of disability, yet the majority of children with special needs are out of school (UNESCO 1995). There is no law mandating education for children with special needs in Kenya. According to Ogonda, Peresuh & Adenigba (1997), special education operates on the basis of policy papers, which have not been translated into laws, hence the needs of children with special education needs are not met in the general system (Edward Kochung 2000, 10).

The involvement of the government in Special education programme is evidenced in its recommendation that the special education be an essential component of the overall education in Kenya (kamunge et al 1988) The introduction of special teacher education in both Maseno and Kenyatta universities also shows that the government realizes that the children with special needs have the right to education (Edward Kochung 2000, 10). In this respect, the *Maasai* children in *Kajiado* North District with disabilities such as growth retardation or development problems should also be categorised here. However very little or nothing at all has been done in this areas, and this have seen the continuation of illiteracy levels in this areas rise.

The government has been blamed for the problem numerous times on the poor infrastructure as well as logistical problems of the area rendering most areas of these places inaccessible. This should not be the reason as to why such children can not be helped as the government has all machinery and resources that could reach anyone in its jurisdiction. Although there is a general trend for the inclusive education globally ,special education services are still run segregated models .Therefore, the majority of children with special needs in Kenya are in special needs. Generally special education facilities in Kenya are far from adequate (karugu et al 1995), there are no services for children with behavioral or emotional problems.

This may be due to difficulties in the diagnosis or classification of this group of children .As a result most of the children are found in classes designed for the other group of handicapped children .Although the government of Kenya has accepted the integration of children with

special needs into regular schools, the implications involved has made it unpractical. These implications include: provision of physical facilities, modifications of existing structures, provision of special trained teachers, changing of attitudes, among others (Kochung Edward 2000, 11).

3.3 Special group missing out on formal education

A Considerable number of children have been missing out on the formal Education in Kenya, presently according to a report by (Kochung 1997). He states that the children particularly those with mild disabilities grow without their problems being detected early enough. This could go on until the children are in their first or second year in primary schools. Due to lack of identification, and special support, Edward Kochung states that these children are retained in the same grades or are forced to drop out of school which is very unjust for them.

Then there are also the street children who are also languishing on the streets and no one seems to care about. These are the other members of the society who have potential and have been forced by fate to be on these locations, on such reasons such as poverty and abandoned children.

According to a study by (Kochung 1997) the factors that contribute to the dropping out of schools by the children are such as social economic factors, school failure in lower primary schools (grades 1-3) and social amenities ,child labour, lack of motivation as well as school failure and social –economic factors in primary schools (Kochung Edward 2000, 17).

Language Policy and Practice

According to Kembo, Nathan the question in literacy provision is the choice of language for initial literacy. In Kenya, the choice lies between one of the estimated 40 mother tongues, Kiswahili and English. The other question is at what point to introduce additional languages. In

the formal primary education, the policy and practice is to teach initial literacy in all three languages simultaneously. The language policy in Adult literacy is to teach initial literacy in the mother tongue or the language of everyday communication in the catchment area (e.g. Kiswahili in the urban centres) switching to Kiswahili at the Post-literacy stage (Kembo, Nathan, 2009, 60).

Kembo, Nathan argues that English is also to be taught at the post-literacy stage or whenever demanded by the learners. However, the policy is not without problems. Schooled in English, many literacy teachers find it difficult to teach in the mother tongue. In addition, many mother tongues still lack orthographies and hence lack teaching learning materials, and many adult learners wish to learn English on social mobility considerations (Kembo, Nathan, 2009, 60)⁴

4. CHALLENGES FACING THE KENYAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

4.1 Corruption in the Education ministry

Much as this thesis addresses the issue of illiteracy as its core research in this paper, the education system in Kenya still needs a lot to be desired. Whereas the government is proud to launch vision after another to curb illiteracy country wide in some years to come, some vicious vice of corruption in its ministries still go on and especially now at the ministry of Education.

The vice of corruption in the education ministry has gone unabated for a very long time. This has now reached epidemic heights and no one wants to bear the responsibility. Billions of Kenya shillings have gone missing from the education kitty and have found their way into individual pockets and accounts.

A report in one of the Kenyan daily newspaper, reported in a section that “The Parliamentary Committee on Education had called for “a clean up” at the Education ministry to rid it of corruption if learning standards were to be improved. Chairman David koech on Wednesday said corruption in the ministry had negatively affected education standards in both primary and secondary schools and there was need of a major reshuffle to end the rot” (The Standard, 2011).

According to David Koech, removing top officials in the ministry would not only help in bringing transparency but also restore confidence of donors who play a major role in improving education quality in the country. David koech added that the (P.E.C) could not “disregard donor communities since they contributed largely to the education kitty and by them withdrawing their support, the country would fail to achieve its target of providing free primary education and secondary subsidised education.” (The Standard, 2011).

David koech stated that, the Parliamentary Education Committee had no “problem if was to remove all staff in the ministry and replacing them with workers with integrity who had a heart

for providing education to the children of Kenya.” The chairman of the committee challenged the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission and the Criminal Investigations Department to move with speed and put in public the amount lost and those involved in the graft (The Standard, 2011).

This trend is worrying as the taxpayers who bear the biggest brunt tend to wonder as how the same state wishes to achieve some of its stated visions of eradication of illiteracy in years to come. The same government officials entrusted with the education funds are the same busy embezzling them without any fears of repercussion such as arrests and prosecutions of the same.

Key Donors

The international communities who are also the major key players in the (F.P.E) free primary education project have not been spared the wrath of the vice either. They are now demanding the reimbursement of their funds injected into this programmes from the state. On another separate report from another local newspaper reported in part that “Britain is demanding a refund of Sh7 billion aid to Kenya’s free education programme following revelations of massive corruption. The local daily added that “The UK Government would push the Government of Kenya hard for return of the UK’s share of lost funds,” the Department for International Development (DFID) had said in a statement (The Standard, 2011).

Among other Key International donors whose funds were affected were such as America, Canada, Sweden, the World Bank and Japan who massively fund educational programmes in Kenya. This is a big shame for the Kenya government who should put their act together and arrest the culprits (The Standard, 2011).

Billions of shillings Lost

The attitude of impunity that some politicians and other state officials have developed over the years has something to do also with the politics of the day. Some of these individuals are “*untouchable*” members of the society. They are usually well connected to powerful individuals

of the state. This gives them a free hand to engage in all manner of vices without abating an eyelid. What the honorable members of the society are engaged in- is the embezzling of the (Free Primary Education funds), the public is left to wonder if the state will ever achieve some of its millennium goals as having a illiterate free nation by 2030 in one of its goals.

On a further investigation yet on the (F.P.E) scam by the local daily, revealed an estimation of the amount of funds lost meant for the free primary education. The daily reported in part that, “A government audit has called for the removal of all finance, accounting and procurement staff at the Education ministry following the loss of Sh4.6 billion free learning cash. It further says former Education permanent secretary Karega Mutahi should take overall responsibility for the loss of the billions under his watch”. “The PS should accept overall accountability for the correct expenditure of Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) funds which he shall be allowed to delegate responsibility for day to day operational control to education secretary or director of administration. This delegation, in no way detracts from the PS’s accountability (The Standard, 2011).

For five years since July 2005, the audit shows that his officers engaged in a brazen embezzlement of free education funds by diverting colossal amounts of money meant for schools and doctoring documents to justify non-existent expenses. An estimated Sh8.2 billion could not be accounted for when auditors from Treasury assisted by a UK financial consultant first embarked on the review of the Kessp between 2005 and 2009, the document says. “However, this figure came down to Sh4.6 billion after audit review of some of the documents that had not been submitted earlier,” it says (The Standard, 2011).

4 .1 Teachers Strikes

Currently in Kenya, there have been a lot of teacher’s strikes that have severely disrupted the learning process in majority of schools in many parts of the country. Hardly does a month go by, than one hears of an impending teachers strike. This has been attributed by the many woes that

the teachers in the country have continued to undergo in their profession. While some say that the government has abandoned them, some in the private sector have a different story. This year 2011 alone, has seen a number of teachers strikes in the Kenya Schools, with the latest one on the month of September when the schools opened for the their final term on the Schools curriculums calendar. The demand of these civil servants are such as poor pay, better living standards and employment on permanent terms away from the old and uncertain contractual terms. This brought learning in any schools across the country into a limbo.

A local daily had a few of their demands captured on the news, part of it read as; “Learning could be paralysed in all public schools again as teachers threaten to abandon classes over delayed payment of their September salaries. Sources at the Teachers Service Commission confirmed to the Standard that teachers had not been paid but downplayed the magnitude of the crisis. Currently, the Commission needs to pay 263,000 teachers. Of these, 245,000 are teachers currently on permanent basis while the rest are 18,060 teachers on contract. Kenya Primary School Heads Association (Kepsha) national chair Joseph Karuga confirmed no teachers had received their September salaries (The Standard, 2011).

Delayed payment of teacher’s salaries is the latest crisis in the education sector this examination term. The situation that now threatens to disrupt learning in schools comes in the wake of a deteriorating shilling against the dollar, and rising food prices. It also comes as teachers are expected to prepare students for national examinations scheduled to start in less than three weeks from today (The Standard, 2011).

Last month, schools lost another learning week as teachers staged a nationwide strike that saw all public schools remain closed. But speaking to the press on Tuesday, Knut asked teachers to feel free to walk out of their classes to demand their salaries from the nearby government offices without fear of being victimised. He said it was unfortunate for the Government to remain insensitive to education matters and the plight of Kenyan children, especially in the examination term” (The Standard, 2011).

Precious time wasted

There is a saying that goes “time wasted is never recovered”! This is what has been happening the entire time when the teachers have gone on strikes demanding for their rights. The pupils have been forced to stay at home without learning whereas they are supposed to be in school. The government knows too well the plight of the teachers but have continued to down play the whole issue altogether. This is what has provoked these civil servants into taking these drastic measures.

Meanwhile ,the money being looted from the education coffers meant for free education programmes in its billions of shillings, is enough to erect more that 200 schools ,equip them with the latest facilities and employ teachers to teach in them in the arid and semi arid areas of *maasai* land. The same money could not run out, and the surplus could also be used for special programmes such as the adult education in these remote areas across the republic. The issue of time wasting in school as a result of unnecessary strikes is a big contributor of illiteracy .The very pupils who are relying on the teachers for daily instructions will tend to relax or drop out of school, as they will find no need to attend school if all that can be done in there is waste time.

4.2 Teacher’s challenges

Kenya has come up with the ambitious Vision 2030, an initiative that is expected to catapult the country into a medium-developed State in less than two decades. However, there is no way Vision 2030 will be realised without universal access to quality education, which is dependent on teachers ability to improve pupils’ learning outcomes (The Standard, 2011). Granted, teacher shortage in public primary schools represents one of the greatest hurdles to achieving education for all and quality education. There is also the issue of attitude on how teachers are treated by the Government and the communities that they serve.

According to UNESCO, teachers are defined as professional personnel involved in direct student instruction involving planning, organising and conducting group activities to develop students' knowledge, skills and attitudes as stipulated by education programmes (The Standard, 2011). By this definition, teachers' professional expertise, first and foremost, lies in being able, through training and experience, to help children to learn. Teachers also play an important role in transmitting cultural and social values that include tolerance, dialogue in societal conflict resolution and gender equality.

However, in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa there has developed a general attitude where teachers are regarded as child minders or grassroots' social workers. UNESCO says teaching has increasingly lost prestige as governments tried to control teacher costs by bringing in large numbers of unqualified or contract teachers or supplementing school capacity with teacher aides, volunteer workers and other categories of Para-teaching staff (The Standard, 2011). This has the effect of not just lowering the average qualification and experience level of the teaching force, but also of lowering the prestige of teachers in communities and more negatively in the eyes of their pupils. For instance, in Namibia only 38 per cent of teachers in primary schools are trained, while in Botswana, Malawi and Tanzania most primary school teachers hold lower secondary qualifications (The Standard, 2011).

Quite often, teachers holding lower secondary education qualifications have not been very effective in teaching of maths, sciences and reading. According to UNESCO Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality, pupil achievement is lowest in countries where they are taught by teachers with only nine years of education. "For instance, in Lesotho, almost 50 per cent of primary school pupils are taught key primary subjects by teachers with only primary education qualifications, not much more than the pupils they teach," says SACMEQ (The Standard, 2011).

However, the situation is not so different in Kenya's public schools where upper primary pupils are often taught key subjects by teachers who had scored an average of D at KCSE exams. Besides often lacking the relevant qualifications, most teachers are ill-prepared to teach pupils of different age groups. Since the introduction of the free primary learning, there has been no

guideline on the maximum age for which one can enrol in a specific class, hence most learners enter school being over-age or became over-age of a specific class due to repetition. According to UNESCO, 80 per cent of pupils in public schools are over-age (The Standard, 2011).

Even then, teaching in Kenya's public sector is ridden with problems of providing sufficient instructional time to pupils. Whereas teachers have the lowest teaching load in the world, there is chronic teacher absenteeism, which has been attributed to indiscipline. UNESCO says teachers in Kenya and Uganda are teaching between 480 and 500 hours a year compared to between 700 and 1,000 hours in other countries. Nevertheless, teaching load in Kenya's primary schools is heavily eroded as teachers have also one of the highest prevalence rates of absenteeism in the world. According to Helen Abadzi, a Senior Education Specialist at the World Bank, pupils in public schools in Kenya lose 30 per cent of the scheduled contact time with teachers (The Standard, 2011).

In addition to teacher absenteeism, real instructional time is reduced by strikes, punishment, and pupil absence from school and copying as a result of having no textbooks. Abadzi argues cumulatively, efficiency of some education systems may be less than seven per cent. The crux of the matter is that quality of education in Kenya's public primary schools has dropped. As teachers celebrate the World Teachers' Day, there is need to evaluate and take into account whether teachers have enough tools to make children learn (The Standard, 2011)

5. RESEARCH TOPIC AND QUESTIONS

Good research is made useful by effectively communicating its purposes, methodology, results and implications. The purpose of research is to answer specific research questions and thereby enable better decision making. Methodology is a detailed account of the research design and the way the project is implemented. The results and implications summarize the major findings and conclusions as they relate to the study's objectives (Hair & Money & Samouel & Page 2007, 398).

The research questions investigated by the bachelor's thesis is the roots of illiteracy among the *Maasai* men in Kajiado North District. The main purpose of the inquiry is to contribute to the knowledge. The results should be suitable as a source of information on the challenges the *Maasai* men experience due to illiteracy. In addition to that, the results should give grounds for further research on the social and economic challenges experienced by the *Maasai* men in general during the period of transformation.

5.1 Research method

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methods were used in this study; focused interviews for gathering the data, and inductive content for analyzing it. The qualitative research approach fitted the research better than the quantitative. Statistical repletion or saturation was not sought for, but the individual experiences. Further investigations concerning the most appropriate and effective method of collecting data, yielded an interviewing method would provide more information than observation. According to (Patton 2002, 14) qualitative methods give more "deep openness s and detail" to a research. Also, qualitative methods give an opportunity to see the research question from the perspective of the interviewees (in this case the *maasai* men) without intentionally

shaping the perspective through predefined categories and subjectivity. A point to note is that , when it comes to qualitative research the informants or respondents may not be able to answer all the questions in depth because of technical reasons (e.g. language used) However, according to Patton, the “elementary level of inquiry” is beneficial. A potential disadvantage of qualitative research is making generalizations in analysing the data collected. The interviewer should be particularly aware of this point as qualitative data does not allow generalization.

5.2 Description of the implementation stage

The implementation phase explains the conduct of the interviews. The interviews took place in five different locations of Kajiado North District. This was as a result of the locations of the various target persons. The first was in Upper Matasia during the second week of May 2011. Upper Matasia is a Public primary school situated in Ngong division of Kajiado North District. It offers primary school education to pupils of cosmopolitan backgrounds. The school conducts the learning in one language, which is English the official language of the state, even though *Swahili* the National language is also taught as a prerequisite on the Kenyan education system curriculum. The policy of the school is to encourage hard work, self esteem, discipline and respect for others.

There are a number of optional studies on offer to allow the pupils develop their individual strengths and abilities. Considering the needs, time and the tight schedule of the school head who was the first interviewee, it was agreed that the second week of May was the best time for the session as this would not disrupt his busy programme for the school. The interview took place during school hours at the school and in the head teacher’s office. The location allowed for privacy and possibility of recording. The total amounts for the interviews at the school were 2 recordings, which were followed with a re-interview with the head teacher/ teacher later on after the last interview with the main target group.

The entire time for these interview recordings was 5 hours 30 min of (total) audio recording and 8 pages of transcription. In the beginning of the interview, the interviewees were asked if they were comfortable with having their interviews audio recorded, which they obliged. The interviewees were made to understand that they could opt for no audio recordings if they wished to. I promised the interviewees to have the questionnaires/recordings destroyed as soon as I am done with my research to maintain anonymity.

5.3 Interviewing

This consists of a number of open ended and closed questions that relate to particular aspects of illiteracy. The questions are composed in away that is easy to comprehend and provoke honest and thorough answers. In the construction of the interview questions, an important point to note is that they should be specific, supporting particular answers but more like carrying a theme. The interviews are audio recorded and consequently transcribed. Notes are taken, when needed during and after each interview.

The interviews are conducted in English. Prior to the interview, a visit to the location is organised to get acquainted with the people and the environment. The other advantages of the interviews were that of control. Sometimes respondents did not answer, while at times they gave incomplete answers, or answers that were unclear. In this situation, the *Probing technique* is used to clarify such situations. Probing attempts to motivate the interviewee to communicate more information without introducing bias into questions or answers, this worked perfectly well on this case.

5.4 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a tool to extract information from the target persons. This worked perfectly as, most of the time during the interviewing processes there is more than an answer for a single question or sometimes a detailed explanation for the same.

It is also easier to use the questionnaire since this way; a lot is gathered on the specific information on various topics on this research. It was also easier than asking someone to explain about a situation where much could have been left out. The questionnaire was in handy since it analyses the current situation of the problems. The questionnaires for this research comprised of both open ended and closed questions. The open ended questions could usefully be employed in both qualitative and quantitative research .The open ended question is exactly that respondents can reply “openly” in their own words.

Open ended questions have advantages of providing full answers, exploring issues that are new to research .The open questions often elicits responses of items or ideas overlooked by researchers; which also covers themes that were not expected. Closed questions have answers that are already determined. Whenever possible, answers on the questionnaire should be coded to facilitate analysis, on a process called Pre-coding. Closed questions are where the researcher feels able to anticipate the types of answers that may result from a given question. The advantage of these questions is that they were fast to administer, and easy to analyse. The disadvantage included the fact that to develop correct options, there needed to be a pilot survey, and error is in evitable, when thoughts are summarised as single words.

The Purpose of the questionnaire is its validity as an instrument for the qualitative research, commonly employed with sample surveys, commonly known as interview form or schedule. The questionnaires are primarily designed to be answered by person who is known as respondents or informants. Such are the forms used for the interviews, also used are variant in observational research to make a record of statements.

5.5 Observation

This is another efficient tool that is used in this research. This is at the location of the first interview which is at the Upper Matasia Primary school. The observation was on the way learning was conducted to the 4th graders using the formal method of teaching. In this style of teaching the teacher could use a lot of (IMs) Instructional materials in form of charts and pictures

drawn on *manila* papers to assist the pupils in connection, relation and the grasping of the subject being taught. Before the class began, the teacher would ask the pupils questions as to what they could recall was taught the previous day. Thereafter the pupils could answer by raising their hands and answering the questions. From there the lesson would proceed from where it had stopped.

During the lesson there are no interruptions, though the pupils are allowed to raise their hands and ask questions. The teacher lectures the pupils while writing notes on the black board using chalk. This is a very old system of learning, but in this particular institution and many others, it is still being used and it is there to stay.

There is also the use of the national language *Swahili* during the Swahili lessons or mostly in communications between the teacher and the pupils. There are special cases when the use of the areas local dialect is used, such as *maa* or *kimaa* which are *Maasai* dialects when lecturing. This is usually used in instances where the teacher encounters technical sections that need more clarification for the pupils to understand. The use of the local dialects in class is not encouraged by the teachers. They can only be used on those special occasions that I have stated here in. The language of instructions for all the lessons is the official language of the nation which is English.

Each lesson lasts for 40 minutes and thereafter, another one starts. The pupils stay in school for 8-9 hours everyday. The day starts at 8.00 o'clock till 16.00 o'clock. A short break at 10.30 am, for 45 min, and then classes resume again till 12.45 pm, where there is a lunch break for an 1hr 15 min. The school has no feeding programme so the children are forced to walk home for those who stay nearby and have lunch-and return to school, while those who come from a bit further locations can have what they had carried to school for lunch (Packed lunch).

The pupils then resume studies again at 1.30pm for independent study, meant as a recollection time on what was learnt in the morning till 2.00pm when the lectures continue again till 4.00pm. After this long tiring day, the pupils can engage in co-curriculum activities such as sports on the field or music on the school programmes, for an hour till 5.00 o'clock when it is time to go home.

6. WHAT EXACTLY AILS THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN KENYA

The following report is from one main local newspaper. It reports in part that; "According to the recent teachers' strike is just one aspect of an ongoing crisis in the teaching profession in sub-Saharan Africa, where the teaching force is highly demoralised, fractured and struggling to be heard. According to Lucia Fry, a senior policy adviser to Global Campaign for Education, states that most teachers are demoralised because their professional needs are neglected (The Standard, 2011).

"Teachers are mired in bureaucracies that neither support their training needs and performance nor clear career progression in their jobs," says Ms Fry in a recent analysis on centrality of teacher management in sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries. According to Lucy Fry, the stakeholders in public education sector should not expect high standards of education so long as the quality of teachers and their morale remained low (The Standard, 2011). "The quality of an education system can not exceed the quality of its teachers," says Fry in a study on consequences of poor teacher management. That is the situation in Kenya where the morale of teachers in public schools seems to have hit rock bottom. Teachers' frustrations were evident during the strike. Besides acute teacher shortages, teachers' union officials were at pains to explain the suffering of contract teachers who are paid wages equivalent to three dollars a day (The Standard, 2011).

As a result, the teaching profession is characterised by lack of confidence, as most teachers have lost professional commitment. According to Dr Halsey Rogers, a senior education economist at the World Bank, teacher absenteeism in Kenya is very high because of poor supervision. "On average, teacher absenteeism in Kenya stands at 20 per cent," says Rogers in a study entitled *Getting Teachers and Doctors Report to Work*. But low morale among teachers seems to have dealt a severe blow to quality of education than any other one factor (The Standard, 2011).

6.1 Learning outcomes

The local daily extract continues and adds that “nevertheless, when problems occur as a result of Government inability to provide the necessary learning resources in public schools, teachers are blamed for the deficient learning achievements. "Teachers themselves, products of a poor education system, are seen as obstacles to educational change and increased student learning outcomes," says UNESCO in a report entitled Teachers for Tomorrow’s Schools (The Standard, 2011). But if the society is keen to have improved student-learning achievement, then it is critical to engage teachers in decision-making education panels in addition to providing tools to enable them perform their duties properly. But for now, teachers’ morale and motivation is fragile and declining fast. The continued deterioration of academic performance in district public secondary schools is another indicator all is not well with the teaching force (The Standard, 2011).

During the recent strike, debates were rife, not necessarily on difficulties that teachers encountered in schools, but on their deficiencies. However, if the situation is to change for the better, there is urgent need to recognise, at the decision-making level, the fundamental importance of teachers’ role towards ensuring effectiveness of the education process (The Standard, 2011). And if this is something to go by, then the government has been producing individuals who are “half baked” into the labour market in the name of literate persons. This again begs to wonder how “qualified are qualified” the pupils leaving schools and into the labour markets from the Kenyan schools.

Whereas this Bachelor’s topic is On the roots of illiteracy among one of the tribal groupings in Kenya (the maasai men), the state should first put its house in order and especially in the Ministry of Education just to name BUT a few, so as a lot can be achieved in the education sector. The vice should be brought down to its extinct, in all the state’s sectors without any

discussions. This is because it is a huge development impediment in the current century anywhere in the world.

Reducing risk factors in Kenya

According to Edward Kochung, school failures and general development problems in children associated with risks factors can be prevented and reduced. These problems can be minimized through early education, good nutrition, and good child rearing styles, healthy environments and prevention of diseases. Although the indicators for the risks reducing among the children in Kenya show that much is still to be done, there have been attempts by the government, communities and families to minimize risk factors (Kochung Edwards 2000, 15)

The United Nations Standards Rules on equalization of opportunities and the UNO 1990 Convention which Kenya is a signatory have had an impact on services for children. This has lead to an increase of the number of girls in schools, thereby reducing illiteracy, which is a risk factor. The establishment of preschool classes in every primary school is an attempt by the government of early intervention. Early intervention helps in identifying and reducing certain risks factors of school failure. High academic requirement qualification for preschool teachers is another way to improve Pre School teaching (Kochung Edwards 2000, 15)

6.2 The Kajiado District

Kajiado District is one of the 18 districts within the Rift Valley Province. It is located in the Southern part of the province .It borders the Republic of Tanzania to the Southwest, Taita Taveta District to the South East, Nairobi City to the North east, Kiambu District to the North and Narok District to the West. It has a population of 406,000 with nearly 50% being in the range 0-14 years. The indigenous people of the area are the *Maasai*, but there is an influx of people from other tribal groups. The District covers an area of approximately 21,902 km (sq) and is divided into 7 divisions; namely Ngong, Magadi, Isinya, Central, Namanga,and Loitokitok. It has 47 locations and 120 sub locations and three constituencies namely;Kajiado North, Kajiado Central

and Kajiado South. Kajiado has two local authorities namely; Olkejuado County Council with 43 civic wards and Kajiado town with 6 civic wards.

The landscape consists of plains plus some volcanic hills and valleys. The region is very dry with continually flowing rivers and officially designated as semi-arid. The annual rainfall varies between 500 and 1,250mm. There are two wet seasons, the “short rains” between October and December and the “long rains” between March and May. In recent years, there have been long periods of drought, when there has been little or no rain at all. Life is extremely hard for the *Maasai* pastoralists, who make up the majority of the population. This hampers efforts to encourage Agriculture as an alternative to cattle rearing. People tend to give up on a system where crop failure is a far too common occurrence. It has 47 locations and 120 sub-locations and three constituencies namely: Kajiado North, Kajiado Central and Kajiado South. Kajiado has two local authorities namely: Olkejuado County Council with forth three (43) civic wards and Kajiado Town Council with six (6) civic wards.

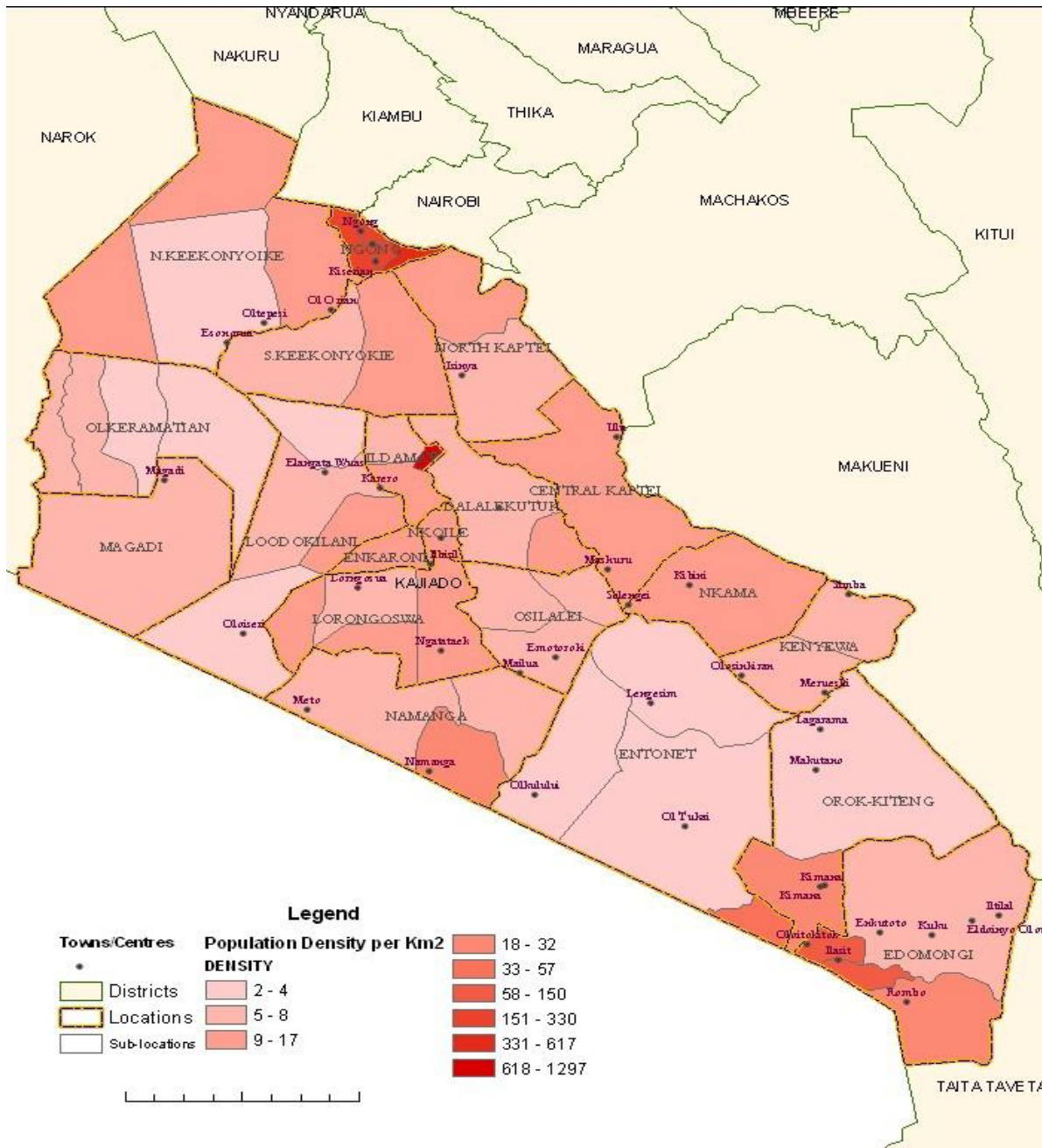


Figure 3: Map Showing; Location, Administrative Areas and Population Density pattern of Kajiado District.



Picture 1: The author and the area covered on the thesis research on the signboard.

Upper Matasia- Ngong Division, Kajiado North District

The area covered during research for this thesis was in Upper Matasia. Upper Matasia is in Ngong Division, located in Kajiado North District. Upper Matasia is some 70 kilometres from the capital city Nairobi. I choose this area Upper Matasia for various reasons. One of the main reasons is that the area lies squarely at the heart of Kajiado North district and is home to the indigenous *Maasai*, whom I was in search for on this research work as the main target group persons. From the Capital city, the area was accessible by road, though with a lot of difficulties when it is wet, as it the case during my time there.



Picture 2: The pupils of Upper Matasia Primary School outside the school main gate.

Personal Interview: 1, 10 May 2011

Upper Matasia primary school was started in the 1960s. The school is located in Ngong zone , Ngong division ,Kajiado District, in Kajiado North Constituency in Rift Valley province. The school is located almost on top of Ngong hills.

Mr. Mwathe has been teaching at this school for 4 years now, and has been in the profession for 12 years, with Upper matasia being his third station. Upper matasia is a cosmopolitan school which comprises of children from different ethnic backgrounds. The school`s teaching staff has both the P.1 and P.2 categories of qualified teachers, that are recognized by standards set by the Kenya`s Teachers Service Commission an independent teachers organisation body.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

The maasais are the minority, but are supposed to be the majority, citing different reasons that compelled this research. The government is really trying according to Mwathe Ruel. Although the schools have been coming up in the interiors of the maasai land , their infrastructure have been very poor and wanting. The introduction of the (F.P.E),free primary education, back in the year 2003 by the NARC Coalition government, has seen the continued supply of (I.Ms) instructional materials, books ,and other stationeries to most primary schools by the state.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

The area that the state has failed miserably is on the manpower. On the Maasai regions, the schools that are there presently are severely understaffed, with such instances as a single teacher attending to 8 classes, which is almost impossible to manage. This kind of a situation has been taken back to the community in the area who now hire untrained teachers who are fellow school drop outs to bridge the gap.

The area legislator, Member of Parliament has also done much for the area and his effort has always been noticed by the community in the area as well as the school. He has also ensures that the school has electricity that lacks in most other school sin the area. According to Mwathe Ruel, there are various causes of illiteracy among the maasai men of Kajiado North District. Some of them are such as the culture;

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011



Picture 3: The head teacher of Upper Matasia primary school, (without cap) in his office.

The maasais have continued to observe their old cultures till to date. These are such as the initiation of the boys at the age of 16-17 years, and sending them to the forest for 2-3 years to observe the rights of those initiations. Such young boys should be in schools in grade 5 or even 6 in the Kenyan education system, and majority are not at this institutions at these times. Upon the completion of the stipulated time in the forest, they emerge as morans a new title for young warriors in maasai culture and are now adults who are supposed to start families.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

There is also the question of gender imbalance among the girl child. The maasais are of the notion that the girl child should stay at home and learn to become a house wife, and the child is of no value in being educated. According to Mwathe Ruel, the girl child upon reaching the age of 8-9 years, and after under going circumcision rituals, she is looked up at as ripe for marriage and she is seen as a wealth provider for the family.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

Another reason is the weather. The area of Kajiado North District is on arid and semi arid area. The area occasionally experiences long dry spells for long durations. The maasais who are pastoralists' and nomads by way of life, will pull the young boys, who are supposed to be learning to herd the large numbers of livestock across plains and regions to as far as the Tanzania border in search of pastures and water. The young boys according to their aging parents, in the process of herding the livestock, they also nurse them while on these journeys. The main reason behind the company of the young lads on such missions, according to their guardians is that they are stronger and endure many kilometers trekking.

The maasai value their cows preciously. Even in an event of severe drought and the situation becomes very dire, they will still hold on to their weak livestock that are almost dying without selling a single one for money to buy food.



Picture 4: The author seated in a class at Upper Matasia Primary School.

The other is Political reasons. In some areas of the larger Kajiado District, the administrative arm of the government in terms of the local Chiefs still wields a lot of powers. This was the old colonial way of administration that is still prevalent in those areas. According to Mwathe Ruel, some of the chiefs are also illiterate or school drops out who have been rewarded of these positions due to political patronage by their cronies in the government of the day. The same chiefs have an attitude that they possess. When an area has a positive local administrator (chief), then the locals will benefit with learning, whereas in an area that has an administrator (chief) with a negative attitude then the area is bound to develop a higher percentage of illiteracies. According to Mwathe Ruel, these local administrations officers are capable of suspending teachers from schools or even close them down all together.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

The current statistics of illiteracy among the Maasai men according to Mwathe Ruel is gradually decreasing. At the moment it stands out at 40%, and this varies from district to district. Mwathe Ruel attributes this into the divisions of the Maasai which is based on clanism. An important aspect to note is that, favauorism, from respective powerful clan members who hold big positions in the government of the day is on the rise in these regions. This is of the simple fact that they will only uplift their areas in terms of education development, and favour members of their own community only.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

In Kajiado District there are 5 major clans, with 2 major clans in Ngong division comprising of Kikunyuki and Purku. The kikunyuki`s stand out at 50% and are the most educated in the region, while the Purku are at 20-30% and are in second on academic ranks. There are some other Maasai clans that also lag behind in literacy. These are such as the Doklani, of Magadi Division and the El-kisingu of Loitokitok. The Matapatu –Kitengela Maasais are very educated, and this is as a result of intermarriages between the Kikuyu/Maasai and Kamba although illiteracy is still higher, which according to Mwathe Ruel is at 20-30% in the area. The Maasai men are more educated more than the women. On gender preference in terms of education , Maasai parents, would rather educate the boy child rather than the girl. This is because the girls are married of at an early age for reasons explained earlier in this thesis.

Mwathé Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

The shortest and longest distance between the school and the homes is quite considerable. According to Mwathé Ruel, the distance can be accessed by most of the children as it is between 1-2 kilometres apart which is not far for the pupils. Majority of the Maasai's who have settled around the area, migrated to the place due to pastures. The area of Ngong hills has the school Upper Matasia primary resting at its foot. In Kajiado North District, a lot still needs to be done to eradicate illiteracy. The government only provides the school books, and therefore most of the other responsibility is left to the community, such as provision of school uniforms, and desks for pupils to seat on upon admission. There is also the issue of congestion in classes. The government policy according to Mwathé Ruel is (1: 40) which translates to 1 teacher to every 40 pupils.

Mwathé Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

However, this has not been the case since the onset of (F.P.E) free primary education from the year 2003. This has seen a lot of congestion in classes in the region with as much as (1:100) a single teacher to 100 pupils per stream, which is just too much to handle, which also makes learning very difficult. This scenario has continually demoralised some of the pupils who have opted to drop out, due to many difficulties in concentration. In terms of Text books, the government has provisions of (1:3) for the lower classes (classes 1-4) which is a text book per 3 pupils and in upper (classes 5-8) it is (1:2) a text book for 3 pupils.

Mwathé Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

Ruel Mwathé states that the previous regime had quality education as compared to the current one. That the quality of the current education has gone down, this is because the teachers cannot cope with the masses of pupils in the classes. An example is in various parts of Kajiado where he gives an example of the figures at (100:3-4 teachers), this is 100 pupils against 3-4 teachers. The government is still unable to take any quick steps to arrest this situation.

Mwathé Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

The situation in regard to congestion at Upper matasia Primary School, is well taken of as the school is in the interiors. The population of the area is low. This brings the ratio at (1:40) which is a teacher for every 40 pupils, which is at the recommended government policy. According to Ruel Mwathe, some of the challenges the teachers are facing that could contribute to illiteracy in these regions, are such as the working conditions. Mwathe Ruel, states that the working conditions for the teachers have been very poor for a very long time. Most teachers have to walk long distances to and from work, as they can not afford the high transportation charges to their place of work due to poor salaries by the government. The government has always promised to review the teacher's salaries but they have not done much until to-date.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

This demoralizes the teachers as they are not able to give their best. When the teachers arrive to their work stations they are always tired and their output is poor, though they keep trying. There is also a lot of workload for the teachers, due to congestions in classes. According to Ruel Mwathe, the teachers have continuously felt neglected by the state. The teachers would like to have better standard of living. Ruel Mwathe states that, all the government is interested in are the pupils and the implementation of the education and nothing else, but he wonders, what about the welfare of the implementers? The teachers?

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011.

Another reason that could hinder literacy in this region is technological knowhow. The teachers at the Upper matasia primary school are all computer illiterate. This is because most of the staff are seniors and have never got access to the machine. The school has no computer neither do many schools in the surroundings. According to Ruel Mwathe, numerous attempts to request for some of this machines, have fallen into deaf ears as the state's procurement policy process is extremely long and treacherous and yields nothing at the end of the day.

According to Ruel Mwathe many schools in Kajiado North district have no electricity supply at all, and learning is conducted without power. When the pupils have radio based lessons from the Ministry of Education, the school uses battery cells to access to such, and in instances where the cells are unavailable then the more important radio-lesson is missed altogether. Mwathe states that, due to this setback, most schools have no electric appliances since they do not find a need for any, and they are used to this kind of set up , something which could be impossible in other parts of the country in other schools.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

According to Ruel Mwathe, there are 25 private schools and 9 public schools in Kajiado North District presently. Ruel states that the current Kenya Education system known as the (8-4-4) system has metamorphosed. These days the curriculum is rather distorted, which has diminished the quality of education as compared to the previous one, the (7-4-3) system which was of more quality. Ruel adds that the former used to prepare the pupils mentally and physically in readiness to handle life after school, a thing that has been watered down in the new system. The news system is only interested on the mean scores of the pupils; or rather the high marks pupil scores, which is a failure on part of education by the government which sets the goals.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

Then there is the issue of co –curriculum activities in schools in that region. These kinds of activities are not given much attention in many schools. According to Mwathe Ruel, the children are huddled more into the academic work instead. This has always locked out the pupils that have much potential in those areas, such as sports, music and athletics which the government should look into in the future. When such children with other talents are not given a chance to demonstrate their potential, they tend to be demoralised as they feel they cannot meet the standards set by the schools, therefore they opt to drop out hence increasing the levels of illiteracy.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

The situation at Upper matasia is that, the school excels very well in co-curriculum activities, these are sports, music and athletics but not in academics. According to Mwathe Ruel, once again this should be an eye opener to the government when they insist on the academic performance of the pupils.

The intervention by the international communities is one that has been felt by all in this region of Kajiado North District. The NGOs excellent hard works have seen illiteracy levels drastically going down in the areas. The NGOs are concentrating more on teaching the locals Animal husbandry and Theology, which have been received very well by the locals, with Kajiado, Laikipia, Narok and Transmara areas recording a higher number of elites among the Maasais in recent times. The women have not been left behind either, as they are engaging themselves in other projects such as making beadwork, belt and key-holders, which they sell to substitute their income to sustain their livelihood. The NGOs are also encouraging the locals to value education.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

Currently the locals in this area of Kajiado North District and its environs have started embracing education as the only way to future prosperity. According to Mwathe Ruel, they have now seen how education has transformed the few in that region and changed their lives completely. According to Ruel Mwathe, one way the Maasais could benefit in their area, is to create a conducive atmosphere for interaction with other communities of elite backgrounds., The new people will come with new ideas. This is what will transform the locals in these areas, which will be a positive investment on the lives of the locals in future.

Mwathe Ruel. Personal Interview. 10 May 2011

Personal Interview 2; District Educational Officer



Picture 5: The area District Education Officer-Kajiado North District in his office.

According to the (D.E.O) Kajiado North District, The district has the following number of schools in that region. They are as follows; *there are 84 Public Nursery Schools and 158 Private Pre-schools in Kajiado North District, together with 108 Public Primary Schools, and 114 Private Schools, adding up 222 Schools. For Secondary Schools, there are 23 Public Secondary schools and 23 Private Secondary schools, adding up to 47 Secondary Schools. The figures given here are for the number of all the Schools in the entire Kajiado District.*

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

Back in 1980s, there were 16 public schools, 4 secondary schools, 3 private schools, and 5 private Primary Schools. Illiteracy is still high .The (D.E.O) gave an example with himself saying that, at his age of 46 years, there were 40% of illiterate maasai men of his age of Primary School level ,others were 20% who had secondary school level of education ,while the rest were who were graduates from the university were at a mere 3 %. Though the level of illiteracy is improving, the gap is being bridged at the moment. According to the (D.E.O) currently, illiteracy is at 50% among the Maasai men in Kajiado North District, while at the age of 50 years and above most are also literate.

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

The development curve is increasing by the day –there are a number of the maasai men who are now educated and they now know the importance of being educated. The government is currently doing well with the introduction of Adult classes on various local levels in Kajiado district. These are meant for those who can not attend formal education. However, in spite of this effort by the Government, the locals have not been attending these programs due to lack of interest and are rather engaged with other things. Presently, in Kajiado district, there are 16 such public centers and 7 in Kajiado North District. The government has continued to play a major role to eradicate poverty by allowing the NGOs to introduce the Continued Centers to operate and help to try and bridge the gap of illiteracy.

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

According to (D.E.O), there could be several factors that affect illiteracy among the Maasai men in Kajiado North. One of the universal reasons is the -pride of wealth, in terms of huge numbers livestock, and enormous parcels of land from single individuals. In instances, there are single person's pocessing 1000 herds of cattle or even more and the same applies to land. The other reason is the belief that people go to school to acquire wealth later in future. Lately, the trend is currently changing –and this has been attributed by the drought and role models in the area, who have embraced education. The (D.E.O) gave a perfect example of himself as role model in his society as well as two of his colleagues at work in the same office.

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

The facilities that are lacking in Kajiado North District, and have been a contributor to illiteracy in the region, according to the (D.E.O) is the infrastructure. The government should construct roads that will in return bring economic returns. The state of the roads are in poor conditions in most parts of Kajiado district, taking into account the area is arid and semi arid area, thus reaching most places is impossible.

The other factor is lack of designated class rooms in the interiors of the large district. According to the (D.E.O) villagers have to go to churches or under a tree for lessons. In these regions the government has employed very few teachers also, which could be another cause all together. When for instances the churches have functions, learning is disrupted automatically, the same way as when there is bad weather and there is a heavy down pour.

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

Another reason is that the instructors in these regions have not been trained to handle adults. Most of them are unqualified teachers with only some basic skills in numeracy, English and Swahili. The majority are primary school drop outs, and secondary school leavers with low grades. The school going age for Pre-schools, in Kajiado North district according to the (D.E.O) depends on the location. There are areas where a 4 year old can attend school, and these are where there are churches in most villages that act like schools and start small nurseries for the children.

When in the interiors, the school going age differs. This according to the (D.E.O), the children as old as 9-10 years can here by start school. The reason for this is that at this age, the child can walk the distance to school, which in most cases is a distance of 8-10 kilometers. Ignorance according to the (D.E.O) is another cause of illiteracy among the Maasai men in Kajiado North district. There are situations where the parents and relatives of a child could be illiterate and see no need of enrolling the child for any form of education. Moranism is the other issue. This is when the young boys would be taken to the forests for the initiation ceremonies. After which they would stay in the forest for 3-4 years and later resurface in the villages as morans and in readiness to start family life.

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

This has continued to waste a lot of precious time for the young boys, however, it is slowly becoming a thing of the past by one of the tribes called Kikunyuki, where the (D.E.O) hails from. According to him, presently there is a very small number still practicing moranism, like 3-4 families out of an area of 10,000 families, which clearly show the practice is slowly becoming extinct. The (D.E.O) adds that even those practicing moranisms have to attend school in their region and that the ceremonies will only take place during school holidays, either in August or December and is usually conducted by a chief, which is a good thing.

In Kajiado North District, there is a trend that the men are more educated than their counterparts the women. According to the area (D.E.O) this has been caused by issues of various development. For example some other parts of the larger Kajiado district are more developed than others. A closer look at other divisions in the district is as follows;

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

For instance the Ngong, and Ongata Rongai divisions are more developed than the kisamis and Kiputu areas, whereas Magadi division bordering Kenya and Tanzania is the least developed area. It is at these under-developed areas, where one encounters illiteracy levels being very high. According to the (D.E.O) Kajiado District the ratio of boys to girls in education institutions varies from area to area. For instance in Kajiado North district, the number of boys in public primary schools is at; 20,010 boys and 8,502 girls respectively. The teaching staff numbers in this area is at 334 male teachers and 635 female teachers.

In another area such as the Ngwaso division which are semi-arid areas there 67 male teachers and 49 female. In the same region there is an enrolment of 2,506 boys against 2,488 girls in the same public primary schools, with 67 male teachers and 49 female teachers. A look at the least developed Magadi division, which is a semi-arid area, reveals the numbers as follows; 2,553 boys and 2,488 girls, with 49 female teachers and 55 male teachers.

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

On now coming to the more developed divisions of Kajiado district, there are the following statistics, according to the area (D.E.O) enrollment of both genders in public primary schools is as follows; 5,024 boys and 4971 girls in Ongata rongai, while in Ngong division, with a teaching staff of 31 male teachers and 203 female teachers. In Ngong division, there are 3,042 boys and 2,996 girls, while the teaching staff is at 32 male teachers against 131 female teachers. In secondary school in the same division, according to the (D.E.O) there are 3,534 boys and 3,143 girls, with 135 male teachers and 209 female teachers, which again shows that the enrolment of boys in schools is much larger than the girls.

One of the reasons why female teachers are on the rise in these regions is that, currently men will tend to change professions later, opting to more challenging careers in medicine and engineering. The women will always want to be posted to their home areas when they secure the teaching jobs; this is because of their motherly nature and the fondness of children.

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

According to the (D.E.O.) the shortest distance between homes and schools is 1Km and the longest is 10Km. These distances are accessible on foot, motor cycle, or a bicycle while some of these distances are not accessible at all.

On response by international community in regards to illiteracy, the D.E.O said that “there has been tremendous support from various NGOs in the region. An example is the World vision, which has been at the fore front with overwhelming support for the less fortunate children in this area. Some of their projects are such as sponsoring them to schools, buying them school books as well as taking care of their medical needs.

There are also church ministries who have various projects in area, whom, apart from spreading the gospel have programs of Adult education, but not as many, though their in put is a bit less. According to the (D.E.O), there is tremendous need for Adult education in Kajiado North district. These are observed by the high levels of ignorance and poverty in these areas, where the children are denied the basic necessities due to this fact. According to the (D.E.O) there are big areas in the district that have not been inhabited, as the population rises, these areas will be inhabited soon and the need of schools will arise in the areas. The schools will be for the

purposes of enlightening the community and bringing down the levels of illiteracy. The (D.E.O) is very optimistic that the levels of illiteracy will decline in future in the next twenty years in Kajiado district. However he was quick to point out that, this does not mean that illiteracy will be wiped out completely, if the community will not be ready to change their attitudes, and cast away some of their cultures.

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Personal Interview .16 May 2011

Personal Interview 3; Maasai man

Mzee Saiyo Ole Kaiyo aged 38, is a married man with three wives and 6 children. He lives in Upper Matasia location, in Ngong Division of Kajiado North District. Mr Ole Kaiyo is not educated at all hence he is illiterate. Though he admits he would like to be literate. He says that *culturally the maasai men do not find any interests in education at all, him included.* He adds that *at that moment he had no chance to engage in any type of formal education.*



Picture 6: Mr. Ole Saiyo, his family, and the author (second right) on his farm.

On inquiry whether his parents encouraged him to go to school, he says *his parents never did and never saw the need for education at all. Instead of sending him to school then, his parents valued herding of livestock for school. Most of the parents in his village during that time had no business either, sending their children to school. Seeking education by then was something foreign to most of the Maasai children and to some extent majority of them presently.*

Saiyo Ole Kaiyo. Personal Interview. 20 May 2011

Born at the Kora baridi, Swahili phrase meaning a “cold area” up the hill at the *Nganyati* area , he reiterates that *in his hey days there were no schools at all by then. The only schools that were there then were only two. One was in Narok, miles and miles away, while the other was in Oloilengalani an area named by the maasais also miles away.*

He says that *those who attended school in those days, had to trek miles and miles away from his area to Narok where the schools were, through the jungles ,which was also a very risky affair.* When I asked him if he would like to go to school if given a chance on this day, *he said that, at the moment, he was too advanced in age and again he has to fend for his many children. However, Ole Saiyo did not rule out the issue of illiteracy among the maasai`s completely, he made a positive note that, those in such clans such as the matapatu, kangare, kabutei, and Damat of Kajiado Disrict were literate, while in Ngong division the kikunyuki, matapatu, and Kabutei were literateas well.*

Saiyo Ole Kaiyo. Personal Interview. 20 May 2011

On his thoughts about children who are now attending school in Kajiado North district, he says that *it is a good idea, but he also adds that, even though the children are learning, they will still find it hard to secure jobs after in future. This according to Ole Saiyo maybe caused by the upsurge of population in the area, or the entire country. On a lighter note, he was quick to admit that, for those who attended school in his days, they are no reaping the benefits of education, and are leading good lives living comfortably.*

Ole Saiyo`s view on illiteracy is that, *for those who are still in this quagmire, the problems are perennial, taking into account that, in today`s modern day and time, no one can afford to be illiterate as life can be very unfair and cruel.* This he recounts on the many times he has to seek help when he is going about his businesses as a business man, and also when it comes to translation of at the local banks as well as general information in instances when he visits the government offices.

According to Ole Saiyo, he was of the opinion that, *for those Maasais that were educated, it was not a must for them to secure jobs, but it is now crucial for all illiterate Maasais to be literate.* This he attributes to the tribulations he undergoes frequently in his day to day life in search for the daily bread for his big family.



Picture 7: Mr. Ole Saiyo`s sons with the youngest holding on his little lamb, and the author behind, on their farm compound.

Ole Saiyo put it that, as a young boy what he had wished to acquire, then was property in terms of a home, children, cattle, and a wife or to become a businessman. Those were his dreams and at present he has achieved all these, but all that is lacking is one crucial thing, which is education - to transform him to a literate man.

Saiyo Ole Kaiyo. Personal Interview. 20 May 2011

On the present time, Ole Saiyo said that, *its now high time for all those illiterate maasai`s to embrace and value education. He says that, these days life has become unbearable for those who are uneducated or rather illiterate. He has seen for himself the clear benefits of literacy and the difference of the later. He adds that, there are those few maasai`s who are currently engaging in Adult education and some are willing to join some form of basic education, which is a positive move and he would strongly urge them to take those chances.*

On his parting shot, Ole Saiyo, said that for those who will not heed this calling now and transform themselves, life will be very expensive and unfair for them in future.

Personal Interview 4- Three Maasai *morani* men

Nkare Phillip, Ole Kaparo Josephat and Segei Alexander, are 23, 27 and 25 years respectively. The three *Maasai morani* men were interviewees who were illiterate. They could not read and write, and have never been seen the inside of a classroom .Below is their experiences of illiteracy. The interview took place at the same location of the author`s research, Upper Matasia location, Ngong division of Kajiado North District. The three young men affirmed that they would like to learn how to read and write, however after some thought the interviewee named Ole Kaparo said, *he felt he was too old for school and wished to engage in some thing else, such as business-buying and selling of live stock.*(Nkare et al)

The interviewees did not go to school regularly since they are all illiterate and have never attended any school. They spend most of their time herding livestock and staying around their

villages. The only education they have is some basic numeracy, which they have acquired partly from their parents and their peers who are literate and attend schools.

The trio confessed that *their parents had never asked them anything to do with school, nor showed any concern about their illiteracy status. This according to them was a clear lack of motivation and mentorship from them. This went on for a long time until at a later stage when they began to see the benefits of being literate due to the everyday hardships that they encountered.* (Nkare et al)



Picture 8: Three maasai *morani* and the author in (white cap) outside their *manyatta* (hut) in Kajiado North district

Enkare et al. Personal interview .27 May 2011

According to them they have also lacked role models, someone to advice them accordingly and demonstrate to them the clear meaning of being literate, and the benefits reaped from such kind of a venture in life (Nkare et al).

The twin men of Nkare and Segei said that *they would take the opportunity given to attend school today if availed to them. They said that would really like to get educated so as he would be able to conduct his own businesses without a problem, instead of requesting for assistance everyday from elite people, on everything and sometimes on matters that are very minor.*

According to Nkare, his was lack of interest all together, and this was due to the fact that *he still believes that there is not much he could acquire from schools in terms of education. According to him, this has been attributed by the slow behavioral change among the maasai`s, due to strong cultural beliefs, which the other two interviewees also agreed with.*

Enkare et al. Personal interview .27 May 2011

For Segei, his reason was *moranism*. He had to attend to this crucial initiation to keep the promised he kept to his dad before he died lest he be *cursed* according to his culture. He explained that, *this is the time where the young boys would be rounded up for this crucial initiation ceremony that took place during the month of August or December on the Maasai calendar. It is usually a crucial right of passage where the young brave boys undergo circumcision to become men. Many a boys look up to this occasion with a lot of respect and dignity. During this time of the month, an entire village can be wiped out off the young men who are ripe for the occasion, according to them (Nkare et al). It is at this initiation where the boys are driven deep in the forest at some sacred venue for the ceremony, as it is in their culture and stay there for a couple of years-which ranges from three to four.*

According to Segei, while at the forest the boys *are taught and trained on how to become responsible men and morans (Warriors). This is where they spend a considerable part of their life and thereafter they are sent back to their respective villages when this time has elapsed as morans and young adults ready to start life as adults.* According to Ole Kaparo, this is crucial time wasted in the forest where as it could have been used in school learning the skills of life and also the ways to maneuver in the modern world. Upon emerging from the forest, the *maasai morans* are no longer regarded as boys, according to Segei Alexander, *they are bestowed a lot of privileges in their villages according to their new stature. This is the time again, when the young men are expected to marry and start having families, so the time of attending school becomes an*

automatic, mission impossible. This is what has continued to escalate illiteracy levels in this region to date.

Enkare et al. Personal interview .27 May 2011

Ole Kaparo's, status as illiterate was caused partly by poverty and drought in the area. He said *that his parents were so poor and could not afford to send him to school.* He adds that *his father wanted him to stay at home and assists in such chores as herding the livestock, which to him was a priority for fending for the family.* On many occasions he had to move with the livestock from one location to the other in such of pastures and water. *Kajiado North is an arid and semi arid area, a lot of precious time is usually wasted in search of forage and water for livestock by the young boys who should be in school, this is according to Ole Kaparo.*

Enkare et al. Personal interview .27 May 2011

The trio admitted that they could read simple text and maybe scribble their names, and also do some simple numeracy. Other than that, *when the texts gets complex demanding more thought and reasoning, then they would always lose track and would need assistance immediately.* They confessed that *the challenges were felt more, when they were to conduct bank transactions or visit some authorities in the offices in pursuit of inquiries, and all the time they would need interpreters, which was also an expensive undertaking.*

According to the trio, *all the children attending schools right now regardless of gender or tribal groupings are not wasting any time at all. The investment in education is going to benefit them tremendously in their future, because the world right now has no place for illiterate persons due to the high competition in the labour market in pursuit and search for the finest brains in vast professions, which are of course of the literate persons.*

Enkare et al. Personal interview .27 May 2011

The trio had different wishes as children as to what was important to them. Nkare had wished *for a nice home, a wife and some cows on which he has now acquired,* while Kaparo had wished *to for large herds of livestock and large portions of land which he is yet to acquire save for a few animals that he inherited for himself.* Segei had more or less the same wishes as Kaparo, though

he was quick to add, that *he felt that he really needed to be literate, since it is the only remedy that would end his miseries.*

Enkare et al. Personal interview .27 May 2011

Personal Interview 5- Upper Matasia head-teacher /a teacher (re-interview)

This was the last interview after the last session with the last group of the *Maasai* men. It was an interview that was intended to compare notes on the reasons of illiteracy among the *Maasai* men from what were given by the other target persons.

Once again the head teacher reiterated the same reasons the *Maasai* men had given as their reasons for their illiteracy. Some of the outstanding reasons were such as the common ones which were, *moranism*, lack of interest due to lack of role models ,as wells as wealth ,I.e. possessing large herds of cattle, poverty ,malnutrition by children from extremely poor families, as well as health issues.

One new phenomenon that I received from this session was diseases. The teachers mentioned that, small children were could fall ill often due to the poor ventilations in their manyatta (hut) and little could be done to save the situation. This has continued to hamper literacy greatly as the sick school-going age children end up staying home for considerable amount of time that could be well spent in schools to bridge the gap of illiteracy. Other reasons were such as weather conditions, as some of the areas were so dry. A case of Kajiado North is that the region is of arid and semi arid area. The location of Kajiado North District is at the bottom of Ngong hills, where it tends to be so cold, and these are the reasons that have forced the *Maasai* men move to higher grounds where the weather is warmer.



Picture 9: A picture session with a teacher of Upper Matasia primary school, with the author (right) after a re-interview session at the school compound.

6.3 The challenges encountered

The first step was to write a proposal of the thesis to my Supervisors on the topic and explain reasons for carrying out the research. This was a big challenge as I had earlier planned of doing something different altogether. After numerous consultations with my supervisors Leena and Timmo, I finally came up with my research topic which was later approved by my supervisors.

The Bachelors thesis topic was *“Illiteracy among the Maasai men in kajiado North District”*. The other issue was on the funds to enable me travel to the location of the research. It was going

to be an expensive undertaking , and during consultations with my supervisors I had raised the issue of funds, and had stated squarely , that while I was waiting for my research topic to be approved, the whole process was subject to availability of the same.

On numerous occasions, I had opted to change my topic midstream, since I was still not so sure of acquiring the much needed funds. After a couple of weeks I somehow managed to get the funds and could now see some hope in fulfilling my research work. The trip back home was one of mixed feelings, a feeling of both sadness and joy. I landed in Kenya safely on the first week of May 2011.

The first thing I did was to set a small base in Nairobi, on where I would be operating from while conducting my research. This I had got arranged all the while when I was still in Finland and everything was just smooth. The real challenges were to begin when I started calling the people who would guide me there as- Kajiado North District was still a bit unclear to me. I had once visited the area some 7 years ago and the place had changed tremendously, and of course tracing my way through the homes and villages of the target persons would prove to be nightmare. On numerous occasions, my contacts guides to the area were always busy or their schedule were overbooked, and so trying to get hold of them was sometimes impossible.

I did not loose hope as I had given my self a period of 21days to get the whole process done with, but still had to push harder if I needed to see things moving, which is the way things are done back in my home country. After numerous calls and attempts to contact, the persons, I was lucky and finally got them. Contacting target persons on numerous occasions to no avail was also an expensive affair. This is because I used a lot of time to track down a single person. On occasions, I had situations where the would-be interviewee would communicate that we could not meet on the appointed day, since some commitment had come up. This occurred numerous times, when I was trying to get hold of the maasai men.

The first interviewee was the head teacher of Upper Matasia primary school. The interview with him was very interesting as he gave an insight of illiteracy among the *maasai* men of Kajiado North District, dating way back as he could remember. He had been with the community for quite a long time during his life, when he was growing up as a young man, during his teaching practice in one of the *maasai* areas school and now as the head teacher of this school.

The head teacher added that, he had seen a lot of young maasai men, go through school and was very conversant with their way of life. He was also aware of the lot that viewed education as a waste of time.

The *maasai* men were the third and fourth interviewees respectively and getting hold of these men was an uphill task. The second interviewee who was a middle aged man. On the day we had agreed to hold our session together, he forgot and went to buy some cows in the market place! I was there as early as 21.00hrs in the morning and having travelled from the outskirts of capital city a distance of over 70 kilometers, picked my interpreter whom I paid on several occasions and arrived at his village- that is the welcome news that slammed on our faces from his wife.

I had no option but to seek another re-appointment through calling my interpreter to fix a new date. After several attempts of trying, I finally got hold of him and the session went on, right at the center of his home compound. It took me a journey of three different days to the same village to track down a single maasai man. In spite of all this, I had to get him (buy) him some sugar for his tea as this is the tradition and culture which was also at a cost.

The other target person, who was also very elusive in the beginning, was the area District Education Officer. After numerous calls explaining my case, he still could not get a suitable date for us to conduct our session. On occasions when I could call him that I had arrived at Kajiado town, he would ask me to hang around the district's town precinct while in wait for him to finish his "meetings" with other government officials- only for him to tell me later late in the afternoon that we could not meet, and we should re-schedule our session. At times I would feel demoralised and worked up, but I would still give myself hope and soldier on. This was proving to be expensive and time consuming.

Sometimes I felt withdrawn and angry. A couple of new attempts to reach him bore fruit and he finally arranged some time for our interview session. On this day of the appointment with him, (D.E.O) ,I arrived in Ngong town in the early morning at the official reporting working hours, which is 08.00 o'clock.

In spite of this, I still had to wait again until 16.00 hours in the evening for him to finish all his official duties and then squeeze me in his busy schedule-despite of the fact that he was aware I had an appointment with him and that my time was now running out. It was when, I started getting restless of whether I could manage to get to conduct our session that he put a call through that I could proceed to his office.

It was the one of the interviews that I conducted late in the evening, but again I had no option but just to go ahead with it. The session took 1 hour and 20 minutes. During the session, the interview was characterized by a lot of interruptions by the other office bearers, who made a lot of noise in spite of the fact that they were fully aware of the requirements of an interview process. On the other hand, the interviewee kept on receiving calls on his mobile phone in-between the interview, fixing other appointments, as well as receiving visitors in his office amidst the interview. The moment I was through with him, I breathed a sigh of relief. In spite of all this tribulations of postponing our meetings and not availing some time in advance for our meeting, the District Education Officer was very apologetic. I took it positively, even though I still could not understand how he went on forgetting we were to meet every so often.

6.4 Social barriers

Language

One of the major challenges was the language barrier. The maasai have a variety of languages. Some are such as *Maa (ol maa,kimaa* or simply *maasai*, In Kenya we have three classifications of tribes. They are Bantus, Cushites and Nilotes, the maasais are from the Nilotic group. Other dialects include *Kaputei, keekonyokie, matapo, Liatokotok, Illodokilani, damat, Purko* among others. I could not understand any of these dialects, and had to seek the services of a friend of mine who was a *maasai* for translations. These was one of the main challenges, and were it not for the translator the author had along, most of this research would not have been possible.

In Kenya we have two main languages, English and Swahili. English is the official language while Swahili is the national language. Majority of the locals can understand and speak Swahili, while those who cannot can at least understand the basics. The second interviewee was a middle aged maasai man whom understood Swahili quite well, though not much, an interpreter was still in handy to drive some points home. The other set of interviewees were three young maasai men. The trio comprised of one who could not understand much of the national language, and could only respond in his local dialect. In this scenario, I had to again seek the services of an interpreter.

A reserved community, yet so volatile

The *maasai* are a reserved, warm, and friendly people, whom should be treated as such. However, on the contrary, the *maasai`s* will not welcome intruders in their territory that easily, and are known for their volatility on aggression. They will fight without relenting, to guard what is rightfully theirs and are always ready to put their life on the line when it comes to dealing with any sort of aggression meted on them. They are also re-known for their bravery that many would not wish to “*ruffle feathers the wrong way*” with them. This is because of their culture. Everyone who intrudes in their territory is deemed as an enemy and sometimes it can turn out to be very fatal due to un-warranted attack on the intruder.

One has to seek special permission in advance from the host or village elder clearly stating his mission or cause of visit or else one could either land in very big trouble or disappointment. Upon clearance for visiting the homestead, it is always advisable if one could be accompanied by an interpreter (Like was in the author`s case) who speaks the local language as well as understands the national language for easier and better communication. The perception the author had about the *Maasais* is that they are not an anti-social people, but it is of the fact that some of their cultures are so embedded on them that they find it a bit hard just to tolerate total strangers. This is regardless of the fact of ones tribe or nationality. This remains of their culture and is strongly adhered to, which is also something that other tribal groupings in Kenya have of their own-but in different approaches. It is a gesture that is highly acknowledged and also respected by others.

7. FINDINGS

On further research on the international communities' involvement with the eradication of illiteracy in Kajiado District, the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF) came into focus. This is one of the international organisations that have been in the country to close to a decade now- being in involved in various projects with the locals of different communities.

7.1 Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF)

Activities in Kenya

LEAF's work in Kenya consisted of various spiritual, social and educational ministries in close cooperation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) mainly in the Maasai land (*Kajiado South, Ewuaso, Narok* and Trans Mara) and in the *Luo, Luhya* and *Kisii* geographic areas.

LEAF also provided general financial support for the Church and her several institutions. LEAF had 15 missionaries in Kenya in year 2006. They served in the following ministries of ELCK:

- congregational and educational ministries in Kajiado South
- congregational and social ministries in Ewuaso, Narok and Trans Mara
- orphan ministry in Luo, Luhya and Kisii areas,
- congregational and social ministries in Kisumu and surroundings
- technical and administrative consultation
- Principals/teachers in ELCK institutions (LEAF).

7.2 Activities in the Maasai land

Maasai work in general

The cooperation between LEAF and ELCK in *maasai* land consists mainly of supporting the smooth cooperation between the local congregations and the ELCK in general as well as of strengthening the congregations and building the capacity of the local church workers - pastor, evangelists and helpers to run the congregational activities independently. Apart of the congregational work in *maasai* is to develop the Service into a form that serves the needs of the *maasais*. Therefore LEAF has continued to offer support in preparation of the Catechism and liturgy texts in *Maa*-language. Preparative work for creating *Maa*-language hymn book and the tunes for *Maa*-liturgy was also started (LEAF).

The improvisation of the position of *maasai* women and education possibilities of the *maasai* girls are enhanced in LEAF's activities. LEAF is running an educational/spiritual support sponsorship program, targeted especially for girls who escape early forced marriages and female genital mutilation. Currently there are more than 30 children supported through the program (LEAF).

Kajiado District

LEAF has been working with ELCK in the *maasai* area of Kajiado District (Kajiado South) for 14 years mainly within developing the congregational and educational ministries. The cooperation covers currently all the 24 ELCK congregations in the area. The Drought emergency relief and school feeding program were running at 17 ELCK sponsored nurseries and 4 primary schools up to the first rains in the area, April 2006. The water projects, funded by ACT and LEAF were promoted and rainwater harvesting systems built in four villages (*Lenkinshon, Oltepesi, Oloirimirimi, and Enoosampurrumpurr*). The water projects will be finished during the year 2007. Support of the pre- and primary school education for *Maasai* children in Kajiado South continued by teacher training program and material support for the schools (LEAF)

8. ANALYSING DATA

An important question to be considered after collecting a data is how to analyse it. A unique characteristic of qualitative research is that analysis actually begins before data collection ends. For example a research project with five group discussions analysis begins within the first minutes of the first group and continues until the last minutes of the final group. Unlike the structured questionnaire, the focus group agenda requires that the moderator opens up areas of investigations and probes them until they yield nothing new. In qualitative approaches, the project is modified as it progresses.

8.1 Discussions

Education in Kenya is not compulsory, although the aim of primary education is to give every child opportunity to have at least primary education (8 years) regardless of sex or disability. Presently 75% to 88% of children start their primary education at the age of six years. This rate varies from one district to another; while at some districts the percentage is as low as 75% in others it can be as high as 95% especially urban areas. In these urban areas some of the schools have a minimum of 50 children per class. In these urban areas the number of places for children who need to begin their primary education is limited. As a result of the lack of schools and the need for better education in urban areas primary schools set high academic standard for six year old children.

The high academic demands of primary schools and by the government-organised examinations in grade 8 are direct contributors to learning failures. This is reflected in the number of children who drop out of school due to grade retention and school failure as well as those referred to Education Assessment Resource Services for assessment. Even though the government education

policy favours automatic age-grade promotion in primary and secondary education, in practice this is not always the case. In general, the existence of the now defunct cost sharing method in many parts of the country is to blame also for illiteracy levels in these areas. This recent research on the arid and semi arid areas, such as in the *maasai* land and especially in Kajiado North district have revealed that;

The provision of buildings, laboratories and learning equipment and their maintenance by the parents have seen a decline of enrolment in the schools, which has contributed greatly to the levels of illiteracy. The guardians of the would be pupils have also given a reason in unison as lack of economical constraints to act in the same directions, which is understandable. School enrolment in these regions is also affected by child labour, poor health and nutrition and lack of motivation. According to the recommendations of UNESCO (1998), this kind of wastage can be reduced by lowering the cost of schooling ,building schools in the proximity of young pupils, improving teaching methods, arranging more flexible schooling hours, and making learning materials available to the pupils (UNESCO 1998).

Some other reason are due to poverty- where parents could not afford to send the children to school due to this condition, hence illiteracy prevailed in most parts of the Kajiado district. There was also the issue of high school drop outs in the region due to reason such as high rate in marriages among the young girls, and for boys was merely to engage in other activities, such as herding of the large livestock for the family (Nkare et al). Another unique factor that contributed to illiteracy in this region by the young *maasai* men was the prevalent drought that is usually in this region being an arid and semi arid area.

Scores of young men and women are sent out in search of water for the livestock or even walk long distances with the animals in such of the same (Nkare et al). This may take very long days rendering school life impossible whenever there is drought. This is usually very normal for the *maasai* who are pastoralists and lead a nomadic way of life, as they will need to save the lives of their animals which are the status symbol of a *maasai* community`s wealth.

The issue of health was also raised in the interview sessions as another cause of illiteracy. The issue was thus of an outbreak of diseases due to poor vulnerability related illnesses due to poor diets among the children of school going age as well as respiratory infections due to poor shelter in the *manyattas* (*maasai* traditional houses) was also another factor (Nkare et al). Another reason for illiteracy was the distance between schools and this depended with the region. The interviewees gave an example of *Magadi* division in the larger *Kajiado* District as an example where the schools are about the distance of 10-15 kilometers, with an inaccessible roads, and the fear of attack by wild animals such as lions, leopards, snakes, and wild dogs contributed to the high levels of illiteracy as the children opted to stay home for their safety.

A major cause of Africa's growth record in terms of illiteracy has been "government failure." Following the spirit of optimism at independence, by the 1970s the competence of many governments was being eroded by both major and petty corruption, democracy abandoned in favour of the one party state with the power changing hands by the bullet rather than the ballot, and accountability undermined by reliance on external support, including aid or resource –based taxation. In general African states since independence moved away from accountability and towards what have been variously called regimes of personal rule, and patrimonial, predatory even parasitic state. These developments have held back poverty reduction in several ways. First and the concern in this section, is that the state have failed in delivery growth, not only in educational sectors for its citizens, but in many more areas.

Growth has not been part of their agenda, and at best they have failed to provide the stable framework it requires, but at worst their actions have undermined growth or state structures have dissolved as conflict has erupted. Second, the state has not addressed the needs of the poor, which has been manifested in various ways, such as poor and skewed service delivery.

African states, Kenya included has failed to deliver growth for at least three main reasons

- (i) The absence of a stable legal and institutional frame work for economy
- (ii) Implementation of controlled economy policies that were to rent seeking and detrimental growth
- (iii) The rise of corruption in major sectors of the state

The systematic abuse of state power for personal enrichment is argued by some observers to be so widespread as to constitute a “criminalisation of the state” in Africa, with official’s involvement in drug trafficking, dumping of hazardous waste, trading in arms, and international fraud. The systematic abuse of natural resources to appropriate profits from the rapid depletion is at the roots of much conflict across the continent, and is clearly bad for the poor as the environment is destroyed by the rich and unaccountable elite wastes the nation’s wealth.

This is what has continued to ail the African continent-much as I would have liked to only highlight on the main issue of this research paper, this valuable information could not have been left out to the readers, as it is an eye opener to some who are unaware of the magnitude of the vice of corruption.

Political systems have also tended to keep poverty off the Agenda Distribution concerns are central to a patrimonial model of politics, to the extent of being at the expense of economic growth and long term development. But these concerns are only incidentally about the poor. Resources of the state are used to reward those who support those in power. The base for this is often ethnic and regional, and sometimes religious, sometimes military. This also was one of the main reasons for illiteracy, as explained in part in this research- in some areas of *Kajiado* District. There is evident, uneven distribution of resources due to political patronage in those areas, which has caused lack of enough learning institutions in the same regions.

The reason why such systems have flourished particularly well in African soil goes beyond this report. Like explanations are rooted in the colonial experience: “The African state system as we know it today is the direct and obvious descendant of European colonialism”. These origins interacted with pre-colonial social and demographic conditions, bringing into being at independence nation –states whose fragility reinforced the tendency to use patronage and centralized authoritarianism in an attempt to hold the state together.

High level corruption erodes the good will of the population, the business community, and the donors, encouraging “exit”. It makes the population less amenable to mobilisation. Since corruption affects producer incentives and costs, it is also inevitably leads to factor substitution,

not necessarily in favor of labour intensive production. Corruption also erodes donor good will, threatening resources inflows that are still important for development.

Education is today recognized as essential as underscored in the following Kenya policy statement: education is necessary in generating a pool of highly qualified personnel in various specialized skills. Greater numbers of graduates will generate the potential for promoting higher productivity of capital and other resources in their individual. Donors have learned from experience that development and fight against poverty are difficult to achieve in corrupt environments. Finally, corruption diverts the attention of state employees and the activities of the state away from the tasks that need to be undertaken to achieve growth , especially if it to be a pro-poor variety.

8.2 Summary and assessment of Findings

Further studies

The possibilities for future research based on this bachelor`s thesis are numerous and of vast variety. This bachelor`s thesis does not have the mandate to generalise the results on the research carried out. The findings should be considered as a basis for future more in-depth research. The significance of the results are to capture the attention towards what the *maasai* men have to say for their ordeal, challenges on the same and ways of dealing with the situation in future.

Another interesting topic to be further investigated is what the Kenyan government is currently engaged in to achieve its vision 2030 for an illiteracy free nation. The findings discussed can also be used for a more detailed study later on for example- the changing attitude of the illiterate *Maasai* men in *Kajiado* North district towards education. The benefits of literacy on the ethnic *Maasai* men communities etc. Also intriguing will be to research on the impact the literate *maasai* men have made upon returning to their societies.

8.3 Ethics and Reliability of the Study

The findings on this bachelor`s thesis cannot be seen as general in any way as the sample and the method used do not allow generalisation. In this sense, the findings are relevant only for the segment researched on. As the study was qualitative, replication of the results or generalisation of the phenomenon are not expected. Generalisation is done in the study itself by systemising in findings the most often issues the interviewees referred to. When it comes to the validity of the data obtained, it can be argued how valid it is. The only way in which validity was attempted could be said in the process of interviewing by asking similar questions through out a single interview.

In other words, a Quantifying method as described by Alasuutari could be applied. However it has been mentioned already, the amount of data obtained through the interviews is significantly limited. According to Alasuutari, in the Social sciences by contrast, hardly ever is the whole process of inference documented; instead the observations are straight away presented from the point of view of the model of explanations that has proved most viable: the observations are examined as evidence. There are of course, differences in this regard between lines of inquiry in the social sciences (Alasuutari Pertti 1998, 35).

For instance, statistical social research will not normally look at the empirical material collected from an angle than how far it supports the hypothesis set out at the beginning of the report. Qualitative research, on the other hand will typically begin with more descriptive accounts and less interpretation. However, the description of the material needs to follow certain principles of economy (Alasuutari Pertti 1998, 35). One feature that these two types of empirical social research do have in common in spite of their differences in mode of presentation is that the trials and errors are hardly ever documented. Reference maybe made to alternative interpretations, but will merely serve the purpose of demonstrating that these alternatives are not applicable in the light of the evidence at hand.

According to Pertti Alasuutari, individual research reports often refer to earlier studies in the choice of a model of explanation or line of argumentation. He adds that the solutions to various research problems often produce new information that other scholars can apply in tackling new problems. Earlier results may also be quoted as evidence of the validity of the solution proposed. Pertti states that it is for this reason that some reports in social research seem to amount to little more than an empirical test of a preset hypothesis, even though that the process has in fact involved various steps of trial error and analysis of earlier studies on the topic concerned (Alasuutari Pertti 1998, 35, 36).

According to Pertti, although empirical research is often concerned with a specific phenomenon or individual case, it is primarily interested in whether the solution also applies to other corresponding phenomenon. The social science is expected to find and produce universally valid findings empirical or generalisability (Alasuutari Pertti 1998, 36). Pertti adds that an individual occurrence or the fates of individuals will only be of interest to the social sciences if it is demonstrated that the occurrence or individual in question represents a 'typical case' or if it is shown that the occurrence will have an impact on the lives of large numbers of people. In these cases according to Pertti Alasuutari, the general interest is based on the empirical generalisation (Alasuutari Pertti 1998, 36).

On the other hand, an individual or deviant phenomenon paves the way to a new perception of society. In the latter case, the general interest –value of the study will depend on how well it corroborates the model of explanation and theoretical framework applied. However, the impression one gets when reading the results of different studies is that this is precisely what has happened in most cases. This does not mean to say that the social sciences should not set more ambitious goals for themselves. The purpose of opinion polls and various government or market surveys is obviously not to find new ways of thinking, but simply to measure the frequency of different phenomena and the number of people behaving in different ways.

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INTERVIEWS

Ruel Mwathi Marimbet. Headteacher –Upper matasia Primary School, Ngong division, Kajiado North District

Personal interview 10 May 2011

Sapunyu Ole Simpiri. Area Disrict Education Officer Ngong Division, Kajiado North District

Personal interview 16 May 2011

Mzee Ole Saiyo-Middle age *Maasai* man

Personal interview 20 May 2011

Nkare Philip, Ole Kaparo Josphat, Segei Alexander- *Maasai morani* men

Personal interview 27 May 2011

Mrs. Kamau wachara/ Ruel Marimbet. Teacher and Headteacher of Upper Matasia primary school

Personal interview-(re-interview) 31 May 2011

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research letter



P.O. Box 505, FI 94101 KEMI EMAIL:ktamk@tokem.fi TEL.358 (0)10 38350 FAX +358(0)16
251120

Dear Sir/Madam;

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

28th April 2011

Supervisors: Leena seppälä seppälä.leena@tokem.fi

Timo [Martalla marttala.timo@tokem.fi](mailto:marttala.timo@tokem.fi)

My names are Stephen Onginjo ,I am final year Social Services student of Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences, in Finland. I am conducting a research for my Bachelor`s Thesis on *Illiteracy among the Maasai men in Kajiado North District*. My main focus will be to find out the “*core of illiteracy among the Maasai Men and in particular, in Kajiado North District*”, a certain community of nomadic herders living in Kenya.

My task will be to interview the target persons in their region of Kajiado North District, in Kenya. The main aim of this research is to find out why illiteracy is still rampant among the *Maasai* men in *kajiado* North District presently. I wish to revisit the main causes of illiteracy and what the government has done in the past and present to curb the situation, and the possible solutions that have been in place on the same, for the people of this region.

In addition, I will revisit other issues among the target persons that have been an impediment towards achieving literacy level vis a vis the economic status of the region, cultural reasons, poverty, unequal distribution of resources among others.

RESEARCH PLAN

Observation

One of my main research plans during this field study will be by observation. I will venture on the fields, this is in this area and find out the way formal learning is being conducted and carried out in these areas and how it can be improved to benefit the locals to better their lives in future.

Interviews

This will be another interesting tool that I will employ during my fact finding mission on this research work. The first will be an interview with the target groups which are the *Maasai* men, and then I will proceed to interview two teachers from the same location and later on, the District education officer in Kajiado district.

Questionnaire

Based on a Qualitative method, I will be armed with some questionnaires, while interviewing the local target group. This will assist in analyzing the current situation of the problem, and also gather the possible suggestions by the locals on what can be done to improve the situation.

Time frame

This whole process is bound to take a period of three weeks if all goes well. Once again this will be subject to availability of the target persons which I believe will not be a problem at all, as I have been currently liaising with some friends on the ground who have assured me all will be well before I get there, which is positive news.

Thanking you in advance

For more information about this research, please contact the following:

Leena seppälä

seppälä.leena@tokem.fi

Cell no: +358 503109357

Timo martallä

marttalä.timo@tokem.fi

Cell no: +358 503109345

Stephen Onginjo

stephen.onginjo@edu.tokem.fi

Appendix 2:

Interview questions

Teacher(s)

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What is your educational background?
3. In how many schools have you taught in?
4. What are the areas that education was available for the *Maasai`s* in kajiado district for the past 20-30-40 years?
5. What is the role of the Government in the current situation of illiteracy in *Kajiado* North District among the *Maasai* men?
6. What is the current situation of illiteracy in Kajiado district among the *Maasai* men?
7. What are the major causes of illiteracy in *Kajiado* District?
8. What are the statistics of illiterate *Maasai* men as compared to *Maasai* women for the past 20-30-40 years?
9. What is the shortest and longest distance between the schools and the homes of *Maasai`s* in *Kajiado*?
10. What other reasons have caused illiteracy among the *Maasai* men in *Kajiado* district?
11. What facilities are lacking in Kajiado District that could be a source of impediment in developing illiteracy?
12. How many Public and Private Schools are there in *Kajiado* district?
13. Could ignorance be another cause of illiteracy among the *Maasai* men in Kajiado District?
14. Are the levels of illiteracy among the *Maasai* men on the rise or decreasing?

15. According to educational statistics in Kajiado district, whom among the gender are more educated, and why is it so?
16. What is the shortest and longest distance between the schools and the *Maasai* homes in *Kajiado District* ?
17. Are there any response on illiteracy in this region by the international community ?
18. Are there needs for adult education in Kajiado district?
19. How do you see the future of Kajiado district in 20 years?

Appendix 2:

Interview questions

Maasai men (20-30-40yrs)

1. Do you want to learn to read and right?
2. Did you go regularly to school?
3. Have you studied to read and write?
4. Have you been in school?
5. Did your parents encourage you as a child to read and write
6. If given a chance today, would you like to go to school?
7. What stopped you from learning?
8. Can you read and write?
9. What do you think of the children who go to school?
10. Do you find it hard to cope with your current situation?

11. What was important to you as a child?
12. What is the reason that you did not have education?

Appendix 3:

Interview questions

Authorities (The District Education Officer-Kajiado District)

1. How many public and private schools are there presently in Kajiado District?
2. In what areas in Kajiado district were public and private schools 20-30-40 years ago?
3. What are the illiteracy statistics in Kajiado District?
4. What are the statistics on illiteracy among the *Maasai* men in *Kajiado* district?
5. What is the development curve of illiteracy among the *Maasai* men? Does it increase or decrease?
6. How do you see the government's role in regard to illiteracy among the *Maasai* men in Kajiado District?
7. What do you consider as the major causes of illiteracy among the *Maasai* men in *Kajiado* District?
8. What facilities are lacking in Kajiado district that could be a source of increase in illiteracy among the *Maasai* men?
9. What is the school going age in Kajiado District and among the *Maasai* men?

10. Could ignorance be another cause of illiteracy among the *Maasai* men in Kajiado District?
11. According to educational statistics in Kajiado district, whom among the gender are more educated, and why do you think so?
12. What is the shortest and longest distance between the schools and the *Maasai* homes in *Kajiado District* ?
13. Are there any response on illiteracy in this region by the international community ?
14. Are there needs for adult education in Kajiado district?
15. How do you see the future of Kajiado district in 20 years?