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## **A Paradox in the Accessibility of Basic Education Among Minority Pastoralist Communities in Tanzania**

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### **Abstract**

This paper highlights key barriers to the accessibility of basic education among pastoralist communities in Tanzania. It addresses the existing policy requirements in provision of basic education and the mismatch with actual practices which create a dilemma as far as learning for children in pastoralist communities is concerned. A number of factors have been addressed, which include inappropriate cultural values among parents in pastoralist communities as well as other systemic factors. Pupils' dropout, conflicts, the long distance to school and inappropriate learning environments have been mentioned as some of the inhibitive factors influencing inequalities in accessing basic education in pastoralist communities in Tanzania. Overall, this paper interrogates the existing paradox between policy statements and the actual strategies for providing basic education among vulnerable minority pastoralist pupils. This article recommends deliberate investment and prioritisation of the learning agenda for minority children in pastoralist communities. Specific emphasis should be placed on the utilisation of technology by establishing mobile digital learning solutions to cater for the learning needs of children in these communities.

**Keywords:** minority; paradox; basic education; pastoralist; Tanzania; vulnerable environment;

## **Introduction**

The article addresses the existing paradox in the accessibility of basic education among minority pastoralist groups who drop out from the formal primary school system before completing the school cycle. Inequalities in accessibility to basic education among children are a global concern. The Global Education Monitoring report of 2021 confirms the prevalence of such inequalities in education, which appear to have raised alarm for many years. Although the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All, adopted in Jomtien, Thailand, emphasises that member countries should reduce educational inequalities, one can notice the prevalence of the same in terms of poor, street and working children; rural and remote populations; nomads and migrant workers; indigenous peoples; ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities; and refugees just to mention a few (UNESCO, 2020a, 2021). It has been noted with concern that educational inequalities in most sub-Saharan African countries are influenced by living standards and differences in income, as well as access to services such as electricity and running water (Lindsjö, 2018). In most cases, children from minority communities are denied their basic right to education.

Likewise, Maliti (2019) confirms the prevalence of educational inequalities in Tanzania, although there are some indicators that this is declining in some regions. A good example is the increase of enrolment rates in regions such as Dar es Salaam and Mwanza. In 2019, Dar es Salaam had a total of 549,665 pupils and Mwanza had 745,446 pupils enrolled in government-owned schools, while in 2020 there was an increase to 575,269 and 762,108 pupils in Dar es Salaam and Mwanza respectively (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019b, 2020). The increase of enrolment rates in some regions signifies the decline of some inequalities in the accessibility of education. The good thing is that other regions are likely to learn from these regions as good investment in infrastructure in education is noted. In Dar es Salaam, for example, 91.2% of primary schools are connected to the national electricity grid, while in other regions, such as Manyara which has many pastoralist communities, only 33.6% of primary schools are connected to the national electricity grid (United Republic of Tanzania, 2020). In reorganising such a situation of inequality, the Tanzanian government has been aligning its national educational plans and initiatives to make them fit into the global agenda. One of these global plans is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasises education for all. Reflecting on the SDG number four, the emphasis is on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. In the similar way, SDG number one stresses the need to end poverty. Quality education raises consciousness about

existing inequalities and contributes to ensuring that vulnerable children are protected and empowered for the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, and economic or other status (Mihai, Țițan, & Manea, 2015; UNESCO, 2017). With better education, there is a high chance of reducing poverty among vulnerable children (UNESCO, 2017). It has also been noted that in order to break the cycle of poverty, it is essential to invest in children's education by removing some barriers (National Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Children's Fund, 2019). There is a strong link between the provision of equitable and quality basic education and poverty reduction, as education has been noted to be fundamental in bridging the gap of vulnerability among children (Singh & Chudasama, 2020; Walker, Pearce, Boe, & Lawson, 2019).

Considering the importance of education in reducing inequalities, specific alignment with the SDGs has been reflected in the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) of 2016/17-2020/21, the Tanzania Education Training Policy of 2014, and the National Development Vision 2025 in which all these strategies stress the need to ensure the general public have increased accessibility to basic education, irrespective of gender and disability (United Republic of Tanzania, 2018a). While the emphasis of the international and national agendas is on inclusive and equitable access to education, there are several indications of barriers which limit its accessibility by some individuals or groups. These barriers include poverty, illness, and cultural barriers, as well as the distance to and from school (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019a). Therefore, this article is based on published materials on basic education statistics and policies on the provision of basic education in Tanzania.

Tanzania is among the countries that accommodate the largest number of pastoralists, who are traditional livestock producers in Africa. According to Carr-Hill et al. (2005) Tanzania has approximately six million nomads (including pure pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and hunters), who utilise one-third of the arable pasture land. Pastoral communities in Tanzania are multi-ethnic in nature and the Maasai are the dominating pastoral ethnic community. More than 70% of the total cattle herds in the country are found in eight regions, namely: Arusha, Dodoma, Manyara, Mara, Mwanza, Shinyanga, Singida and Tabora (Berkum, Dijkxhoorn, Helmes, & G, 2020). Children in these pastoral communities are heavily and continuously engaged in herding cattle especially boys than girls who are engaged in household chores such as fetching water for calves (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2013). The engagement in these activities is likely to limit their access to basic education as they spend most of their time doing household chores rather than going to school. Since the 1980s, problems such as the low

enrolment of school-age children, irregular attendance, and high dropout rates among pastoral communities have been recorded (Carr-Hill et al., 2005). The reasons behind such low engagement in formal education were the requirement for labour in the livestock economy, as well as parents' traditional attitude towards education, particularly formal education. They claimed that at school their children are taught things which are against their culture, where traditionally the oldest son is expected to manage the family's wealth (cattle), but when sent to school he is likely to ignore such traditions and customs (Komba, 2012).

Pastoralist communities such as Datoga in Manyara region have been the victims of educational inequalities and barriers for several years, as they face a high teacher and facilitator dropout rate, in addition to clan conflicts due to mobility, especially during the dry season (Bihariová, 2015). Most of the pastoralist communities such as the Barbaig, Maasai, Akie and the Sandawe are located in remote areas, where they mostly only have primary schools which have inadequate infrastructure, coupled with limited access to secondary education (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019d). The Tanzanian government report indicates that the majority of the students who drop out from schools due to the long distance to school, poverty, early marriage (as well as early pregnancy for girls), lack of role models/mentors, and parents' lack of awareness about their children's education (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019d). Moreover, these limitations signify the prevalence of educational inequalities among the children of pastoralists. It is possible that there are other factors that may be associated with such inequalities; some reports mention the nature of pastoralist activities and the lifestyle of being mobile and being located far from schools, which makes it difficult for the children to access education and other social services (UNICEF, 2018).

The prevalence of prolonged conflicts among pastoralists and farmers has been mentioned as one of the inhibitive factors accounting for the increased gap in accessibility to basic education. In the context of this review, farmers are considered to be members of the community who are involved in cultivation of farms with an ability to produce crops for surplus. Usually they have larger areas of lands for production, while peasant farmers produce for subsistence and have small areas of land (Saruni, Urassa, & Kajembe, 2018; Walwa, 2020). The increase of conflicts between farmers or peasant farmers and pastoralists in many districts in Tanzania has been due to the marginalisation of the pastoral community's interests over access to land, while the government has not yet been effective in resolving such conflicts (Makulilo, 2019; Walwa, 2020). Whilst land conflicts appear to contribute to educational inequalities, there are other significant factors such as reluctance and cultural beliefs. Most

pastoralist communities in Tanzania are well-known for preserving their traditional culture and being reluctant to send their children to school; male children have the responsibility for cattle-grazing, which implies the denial of their right to access education (Rweyemamu, 2019; Saruni et al., 2018). There have been some cultural challenges among pastoralists related to the fear that when they send their children to school, their traditional cultural practices may be eroded by other children from other tribes (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019d). Unlike other tribes, pastoralist communities such as Maasai are very famous for their profound practice of indigenous customs, traditions and the protection of their traditional culture (Gimbo, Mujawamariya, & Saunders, 2015; Makulilo, 2019). One could thus see an interesting paradox where government initiatives emphasise the need to minimise the inequalities in accessibility to basic education, yet there are few efforts being made to address cultural challenges. As mentioned previously, this article, therefore, addresses the barriers to accessibility of basic education for all by reflecting on government reports which include basic education statistics and basic education policies in Tanzania.

### **1. Methodological procedures**

This paper employed document analysis as a qualitative research method, based on the Tanzanian government's relevant reports on basic education statistics and education training policy. In the context of the current study, Tanzania was considered as a case study in which minority pastoralists were the focus. According to De Vos et al (2005), document analysis may involve the critical scrutinization of official or government documents for making interpretations. Similarly Ary et al., (2012) stress that government sources can be used as a source of data for document review. On this basis, official government reports were used as a data source to develop understanding and generate insights regarding the accessibility to basic education among minority pastoralist children. The focus was on primary education, although the documents on basic education statistics (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019b, 2020) contain data from pre-primary to secondary education, as well as non-formal education programmes. The consideration of primary education statistics in Tanzania was based on the fact that education at that level is compulsory (Hedges, Borgerhoff Mulder, James, & Lawson, 2016; United Republic of Tanzania, 2014). The consideration of pastoralist communities was also based on previous evidence which indicates that those children are more disadvantaged than other minority groups concerning their accessibility to basic services such as education and healthcare (Lawson et al., 2014). The review utilised critical analysis discourse (CDA) techniques to examine the basic education statistics and other government reports at the

primary education level. The principles of CDA provide an avenue for researchers to analyse relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships (Van Dijk, 1993). According to Mullet (2018), CDA is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimise social inequalities. It can be used when policy researchers seek to understand the complexity of policy issues on different levels such as explaining and/or critiquing extant patterns within society, policymaking institutions, and local communities (Lester, Lochmiller, & Gabriel, 2016). Therefore, thirteen government reports on education were reviewed, reflecting on the educational practices for minority groups with a specific focus on the pastoralists. Guided by CDA, the study addressed social inequalities in provision of education in Tanzania. The review adapted seven stages of the General Analytical Framework for CDA, as proposed by Mullet (2018) and summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. General analytical framework for CDA

Stage of analysis	Description	Procedures employed
<b>Select the discourse</b>	Select a discourse related to injustice or inequality in society	Minority pastoralist children who rarely access high-quality basic education were selected
<b>Locate and prepare data sources</b>	Select data sources (texts) and prepare the data for analysis	Thirteen documents (government reports on education in Tanzania) were selected to lead the analysis.
<b>Explore the background of each text</b>	Examine the social and historical context and producers of the texts.	Historical background was contextualised after a critical reflection and synthesis of thirteen government reports on education
<b>Code texts and identify overarching themes</b>	Identify the major themes and subthemes using choice of qualitative coding methods	Major themes were identified by aligning them and making a critical reflection on the policy statements and data presented in the government reports
<b>Analyse the external relations in the texts (interdiscursivity)</b>	Examine the reciprocal relations (how the texts affect social practices and structures). How do social practices inform the arguments in the text?	The critical reflection on the global agenda such as SDGs and research articles from scientific database were examined to see how they inform and influence the thirteen documents under review
<b>Analyse the internal relations in the texts</b>	Examine the language for indications of the aims of the texts (what the texts set out to accomplish), representations (e.g., representations of social	Social inequalities reflected in the thirteen documents under review were examined to see any mismatches and critical gaps

	context, events, and actors), and the speaker's positionality.	
<b>Interpret the data</b>	Interpret the meanings of the major themes, external relations, and internal relations identified	The implications of the results were discussed in a logical way while reflecting on other policy documents and empirical studies on the phenomenon

### *1.1 Criteria for documents selection*

Documents addressing accessibility to basic education were selected, in order to obtain rich and relevant data regarding pastoralist children. There is limited access to government data which specifically address the educational needs of pastoralist children but the available resources provide information regarding vulnerable children, a group which pastoralist children are recognised as belonging to. The documents that were selected for review are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Documents selected for review

S. No	Document name	Year of publication
1.	Tanzania Education and Training Policy	2014
2.	Free Basic Education Policy	2015
3.	ICT Competency Standards for Teachers in Tanzania	2015
4.	National Five Year Development Plan 2016/17–2020/21, the Education Sector Development Plan (2016/17-2020/21)	2016
5.	Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children – Tanzania Country Report	2018
6.	Education Sector Performance Report 2018/2019	2018
7.	National Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania of 2019	2019
8.	National Curriculum Framework for Basic and Teacher Education	2019
9.	Voluntary National Review on Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality	2019
10.	Vulnerable Groups Planning Framework for Tanzania - Secondary Education Quality Improvement Project (SEQUIP)	2019
11.	Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary and Non-Formal Educational Statistics of 2020	2020
12.	National Five Year Development Plan III 2021/22-2025/26	2021
13.	Tanzania Development Vision 2025	1999



## 2. Results and Discussion

This section provides descriptive findings from the reviewed government reports, and then presents a critical overview on barriers that contribute to educational inequalities among minority groups, specifically pastoralist children.

### 2.1 High dropout rate among children in pastoralist communities

The review indicates that the introduction of the Free Basic Education Policy (FBEP) in Tanzania in 2015 has contributed to the rapid increase in the enrolment rate. For instance, there has been an increase by 4.9% from 10,111,255 pupils in 2018 to 10,601,616 pupils in 2019 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019a). Despite the substantial improvements in enrolment rates since the introduction of FBEP, Tanzania is still lagging behind in achieving high retention rates among children from pastoralist communities, as could be noticed in the high dropout rates (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019c). Although education in Tanzania is universal and compulsory for all children aged 7 to 13 years old, government statistics indicate an increase in dropout rates. A total of 167,834 pupils dropped out of primary schools in 2019, and truancy was identified as the main cause for 97.5% of these dropouts (United Republic of Tanzania, 2020). A number of truancy-related factors, including livestock keeping among children in pastoralist communities, have led it to be cited as the principal cause. Consider the statistics in Figure 1, for example, which address the reasons for dropouts related to truancy.

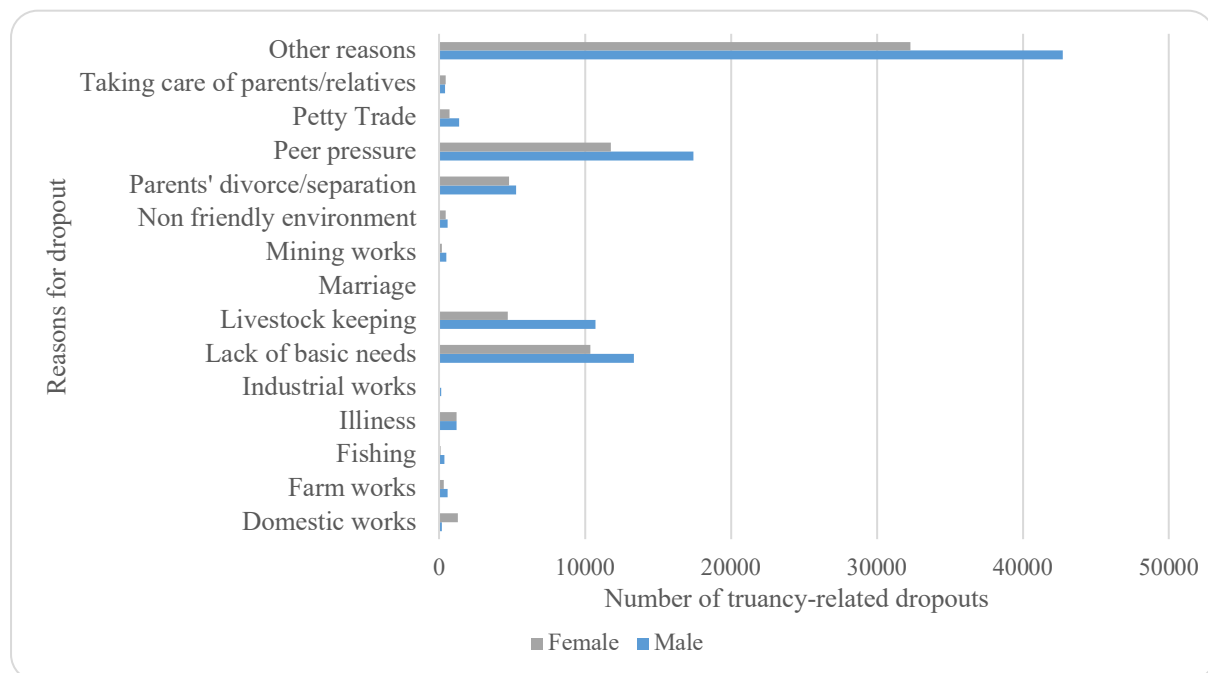


Figure 1. Number of truancy-related dropouts in government and non-government schools by reason, 2019

Source: United Republic of Tanzania (2020)



The data in Figure 1 indicate that 10,738 male pupils and 4,715 female pupils dropped out from primary school in Tanzania because of livestock keeping. This is in line with the report by (UNICEF, 2018), where parents in pastoral communities stated that they would rather have their children herd cattle than attend school. Similar findings have been reported among the Karimojong pastoralist community in Uganda by Namukwaya & Kibirige (2019) who found that parents in that community were cynical about the survival of their culture; thus, they were reluctant to support their children at primary school which hindered the achievement of universal primary education. Likewise, Woldesenbet (2014) found that children's participation in basic education among the Suri community in Ethiopia was very low due to socioeconomic and socio-cultural constraints where parents had reluctant feelings towards modern schooling on the ground that it would distort their traditional values. In their research on parental investment in education in Tanzania, Hedges et al. (2016) found that children in Maasai pastoralist households were the least likely to attend school, while neighbouring farmers and business owners invested more in education for their children. Another research conducted among Maasai pastoralists was by Raymond (2016), who revealed that the community is tied to cultural values such as genital cutting and pre-arranged marriage among girls, and it was very difficult to separate parents from those values. These findings illustrate an improper understanding of compulsory basic education among parents in pastoralist communities. It is for this reason that some parents have less engagement in their children's learning, as they do not realise the value of education. Parents in pastoral communities have a negative attitude towards schooling, and are in favour of their traditional cultural values (Danovska, 2018). Moreover, it remains unclear whether the government is addressing critically these customs and taboos which appear to deny children's right to access basic education. While Tanzania Vision 2025 addresses the need to create a well-educated society which can build a competitive and dynamic economy, there are parents who still have different interpretations and negative perceptions towards education. Parents in pastoral communities perceive education as an investment with no economic returns and therefore, as a barrier to their way of life (Mobey, 2017). Indeed, a lack of proper interpretation on the value of basic education to children raises many questions and paradoxes on whether inclusive and equitable lifelong learning could be achieved among minority pastoralist communities.

## ***2.2 Lack of motivation to learning due to vulnerable environments***

The review of basic education statistics in Tanzania reveals that children from minority pastoralist communities lack motivation towards learning in primary schools. It has been noted

that there are many children living in vulnerable environments, which may contribute to school dropout. Out of 10,925,896 enrolled pupils in primary schools, about 948,273 (8.7%) of children live in vulnerable environments (United Republic of Tanzania, 2020).

There have been several ways of defining vulnerability among children, which depends on the situation in a given context. According to USAID (2008), vulnerable children can be defined as children whose safety, wellbeing or development is at significant risk. The concept of vulnerability is related to the experience of suffering from oppression, inequality, or physical and emotional harm (Waiton, 2019, 2021). In the Tanzanian educational context, the term ‘vulnerable child’ has also been defined as one who is at high risk of either dropping out of school or facing academic failure due to conditions that lead into such vulnerability, which include poverty, orphanhood due to HIV/AIDS, street children, child abuse, child labour, and hostile family conditions among others (Lekule & Beckford, 2013). Reflecting on the preceding definitions, it is possible to say that a vulnerable child in an educational context is one who has high exposure to the risk of not accessing basic education due to several reasons.

In the context of the current review, children living in vulnerable environments are those from low-income families, who either live near to or pass through areas where wild animals live, who use ferry transport during the rainy season, who may be the head of household or have been ill for more than three months. The data in Figure 2 provide the distribution of pupils living in vulnerable environments.

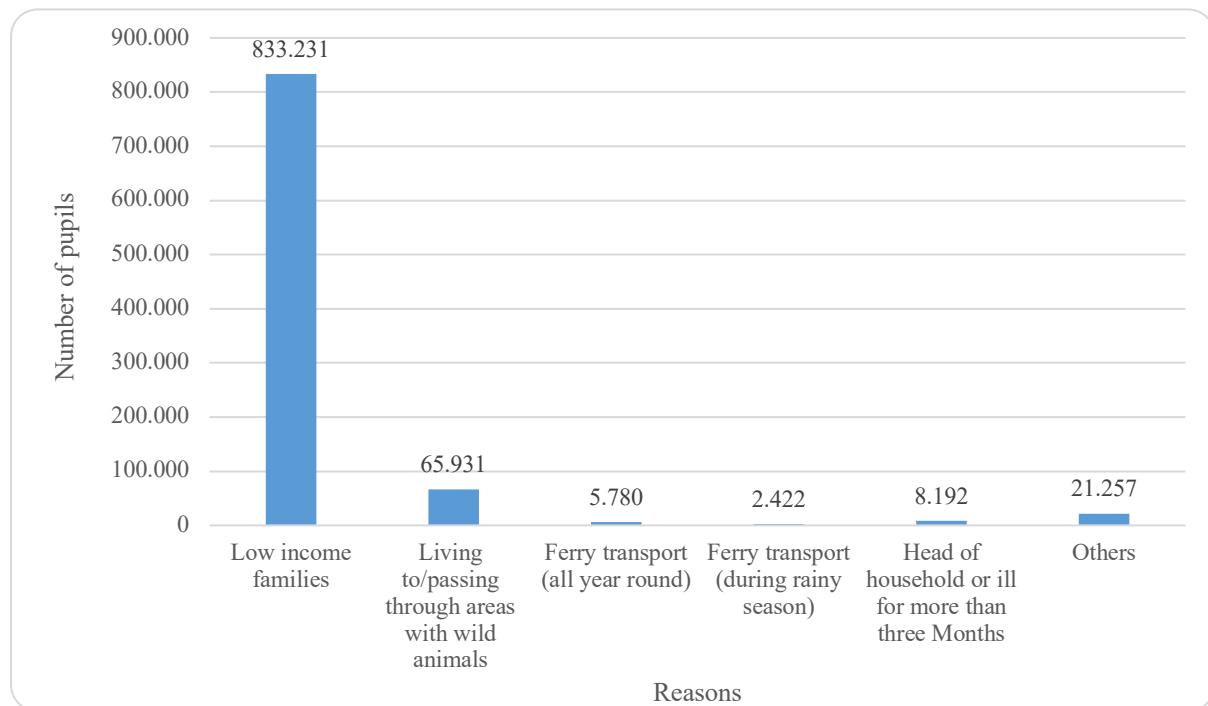


Figure 2. Pupils living in vulnerable environments

Source: United Republic of Tanzania (2020)

The data in Figure 2 indicate that most pupils living in vulnerable environments are from poor families. Yet, one can still notice the second group of children who live near areas where there are wild animals. It is important to note that pastoralist communities in Tanzania have been identified by the government as being among the most vulnerable groups. These include hunter-gatherer communities, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities, (namely the Hadzabe, Akie, Sandawe Maasai and Barbaig which are mainly located in the north of Tanzania (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019d). The data further reveal that the majority of the pupils in vulnerable environments lack appropriate services that could support their participation in basic education. This suggests that pupils do not acquire the adequate knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for life. The literature indicates that basic education transforms lives and reduces socio-economic inequalities (Maliti, 2019; Walker et al., 2019), and this is supported by government plans in Tanzania that highlight education as an essential aspect in the country's economic transformation: it enhances skills and generates technology and a workforce that can be deployed to utilise the country's endowments to its competitive advantage (United Republic of Tanzania, 2016). The question may arise on whether children from pastoralist communities have the opportunity to achieve the same. In the recent study of Maasai students by Pesambili & Novelli (2021), it was revealed that children in pastoralist communities lack educational experience due to the lack of support from parents, the long walking distance to school, and strong cultural tensions caused by difficulties in reconciling the requirements of traditional life with those of formal schooling.

While the emphasis of the Education and Training Policy of 2014 was on ensuring a safe, secure, and conducive environment, pastoral communities are lagging behind. It has been noted that parents in pastoral households in distant marginal areas of villages were concerned that their young children walk long distances to school (United Republic of Tanzania, 2018b). Further government reports indicate that the provision of basic education is more difficult in most pastoral communities due to migration (United Republic of Tanzania, 2018a). This suggests that pupils in marginalised pastoralist communities are not well-supported to take part in a well-educated and learning-focused society, as stipulated in Tanzania Vision 2025 (United Republic of Tanzania Planning Commission, 1999). The lack of proper support and specific strategies among pastoralist communities to access basic education could be perceived as weaknesses in the prioritisation of the learning agenda. This calls for a need for additional investment in social services among minority groups, to create an attractive learning atmosphere as a means to achieve 21<sup>st</sup> century learning needs and the SDGs.

### 2.3 Educational technology for vulnerable communities

While the emphasis of several international and national initiatives is on creating an inclusive learning environment for all, one can notice several disparities in terms of utilising technology for enhancing the accessibility of basic education. According to the (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014), learning institutions are expected to have strong technological systems that allow the proper integration of technology for enhancing learning. In actual fact, however, this has not been the case (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014). It has been acknowledged by the government that little digital content exists and the curriculum does not point to the specific use of ICT in accomplishing learning objectives for children in vulnerable pastoralist communities (United Republic of Tanzania, 2015). Most learners living in vulnerable environments lack access to technological devices that could enhance remote learning. Government statistics indicate that there are a total of 16,406 public primary schools in Tanzania, out of which there are only currently 27,697 items of ICT equipment (United Republic of Tanzania, 2020) for 10,460,785 enrolled pupils. With concern, it has also been acknowledged that, due to limited training opportunities, there is a shortage of teachers in public primary schools in Tanzania with the necessary technological skills (Nieminen, 2020). Even available digital resources are not sufficient or lack relevance to primary school learning (United Republic of Tanzania, 2015; Nieminen, 2020). The logical implication is that even the ICT equipment that is currently available in primary schools cannot support the acquisition of digital skills among teachers and pupils. Considering the example of government statistics on the availability of ICT equipment, as presented in Figure 3; one can notice high disparities regarding the nature of the equipment and learning needs.

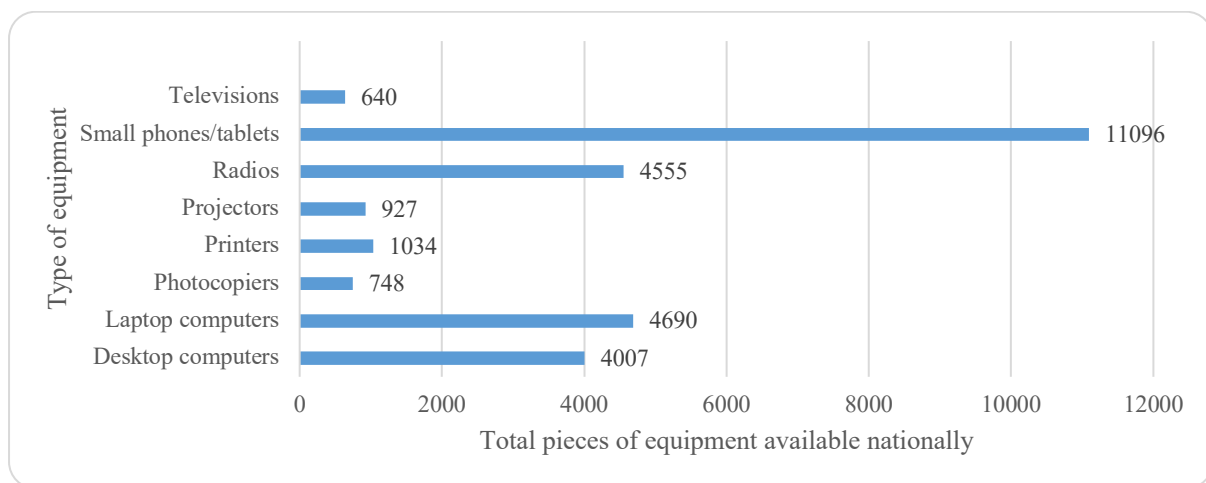


Figure 3. Amount of ICT equipment in government primary schools

Source: United Republic of Tanzania (2020)

This variation raises many concerns among stakeholders on how the inclusive learning and information society can be achieved by 2025. It makes sense to conclude that ICT in primary education in Tanzania is in its infancy, where there are several challenges such as obsolete ICT infrastructure, the low digital competencies of teachers, and the poor learning environment (United Republic of Tanzania, 2015). This is an indication that even if one would like to use technology to support remote learning among pastoralist children, then the opportunity to realise this possibility is very low. This was observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where most learners in Tanzania could not access digital solutions for learning. It has been noted with concern that, during the pandemic, pupils in primary schools could not participate in remote learning due to limited internet connectivity, the lack of access to the required devices and their parents' lack of skills in using digital devices to facilitate the learning process (Manyengo, 2021). More specifically, vulnerable students from minority groups such as pastoralists were more likely to suffer and bear the brunt of systemic inequities and barriers throughout the pandemic due to being deprived of physical learning spaces and resources (Parker & Conversano, 2021). Even though there are indicators that technology for learning has been utilized in the Tanzanian context, the results of the current review suggest that the government has not fully invested in ICT for learning in primary schools. Indeed, the lack of investment in technology to support pupils' learning raises serious questions on how 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as innovation, creativity and collaboration can be enhanced among learners in pastoralist communities. Inadequate investment in technological solutions may result into digital inequalities where some learners in minority communities are left behind while others are able to access digital learning solutions. It is on this basis that the need for deliberate measures to improve the quality of the digital learning environment could be recommended, so that all children in pastoralist communities have access to basic education fairly.

Though Tanzania's Education and Training Policy of 2014 mentions technology as a means to ensure a flexible, effective, and efficient system in providing education and training, it is not clear whether the pastoralist minority are benefiting from such aspirations. Although the policy states that the government shall increase diversified and equal education and training opportunities to all groups at all levels of education, including children with special needs, these groups have still not been identified in a consistent manner (World Bank, 2021). It is not clear how technology has been harnessed to bridge the existing digital divide between children in disadvantaged areas and those living in less disadvantaged ones. The analysed documents, more specifically the basic education statistics, seem not to mention information regarding

digital inclusion for disadvantaged groups. It is on this basis that one would suggest the need to explore several strategies that could enhance mobile digital learning among pastoralist communities. Therefore, increased investment in digital solutions may facilitate the successful creation of new learning opportunities among children in pastoralist communities.

#### ***2.4 Ineffective alternative delivery strategies of basic education***

The prevalence of educational inequalities in many countries with minority groups has been due to the lack of alternative education delivery. In Kenya, for example, education has not been provided for all pastoralist children due to ineffective delivery strategies such as boarding schools and mobile schools. Poor infrastructure in alternative education centres and long walking distances still keep many pastoralist children out of learning programmes (Datzberger, 2017). This creates the need for distance learning strategies to enable children from pastoralist communities to acquire a modern education and compete with other children, if necessary, in the world outside pastoralism (Siele, Swift, & Kratli, 2011). Similarly, Dyer (2016) recommends the use of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as an alternative mode of delivery among pastoralist communities, where learners can participate in learning without the barriers of time, place, pace or method of study. Although ODL appears to be an appropriate mode of delivery, other scholars still insist on increasing investment in infrastructure for semi-boarding and boarding schools for ethnic minorities – such as pastoralist children – in poor districts (Do et al., 2020). Other researchers propose the adoption of mobile schools where teachers are attached to a family or a group of nomadic people and move together when they go for seasonal migration in search of pastures and water (Ali, 2019; Hussein, 2016). Likewise, Kenea (2019) emphasises that children in pastoral communities could learn better through satellite and mobile schools. While other researchers emphasise mobile schools, Dyer and Echessa (2019) recommend the use of “networked schooling” in which children who drop out from school in pastoral communities have access to flexible learning opportunities, thus protecting them from separation from their families, and from which they continue to learn during periods of migration. The findings of several researchers suggest the need for flexible alternative basic education programmes which are supported by technology. Whilst the recommendations from researchers imply the need for a flexible approach, there are significant differences on how technology could be integrated to support mobile schools in pastoral communities where there is no infrastructure such as electricity and the internet. A missing key strategy is how to get learners to access digital learning resources, simply because this is an crucial initial component of distance or satellite learning. It is important to note that even in places where electricity and

internet is available in Tanzanian schools, access to relevant digital solutions is still a big challenge (Stanfield, Calder, & Mlowe, 2018; United Republic of Tanzania, 2015). As a way of improving learning through digital content, an appropriate strategy should be in place to ensure accessibility.

Although the idea of supporting accessibility to basic education through ODL and satellite approaches appear to be appropriate in the digital age, other concerns may arise about the competence of teachers. Literature indicates that education systems in most developing countries are not ready to migrate to distance learning technologies. A good example can be drawn from the experience during the COVID-19 pandemic where most countries experienced school closures. The study on educational responses during COVID-19 in Cameroon by Béch , (2020) revealed uncoordinated and institutional responses where learners experienced educational exclusion and inequality due to poor technological skills. Further concerns are teachers' competence in the use of technology to support ODL which, as revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic in most countries, was minimal due to the prevalence of the digital divide (Portillo, Garay, Tejada, & Bilbao, 2020; UNESCO, 2020b). While other children in elementary schools in developed countries such as the United Kingdom were able to access digital learning resources online at home during the pandemic (Andrew et al., 2020), most pupils in Tanzanian public primary schools were unable to do so due to teachers' low technological competencies.

Having teachers who lack pedagogical competencies in the use of ICT for supporting distance learning contradicts the with SDGs, which indicate that by 2030 teachers will have the necessary technological competencies to enable them to meet the needs of all learners (Tang, 2015). The same emphasis is reflected in Tanzanian ICT competence standards for teachers, which stress the need to improve teachers' qualifications in order to integrate ICT into their teaching and capacity building, thus enhancing teachers' competencies in pedagogical and collaborative digital solutions (United Republic of Tanzania, 2015). Although the framework for teachers' ICT competence is in place, one could note little evidence on teacher training for digital skills development, including the lack of access to digital facilities and technology in schools and at home, as well as low internet and power connectivity in some schools and regions (Manyengo, 2021). Such discrepancies between policy statements and practices indicate the importance of collective dialogue between policy makers and implementers. For effective adoption of technology in teaching, collective decisions at the individual and other decision-making units are necessary (Rogers, 2003). This signifies that



there is a need for relevant authorities to put more emphasis on teachers' professional development regarding the use of technology to make education benefit all learners, including children from pastoral communities. This will raise the quality of learning among pastoral communities as a foundation for a better life in the future.

### ***2.5 Lack of safe school learning environment***

The results of the review indicate the prevalence of unsafe school learning environments which create insecurity for many children, especially girls. Most primary schools lack sufficient teaching and learning resources, electricity, drinking water, toilets and separate sanitary facilities for girls. Consider the example of the following statistics; in government schools, the average male pit latrine ratio is 1:60 against the standard of 1:25; and 1:56 for females against the standard of 1:20 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2020). This is an indication that although the Tanzanian government introduced the revised Education and Training Policy in 2014, which declared that free and compulsory basic education (primary and lower secondary) would be provided to all Tanzanians (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014), these challenges still persist. Alongside the education policy, in 2015 the government issued Circular no. 5, which directs public bodies to ensure that basic education is free for all children. While the policy documents report increased opportunities for basic education, one can still note several disparities in the provision of basic services, as it has been acknowledged that there is a shortage of 192,758 (81.3%) teachers' living houses, 15,908 (90.9%) libraries and 18,499 (97.7%) first aid rooms in government primary schools (United Republic of Tanzania, 2020). Again, the government has acknowledged that there has been a decline in the pupil-teacher ratio from 1:42 in 2016 to 1:56 in 2020 due to the decrease in the number of primary school teachers by 5.8% (from 206,806 in 2016 to 194,736 in 2020) (United Republic of Tanzania, 2021). The gap between education policy statements and their implementation suggests that potential areas like the learning environment and teachers' capacity are given less priority. Thus, there is a need for more practical strategic plans to ensure basic education for all. Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires schools to ensure safety, learning resources, and an inclusive learning environment. With these challenges, it may be difficult to achieve basic education for all if essential measures are not given adequate priority. Even the engagement of minority groups in meeting grand challenges in basic education is not well-known. The involvement of all majority and minority groups in addressing these educational challenges would yield appropriate outcomes for all.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

Basic education unlocks children's potential and helps them acquire the skills needed to be productive members of society. Achievements in terms of better health, employment opportunities and other socio-economic services depend on the quality of the basic education offered to children. Therefore, creating the best learning opportunities for a child at the basic level is a key to educational progress, as well as success in solving problems and economic opportunities. Whilst the policy documents reviewed have not clearly indicated the engagement of pastoralist communities in learning opportunities, some efforts by the government to ensure equity have been recognised. In this sense, broader investment in basic education for all remains crucial to transform learning among children in pastoralist communities. In order to build a strong competitive society in Tanzania by 2025, deliberate measures such as establishing boarding schools and strengthening technological systems are necessary. It is possible to conclude that there is a need to prioritise the learning agenda, considering equity and inclusion for all. Further measures could focus on creating awareness among parents in pastoralist communities, so as to enable them to realise the potential of basic education. This can be done through mass and public education where national task forces can be created to engage parents in developing a proper understanding of the importance of basic education. Further emphasis could be put on developing key strategies that would eradicate negative perceptions towards education among pastoralist parents. While Tanzania has recorded a significant increase in school enrolment in general, there are several indicators of pupils dropping out from formal schooling, as well as the low enrolment rate in pastoralist communities due to the poor learning environment. This paper draws attention to a holistic transformation that would involve the need to develop mobile digital solutions that extend to the learning needs of children in pastoralist communities.

The results of the analysis of policy documents have also indicated that there is a mismatch between policy statements and actual practices, which suggest increased disparities in the provision of basic education. There are more limited opportunities for children from minority groups to access quality basic education than their majority counterparts, due to several constraints like traditional taboos and an insecure learning environment. This may result in the inadequate development of the appropriate life skills needed for a competitive economy and the world of work. The government could build on the current demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to capitalise on the life skills required by learners through improving the quality-learning environment.

The observations from the reviewed documents indicate that it is hard for children from pastoralist communities to fully access high-quality basic education as a promising means to gain skills for life. This suggests the need for well-translated policy statements with critical strategies for implementation, which cater for the demands of all. Through these policy statements, parents and children from minority groups may be able to develop a proper understanding and personal motivation towards educational practices. There is a good reason to believe that the government and other educational stakeholders can work collaboratively to bridge the existing educational inequalities among minority groups. It is not clear when this will be possible as it is difficult to find out about a specific national educational framework which addresses the specific learning needs of pastoralist children. Undoubtedly, learning needs for all should be explicitly addressed and linked fairly through various strategies by making a proper alignment with educational policies. Yet, the government appears to give lower priority to alternative educational delivery for pastoralist communities, which calls for strategies to ensure that children's rights are guaranteed to be revisited. In addition, the review indicates that the community has not yet undertaken a serious debate regarding the prevailing negative customs and taboos among pastoralist families which contribute to low school enrolment for children. One would suggest a reconciliation mechanism to ensure that there is an open discussion forum that ensures outdated customs and taboos are diminished, to ensure equal access to basic education for all.

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