Educational Experiences of Young Maasai Women in Kajiado District, Kenya: A
Phenomenological Case Study of Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School

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of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Elizabeth K. Ngumbi
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This dissertation titled
Educational Experiences of Young Maasai Women in Kajiado District, Kenya: A
Phenomenological Case Study of Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School

by

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Abstract

NGUMBI ELIZABETH, Ph.D., June 2011, Curriculum and Instruction, Cultural Studies


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The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the educational experiences of young Maasai women in Kajiado District, Kenya. Despite the many difficult circumstances impacting their education, the young Maasai women in Kenyan high schools are striving to excel against all odds. They come from rural, Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) of Kenya where pastoralism is practiced. The study privileges these Maasai women’s voices, which are a cry for help in improving their educational conditions.

This study was a phenomenological case study. The participants for the study were in two categories: secondary/high school students drawn from Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School and key informants working as government and civil society education officers in Kajiado District, totaling to twenty (20) participants. Data were collected using both secondary and primary sources including: interviews, focus group, observation and document analysis. Data were organized, coded, categorized and analyzed using themes to make deductions, and interpretations.

This study found that the education of young Maasai women was influenced by socio-cultural factors in Kajiado District. They are: out-of-school factors and in-school...
factors which included: environmental factors including nomadic lifestyle, Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C), early marriage and early pregnancy. In school, young Maasai women suffered home sickness, had to make a tough choice of remaining in school, fear of examinations, math and sciences as challenging subjects, learning in rescue centres, and inadequate learning resources. Although not all of the above factors are unique to the Maasai women, specific issues concerning nomadic lifestyle and rescue centers for girls are distinctive to this group.

The study revealed that being in school for young Maasai women had different meanings for them. While some were in school to escape early marriage, poverty and to learn some skills, others wanted to gain respect in society as women. Basically, the major objectives of remaining in school included: social, educational (knowledge), economic, and political reasons. High school participants felt that the future of a woman in education would remain miserable, if they failed to recognize it as a form of empowerment. Therefore, in order to claim education, participants had to fight for gender equity. They learned to say not to those factors that obstruct access to education. They had to become the solution to their own problems while embracing new opportunities. Generally, the study found that education is very important to the study participants. Therefore, families do not need to educate the boys only.

Based on the study findings, I recommend that the Ministry of Education needs to device ways and means of achieving gender equity in the ASAL regions in Kenya. Additionally, the government needs to reinforce laws that criminalize the practice of
forcing under-age girls into early marriage. In order to retain young Maasai women in school, parents and relatives should stop the practice of early marriage.

Suggestions made for further study include carrying out a similar study in another district where pastoral communities are found in Kenya for purposes of comparison. Further, expanded research needs to be carried out incorporating parents, students, education officers and the civil society.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Francis E. Godwyll
Assistant Professor of Educational Studies
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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Introduction</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations of the Study</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Literature Review</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Situation of Women Education in Africa and in Kenya</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Background of Formal Education in Kenya</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational and Policy Evolutions after Independence</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Education Structure in Kenya</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Primary School (2 Years)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School (Class or Standard 1-8)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School (Forms 1-4)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Education (4-6 years)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor Influencing Enrollments in Post Primary Education in Kenya</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Post-Primary Education</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Post-Primary Education in Kenya</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Education as a Strategy to Empower Women</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Education as an Empowering Tool</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Design .................................................................................................................. 143
Qualitative Research ............................................................................................................ 143
Case Study .......................................................................................................................... 149
Phenomenology .................................................................................................................... 150
Rationale of a Phenomenological Case Study ........................................................................ 151
Site Selection ........................................................................................................................ 154
Participants Selection ......................................................................................................... 156
Methods of Data Collection ................................................................................................. 159
Interviews and Focus Group ................................................................................................. 160
Focus Group ....................................................................................................................... 162
Documents ........................................................................................................................... 163
Observation .......................................................................................................................... 164
Triangulation ....................................................................................................................... 168
Data Collection Procedure ................................................................................................. 169
Data Analysis ....................................................................................................................... 172
Research Ethics and Informed Consent ............................................................................... 175
Anonymity and Confidentiality ............................................................................................ 176
Self as Researcher ............................................................................................................... 177
Summary .............................................................................................................................. 182

Chapter Four: Education among Maasai and other Pastoral Groups, School Context and Profiling Participants ................................................................. 184
Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 184
Formal Education among the Maasai .................................................................................. 184
Challenges Associated with Women Education among Pastoral Communities ...187
Contextualizing the Study Site ............................................................................................. 191
Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School ............................................................................. 193
Summary .............................................................................................................................. 200
Study Participants ............................................................................................................... 200
Categories of Participants ................................................................................................. 202
Secondary School Students ............................................................................................... 202
Summary .............................................................................................................................. 217
List of Tables

Table 1: Trends in secondary gross enrollment rate and net enrolment rate, 2002-2008………………………………………………………………………………………………..23

Table 2: Secondary Schools Gross Enrolment Rate by Province and Sex, 2005-2006………………………………………………………………………………………………..23

Table 3: Primary-school gross enrolment rates by sex and provinces, 2004…………30

Table 4: Representation of study participants by category………………………………158

Table 5: A representation of the study participants by name and category………….201

Table 6: Factors affecting Maasai girls’ education ……………………………………223

Table 7: Estimated Direct and Indirect Cost of Education by Parents per Child per Year …………………………………………………………………………………………………..278
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pictorial representation of girls and women education cross level</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kajiado District map</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Education Structure in Kenya</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Snapshots inside Enoomatasiani Girls School</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The school farm</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School related factors</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Making tough choices in school</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Winning the education race for young women</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Factors influencing math and science subjects</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Picture of girls manipulating some science equipment in the science lab</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Meaning of Being in School</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Impact of education among young Maasai women</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Education a empowerment</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One: Introduction

Background

“The surest way to keep a people down is to educate the men and neglect the women. If you educate a man you simply educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family” (Konotey-Ahulu, 2007, p. 2. Citing Dr. J.E. Kwegyir Aggrey, a visionary Ghanian educator (1875-1927)).

Research shows that educating girls is one of the best investments to both the individual and the family (Njogu, 1991; Summers, 1993; Dodoo, 1998; Pearson & Craig, 2001; Whitehead, 2003). In addition, UNESCO (2006) takes women education as a strategy leading to economic development, empowerment, growth, and poverty reduction. Education has the power to break the vicious cycle of poverty in both women and men. According to the Global Campaign for Education (GCE, 2005), “Education is a key economic asset for individuals and for nations. Every year of schooling lost represents a 10-20% reduction in girls’ future incomes” (p. 19). Although it seems schooling is the silver bullet that can raise individuals and communities from ‘grass to grace,’ there are large inequalities across and within countries (Mule, 2008). The inequalities are more pronounced along gender lines. However, Dr. J.E. Kwegyir Aggrey, a Ghanaian scholar and educator believed that, “The surest way to keep a people down is to educate the men and neglect the women.” (Konotey-Ahulu, 2007, p. 2).

Across the world, many nations have realized the importance of education for all people and especially females, thus improving access (GCE, 2005). Consequently,
many countries have made it possible for children and adults to attend school. This is well captured under international policies on education such as EFA and MDGs aim at reinforcing educational equity. The Kenyan government is a signatory to some of the international policies gearing towards educational quality and equity. However, many nations including the United States have not yet achieved gender parity in education, making it a service which is unevenly distributed.

On the African continent and in the Sub-Saharan region in particular, females are poorly represented in educational, health, political, agricultural, and research institutions. Primary schools enrollments in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2004 was 96% males and 85% females and only 21% of girls attend secondary school on average, compared to 27% of boys (UNESCO, 2006). I am tempted to believe that these statistics on girls’ and women’s education have a major role in dictating the career lives of women. One can gather a lot of evidence by merely looking at the invisibility of women workers which cuts across many sectors in the job market.

Crown (1996) argues that women’s restricted access to education limits their knowledge and skills in the job market. Low skills have acted as a challenge to women’s ability to compete favorably with men in many sectors of the economy in patriarchal societies (Narayan, 1997). Narayan, a feminist theorist, associates the phenomenon of women’s inability to compete for jobs and opportunities with gender inequality and oppression. Gender inequality and oppression promotes male dominance in almost all sectors of production, leaving the poorly paid jobs such as teaching, nursing, social work, and secretarial work for women.
Scholars think that improving the lives of people in Sub-Saharan Africa lies in bettering their access to formal education. Improving access to education is believed as one of the best ways in bridging the gender gaps in many sectors of the economy (Crown, 1996; Narayan, 1997; Sifuna, 2005). These authors suggest that involving more women who have otherwise been out of the picture in the workforce has the ability to accelerate economic development. Additionally, education is one of the right vehicles to train people especially women in those skills that employers need.

Crown (1996) states that education promotes women’s ability to protect themselves from diseases such as HIV/AIDS and others (UNESCO, 2009). In addition, studies show that an increase in one’s level of education improves one’s ability to protect oneself from diseases (Crown, 1996). Therefore, women’s improved access to education has the ability to keep them away from many diseases such as heart diseases, eating disorders, diabetes, and environment related diseases. Higher education confers economic advantages to both women and men, consequently, improving their ability to seek medical care. In school, women and men learn the value of diseases prevention and health promotion programs. On the other hand, people with a low socio-economic status suffer from inability to seek medical care. They also tend to adhere to retrogressive cultural practices, often with negative affects to their health and future aspirations. For instance, female circumcision, early marriage, and early pregnancy present many difficulties to young female students in their educational journey, often forcing them to drop out (Sifuna, 2005; Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009).
UNESCO (2005) and Population Council (2005) pointed out that without education, it is difficult for both men and women to exercise their rights and to meet their aspirations such as secure livelihoods. Higher education often gives both women and men the ability to participate in political decision-making and to negotiate especially in marriage relations (Otieno, 1995; Chege & Sifuna, 2006). Additionally, education enables one to acquire those skills needed to participate in the modern economy. The realization of the importance of education has prompted almost all African countries including Kenya to adopt educational policies that focus on improving access including: Education for All, Millennium Development Goals (M.D.G.) on education policy and Free Primary Education (FPE) (Mosedale, 2003; Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), 2001; UNESCO, 2005; Freire, 1970). All these policies focus on education because education empowers people, making it a more desirable commodity for women.

Some of the legal documents that are used to support children’s right to education, which Kenya is a signatory to include: the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of Children (1989), and the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979). In Kenya for example, the basis of providing free education at primary education and offering many scholarships to the needy students at high schools is in support of the children’s right to education.

Yet, school enrollment differs between men and women in Kenya; it appears to be unfair to women and girls (Mule, 2008; Chege & Sifuna, 2006; Alwy & Schech,
2004; Otieno, 1995). “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Mandela, 2002, p. 2). My attention in this study was drawn to the educational disparities in Kenya by gender and the educational experiences of female students in Kenyan schools. According to the literature explored, little is known about the experiences that female learners go through in school and the challenges and sacrifices involved. The female students in Kenyan high school are already marginalized, and their experiences complicate their marginalization all the more.

Having few girls in high school is a true sign that something is wrong and action needs to be taken to correct the situation if gender parity in education is to be achieved as advocated by some international policies. For instance, Kenya dreams of achieving the Education for All—EFA goal and Millennium Development Goals on education by 2015. Therefore, there is need to bolster girls education to realize this achievement. Researching girls’ educational experiences in school can shed some light to what learners go through in school and what meaning they make out of it. Also, it is interesting to understand the dreams of this group in relation to self, family, and society. In some communities, it is believed that educating young women is a waste of family resources because after marriage, they do not benefit their families. There is the belief that educating girls does not make economic sense (Nkinyangi, 1982).

For the last 10 years, education report after education report in Kenya shows regional and gender disparities. These disparities persist despite a general increase in enrollments and educational institutions since Kenya’s independence in 1963 (Eshiwani, 1993; Sifuna, 2005; Nkinyangi, 1982, Ojiambo, 2007). Yet, “schooling still
remains among the major route to upward mobility for the lower classes” (Nkinyangi, 1982, p. 199). Being that important for women, the oppressed and ‘forgotten’ groups in many communities, education could be used as a tool to liberate and empower the marginalized (Freire, 1970). Education is therefore highly needed by those pushed at the margins. In order for them to rise above the low class, they need to become empowered through education.

By this study, I seek to understand the educational experiences of the participants from a personal point of view. Culturally, the Maasai people had their traditional form of education which involved every member of society. This form of education was adequate and relevant to the daily experiences of both women and men (Kratli, 2000). As Maasai women in their final year of secondary school at Enoomatasiian Girls’ Secondary School in Kajiado District, the study participants were in a position to speak to their experiences. Kajiado District is in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya. Kajiado is one of the Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASALs) in the country (Government of Kenya, 2007; Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). Kajiado is categorized as 36% ASAL and home to the nomadic pastoral communities in Kenya (Government of Kenya, 2007). According to Roto, Ongwenyi and Mugo (2009), the district suffers from policy and developmental neglect due to the tough climatic conditions. All the participants in this study come from this this region and due to their lifestyle (nomadic pastoralism), it makes it difficult for them to access education (Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009).
In discussing the educational experiences of young Maasai women, it is important to understand the meanings they attach to the day to day activities in navigating through the Kenyan education system. Presenting these meanings in participants’ own voices, stories and opinions is advocated by many qualitative researchers who study people’s experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). When seeking to understand people’s experiences, listening to their voices and opinions is important in gathering data that places the participants in their own context.

**Statement of the Problem**

Globally, educational reports show that females have been under-represented in formal education. The literacy skills of a majority of women are low “An estimate of 759 million adults lack literacy skills today, around 16% of the world’s adult population. Nearly two thirds are women” (UNESCO, 2010, p. 17). This under-representation of women in education around the world has a consequence of absenting this group in other areas where educational qualifications are required in society.

In Kenya, female students are poorly represented at all levels of education. Primary school enrolment rates for boys and girls in Kenya in the year 2008 was 36.7% and 33.5% consecutively (UNESCO, 2010). According to the Kajiado District Strategic plan 2005-2010, there is dire need to improve on the enrollment rates of both females and males in schools in Kajiado since, “there is a very low strasition from primary to secondary schools” (Republic of Kenya, 2005, p. 6).

The enrollment situation in Kenya is poor at secondary school level of education as presented in Table 1 below:
Table 1: Trends in secondary gross enrollment rate and net enrollment rate, 2002-2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gross Enrolment Rate (GER)</th>
<th>Net Enrolment Rate (NER)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economic Survey, 2009

Table 1 above shows that there is not a single year when the gross enrollment rate for girls exceeded that of boys from year 2002-2008. Additionally, regional gender differences dominate high school enrollments in Kenya as indicated in Table 2 below:

Table: 2. Secondary Schools Gross Enrolment Rate by Province and Sex, 2005-2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rift Valley</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyanza</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2 above indicates that the Rift Valley Province had a gross rate of 28.1% girls and 34.3% boys respectively in the year 2006. The trend presented on the table is that there is a low gross enrollment rate for girls compared to boys in 2005-2006. This trend
has not changed much. Furthermore, Kajiado District in the Rift Valley Province cannot be seen on the table. Basically, generalizations make the vulnerable regions invisible.

The low representation of females goes on at the university level in Kenya. According to Republic of Kenya (2007), only 30% of female students make it to the public universities (UNESCO, 2005). Therefore, it can be deduced from the above statistics that the education of girls and women in Kenya takes a triangular shape with a wide base and a sharp apex to signify the decline in enrollments as they matriculate through the education system as shown in Figure 1 below:

![Diagram of girls and women education levels](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 1: Pictorial representation of girls and women education cross levels.**

*Source:* Derived from data on enrollments statistics
Figure 1 shows that many female students start their school at the lower grades but their numbers reduce as they go up the education ladder in Kenya. This trend is the same in Kajiado District which is the site of this study. On the other hand, it is important to note that Central Province in 2005 had more girls than boys in secondary schools (Republic of Kenya, 2007). Yet, the Kenyan constitution in Republic of Kenya (2008) Article 63 supports the education for all people in the country by stating:

(1) Every person has the right to education.
(2) The state shall institute a programme to implement the right of every child to free and compulsory pre-primary and primary education and in so doing shall pay particular attention to children with special needs.
(3) The state shall take measures to make secondary education progressively available and accessible. (pp. 37-38)

To display the importance of education to its citizens, Kenya has adopted free and compulsory primary education for all children in 2003 (Republic of Kenya, 2005). Also, the country is a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) where education of women is stressed upon among other gender related issues (MDGs, 2000). These are all efforts to make education accessible to all in the country including girls.

However, educational access for girls in some regions such as Kajiado District remains low, meaning, the education policies adopted in the country allow some learners to fall by the way-side. A good example is Kajiado District located in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya. Kajiado is an arid and semi-arid region characterized by prolonged droughts and poor soils for agriculture, making its climatic conditions problematic (Government of Kenya, 2007; Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). The tough climatic conditions in Kajiado coupled with the historic pastoralism of the Maasai
people makes it difficult for students to access education. Figure 2 below shows the map of Kajiado District.
Figure 2: Kajiado District Map
Source: http://www.ncapdke.org
Figure 2 above shows the Map of Kajiado District in Rift Valley Province, Kenya, the site of this study. This study took place in Kajiado District.

The existence of profound gender disparities in education explains why an investigation into the education of young women in Kajiado District is important. According to Republic of Kenya (2005), there were 198 primary school in the region. Based on the District Strategic Plan 2005-2010, this was a small number of schools compared to the young populations of school going age. Bustressing on the few number of schools in Kajiado District, the DEO’s Office Report (2010) reported that the number of primary schools had grown to 215. This was a challenge to girls’ education because very few had access to school. In addition, forced and early marriages are some of the reasons that cause profound gender disparities in education in the district. In addition, this increase of school is still not satisfactory owing to the number of youths in need of primary and secondary education in the district. The teacher pupil ratio was reported to be at 1:41 (Republic of Kenya, 2005). This rate has gone up to 1:44. There are more males (55.8%) in primary school than females (below 50%). These rates are lower in high school.

According to Republic of Kenya (2007), only 48% of girls from ASAL regions enroll in primary school, and only 5% of these acquire secondary school education. Literature explored does not focus on educational experiences of young women in secondary schools in Kenya. Therefore, the current study was focused on highlighting the reasons contributing to the small number of women enrolled in secondary schools in Kajiado. I interviewed young Maasai women at their final year in secondary schools, asking them to share their educational stories as a step in capturing their ideas, opinions, challenges and opportunities. It was hoped that letting the young Maasai
women share their opinions and challenges in school would act as an opening for further discussions. In addition, the study is a step in formulating interventions that can be used to improve the educational access of young women.

Existing studies fail to provide information on the educational experiences of young Maasai women in Kajiado District in Kenya. The existing ones focus on female education in ASAL regions. For instance, the North Eastern Province has been focused on much because it has the lowest female student enrolment rate of 16.8% in the country (Republic of Kenya & FAWE, 2000; FAWE, 2001; Mulama, 2008; Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). The national enrollment rate for females in Rift Valley Province where Kajiado is located in the Rift Valley Provinve as shown in Figure 2, is above average (85.6%). These rates are too general, thus, calling for them to be broken down to each district. For instance, one needs to know the school enrollment rates in Kajiado by gender in order to see the big picture of female enrolments. Also, studying and reporting the educational experiences of female students in this region has the ability to offer more information and comparable data which may not be found in the statistics. The study will also serve as a springboard for more studies on the same topic in future.

Republic of Kenya and FAWE (2000) lists primary school enrolment targets for females by province in the year 2000 in Kenya as: Coast – 66.9%, Central – 100.1%, Eastern – 96.1%, Nairobi – 52.8%, Rift Valley – 85.6%, Western – 104.2%, Nyanza – 91.9%, and North Eastern – 16.8% (p. 9). It is important to note that the enrollment rates exceeded 100% enrollments in some cases when free primary education was
initiated in Kenya in the year 2003. Table 3 below shows the primary school enrollement rates after free primary declaration in Kenya.

Table 3: Primary-school gross enrolment rates by sex and provinces, 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Coast</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
<th>Nairobi</th>
<th>Rift Valley</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Nyanza</th>
<th>North Eastern</th>
<th>Kenya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>102.6</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>104.2</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>98.2</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>103.4</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Republic of Kenya/FAWE (2005, p. 9)

But, there are places in Kenya where female representation is low. These statistics are so generalized such that some vulnerable groups such as young Maasai females in the Kenyan Rift-Valley are invisible. Republic of Kenya and FAWE (2000) stated that the Rift-Valley province’s enrollment rate was 85.6% as indicated above. Therefore, blanket data on the Rift Valley tell us nothing considering other places such as urban centres do better than rural areas in the same region. Looking beyond the general numbers in favor of specific rates is important.

According to FAWE (2003), Kajiado District is home to the Maasai people. Maasai is a pastoral community which has not changed its cultural way of life much despite outside and colonial influences. Historically, education and development in Kajiado have been riddled with difficulties compared to other parts of Kenya. Early education in Kenya was started by the missionaries and the colonial Kenya government. However, according to Kratli (2000), education of the Maasai children was always met with stiff resistance from the community especially because education and the Maasai way of life did not seem compatible because of their nomadic pastoralism. Similar
sentiments are expressed by Coast (2002) and Ju (2007) who add that a parallel form of education—initiation ceremonies as rites of passage to adulthood—was the only education the Maasai considered vital and appropriate for their youth.

Kenya has been trying to erase the gender gap with little success. For instance, the adoption of the Education for All (EFA) policy and Free Primary Education in 2003 aimed at closing the gender gap (Republic of Kenya, 2007). Free Primary Education (FPE) is beneficial to children as the foundation on which all other levels of education are based. According to current statistics, gender parity seems to have been achieved at the primary level in Kenya (Mule, 2008; UNICEF, 2007). This shows the great efforts being made by parents, government and other stakeholders to ensure that both females and males acquire education in general.

However, it seems there is need to look beyond primary education in order to work towards improving the transition rates from primary to secondary education in the areas where enrollments remain low. It is a general observation that very few students especially women transit from primary school to high school (Republic of Kenya, 2008). For those who are fortunate enough to get to high school, no one knows about their educational experiences, which could make or break their ability to access education. This is the reason why this study focuses on the educational experiences of young Maasai women in Kajoado District, Kenya.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the educational experiences of young Maasai women in Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School in Kajiado District, in Kenya.

Research Questions

1. What are the educational experiences of young Maasai women in their final year in high school?
2. What are the social-cultural factors that influence the education of young Maasai women in Kajiado District in Kenya?
3. How has education shaped the lives of young Maasai women and their future aspirations?

Significance of the Study

There is a knowledge gap of including student voices and opinions about their educational experiences. Student experiences influence the way they learn, yet, they tend to be overlooked by policy makers, teachers, and other stakeholders in education. Therefore, it is hoped that the results of this study will provide knowledge, serve as an empirical basis for future policy-making in Kenya in the area of girls’ and women’s education including the study participants’ recommendations on the same. In addition, it will act as a springboard for further research in gender issues in education. This study will be of particular interest to planners in government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) regarding the type of education projects to initiate in rural areas and more so in the ASAL regions of Kenya. Also, the study will add to the knowledge
gap and pool of literature on female students’ educational experiences in Kenya in general and young Maasai women of Kajiado District in particular. Many studies of education of women and girls have been conducted at primary schools or higher institutions of learning (Mule, 2008). In addition, this study will provide reliable and comparable data on the education of Maasai girls. It will inform researchers interested in the education of young women from rural set-up.

**Delimitations of the Study**

This study was bound by location, time, study sample, focus, study design and the theoretical framework. It took place only in Kajiado District in Kenya, from April to June, 2010. The study sample consisted of 20 participants. They were divided into two categories: secondary school students and key informants. The study design will be a phenomenological case-study examined under the lens of African feminism. It will not apply to the general population of Kenyan high school female students because this is not my objective. Specifically, it will apply only to the experiences of these students in their last year of high school and provide in-depth and thick description of pastoral female students’ educational experiences.

**Definition of Terms**

In conducting this study, I discovered that terms, words and acronyms mean different things and take different contexts in different places. Consequently, for clarity purposes, I provide the following terms as operational terms for this study.

*ASAL:* Arid and Semi-Arid Lands or the dry regions of Kenya which experience prolonged drought and water shortage for both people and animals.
**BOG**: Board of Governors are officials or members who are commissioned by parents to assist in the running of an educational institution.

**Bursary**: Scholarship given to school and university students who are needy.

**DEO**: District Education Officer.

**Dropout**: Dropout refers to students not completing an educational program. This can occur either at primary or at secondary level of education. In Kenya, a dropout is a child or young person who has not completed the 8 years of primary or the 4 years of secondary school. Many girls drop out because of school fees, pregnancy, early marriage and other reasons.

**Empowerment**: In this study, the term *empowerment* means gaining power and control in decision making concerning resources and one’s quality of life. It takes time to be accomplished, thus, it is a process and step-by-step journey (World Bank, 2002; Narayan, 2002). It calls for social inclusion, which takes time for planning, implementation and evaluation to seal the loopholes.

**FAWE**: Forum for African Women Educationists.

**FGM/C**: Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting.

**Girls**: In a Kenyan context, young school females who are between ages 8-17 are referred to as girls.

**Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)**: The GER is the total number of children enrolled in each level of school expressed as the total number of children who belong to the age group who should be enrolled at that level of basic education (Republic of Kenya, 2007).
HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

Kajiado District: Kajiado District is among the 40 districts in Kenya and is located in the Rift Valley Province in the country.

Patriarchy: This term is used to refer to the promotion of male privilege and dominance in society. It is a social structure which favors males in values, norms and philosophical underpinnings.

Primary School: In Kenya, primary school level is the second phase of formal education system in Kenya. The starting age is between 4-6 years under normal circumstances unless otherwise interfered with by uncontrollable circumstances and runs for 8 years.

Republic of Kenya: The Government of Kenya has published many official documents which are referred to and quoted in this study.

Secondary School: Secondary education (high school) is the third phase of schooling and caters for primary school leavers in the 14-18 years age group. However, students from the dry parts of Kenya or the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL), from rural parts of Kenya, girls, street children, children from non-formal settlements in the urban areas among others are often disadvantaged (Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). Students from these parts of the country often start school later than the 14-18 age bracket.

Key informants: These are individuals who are expected to have particular ‘expert’ knowledge about the topic under study. In this study, experts in education include: government education officers, teachers, school board members, former students and others. When identifying key informants, diversity of representation should be taken
into consideration in order to represent as many groups as possible based on the study focus.

*Voice:* Voice is a communication which empowers disadvantaged people, children, communities, and societies to advocate for themselves from their own perspectives.

*Young Maasai Woman:* In this study, this term was used to refer to young Maasai women in high school and above 18 years. This group is generally referred to as school-girls in a Kenyan context but since they are over 18, I preferred to call them young women because they are adults by law (National Council for Law Reporting, 2008).

**Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into eight chapters. The first chapter opens with the introduction to the study, its purpose, statement of the problem, research questions and the significance of the study. The first chapter ends with a look at the delimitations of the study, definition of terms and the study organization. Chapter two outlines the literature review and the theoretical framework. Chapter three demonstrates the study design and research methods used for the study by presenting the research design, selection of participants, sources of data, data collection procedure, data analysis employed, and a step-by-step explanation of what took place in the field. Chapter four contextualizes the study through looking at: the education of the Maasai, the school/ the study site as well as profiling the study participants.

Chapter five covers research findings about life in school based on the views of the study participants. Chapter six presents meaning of being in school under Maasai
young women’s eyes. Chapter seven provides data on how education shapes lives of young women. Lastly, chapter eight presents a summary of the study findings, implications, suggestions, and possible topics for further research.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review is presented in sub-headings which are important in explaining the situation of the education of women internationally, nationally and locally. In order to fully understand the contextualization of the education of young women internationally and specifically of the Maasai women in Kenya, the following sub-topics were explored, namely: the situation of women education in Africa and in Kenya, the background of formal education in Kenya, educational and policy evolutions after independence, factor influencing enrollments in post primary education in Kenya and education as empowerment of women.

Additionally, other explored issues include the importance of education to women, national and international educational policies on women, education and marginalization, resources and inheritance, gender disparity in education in ASAL regions in Kenya, Kajiado District, and the Maasai people. All the above named issues are important because they directly or indirectly influence education of women peculiar to Kenya only. However, there are those factors that are contextualized to marginalized groups in developing countries.

The Situation of Women Education in Africa and in Kenya

Researchers have given comprehensive evidence that a huge number of women, especially those from some smaller ethnic groups in Africa, have not acquired adequate literacy skills (UNESCO, 2009). Society has continued to deny women and girls formal education, though it is viewed in contemporary times as a human right due to the many
disadvantages associated with illiteracy (UNESCO, 2009). Scholars such as Seufert-Barr (2005), attest to the fact that more women are poor globally because their chances to better themselves economically and socially have been slim. UNICEF (2007) states that women comprise a large share of both the world’s population and the world’s poor. Although formal education is an important tool in acquiring employable skills for both men and women, efforts to put women on the same page with men seem inadequate at global and continental levels. Globally, UNESCO (2005) reported that:

Of the 867 million adults who cannot read today, 64% are women, according to World Bank estimates. Of the approximately 113 million children aged 6-11 years who do not attend school, the majority are girls. Research shows 60% of youth not attending school are girls. (p. 5)

In Africa, Seufert-Barr (2005) stated that there are more illiterate women than men “905 million men and women—almost a quarter of the world’s adult population—are illiterate. About 587 million, 65 percent of them, are women” (p. 2). These reports emphasize the high illiteracy rates among women, a phenomenon which has remained for some time, not only in regions but in countries such as Kenya. These studies are evidence that if more girls continue to miss school especially those from rural areas, the illiteracy rate in females will rise since mothers play a huge role in the education of their children (Bhattacharya, 2009).

Annin (2009) posits that many African countries experience educational gender divisions. Annin believes, “There has been a persistent disparity between the rich and poor, and between the rural and urban populations. Gender analysis at all levels of educational outcomes reveals a significant level of inequality between women and men, which may be covert or overt” (p. 62). He contends that many school girls have to put
up with “multiple identities such as religion, economic status, age, and geographical
location, which impact their overall educational experiences” (p. 63). Though
sometimes not taken seriously, these factors have the ability to be a great force
affecting girls’ enrollment, retention, achievement and performance in school.

Studies focusing on Kenyan education during the colonial times show how the
colonial base of Kenyan education, as in many other African countries, has been
hegemonic, gender biased, and a pure imitation of the European form of education
(Mule, 2008; Ojiambo, 2007; Chege & Sifuna, 2006). Explanations given by Chege and
Sifuna (2006) show a slow pace of missionary education and the colonial
administrators’ preference for educating men since, other than reflecting the case in
Europe, men were needed more in farms and industries.

Female education started late in Kenya as in other parts of Africa (Karani,
1987). Although Eshiwani (1993) insisted that women’s and girls’ education in Kenya
has greatly improved, Chege and Sifuna (2006) disagree with the argument that it was
the effort of the colonialist masters in empowering African women through education.

**The Background of Formal Education in Kenya**

Formal education in Kenya can be traced back to colonial times, more
specifically 1846, when the first group of missionaries arrived in Kenyan coast. Before
the colonial period and the arrival of missionaries, there was non-formal education or
African Traditional Education (ATE) (Bogonko, 1992; Mbiti, 1969; Nyerere, 1967;
Ojiambo, 2007). According to Nyerere, ATE involved all members of society and was
geared towards making everybody to fit and become a useful member in the family,
village and clan. This view is compatible to that of Mbiti (1969), who argues that ATE was founded on collective communal responsibility. According to Ojiambo (2007) ATE is a “frame of education that the missionaries and the colonial government fought to eradicate” (p. 49). The eradication of ATE was gradual through formal schools and churches, terming it as uncivilized and useless especially because it was different from that of the Europeans. However, all African communities used this form of education to perpetuate themselves. It was a means of transferring social values, skills, norms, and traditions to the new members.

In the spirit of communal responsibility in ATE, everybody had something to teach and or learn. The teachers were all members of society including one’s siblings, parents, relatives, neighbors and others (Mbiti, 1969; Nyerere, 1967). Therefore, it is important to note that ATE was the form of education that existed in pre-colonial Kenya.

Formal education and the construction of schools were done by the missionaries in Kenya. They were later supported by the colonial government and the African community through independent schools (Bogonko, 1992; Ojiambo, 2007). Bogonko, 1992; Ojiambo, 2007). However, in 1920s, formal education had few if any benefits for black Kenyans. Several authors are in agreement that colonial/missionary education was not helpful to Africans (Achola & Pillai, 2000; Bogonko, 1992; Carnoy, 1974; Diamanka & Godwyll, 2008; Ojiambo, 2007). They mention two key points which guided the curriculum of formal education during this time. First, the colonial/missionary education was aimed at controlling the black Kenyans while
instilling in them a sense of inferiority. Secondly, 90% of the schools in Kenya in 1924 were mission schools with a sole purpose of winning converts and giving them basic skills to read the Bible and spread the Gospel.

Generally, education curriculum in Kenya was originally introduced to produce interpreters, catechists, and clerks to serve in the churches and colonial administration. The structure and content of education that was introduced by the missionaries and colonialists did not aim at benefiting Africans as earlier mentioned. It was based on the British system and more akin to the British culture (Bogonko, 1992; Godwyll, 2008). The colonial and missionary education objectives prevailed even after Kenya’s independence, 1963.

Both Abagi and Okwach (1993) and Sifuna (2006) agree that the colonial education system was gender biased as evident in enrolment rates and subject choices. By independence in 1963, 73% of boys were in school compared to only 41% of girls (Achola & Pillai, 2000). Their argument is congruent with the one by Abagi and Okwach (1993) who contend that the number of females attending formal schools in Kenya at the time of independence was half that of males. Since then, underrepresentation of females in education has been common at all levels of education in Kenya with a changing trend at primary level. This can be attributed to the re-introduction of free and compulsory primary education in Kenya in 2003 (Republic of Kenya, 2007).

The curriculum and subjects offered to female students had the possibility of putting off this group. Based on choice of subjects, missionary schools practiced gender
segregation especially at middle school. This continued to the high school level. Furthermore, boys and girls took different courses which were believed to prepare them for their future roles in society. For example, girls took courses such as home economics while boys took agricultural science, woodwork, and masonry (Achola & Pillai, 2000; Karani, 1987). This being the case, the few girls who attended high school were taught home science in readiness for becoming mothers and home makers, rather than politicians, lawyers or even economists.

Karani (1987) commented that parents find it easy to dismiss women education based of gender roles which are further reinforced in school. Karani claimed that anybody with a good understanding capacity could easily learn cooking, cleaning, childcare and good grooming at home. Perhaps this made it easy for parents to question the use of school while others avoided taking their daughters to school altogether. Given the amount of work a girl could do if she remained at home, her family could become satisfied to keep her and pay no school fees from the family budget.

Following many years after colonialism, the school curriculums in many African countries are colonial based, thus perpetrating the colonial influence (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). Colonial influence could be traced in the education institutions through: text books, discipline maintenance, male dominance among others. Also, it is a kind of an education system that ignores and does not prioritize indigenous knowledge. The curriculum heavily borrows from western ideas of education rather than from local situations which makes learners more adaptable to their own environments, day-to-day activities and challenges (ADEA, 2009). Worse still, students at PPE institutions in
Africa are still grappling with the language issue where 80% of the languages used are foreign (ADEA, 2009). In addition, many countries still keep the educational systems inherited from their colonial powers.

Other than being prepared to become “supermoms” by the subjects they take in school (Bogonko, 1992), the media also portrays women in traditional gender roles such as child care and domestic labor (Achola & Pillai, 2000). They are presented in televisions, newspapers and magazines in careers which enable them to take care of their houses and family. As much as women are good in all these roles and many more, they also want to be viewed as having many more skills than housework. For instance, why would writers want to always present women in traditional gender roles while we are in the age that has witnessed the first African female president?

On subject choices and gender disparity, Godwyll (2007) reflects on the Ghanaian situation of education and subject choices by gender. For instance, he pointed out that history was taught to males because it serves as the basis for politics-oriented courses such as political science and law. Although Wilson does not give a statistical picture of how many politicians have studied political science and law, I tend to agree with his assertion because very few women are found in politics. There is an unequal representation of men and women in the parliament in Kenya. For instance, Kilimo (2009) stated that out of 224 members of parliament in Kenya, only 22 are women. Kilimo lamented that although many women offer themselves as candidates for local and parliamentary elections, they fail to be nominated by their political parties. Further,
they are not allowed to field themselves as independent candidates. Also, nearly all political party leaders are males, who make it difficult for women to win seats. Compared to other African countries, Kenya has a long way to go before catching up with its neighbors concerning women's presence in parliament. Tanzania has 30.4 percent; Uganda has 29.8 percent. According to Powley (2005), Rwanda’s women presence in parliament stands at 48.8%.

Since Ghana and Kenya were colonized by the British and adopted a similar kind of education, it follows that schools in the two countries served to create more avenues for males than females to engage in politics at the higher levels and attain political power while shutting women out. Most of the missionary high schools in Kenya were gender specific. In addition, Missionary schools in Kenya were distributed along the Kenyan coast, the Kenyan highlands and western Kenya, where many missionaries were stationed (Achola & Pillai, 2000; Bogonko, 1992). Therefore, places such as Kajiado District in the Rift Valley did not benefit from early start of school in the country. Arguably, the fact that missionaries seemed to promote boy-child education could be attributed to their socialization in a patriarchal society in Europe and in Kenya by extension. Consequently, the education of women and more so those from rural parts of Kenya remained undeveloped till recently. Basically, missionaries reinforced patriarchy in our education system.

**Educational and Policy Evolutions after Independence**

After independence, many Kenyan leaders felt that the education system was not serving their needs. Consequently, several educational commissions, committees and
taskforces have been enacted to transform the face of formal education in order to serve the needs of Kenyans. For instance, the Ominde Report—1964, Gachathi Report—1976, Mackay Report—1981, Kamunge Report—1988 and Koech Report—2000 have all made some compelling suggestions leading to addressing some of the challenges facing the education sector in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2004).

According to Republic of Kenya (2004), while the Ominde Report aimed at flipping the Kenyan education away from the colonial objectives, forging a united nation and creating human capital just one year after independence (1964), Gachathi Report of 1976 reflected more on educational policies. It is from Gachathi Report that the government supported ‘Harambee’ schools, established National Centre for Early Childhood (NACECE) and Kenya Institute of Education (KIE).

Mackay Report in 1981 led to the removal of advanced (A) level of secondary education and the expansion of post-secondary education, leading to the 8-4-4 system of education in the country. In addition, this report resulted to the establishment of the Commission of Higher Education (CHE). The Kamunge Report of 1988 stressed on improving educational financing, quality and relevance. Since the government could not adequately provide educational resources, Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) was introduced in the Kenyan education system among other sectors and we will see its effects on women and girls’ education later. Lastly, the Koech Report in 2000 was charged with the responsibility of suggesting ways of making education the vehicle to industrial and technological development in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2004). Other key policies that are crucial to the Kenya’s education and have a huge impact on gender
are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA), which were adopted in 2000 and 2003 respectfully.

Many of the above policies and the curriculum have been questioned for the persistent gender inequality in the Kenyan education. For instance, Otieno (1995) lamented that formal education in Kenya has a male bias based on the curriculum having been “designed by men, for men and with men” (p. 21). She further states that, “The education system seems to favor males” (p. 11). This seems to suggest that women and girls are not considered during educational planning and curriculum designing processes and perhaps not viewed as consumers of the same. Abagi and Okwach (1993) add that the marginalization of women in education has been fuelled by treating women as lesser partners, ignoring their knowledge base, skills and their academic abilities.

The Education Structure in Kenya

The education structure in Kenya is presented in figure 3 below:
Figure 3 above shows the 8-4-4 education system structure in Kenya which was implemented in 1985. It replaced the previous 7-4-2-3 system which implies: 7 years of primary schooling, 4 years at ordinary level, 2 years at advance level and 3 years at the university. The phases that one goes through before completing in the 8-4-4 system are outlined below.

**Pre-Primary School (2 Years)**

The pre-school education in Kenya is now the first phase of school. It remained under the care and organization of parents and local counties till recently. Children start this level of education at age 3 or 4. Before, a child would take one or two years depending on the level of understanding. Today, pre-school education is under the
government organization and supervision and all children take two years based on the syllabus.

**Primary School (Class or Standard 1-8)**

Primary school is the second phase of formal education system in Kenya. The starting age is between 4-6 years under normal circumstances unless otherwise interfered with by uncontrollable circumstances and runs for 8 years. However, this could take longer if some classes are repeated. Generally, this level promotes growth, imparts literacy and numeracy skills. It lays a firm foundation for further formal education and training and life-long learning. Looking at the Kenyan education structure, many girls from rural parts of the country stop school after the first 8 years. Many factors that contribute to this situation including poverty, preference of boy-child by some poor families among others are discussed later.

**Secondary School (Forms 1-4)**

Secondary education (high school) is the third phase of schooling and caters for primary school leavers in the 14-18 years age group. There are about 3,612 public and 2,876 private secondary schools, making a total of 6,484 in the country (Oyugi, 2010). The net enrolment is about 24% of the eligible age group (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). According to Oyugi (2010), the “enrolment in secondary schools grew from 851,836 students in 2002 (451,362 boys and 400,474 girls) to 1,382,211 (746,513 boys and 638,698 girls) students in 2008” (p. 5).
University Education (4-6 years)

Currently, Kenya has 8 public universities and 17 private universities. The private universities increase each day and others are online. Undergraduate education takes a minimum of 4 academic years but others like medicine and law faculties take 5-6. Enrollment is about 23,000 students. Annual intake into public universities is about 15,000 and private universities about 7,000 students.

Factor Influencing Enrollments in Post Primary Education in Kenya

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) is an international organization which was started in 1988 by Donor to Education in African (DEA) interested in education projects in Africa. ADEA (2009) reported two major forces believed to be responsible for accelerating the demand for Post-Primary Education (PPE) in Africa. These two major forces have also been so influential in decision-making in politics and in the general planning of education in the continent. They include: an increase in the social demand for access to secondary and higher learning opportunities, and governments’ wishes to expand this levels of education for economic and social development reasons.

Although many people may not realize, the adoption of EFA and free primary educational policies in education in the African continent have pushed a great number of students to graduate at the basic level. Anybody who needs a job needs to develop some skills and this is easily done through acquiring education. However, going through the Kenyan school system for young Maasai women may have a negative effect to their skill development because they are taught agriculture (farming or crops) which does not
teach them about keeping animals. Rather than schooling them, school may be mis-
educating the Maasi group as far as their environmental needs are concerned.

Poverty and disease are two major challenges in many parts of Africa which are
believed to lessen based on one’s level of education. There is a wealth of literature on
education and HIV/AIDS in Africa showing that “an increase in educational attainment
leads to a decrease in chances of HIV/AIDS infection” (Rakotomalala, 2008, p. 12).
Dupas (2006) suggest that each additional years of education leads to a 6-7% decrease
in the likelihood of being infected with HIV/AIDS. In other words, the above studies
support the fact that formal education is a true HIV/AIDS “vaccine” among those with
higher education. However, this may not always be true in the face of joblessness
which escalates the desperation of jobless graduates who result in risky indulgencies
such as drug abuse. Furthermore, overproduction of graduates in developing countries
is becoming counter-productive.

Parents and community involvement in higher education—many communities
are now more involved in provision of higher education through opening of community
financed schools. For instance, Kenya is popularly known for initiating community
funded schools all over the country which are popularly known as harambee schools.
Also, parents are paying school fees for their own children at this level of education
than before. According to Verspoor (2008) parents cover around 40% of the total cost
of secondary education in Kenya. In addition, profit and nonprofit organizations have
joined in starting new schools and universities linking their courses to local and
international job markets. However, poverty in households is still a big barrier to
accessing PPE in the country owing to the fact that much of cost of schooling rests on the shoulder of poor parents. In fact, Verspoor (2008) claims that the cost of “community financing” of schools is still a burden to the poor and more so in Kenya where the cost of PPE is among the highest in the region.

**Challenges to Post-Primary Education**

The expansion of Post-Primary Education (PPE) is affected by the perspective that it is elitist, thus, excludes some people who cannot acquire that level of education from many social places and job opportunities (ADEA, 2009). Also, it separates academic education from vocational skill training. Furthermore, it is in secondary school that learners take different subjects based on their abilities, interests and believe that the subjects have the potential to place them in a better place in the job market. At this level, students also see the mismatch between what they learn in school and the skills required in the job market.

Other people argue that PPE is quite academic oriented and aims at preparing all learners for white color jobs in the government offices with less consideration of those who may not secure government jobs. Secondary schools in many countries are not evenly distributed and students are also not evenly distributed during admission to these institutions, causing ethnic divisions in the country (ADEA, 2009).

Many scholars have studied and affirmed that there is huge gender inequality in post-primary education. The gender perspective and culture in formal education is an outstanding issue that has been and still needs to be explored by researchers (Verspoor, 2008; ADEA, 2009). Education at this level is faced with huge gender imbalance.
However, gender prioritizing in education ensures that both females and males are well taken care of. This could be done through gender sensitive policies as well as using gender mainstreaming strategies at all levels and all situations in education. For instance, aiming at achieving gender balance in education may call for gender based budgeting—to ensure that all learners both female and male benefit from education expenditure (Mulama, 2008). Further, gender responsive budgeting should be considered in order to take care of an increase in female teachers in higher education where many female students lack role models in form of female teachers.

**Cost of Post-Primary Education in Kenya**

According to Oyugi (2010), the cost of education at PPE is high and not all learners can afford it. Although some governments have made policy statements on making PPE free to some level, these pronouncements remain on paper, not in practice. Others give huge subsidies and bursaries to students from poor households (ADEA, 2009). Also, students, parents, and relatives have a great role to play in the cost of their education. Investing in children’s education as a cushion for the future for children and their parents has been frustrating and with fewer benefits to many families. However, the frustrations do not seem to stop families and governments from investing in education.

Some Kenyan parents are poor and cannot afford school fees for their children especially after primary school. Consequently, the bursary (scholarship) scheme in Kenya was started in 1993/1994 as a suggestion from the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005, and the funding targeted needy students (Republic of Kenya, 2005). According to
Oyugi (2010), out of all those who apply for secondary school bursary fund, only 43% are awarded and the 57% remain un-catered for. In addition, Oyugi (2010) noted the following flows with the bursary fund: i) applicants are not assured of a continuous funding till they complete their education, ii) low funding which leaves applicants with huge fees balances to pay, iii) only 0.4% of the applicants receive the maximum Ksh. 15,000., iv) fifty seven (57%) of the bursary demand is unmet in the country. Basically, Oyugi (2010) identifies the major challenges facing the bursary scheme for post primary education in Kenya. It implies that the solution is a bandage one and may not meet the full needs of the needy Kenyan students from poor backgrounds.

Local means of financing education is in tandem with the long tradition of cost-sharing in Kenya through harambee (self help), which has always been useful in funding school structures, education, health and social facilities. It is believed that local funding can help families educate their sons and daughters while freeing the country from donor conditions, thus, enabling Kenyans to clearly and consciously use education as its own tool for development. Education should aid one’s social mobility, prestige, status and financial returns. However, this may remain far from reality for pastoral people who do not naturally fit into the mainstream schooling system due to their mobile lifestyle.

According to Leggett (2005), educational policy for pastoralist (nomadic) communities in Kenya needs to be improved. This could be achieved while ensuring that the pastoral communities are not marginalized. Leggett posits that educational expansion in Kenya responds to the needs and interests of the majority, while failing to
mirror in the unique circumstances of pastoralists in the country. It neglects the rights of children, especially girls. What this means to the pastoral communities is low levels of participation in education compared to other communities in the country. Leggett and FAWE (2001) opine that for education policies to become effective instruments of change in Kenya, ASAL districts would be the best regions to test such changes. The education of pastoral communities is a real test in determining whether the country will achieve EFA and MDGs in education or not.

Leggett (2005) is convinced that the cost-sharing policy in Kenya has a direct impact on the education of pastoral communities. However, educational policies remain mute on other factors such as cultural values, social norms and the economic system which have a direct impact on education. The practice of taking more males than females to school is a good example of how pastoral communities have yet to adopt the idea the two genders have an equal right to education. For Education for All (EFA) to become a reality in the communities including the pastoralists, community campaigns promoting females’ education could be conducted. It should be realized that policy recommendations may not tackle the unique issues affecting each individual community in Kenya.

Although many Maasai families in Kajiado District are no longer mobile, pastoralism and education are widely viewed as two problematic systems whose structures do not accommodate each other (Mfum-Mensah, 2002; Obura, 2002; Dyer, 2001; Kratli, 2000). In the last few decades, the assumption was that the achievement of gender equity and EFA goals in education among the pastoral groups was an uphill task
for both governments and other development agencies. To solve the problem, these
groups in Kenya and elsewhere were asked to settle down and change their lifestyle
(Leggett, 2005). It has been hard for these groups to change their lifestyle as suggested
above. Becoming crop farmers is not easy for the Maasai because their climatic
conditions are harsh. Consequently, they cannot take up the settlement policy because
they cannot change their land from arid and dry region where crops do not do well. This
situation puts education experts and communities in a dilemma over who changes:
school or pastoralism?

Leggett (2005) adds his voice to the norm that Kenyan parents are expected by
policy to contribute to the school either by paying money or by offering services. This
policy also does not seem to work well with pastoral communities. Rather, need for
cost-sharing has contributed to geographical inequality in education. Parents from
pastoral communities and regions have ‘little to no contribution’ to the construction of
school structures and school levies. Consequently, the enrollment rates in ASAL
regions are still low compared to other regions (Leggett, 2005). For example, Leggett
(2005) argues that in North Eastern Province in Kenya, four out of five girls fail to
attend school.

Further, Leggett (2005) associates low school enrollments in ASAL regions
with urbanization, which is influencing greater school attendance. In addition, the
absence of other facilities which attract pastoralists such as water and health centers
complicate the equition of school enrollments among pastoralist children. It is argued
that inadequate water supply increases the workload for school going females, robbing
them precious time to study. If efforts are not made to avert water shortage and inadequate medical care in ASAL regions in Kenya, there will always be a conflict between going to school for girls and helping their families to acquire drinking water. Therefore, failing to provide water and medical care is equivalent to failing to achieve EFA goals of education among the pastoral communities in the country.

Decentralized curriculums are also problematic in ASAL regions. Specific skills required in a particular place and time are often thrown to the dogs. Also, the cost of post-primary education is high and parents’ abilities to pay such cost differs. While some schools are financed communally through *harambee* as community schools, other parents are not able to give much money to school construction. Consequently, the Kenyan Government has initiated scholarship schemes for needy students. However, Leggett (2005) argues that the cost-sharing policy in Kenya negatively affects the education of pastoral communities in the country.

**Taking Education as a Strategy to Empower Women**

The very mention of the word empowerment assumes a lack of power or less power than deemed effective by oneself or another. Empowerment can be thought of as both a process and as an outcome. It cannot be bestowed upon people or communities, but rather, it involves the active participation of those who are to benefit from it. The notion or agency, that is, the faculty of acting or the power to act, is central to empowerment. (Diaw, 2005, p. 180)

In this section, I will examine different scholars’ definition of the term *empowerment* and a critical evaluation of how this term has been used over time. While some authors view empowerment as a process, others see it as a destination. Based on the reviewed literature, both sides will be explored. Lastly, I will give my personal view on whether someone can be empowered once and for all.
Those who believe that women should get educated in order to participate in development matters imply that women have the ability to achieve equality in the society so long as they have the opportunity to work within the dominant system. Consequently, as long as a woman takes part or gets involved in the formal economic system, then she is empowered (Diaw, 2005; Parpart, Rai & Staudt, 2002; Stromquist, 2002). In order to clearly understand the disempowerment of women, one should look at the inadequate opportunities presented to them by the social structures which are most often gender discriminatory in nature.

Scholars have not agreed upon the definition of empowerment since it is drawn from several fields of study. Diaw (2005) warns that there is little agreement on the meaning of the word empowerment especially in the fields of education policy and development planning. In addition, scholars fail to point out the meaning of the term empowerment, calling it unclear and ambiguous (Narayan, 2007; Diaw, 2005; Parpart, Rai & Staudt, 2002; Perkins, 1995). In fact, Kieffer (1984) states that its “applicability has been limited by continuing conceptual ambiguity” (p. 16). In my opinion, scholars who research on the term have to put up with its lack of clear definition or redefine it to fit their contextual needs.

Rappaport (1987) views empowerment as a societal change which treats the disempowered group (and in this case women) as agents of change that constitutes a bottom-up perspective where women are involved. According to Diaw (2005) the involvement of the disempowered is quite important because it brings the notion of agency or taking action. Therefore, the disempowered are not silent spectators but they play an active role of identifying their own problems, determining how and what to be done. For
instance, if society has been oppressing women, Rappaport (1987) expects them to go through several stages in solving the problem involving: discovering the problem, discussing how it affects the people, coming up with solutions and the implementation.

Rappaport (1987) defines empowerment as “a process by which people… gain mastery over issues which are of concern to them” (p. 122). In a situation where rural women have no economic power, they must be given a chance to understand their situation and come up with workable solutions. In this case, an increase in women’s personal assets through a micro credit scheme may result in the partner/husband feeling challenged in his role as provider for the family by an attempt to control family resources. Therefore, to empower such a group, one needs to study the group; and understand the problems and the possibility of husbands wanting to take control over any monies credited to women.

Worlf (1999) and Parpart, Rai and Staudt (2002) define empowerment as a force that encourages social activism in fighting poverty and the lack of opportunity from local national and international levels, and calling upon the oppressed, especially women, to question the status quo. For this activism to be meaningful and successful, proper and wise strategy is required that can be acquired through formal education. It becomes important to convince those in power and the so-called haves in the society that the oppressed are quite aware of the prevailing conditions and are determined to act to improve their situation (Worlf, 1999).

Parpart, Rai and Staudt (2002) argue that the concept of empowerment is used in the business world by managers to improve productivity. Its connection with “power” gives empowerment a wide range of uses. In this sense, it means “the ability to exert power over, to make things happen…, the ability to change the world, to
overcome opposition” (p. 5). It has to do with the level of influence one can have over external decisions affecting him or her directly. Hence, it is important to look at how marginalized groups are able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance and assert their independent right to demand change from those institutions that affect them negatively (Worlf, 1999). Akinsola (2005) envisions empowerment in social relations as the process by which unequal power relations are transformed into equitable power sharing, thus, helping those with less power. Akinsola’s definition is closely linked to human rights, justice and equality. In fact, many people and organizations interested in making the world a better or more equitable place adopt an empowerment approach. Empowerment emphasizes people’s potentials including those of the poor and the marginalized; whereas if things change and all social institutions employ fairness and democracy, all people can have the ability to change the world.

Empowerment is defined in several studies as gaining control over and making critical decisions about one’s life (Kabeer, 2001; UNICEF, 1999; Perkins, 1995; UNICEF, 1994; Rappaport, 1981). It involves having access to resources, awareness-raising, meaningful and quality participation in the society and the willingness to take up leadership roles and challenge the status quo (Bhattacharya, 2009; Narayan, 2007; Gill, 2006; World Bank, 2002; Kabeer, 2001). Sen (1999) views empowerment as the expansion of people’s capabilities and freedom to live a comfortable life. He argues that rights, opportunities, and entitlements contribute to the expansion of human freedom, which I would call empowerment. According to Sen, being able to make choices that are free from coercion and circumstances is empowerment. Women and
girls in Kenya need to get to this level of making decisions for themselves, not because they lack alternatives but because the choices can make their lives better.

Perkins (1995) claims empowerment is “encouraging individual and community control over the planning and implementation of solutions to individually and locally felt problems, typically by decentralizing decision making authority” (p. 767). Since decisions need to be based on sound reasoning, it is very important for the decision makers to be autonomous and well-informed about the pros and cons of their decisions. This kind of reasoning is strengthened through formal education. Putting education at the center of empowerment is used in relation to Paulo Freire’s (1982) belief that eradication of illiteracy in marginalized groups has the ability to raise their consciousness, self-esteem, capabilities and inspirations, thereby improving their capability to challenge social inequality (Gill, 2006; Parpart, Rai & Staudt, 2002).

Self-esteem is strongly linked with empowerment especially on individual’s self-efficacy (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Sadker and Sadker (1994) make a connection stating that strong self-esteem is important for one to feel confident about what he or she can do and become. These views closely relate to Akinsola (2005), who perceives empowerment as having inner power to express and defend one’s rights thus, providing greater self-confidence over one’s own life, and personal and social relationships. According to Sadker & Sadker (1994), self-esteem “is not only a vital sign of mental health, it is also a connection to academic achievement and a direct link to career goals and hopes for the future” (p. 77). Furthermore, girls’ self-confidence is viewed as a short-lived phenomenon: much is lost in adolescence.
Sadker and Sadker (1994) elaborate further that empowering girls and women is more delicate than that of men and boys. Youth are very concerned with their growth and changes in their bodies during adolescence. For instance, increase in body size and strength for boys is taken positively because males believe they became more in charge to avoid being viewed as weak. On the other hand, girls lose their control with age, becoming more conscious of themselves especially in a country where thin is considered beautiful. This shift from self-confidence to self-consciousness confuses girls and affects their future aspirations and careers (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). For these authors, it seems that as girls interact with the world they become less active, more dependent, thus shattering their delicate self-esteem. Moreover, the level of being empowered also drops despite their level of education since they no longer trust their abilities. Going by the views by Sadker and Sadker, expecting young females to act in an empowered manner is not only challenging but confusing to them. In addition, neither school nor society reinforces the message of empowerment to young women.

From this backdrop, empowerment has different meanings in different socio-cultural and political contexts. Putting these many definitions together, a person may get the impression that empowerment speaks to poor and marginalized groups’ power, influence, resources, control, self-esteem, capabilities and opportunities that affect their lives. It encourages fair and equitable distribution of states’ wealth and services without discrimination. Aspects and indicators of the same include access to education and information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity (Narayan, 2007). Narayan holds that these elements are closely intertwined
and act in synergy in order to create more effective, responsive and inclusive institutions that are accountable.

Basically, one would argue that most of the definitions of this concept revolves around gaining power and control in decision making concerning resources and one’s quality of life. Empowerment emphasizes the marginalized group’s state of inequality, thus, advocating for improved access to information about the causes of the inequality in society. Empowerment encourages the powerless to develop the capacity to direct their own interests despite the obstacles in order to overcome structural inequality. Some of the definitions reflect awareness of the structural inequalities which exist, affecting individuals and groups, especially women and girls. Other factors which seem to be very important in defining empowerment include capacity to exercise such strategic life choices as access to resources, agency, and outcomes (Kabeer, 2001).

Based on the reviewed literature, I note that several authors view the concept of empowerment as a process, a destination while others are undecided. Empowerment takes time to be accomplished, making it a step-by-step journey (World Bank, 2002; Narayan, 2002; Bennet, 2002; Sen, 1999; Zimmerman, 1995; Shor, 1992). World Bank (2002) views empowerment as a means to social inclusion, which takes time for planning, implementation and evaluation to seal the loopholes. For instance, when we think of small ethnic groups or even women and girls who continue to be underrepresented in the education system in Kenya, they appear invisible in policy. Therefore, mainstreaming them cannot be a one day affair; it must be a long term process that requires time and money.
Further, Narayan (2002) affirms empowerment as a process by stating that the inclusion of marginalized groups calls for community advocacy. Empowerment allows consulting with all stakeholders in order to make them parts of the change. It involves availing assets, structures and social institutions that are required for the completion of the inclusion circle for the marginalized. Narayan (2002) insists that this procedure may involve removing all social barriers and making opportunities available for the marginalized groups. For instance, if more Maasai girls need to be included in secondary schools in Kenya, there is a need to ensure that the requisite school structures are available, have space vacancy) close to the girls’ homes and have all the facilities required to make the change sustainable. Consequently, the process may involve advocacy programs involving policy makers, parents, the girls and the community members for people to buy into the idea, thus putting up the structures, and finally ensuring that the change is sustained as a process.

Shor (1992) and Bennet (2002) view empowerment as transformation. In particular, Shor (1992) explains, “Transformation is a journey of hope, humor, setbacks, breakthroughs, and creative lives, on a long and winding road paved with dreams whose time is overdue” (p. 263). Policy makers should not fear change because “empowering education is a long term process of redevelopment” (p. 198). This means that any project aimed at transforming education and society in general will not be achieved in one day. Resistance to change affects personal (women and girls) and social (Kenya’s) success and development. Education practitioners who embrace the possibility of equity cannot avoid being open- minded. Change should be accepted as
part of life (for example, children grow to become adults) and being rigid and conservative leads to lack of growth.

On the other hand, a few scholars claim that empowerment is a destination. The proponents of this view include Narayan (2002) and Zimmerman (1995) who assert that when empowerment goals remain inaccessible for a long time, the group under oppression and in need of social change still remains invisible and its interests remain unattended to at policy level. Therefore, when working toward bettering the situation of marginal groups, prolonging the results leads to frustration, with strong likelihood of the group in question giving up. In this sense, one would get the impression that empowerment is a destination.

According to Zimmerman (1995) empowerment enables individuals to gain methods of accessing and controlling resources to achieve their goals in life. However, in viewing empowerment based on Zimmerman’s view of achieving one’s goal in life, one gets the impression that attaining life goals will become an end by itself. If taken as a goal, empowerment will be achieved one day, thus, making the battle against inequality in society a thing of the past. But is this possible?

Other authors claim both sides of the argument by viewing empowerment as a process and a goal (Parpart, Rai & Staudt, 2002; Narayan, 2002). They assert that any user of the concept should think of the big picture, combining both process and goal to achieve results. Delay in achieving a goal influences people’s faith and patience to try again and again. There is an English saying, “Justice delayed is justice denied.” This saying implies that when people anticipate change for too long, it may serve no purpose
in future. Furthermore, justice connotes power change and power change can be difficult to accomplish.

Although it is clear that empowerment is a series of experiences as noted by many scholars, sometimes it needs to be taken as a goal which must be accomplished. As mentioned earlier, working without any set time limit could be risky, leading to great delays. For instance, many marginal groups in the society have continued to suffer at the hands of greedy leaders who use delaying tactics to retain the status quo. Such delaying tricks have been played on Kenyan women for a long time in relation to asserting their interests in politics and other male dominated fields (Nzomo, 1997). The English people will say, “Hurry hurry has no blessings.” But, they also appreciate time by saying, “A stitch in time saves nine.” This is in appreciation of doing the right thing at the right time. In my view, the concept of empowerment is a myth as long as the power of decision making remains in the hands of a few members of society, who also own resources and the means of production.

**Formal Education as an Empowering Tool**

Formal education and its empowering role for women and girls is non-quantifiable, but, other important factors could be considered as empowering the marginalized in society. Despite there being several forms of empowerment, formal education is viewed as the most basic tool, close at hand to the marginalized members of society (UNESCO, 2008). However, it is important to clearly understand that formal education alone is not enough to empower, and for this reason, researchers support
supplementary methods. For instance, communication and giving a voice to the voiceless is one of the factors that make a lasting difference in the lives of women.

Weyer (2009) and Etllng (1993) define education as the process of acquiring basic skills, academics, technical information, discipline, citizenship, positive democratic values and attitudes. The authors describe three types of education, formal, non-formal, and informal, and further suggest that each is important in attaining the goal of assisting learners to acquire and share knowledge and skills. Formal education is hierarchical, with physical school structures, age limits, learning levels or grades. Non-formal education is more learners-centered and may not necessarily require organization from top to bottom. Informal education is less structured and deals with everyday experiences which are not planned or organized. Elders and peers act as teachers who interpret and explain the learning experiences to the young.

Formal education tends to be career-oriented since the learning tends to be geared towards certain fields of interest and study. It is unfortunate that society places more value on academic skills rather than social skills which more often than not are acquired through non-formal and informal learning (Etllng, 1993). This segment will focus more on formal education, which is academic, with learner-acquired values, beliefs, experiences, skills and attitudes that are in tune with the society (Weyer, 2009).

The purpose of formal education is to gain knowledge and skills necessary to make conscious, informed and reasonable decisions about all situations in life (Freire, 1982). In other words, the role of education becomes that of empowering marginalized
and poor people to see their situation, analyze it critically and make sound decisions for
the better. Although the benefits of education are many, sometimes it becomes quite
specific to the needs in hand. Freire viewed education as a tool for empowerment of the
poor and marginalized in society.

Parpart, Rai and Staudt (2002) view formal education as a force which
encourages those who are poor and oppressed to fight for their rights. The marginalized
members of society could analyze the reasons why they lack jobs and opportunities at
local and national levels. After conducting a proper analysis and understanding the
social structures, they could easily question the status quo and face their dissatisfaction.
For this activism to be meaningful and successful, proper and wise strategy is required,
which can be acquired through formal education. Today, education is encouraging the
equality of males and females in society by adhering to human rights of the individual.
Local and international organizations concerned about the poor state of some
community members and groups are pushing for equal education for both boys and
girls (UNESCO, 2007). Because more women are oppressed and poor, the educated
ones have enough reasons to convince those in power and the haves in society that the
oppressed are quite aware of the prevailing conditions and are determined to improve
the situation.

Today, education is viewed as a possible solution to most social problems and
injustices (Shor, 1992; Miller, 1992; Dewey, 1938). It can prepare people for
employment, upward social mobility, improved quality of life, increased participation
in social activities, and active participation in politics (Ombonga, 2008; Mulama, 2008;
Mule, 2008; Achoka, Odebero, Maiyo & Mualuko, 2007). Education can open doors for women in areas that have traditionally been dominated by men. Access to additional jobs resulting from improved education of women is a form of empowerment. This would be in line with Shor’s (1992) view that education is useless if it does not change the self and the society.

Other scholars suggest that education has to be holistic for it to mold an all rounded person who is ready to develop self and the community (Shor, 1992; Ojiambo, 2007; Eshiwani, 1993; Karani, 1987; Freire, 1970; Dewey, 1938). According to these authors, consumer targeted holistic education is viewed as: pragmatic, benefit-based, attitude changing, service oriented, virtue based, inculcating discipline, and the fear of God. This kind of education incorporates academic, life skills and sports. Holistic education is based on John Dewey’s experiential learning which helps the learner navigate better her or his own environment. Thus, this will improve access to education among Kenyans and especially the females which assures them all the above mentioned benefits and many more.

There are many people in history that became educated and were empowered, although we cannot claim formal education was all they used to bring change. This means we still have reasons to believe in the power of education in empowering the powerless in society. The spirit of Freire (1982) on making people aware of their condition in order to change their situation becomes very crucial. Coming out of an oppressive situation calls for some skills to improve their unfortunate position. Historically famous figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr. of the United States,
Mahatma Gandhi of India and Nelson Mandela of South Africa fit this category (Raatma, 2001).

Linking education to social change, Shor (1992) and Miller (1992) propose that an irrelevant education that does not promote critical thinking and bring change to self and society is not worth it. Using the above named great male leaders does not mean women are invisible in bringing social change in difficult situations. Professor Wangari Maathai of Kenya fits in this structure through her work with local women to better their lives.

Ju (2007) laments that poor education among Maasai children not only diminishes their ability to develop but also renders them less productive in society. Parents’ poor educational background worsens the chance for better educational opportunities, access to good health care, and nutrition in their communities. Poorly educated parents do not worry much about issues of gender inequality in their families. Therefore having more educated women would reverse this situation because educated parents, and women in particular, educate their children.

Sifuna (2005) asserts that obtaining information from regions that are Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) regarding drop-out rate from either schools or district education offices is difficult. Records indicate that the drop-out rate for females is higher than for males. Despite low enrollment rate for females in the ASAL regions in Kenya, the drop-out rate is much higher than the national level. Sifuna states that free primary education appears to have little or no effect on females in these geographically deprived regions.
Mulama (2008) claims there are other reasons which keep females in these communities away from school including such cultural practices such as early marriage, female circumcision and gender bias. Achoka, Odebero, Maiyo and Mualuko (2007) concur with Mulama’s views on culture as a barrier to females’ education. The authors theorized that participation of a girl-child in her education in Kenya continues to be a challenge in some communities, a statement which is true of the Maasai community. Achoka et al (2007) particularly mentions cultural practices such as early marriage for young females who are withdrawn from school then married off to older men as one method of counteracting poverty in their families.

Although primary education is free in Kenya, other levels of education are not. Participation by children, especially females from marginalized groups in general and pastoralists in particular in formal education is determined by the cost of education. Sifuna (2005) states that poor parents from ASAL regions in Kenya cannot afford the cost of education, especially at the high school level where educational levies are still charged. According to Kratli (2000), the reason policies should be redirected to address the educational plight of the Maasai group is that it has been costly to run schools in the ASAL regions in Kenya. Constructed schools occasionally become dilapidated due to abandonment by this group due to its pastoralist lifestyle. If more children are needed in school for this community, educating women could be one solution because educated mothers have a higher chance of educating their children. This is supported by Sosa-Escudero and Marchionni (2004) who indicates that educated men spend less money than educated women on children’s education.
Educating all members of society accelerates development (Whitehead, 2003). Furthermore, failing women in education is equivalent to failing the whole community (UNESCO, 2010). Whitehead continues that if development is to take place at a reasonable speed, all members of society regardless of gender have to take an active role. Since many studies show that educated females tend to have smaller, healthier families, females’ education can improve living standards in both industrial and developing countries (UNICEF, 2007). Education of females can result in sustainable development because when women have a basic education, they tend to delay marriage and take more time to find suitable husbands, know about and practice family planning, have more job opportunities, lose fewer babies to childhood diseases and malnutrition, and as a result choose to give birth to fewer children (UNICEF, 2007). All of these outcomes tend to improve the social, physical, and economic health (and therefore sustainability) of a country. In addition, the resulting slowing of population growth can lessen stress on natural resources and the environment. Countries which have more educated women are known to have more skilled workers and less population as stated above (UNICEF, 2007).

For this reason, education, according to Shor (1992), has to be relevant in developing individuals who are active, cooperative in social processes because the self and society create each other. “The educational pedagogy must relate personal growth to public life, develop strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change” (p. 15). Education should prepare young women to fit into society, just as it does young men.
Following Shor’s (1992) ideas, empowerment is not limited to education only. It includes leadership and economic skills. Learners need not be content with access to education only. Education itself should seek to empower both females and males for a better future. It should enable them to become better community leaders, better mothers and fathers and to take charge of their communities in the future. However, this cannot happen if some learners especially young women are away from school.

If we examine these sentiments carefully, two things become clear as far as using education as an empowerment tool for women is concerned. First, deliberate efforts must be made to retain female students in school and second, the school curriculum must be tailored to cater for this group’s needs. If these two considerations are not made, we risk the danger of failing to match women’s skills with the economic opportunities which would, in turn, engage them fully in economic development.

Educating women can ensure that future generations get educated as well, thus reversing the sorry state of women globally. Sperling (2006) stated that 55% of out-of-school children are females. Worse still, 54% of all females who drop out of school before they finish primary school are in Africa and only one out of every five goes to secondary school. Sperling’s views reinforces the fact that high school education is never acquired by many children and something needs to be done to turn the situation around, especially in Africa. Although boys from marginalized communities are equally disadvantaged in education, any efforts to increase educational access should not close its eyes to female students because their situation is worsened by early marriage, family chores, distance to school and gender bias. Going by these statistics,
females are more likely than boys to be out of school and they face more issues which push them out of the education system because of their social roles.

**Importance of Education to Women**

“Every society has a way of torturing its women, whether by binding their feet or by sticking them into whalebone corsets. What contemporary American culture has come up with is designer jeans”—Joel Yager (Abdi & Cleghorn, 2005, p. 16).

Abdi and Cleghorn (2005) show the importance of education in the lives of individual learners and society. Women’s schooling is widely thought to have important nonmarket effects additional to any effects on market productivity. Scholarly studies and the applied policy literature stress that for development and poverty alleviation reasons, female schooling is an important. Summers (1993) states that:

> Once all the benefits are recognized, investment in the education of girls may well be the highest-return investment available in the developing world....Increased schooling has similar effects on the incomes of males and females, but educating girls generates much larger social benefits. (p. v)

Summers (1993) statement is strongly supported by UNDP (1996), and adds that educating women has a multiplier effect as noted below:

> As is now well known, educating women has a powerful multiplier effect on the well-being of families and on a society’s general level of human development. As women become literate, fertility rates fall, infant and child health improves, children’s educational level increases and household nutritional and sanitary conditions improve. (p. 110)

Women ability to access resources in form of salaries and employment enables them to access family planning programs. In addition, working women have the need to plan their families in order to concentrate on their career improvement. As such, having few children becomes a necessity, not a luxury. Scholars on education issues argue that there are positive effects of mothers’ schooling associated with the education of their
children (UNDP, 1996). According to them, mothers’ education benefits the child more than fathers’. They argue that mothers are keen in providing good learning environment for children, children heavily rely on their mothers for their school homework and supervision, and mothers’ education influences the daughters’ more than the sons’.

Despite the above listed benefits of educating women and girls, many scholars lament that governments and families spent more money on the education of men and boys than this group (Hill & King, 1995). These scholars suggest that, due to the benefits associated with the education of mothers to their children, governments and policy makers should base their educational polices on such information. Basically, investing on women education makes much difference in education for generation and generations. Yet, despite many policy changes, many governments still grapple with gender inequality in education, Kenya included.

Many studies state that women’s education enhances their role in the community, national development and self efficacy (UNDP, 2008; Pearson & Craig, 2001; Whitehead, 2003; Hill & King, 1995; Davidson & Kanyuka, 1992). For instance, Hill and King (1995) opine that rising levels of education improve women's productivity in the home, thereby increasing family health, child survival, and fighting poverty through investment in children's human capital (Dodoo, 1998; Njogu, 1991; Pearson & Craig, 2001; Whitehead, 2003). All these authors contend that the education of women plays a crucial role in the fight against poverty and the regeneration of communities because when education fails women it subsequently sustains poverty in society.
Formal education has been viewed as an important tool for the liberation of women in Kenya and elsewhere. Okeke-Ihejirika (2004) claims that although few women in Africa countries have acquired formal education, they are often accused of failing to recognize their culture and mimicking Western ideologies. In other words, in the packet of formal education comes with: change of one’s cultural values, beliefs and feeling of being privileged, compared to the un-educated women and being involved with movements which fight against women marginalization in many social institutions. However, although formal education creates classism in women (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004), I believe its advantages outweighs the disadvantages and the more reason why it is encouraged.

Today, many African governments seem to understand and recognize the benefits of formal education for both men and women. This is illustrated by the national and international policies adopted by these countries towards achievement of gender equality in education for several decades now. Universal Primary Education (UPE), Education for All (EFA) and Free Primary Education (FPE) are all measures put in place to fight gender inequality in education (UNDP, 2008; Achoka, Odebero, Maiyo & Mualuko, 2007; UN, 2000). Although these measures have born some fruits, much needs to be done.

Also, gender inequality in schools is being fuelled by teaching and learning materials which many scholars brand as sexist. For instance, some authors argue that school textbooks and curricula are some of the causes of female students lagging behind in schools (UNESCO, 2004; Kambararni, 2006). Based on these views, teaching
materials such as class posters, text books and the illustrations there in, play a big role in empowering or disempowering of girls in school. Since women are shown as dominant in low-cadre jobs, young women in schools get frustrated that their efforts in school may not change their social status.

Otieno (1995) and Obura (1992) concluded that teaching and learning materials in Kenyan schools create what is popularly referred to as the “hidden curriculum.” According to these studies, this hidden curriculum forces young women to conform to social roles that were performed by their mothers and grandmothers (feminine roles). As such, school textbook illustrations teach this lesson clearly by depicting women as housekeepers, cleaners, cooks, nurses and secretaries. Young women in school feel dispirited the message that going up the education ladder is ‘wrong,’ for them as women.

Although huge campaigns geared towards deconstructing the image of women professional have been taking place, women and girls still question the value of getting much education. I guess young women in schools today seem to be confused because they are exposed to two contrasting messages: campaign messages telling them they can become anything they wish to become and the hidden curriculum messages telling them women are cleaners and cooks. The confusion is compounded by comparing themselves (young women) with their male compatriots who are depicted as doctors and lawyers in the same school textbooks.

In her report, Obura (1992) insisted that sexism in textbooks and teaching materials under-represented women and characterized them only in their roles as
mothers and wives in the school system. Consequently, this has devalued female students’ education aspirations especially in those subjects and careers that are dimmed ‘male dominated’ such as engineering and mathematics. School has taught us to see school subjects as gendered (male and female) thus, the male ones are superior and female ones are inferior. This trend continues to the pay packages in each profession. As such, parents may find it uneconomical to support female students taking inferior courses because they will later receive poor salaries. If education is a tool for empowering learners, all learners should be encouraged to take all subjects and this should also be echoed in the teaching and learning materials.

**Education, Resources and Inheritance**

According to Moser (1993), women should not be viewed as passive recipients of resources and development. Moser’s argument is in line with many international policies, projects and programs, more specifically since the 1975 declaration of the UN Decade for Women. This declaration shifted the way of planning for women from addressing issues that were predominantly on the reproductive and care roles: food, health care and family planning to their becoming partners in resource allocation and development.

Making women partners in development and shifting the social notion that women are not only good at home but in development is not easy. However, educating women and girls from marginalized communities could give them access to the right to resources. Using African Feminism as the stage, women fight for rights to education, land, control of food distribution, living wages, safe working conditions, education,
health care and election reforms (Mikell, 1997). Educating Maasai females would enhance their knowledge and provide them with the intellectual ability to actively claim their rights when necessary. Since Otieno (1995) lamented that the formal education in Kenya more so the curriculum is “designed by men, for men and with men” (p. 21), attention needs to be paid to the same for both genders to be at par in national development.

The slow pace of acquiring formal education among the Maasai community is disturbing and something needs to be done to amend the situation. African Development Bank & UNESCO (2005) observed that there are:

Approximately 700,000 Maasai in Kenya, [and] fewer than 5,000 have had formal education, an abysmal average of 5 people per year since the beginning of colonial rule. In the last two decades, the lack of education in the Maasailand has brought the Maasai untold suffering. Kenya has changed quickly, and other ethnic groups in Kenya seemingly have developed at a faster pace than the Maasai. (p. 40)

Petrides (1998) claims that highly educated women spend more money on the education of their children than educated men, as mentioned earlier. Educated parents would be in a position to supplement the funding of public schools in the Kajiado region which seem inadequately funded by the government. As a result, the schools have very poor resources and structures, making it quite hard for Maasai children to acquire quality education.

Highly educated women act as change agents in their community. However, this may not come to pass in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa because, according to Adusa-Karikari (2008), “dropout rates beyond primary level tend to be higher for females than for males, a trend that has been attributed to various economic and social-
cultural factors” (p. 23). Furthermore, Adusa-Karikari attributes the low female participation in education to the common perception that women and girls need only basic skills to prepare them for the child-care and housekeeping in marriage. Yet, highly educated women have the possibility of serving as change agents. In my experience, educated women have the ability to advocate for better schools for their children, urging the government to ensure all schools are funded without discrimination.

When women are well-educated, they in turn educate their daughters and sons, thus, erasing educational gender discrimination in society. According to Wangui (2003), there were few people aged between 4-24 years attending formal schooling in Kajiado District in Kenya. Wangui conducted her study in Kenya among the Maasai people. The author points out that family emphasize more on educating boys more than girls because it is viewed as an investment. Supposedly, educated boys are expected to contribute to their families and the society at large.

In the study, Maasai parents categorically stated that “educating a girl is risky as they stand a higher chance of dropping out of school than boys due to pregnancy, early marriage or both… [and that] girls are also an important source of wealth (bride price) especially for poor families, who prefer to obtain an income by marrying off their young daughters rather than spend money on them through school fees” (pp. 35-36). There seems to be double standards in a community that practices “bride booking” before and immediately after birth.
Many societies in Kenya do not prioritize girl-child education, and the Maasai community is no different. Parents appear to be taking child labor and early marriage as alternatives to educating their daughters. My view is that, educated mothers would be in a position to put their daughters in the family budget. The practice of investing in the education of males but not females by parents is related to the patriarchal structure of many communities in Kenya where inheritance is a son’s right. In the case of the Maasai community, inheritance is viewed as a boy’s right (Craatz, 2005; Coast, 2002). In most cases, the youngest son receives all that belong to the mother. This is because it is assumed he will take care of the parents at old age.

According to Eshiwani (1993), males are viewed as providers of additional economic support to the family. This shows the perceived link between education and employment where males seem to have a better prospect for wage jobs in the formal sector. Interestingly, although the above is a discussion of the importance of educating young women beyond basic education, not all scholars buy the idea that as long as you are educated, you are guaranteed a quality life. Webter (1999), studying the socio-cultural barriers to Kenyan females’ education at high school level in Western Kenya revealed that although more females are going to school, they still face more barriers than males. For instance, the study cited low-quality, community-run schools for females, low curriculum coverage and sexual harassment as some of the challenges with which females must contend with in the western part of Kenya.

Based on Webter’s (1999) view, an increase in enrollment for females in secondary schools is not a guarantee of a better life if their daily experiences which
impede their full participation in the learning process are not investigated. Webter takes this as an indication that there is more need to make a difference in females’ lives in school especially in eliminating poverty and sexual harassment. There is need to eliminate school and classroom practices which show gender bias to retain female students in school. In other words, we cannot talk of increasing access and quality of female education if the challenges facing the ones already in school are left unattended.

**Other Means of Empowerment Discussed in Literature**

This segment of the discussion explores other means of empowerment such as political, social inclusion, poverty eradication, economic empowerment, communication and technology. Educating and empowering women to take leadership roles in politics, especially in a patriarchal society, is given a high premium by many groups which fight gender discrimination in society (Parpart, Rai & Staudt, 2002). Such organizations claim that “without a critical mass of women in national decision-making levels, women’s concerns will remain marginalized in many parts of the world (Women’s Leaning Partnership, 2007). Giving a 30% chance to women at parliament, as is the case in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2007) and many other nations, is one step towards female political empowerment but in many cases this has remained on paper rather than in reality. In addition, the female representation should be in all sectors not just in parliament, meaning much still needs to be done. For instance, increasing the number of women at decision-making levels could lead to reduced gender-based violence by enhancing and increasing women's political voice.
Political Involvement

Politicians are known to have a lot of influence on what happens in society and have the ability to use their power to oppress some groups of people. In tackling cases of oppression, education becomes part of a collective effort to teach the oppressed of today how to overcome their situation and how to become the democratic subjects of tomorrow. Bhattacharya (2009) claims that all people need to be empowered through education to avoid becoming politically marginalized, which is sometimes used as a tool to retain the cycle of poverty. Equitable involvement of all people in the economy, improving the quality of lives of women and men in terms of accessing essential goods and services, information, ability to make changes in line with what works for each group and resolving conflict in a peaceful manner are key requirements. Girls and women in Kajiado, Kenya need not be left out due to their inadequate education.

Paxton and Hughes (2007) on political representation of women list numerical, descriptive and substantive as type of women’s representation. By numerical representation women are encouraged to act in numbers when advocating for political changes which are tilted to their interests. Educating women to make them more critically conscious remains a better deal for them (UNICEF, 2007). My argument is that giving more women the ability to become critically conscious of what social structures need to change, why and in what direction makes a more lasting difference to the future than any form of affirmative action.

Eshiwani (1993) notes that the number of young women attending high schools in Kenya needs to be guarded and protected to maintain a constant rise. This calls for
unwavering supporting to those female students in school to protect them from dropping out. Researching on them and documenting their school experiences could be a way of giving some insightful information to planners and decision makers concerned about women education. It is believed that the more support students get to complete school, the more they get equipped to occupy decision-making positions and the more they are able to influence issues which concern their welfare. Much of the women’s work at the family level and in the informal sector remains invisible and women face legal constraints which prohibit them from owning property. In such a situation, it would be in order for women to acquire higher education, enabling them to advocate for their political and economic empowerment.

Women’s Leaning Partnership (2007) stated that achieving equality under the law is something worth striving for, if women wish to gain equal access to education, technical training, increased leadership at all levels, equal pay and gender sensitive social systems especially the courts. However, high illiteracy levels remain a stumbling block which needs to be overcome through having some women as lawyers in the Kenyan courts. According to Women’s Leaning Partnership, a general lack of women in decision-making positions is viewed as a sure way of excluding them advocating for their needs.
Inclusion and Participation

Mosedale (2003) and Ojiambo (2007) claim that poor people are generally excluded from participation in state institutions that make the decisions and administer the resources that affect their lives. This is what leads poor people to conclude, “Nobody hears the poor. It is the rich who are being heard” or “When the rich and poor compete for services, the rich will always get priority” (Mosedale, 2003, p. 17). From these authors’ views, bringing about systemic reform might require changing these unequal institutional relations that reflect a culture of inequality.

Changing unequal institutional relations depends in part on top-down measures to improve governance, and changes in the laws, procedures, regulations, values, ethics, and incentives that guide the behavior of public officials and the private sector. It also depends crucially on the presence of well-informed and well-organized citizens and poor people where their education cannot be left out. From these sentiments, it is clear that if young women are educated, they become well aware of the rules and laws of investment, and participation and do not suffer exclusion from decisions which affect their lives and resource mobilization.

Many studies state that women’s education enhances their role in self, community and national development. For instance, Hill and King (1995) claim that rising levels of education improve women's productivity in the home which in turn can increase family health, child survival, and the investment in children's human capital. Whitehead (2003) stated that education of women plays a crucial role in the fight
against poverty and the regeneration of communities because failing women amounts to sustaining poverty. Against this background, I believe that the full potential of Maasai women in community development is not being exploited to the maximum. Akama (2002) suggests that a focus on the education of Maasai female students with an aim to enhancing their role in development would reverse the situation of poverty in the community.

**Communication and Having a Voice as Empowerment**

Communication is a basic human need, indispensable for the organization of societies and should be the foundation for building an informed society. Since the emergence of the Internet, information and access to information is power. In the same vein, empowerment of women through Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) has been recognized as a vital element in national development efforts (Articlesbase, 2009). Both rural and urban women need to be able to share and receive current information as a form of empowerment. This could be achieved through telephone services, Internet services, newspapers and books.

Parpart, Rai and Staudt (2002) claim many women are not in a position to access much information since they cannot afford Internet and telephone bills, excluding them from the information society. In Kenya, for instance, there are wide technical and economic disparities between men and women based on their ability to communicate with the international world. Therefore, I suggest that the agencies that shape the information society should pursue goals of gender equality and women's advancement just as in other areas such as political and economic justice. In my view,
the information society should be grounded in a human rights approach. Spivak (1999) argues that the right to communicate, the right to non-discrimination and the right to represent one’s own case is important.

Spivak (1999) raises the question of the voiceless state of the poor and the marginalized communities in many parts of the world, especially women when she talks of subalterns who occasionally are denied the right to speak. In her article: Can the subalterns speak?, Spivak wonders why the poor and marginalized groups are always represented by the “Other” who may not fully or correctly present and represent them both historically and in their reality. According to her text, the experiences of the working class and the underprivileged of society cannot be similar. At best, the privileged render underprivileged groups invisible and voiceless.

In other words, asking any marginalized group to speak for itself and giving it the ability and style to do so is giving it a voice. Spivak (1999) insists that letting the listeners get the story from the horse’s mouth, so to speak, is a step in the right direction. In this sense, understanding the experiences of Maasai female students from their point of view is similar to giving them a voice: this chance to share their personal experiences is in line with Spivak’s idea of letting the voiceless be heard in their own words.

Improving the level of education for young women is a true gateway for their ability to later access information as mothers and workers, making it possible for them to enjoy their right to communicate. Having the ability to communicate is also having a voice. According to Articlesbase (2009), excluding or marginalizing groups of people
especially women and indigenous communities, from the mainstream economy is caused by their lack of access to information and lack of a voice among other reasons. Due to societal, cultural and market constraints, these groups have been forced to distance themselves from the global pool of information and knowledge. Articlesbase argues that this distance is reflected in the low levels of empowerment and inequality of men and women has enormously contributed to the slow pace of development in many countries. Based on this premise, it seems to be a fact that without progress towards empowerment of women, any attempt to raise the quality of lives of people would be incomplete. Today, there seems to be an increasing pool of evidence to prove the truth those societies which discriminate by gender pay a high price in terms of their stunted capacity to develop and to reduce poverty. In my view, solving this problem would call for increasing the educated population of both men and women and could improve their access to information, giving them a voice.

**Economic Empowerment**

In many cases, it is not easy for development officers in a rural village in Kenya to listen to rural woman compared to men (Mosse, 1993). This gender divide in communication raises a very important question in development-related projects which target women in their communities and to whose voices the development officers should be listening. Improving the education of young women in school improves their knowledge, language, and confidence to voice their needs. Moreover, Mosse (1993) mentions that increased knowledge of whatever kind increases one’s power to communicate.
Mosse (1993) insists that the patriarchal nature of many societies excludes women from the decision making processes because they lack the language to express themselves. Language and communication skills are subjects taught in school and one’s ability to utilize these skills improves with increased education. This means that any efforts to improve the levels of education of young women is an effort to improve their access to information and to acquiring a voice, thus decreasing their level of marginalization in society. This being the case, I strongly believe that enabling females to communicate to the inside and outside world would, to a great degree, make them economically active.

It has been established that gender relations affect all aspects of people’s lives including income, opportunity, security and empowerment (Adusa-Karikari, 2008; World Bank, 2001). This means that gender differences could act both as a cause and characteristic of poverty. In other words, one’s gender could determine if one gets considered for a certain job opening or not. Some companies are known to prefer men than women for some positions and vice versa.

Arun (2008) claims that the feminization argument of poverty has helped to bring out the connection between gender and poverty in terms of its extent, incidence and trends. For Whitehead (2003), female-headed households are seen to have a higher incidence of poverty compared to male-headed ones. Young women need to become empowered to take up jobs and income-generating activities to cushion their families against poverty in case they become heads of households.
Many parties of women empowerment belief that economic power is the most effective, and all the rest follow (Arun, 2008; Ojiambo, 2007). Although many scholars believe that poverty cannot be erased completely, extending credit facilities to women through micro-credits has been used in some parts of the world. Though a buzz word for funding purposes in the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) dealing with women, few women have benefited (Lairap-Fonderson, 2002).

Many scholars assert that enabling young women to gain economic power and become decision-makers in family expenditure is unique to women. Culturally, economic power was only vested in men, an assertion that Lairap-Fonderson differs with. Lairap-Fonderson (2002), researching on the role of women in micro-credit institutions in Kenya and Cameroon found out that micro-credit institutions were not empowering enough, as many people had been incited to belief. For her, these financial institutions were more of disciplinary tools than empowering ones to women. After securing loans, women were keen on paying back the loans and cautioning their friends to follow suit in order to avoid penalties.

Based on Lairap-Fonderson’s (2002) observation, it is wise to invest more on women’s education rather than on micro-credit institutions. Empowering women in this case is not all about money. Money is just but one facet of empowerment. Education enables women to move beyond money and economic stability to job security, active participation in social, political, and economic bargains. Equipped with a critical mind, educated women have the ability to critique the status quo, see gender gaps and work
towards changing society. In other words, they are able to change whichever facet of
society they wish to change.

**Education and Marginalization in Kenya**

In order to understand the educational experiences of pastoral females, it is important to understand the context under which they operate, which could explain why they are marginalized. In this section, I will define the term *marginalization* and then shift the discussion to ways in the current marginalization of Maasai women and girls in education, based on the historical cultural and political institutions in Kenya. The pillars of political orchestration of some ethnic groups in the country were erected by the colonial government based on how particular ethnic groups reacted to the colonial rulers. The fact that some members of the Kenyan society still seem almost invisible is based on Kenyan political leaders seeming to have imitated some colonial practices, thus, becoming experts in setting apart some of their own. This practice seems to affect Kenyan women in general in education, on the job market and in leadership roles, thus, maintaining them on the margins.

**Marginalization Defined**

In its literal sense, marginalization has to do with being subjected to inequality, domination and/or colonization due to: being a minority, being a majority but powerless or being different from mainstream society. Mutua (2009) defines marginalization as: exclusion, being set apart or treated differently. Chege & Sifuna (2006) noted that African societies have experienced many forms of domination such as the slave trade, colonialism, neocolonialism, developmentalism and globalization.
Mutua (2009) insists that marginalization often happens to minority members of a society and often is based on ethnicity, race, gender, religion, language, color, or culture among others. When marginalization occurs to a group of people, voicelessness, invisibility, and poor representation in many spheres of life are the consequences of being dominated. Also, domination reduces people’s opportunities to better their situation, and leading to social inequality. Furthermore, socially marginalized groups face social inequality, educational inequalities and social exclusion. This makes marginalization a process of elimination.

House-Midamba (1996) asserts that the question whether Kenyan women have been treated as second class citizens is no secret. For her, Kenyan women have been working hard to pull themselves from the margins socially, politically and economically. She attributes gender inequality to political repression, human right abuses, economic mismanagement, nepotism and corruption. Although the fight for women inclusion has not been easy, there seems to be other forces which have made things work out faster—or so to speak—‘winds of change’ have been sweeping throughout the continent of Africa for the last three decades. According to her, winds of change and democracy are spreading like bushfire throughout Africa (Guy, 1994 cited in House-Midamba, 1996). Also, local and international organizations interested in gender equality, equal access and competition over resources have stepped into the scene as women supporters, who question the government’s role as the arbiter of gender struggles.
In an earlier study, House-Midamba (1990) argued that educational inequality in Kenya was as a result of African patriarchal societies ignoring the need for women to work outside their homes. As a result, this group has had no good chances of being well educated, trained and sharpened for the job market. In my observation, families, organizations and governments alike invest heavily on the education and training of those members who are believed to benefit these institutions more. Using families as an example, Mulama (2010) seems to support House-Midamba’s assertion because she maintains that, “in families with many children, these costs [direct costs—tuition fees, cost of text books, uniforms and transport] exceed the income of the family, girls are the first to be denied schooling” (p. 2). In other words, Mulama means investing in girls’ education in the family set-up takes a back seat when the economic situations are tough.

Although it is not time yet to celebrate, some gains have been achieved on investing on women and girls’ education and training in the family or elsewhere. Muriuki (2010) reporting on studies about wives who earn more money than their husbands in Kenya and elsewhere, “More women are landing better paying careers than their husbands, and researchers warn it is a threat to marriages” (p. 1). Muriuki’s story is a dilemma to wives earning more money than their husbands, and is not peculiar to the Kenyans but common phenomenon in other parts of the world. Many men were reported to be uncomfortable with the turn of events because, “researchers in Britain and USA… [maintained that] …Women earning more than their husbands are likely to end up either separated or divorced” (p. 1).
Muiruri (2010) study revealed that, it had become quite hard to maintain the balance for couples handling salary inequality crisis because, normally, while the pride of men gets wounded if they earn less than their wives, the women’s security gets enhanced through financial stability. Interviewed men preferred their wives to earn three quarters of their (men) salaries and not the other way round. For example, for every $100 earned by husband, the wife could earn $75.

This social expectation of men wanting their women to earn less money, have less power and less social networks in order to preserve male pride explains the lagging behind of women in attaining economic, social and political power. This fact must be frustrating to women because their efforts cannot be paralleled in food production and provision of family care.

The colonial regime in Kenya employed policies which undermined and reduced the status of Kenyan women (House-Midamba, 1990). The colonial government watered down any power attained by women during the pre-colonial period. For instance, the government controlled women’s roles in crop production and seeking jobs in the city. In general, the historical base of marginalization of women is strong and there is the possibility for it to continue if no tough steps are taken to reverse the situation.

Among the many methods being applied to raise the situation of women in Kenya and elsewhere is giving them adequate education. Education has been viewed by many scholars as a tool that can sharpen people’s minds to rise above oppression. Becoming educated and knowledgeable give people the power to see and challenge and
become concerned about their marginalization and exclusion from issues that concern them. In fact, the exclusion of marginal groups from social, political and economic benefits in their country has become a national and international concern and a challenge. As an effort to reduce the inequality gaps, there is a global move towards democracy, tolerance, diversity, social justice and human rights (UNESCO, 2008; UNDP, 2008).

In Kenya, marginal groups suffer exclusion from education, health services, politics, influential leadership positions, the economy, and jobs opportunities (Achoka, Odebero, Maiyo & Mualuko, 2007). Groups with have a higher chance of experiencing inequality include women and girls, children, people with disabilities, refugees, minorities and indigenous groups. Although it is internationally recognized that women are marginalized in formal education, their situation is doubled at the local level through cultural and sometimes religious practices in their own communities rendering them invisible.

According to Arun (2008), exclusion from education is equivalent to economic execution. Yet, in 1948, the United Nations (UN) assured all its member states that “Education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 1). Consequently, Kenya adopted the “international protocol that established Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand 1990 and the world education forum in Dakar, Senegal, 2000” (Achoka, Odebero, Maiyo & Mualuko, 2007, p. 275).
Although the world is preaching tolerance, it is important to mention that the world is still advancing some divisions while disadvantaging others. Some marginalizing factors with which marginal groups are grappling could be local, national and international. On the local level, it is understood that each community has its own ways of treating each of its members based on age, gender and social class. Such relations are guided by socio-cultural practices specific to each group of people.

Nationally, there are those decisions and policy guidelines which, although made by the government from a central point, affect all citizens. Examples will be used to clarify such forms of decisions which cause ripple effects in society, either top-down or bottom-up. However, it is important to note that some issues are interwoven into local, national or international levels, making it difficult to place them where they belong. For instance, the introduction of free primary education in Kenya affected all school-going children in the country. In the same vein, there are decisions made by international or global organizations that result in national and local effects.

A good example of decisions made from a global platform but resulting to national and local effects is the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in all developing countries by the World Bank in 1982. The SAPs policy demanded the introduction of cost sharing on social services such as education, health and agriculture, pushing the cost of such services too high at the local levels (Republic of Kenya, 2004). Again, Republic of Kenya continues to state that the introduction of major reforms and innovations in all sectors especially in education are aimed at achieving the goals of
industrial development and technological advancement, which are being advanced by all nations globally.

On a local scale, cultural and religious practices have been reported by researchers as causes of inequality in society. For instance, the patriarchal structure in many Kenyan communities affects the education of women and girls in the country. Mulama (2008), Mule (2008) and FAWE (2001) ascertain that when many Kenyan families face tough economic situations forcing them to cut the education budget for their children, males are preferred against females (FAWE, 2001). Eshiwani (1993) opines that Kenyan parents in the 1960s educated their sons, not daughters. Mulama (2008), who studied the education of pastoralist females in Kenya, noted that, "The nomadic [pastoral] life favors only boys… Parents [encourage] boys to go to school and the girls are required to look after the animals" (p. 2). Thus, both gender bias and tough economic situations affect the ability of Maasai women and girls to acquire formal education in Kenya because the choice of educating boys is common in many patriarchal communities (Mule, 2008; Unterhalter, 2006; Eshiwani, 1993). However, on a local level, this barrier to the education of Maasai women and girls marginalizes them.

Cultural practices such as male bias, early marriage, and initiation into adulthood among the Maasai people are harmful to girls’ education (Mulama, 2008; Otieno, 1995; Child Fund International, 2005; Soumaoro, 2000; Abagi & Okwach, 1993). They either give no chance at all or derail girls’ education. Without positive
intervention from the community and the government, girls could continue to be invisible and their needs unattended in the school system.

Women and girls have generally been marginalized at all levels of education in Kenya (UNESCO, 2007; Ju, 2007; Sifuna, 2005; FAWE, 2001; Ezeomah, 1997; Eshiwani, 1993). This marginalization cuts across all groups in the country, including the Maasai. Gender division in education has generally been seen as normal in formal education in Kenya and consequently in Kajiado District. Some scholars declare that the system treats women as subordinate partners, ignoring their knowledge, skills and academic abilities (Abagi & Okwach, 1993). Linking gender inequality to pastoral families, more boys than girls are taken to school because parents take education as an investment.

Shrinking of land resources coupled with climate change and drought are increasingly becoming a major challenge which forces many families from geographically deprived regions to offer poor education to their children. Parents from ASAL regions in Kenya face many economic hardships associated with land shortage, climate change and drought (Cheeseman, 2000, Omosa, 2005). Also, pastoral farmers take a longer time to recover from drought because their animals die compared to crop farmers. Re-stocking of livestock is not easy and the recovery takes time, making the farmers vulnerable economically, complicating more their ability to educate their children.

Cheeseman (2000) explains how some “progressive” Maasai started embracing land privatization which was introduced by the government with the objective of
lowering the numbers of the Maasai herds. Little by little, the land privatization policy has been transforming the Maasai from a subsistence way of life to a more commercial one. For instance, among the Maasai of Kajiado, this is exacerbated by the fact that many landowners are increasingly selling off their productive lands for other commercial purposes thus pushing the local pastoralists to the drier parts of the district (Omosa, 2005). This is also impinging on the economic ability of many Maasai families, thus affecting the education of their children.

On a national view, Alwy and Schech (2007) claim that despite the international, national and local cognizance of the importance of EFA, both for development and as a basic human right, its achievement still remains a huge challenge in Kenya, showing glaring regional disparities. It is unfortunate that the Kenyan education system seems to discriminate against those groups which do not fit into the mainstream school system. Such groups include girls, pastoral communities, people with disabilities, politically incorrect communities and others as mentioned earlier. This kind of educational inequality seems ironical considering the country is a signatory to the universal declaration of education as a human right (UNESCO, 2004).

About a decade ago, 164 countries including Kenya and partner organizations around the world collectively committed themselves to expanding educational opportunities for children, youth and adults by 2015 (UNESCO, 2008). The Kenyan committed itself to this pact and is doing everything possible to ensure that all children in the country acquire quality education by 2015. The best example we can draw from Kenya to demonstrate its commitment towards meeting the EFA goal is the start of free
primary education in the year 2003 (Republic of Kenya, 2004). This gave educational hope to all children in the country including Maasai girls. However, ASAL regions in the country are faced with huge gender disparities in education with such ASAL regions such as Kajiado District and North Eastern Province recording the lowest Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) of 29% in girls (Republic of Kenya, 2004). This is a clear indication that girls’ representation in education is poor and the 2015 goal may remain elusive in relation to the education of girls from Kenyan pastoral communities (FAWE, 2001).

Historical marginalization and political orchestration are also mentioned as causing educational inequality among the Maasai people (Ju, 2007; Oxfam GB, 2005; Sifuna, 2005; Maasai Education Discovery-(M.E.D), 2003). Based on historical political orchestration of this community, M.E.D. Stated that in 1918, Sir Charles Eliot, then Governor of Kenya, had advocated the end of African traditional cultures. According to Maasai Education Discovery (2003), Sir Charles made a famous assertion that:

There can be no doubt that the Maasai and other tribes must go under. It is a prospect that I view with equanimity and clear conscience ... I wish to protect individual Maasai … but I have no desire to protect Maasaidom. It is a beastly, bloody system, founded on raiding and immorality, disastrous both to the Maasai and their neighbors. The sooner it disappears and is unknown, except in books of anthropology, the better. (p. 39)

What this means is that the Maasai community in general and the Maasai women in particular have had to protect their interests and rights from the colonial administrators who seem not to have been on the community’s side. Sir Charles Eliot’s statement
cannot be taken lightly and is possibly a clear indication that this community suffered
greatly under the British colonial and post-colonial systems. In other words, the
colonial leaders distanced themselves from this community, meaning, its advancement
in education and other public services were out of the picture.

The voice of Eshiwani (1993) and that of the Ministry of Education (2007) on
gender policy hold that, “The national education system has been characterized by
gender disparities at the national level, and between the various regions, in favor of
males….Gender disparities in performance in national examinations are also evident”
(p. 1). What this implies to the girl-child in Kenya is that she remains at the bottom of
the education ladder. This poses a problem to her future chances of becoming an active
and productive member in her community. This state of affairs not only diminishes the
ability of this group, but renders it less productive in society, consequently, worsening
chances of better education, and access to good health care, and nutrition, thereby
spelling doom to their communities. Yet, scholars note that highly educated women in
Kenya tend to practice monogamy, use more family-planning devices, discuss family
size more with their partners and have lower incidents of child mortality compared to
those with less education (Dodoo, 1998; Njogu, 1991). These two authors argue that
education for women is a key factor in determining use or lack of using contraceptives,
control over family size and level of involvement in the education of their children.

Many pastoral and patriarchal communities such as the Maasai, boys’ education
is given a higher premium than that of girls. For instance, Mulama (2008) believes that
pastoralism favors boys’ education only. Parents support the schooling of boys while
girls look after the animals. If girls lack educational support by parents and relatives from the family level, how do you expect other community members out there to support them? It means that from the time they start school, girls become aware that their parents do not take their education seriously. Could it be because they are expected to take marriage and motherhood more seriously? Is it because the community is not aware of what educated girls are capable of? Or have other educated women failed to secure employment after spending a fortune in school? These and many other questions come to my mind as I reflect about the educational gender imbalance between boys and girls.

Webter (1999), studying the socio-cultural barriers to Kenyan girls’ education at the secondary school level in Western Kenya, revealed that although more girls are going to school, they still face more barriers than boys. For instance, Webter cited low-quality community-run schools for females, low curriculum coverage and sexual harassment as some of the challenges for girls in some parts of Kenya. Based on Webter’s view, increased enrollment for girls in secondary schools is not guarantee of a better life if the daily experiences which impede their full participation in the learning process are not investigated. I believe that eliminating poverty and sexual harassment would make a difference in girls’ lives in school. In addition, we need to look into the school and the classroom, with an aim of eliminating any classroom practices which show gender bias. We cannot talk of increasing the access and quality of female education if the challenges facing the ones already enrolled are left unattended.
In post-colonial Kenya, political orchestration has continued to haunt the Maasai even after the country’s independence. Many governments have found pastoral groups “hard to reach” in relation to the mainstream education provision (Mfum-Mensah, 2003). In a sense, the high cost of maintaining schools for pastoral communities is a challenge to many governments’ efforts to achieve EFA by 2015. UNESCO (2008) insists that many governments are making particular efforts to solve the challenge of pastoral children by providing schools with boarding facilities. As good as the idea sounds, there are concerns about the quality of education in such schools, giving the impression that they also have a marginalizing effect. Moreover, Annin (2009) adds that geographical orchestration of an area has an effect on people’s educational access, enrollment, retention, achievement, and performance. He pointed out that schools in very rural areas may face teacher shortages and communication problems.

Political elites seem to peg school resource provision to patron-client relations. After many African countries achieved independence, political leaders in post-colonial states busily revised the notes the colonial masters used in ruling Africans. Alwy and Schech (2004) state that the African continent is marred by many examples of ethnic groups favored over others by the colonial masters. Kenyan political elites are quite smart in distributing government resources to gain political mileage from patron-client relationships, especially with marginal groups (Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). This has affected the education of such marginal communities as the Kenyan Maasai in that they need to be strongly affiliated to these political elites in order to get a better share of
national resources such as education, road networks and health. Since promises are made to these patrons are rarely fulfilled, the Maasai in general and their women in particular receive poor quality education, which consequently marginalizes them, retains their client status so they can only access low level jobs or no jobs at all.

On the other hand, patrons and political elites work to retain their status quo plus that of their future generations (Coast, 2008). They groom their children to follow in their positions when they retire. For this reason, they invest heavily in the education of their children just to make sure all is well and their children will not suffer in the future, sending them to the best schools in the land. It is obvious that if the rich do not need the rural schools for their children, those schools will lack good roads and teaching staff, making it difficult for any students to perform well with high scores required for the next level of education, it becomes almost impossible for the marginal groups to qualify, reducing the possibility of their acquiring higher education.

In Kenya, as in much of Africa, formal education provision and participation expanded dramatically during the 1960s and 1970s. The number of primary and secondary schools increased at a high rate. Primary schools particularly, doubled from approximately 5000 in 1965 to 10,000 in 1980. Enrolment increased dramatically, from just over one million pupils in 1965 to nearly four million in 1980 (Eshiwani, 1993). This expansion reflected policy changes which collectively represented major advances in Kenya’s educational development at the national level. It also reflected the strategic use of public expenditure in support of educational policy goals (Abagi & Olweya, 1999).
Due to the benefits associated with education, the Kenyan Government is committed to ensuring formal education for all Kenyans for development and progressive existence in society despite gender, age, social class, region, physical and mental ability, or political and religious affiliations. To achieve this goal, Kenya adopted the “international protocol that established Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand 1990 and the world education forum in Dakar, Senegal, 2000” (Achoka, Odebero, Maiyo & Mualuko, 2007, p. 275). Consequently, Kenya is obligated to offer quality education as a human right to all its citizens to enable them to become well educated, informed, critical, and active citizens.

Although education seems scarcely provided to women and girls, Unterhalter (2006) lists two reasons why education should not be given in limited doses to women. First he views education as a basic human need, which women should be given access. Unterhalter insists that having access to basic needs helps one to flourish while denying them such an opportunity is harmful. Secondly, Women in Development (WID) stress the need for women to be included in development planning with an objective of improving their efficiency. For this goal, many years of schooling will be required to achieve a just comparison between females and males and to better challenge the multiple sources of gender inequality and women’s subordination. The WID argument for improved access to basic education is that through free education, other needs such as food, and infrastructure will also come on board and governments will ensure no child is denied the right to education. This right is supported by the United Nations

Globally, pastoral communities are marginalized in education especially because their pastoral lifestyle seems different. Mfum-Mensah (2003) stated that these communities suffer marginalization due to their non-settled way of life in search of fresh water and pasture for their animals. The Maasai of Kenya are in this category and their way of life is pastoralism, semi-nomadic, or sedentary. The fact that the international community recognizes the challenges associated with nomads in relation to schooling is reason enough to accelerate efforts towards providing them with quality education. The Maasai case does not attract much government attention because in addition to being few in number, it is costly to run their sometimes mobile schools (Mulama, 2008). However, in recent years, there has been international interest in promoting education among marginalized groups (Coast, 2008; Dyer, 2001; Lar, 1997; Semali, 1994; Ezeomah, 1992). Such international interest has an effect on national and local levels of education.

In Kenya, nomadic education is not institutionalized, which makes mainstream education irrelevant to pastoral communities. Formal education seems not to have taken root among pastoral groups, especially the Maasai, compared to other communities. Reasons for this are not peculiar to one group but vary, based on countries where such communities exist as in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Somalia, India, and others (Semali, 1994). Although there is a current move geared towards the institutionalization
of pastoral education all over the world (Semali (1994), economic and political reasons are blamed for the slow pace in making it a reality.

Politically, Semali (1994) points out that pastoral groups in many countries, including Kenya, are viewed as powerless. Since the Maasai people are few in numbers as indicated earlier, their voting impact will not be very influential compared to other, larger groups in the country. Therefore, their needs may not be urgently addressed since their representatives at the policy-making levels are viewed as having less political influence. Financially a majority of the Maasai depend on animals for their income. Few do crop farming, but their land is not as productive because it is semi-arid with long spells of drought (Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009; Kratli, 2000). Therefore, occasional droughts cut down the economic abilities of many Maasai parents since their animals die. This means that this group would not be well-equipped economically to support the education of their children. Many high school and university students depend on government funding, NGOs and well-wishers. However, school funding by the government is sometimes inadequate. This support is problematic to Maasai children, calling parents to seek alternative ways of keeping their sons and daughters in school.

National and International Educational Policies on Females

This section will attempt to list some of the challenges which prevent Maasai females from benefiting from national and international educational policies such as Free Primary Education (FPE), Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Education for All (EFA). Although many people are willing to acquire education and to educate their
children, this is not always achieved, becoming a real concern not only to families but to nations and the international community.

A policy is a deliberate plan of action aimed at guiding a group of people, an organization or a state in decision making. Although actions may be carried out without a plan, all governments, and international and private organizations which are democratic by nature plan their actions and projects based on policy guidelines. Policies, even government ones, are mere guidelines towards achieving desired goals. All states provide some basic services to their citizens such as health, education, and waters. Due to these needs seeming universal in nature, the global world through the United Nations works together and through treaties; basic human needs were made human rights in 1948 (UNDP, 2008; UNESCO, 2004).

The United Nations (2008) declared that December 10, 1948 was when the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. After the declaration, all member countries were called upon to disseminate the information in as many ways as possible to the public, especially to teaching and learning institutions. The declaration is enshrined in Article 26 which deals with education and states:

- Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
• Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (United Nations, 2008)

Article 26 is a clear confirmation that all people despite race, region and gender have a right to education and this includes all marginalized groups. For instance, the Maasai women and girls who are the focus of this study are included by Article 26 and the Kenyan constitution on education.

Although Article 26 makes it mandatory for all children, youth and adults to acquire at least basic education, some challenges make achievement of this goal difficult. These challenges are varied in nature and multifaceted including: early marriage, poverty, and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Also, economic hardships, attitude towards girls’ education fuelled by gender bias, in-migration, early marriage and child labor.

Child Fund International (2005) gives a scary insight into how early marriage challenges girls’ education among the Maasai of Kenyan and Tanzania. In this community, very young school age females are given away as brides in a cultural practice known as Esaiyata (booking in the Maa language). Booking is seen as an unbreakable contract between the girl’s father and the prospective husband (Child Fund International, 2005). Booking can take place as early as when a woman is pregnant. For instance, Spencer (1988) states:

A man may approach a pregnant woman and beg for her unborn ‘daughter’ with the gift of the anointment, by smearing butter across her womb. The child might of course be male or die young. .. if the child is born a girl and survives to the age of marriage, it is as if God has shown favor towards the suit, and it would be dangerous to offer her to another man. If the child is a boy who survives, then again this is God’s will and he and the suitor should become close ‘stock friends.’ (p. 39)
In all cases, the husband-to-be gives the girl’s family dowry in the form of livestock, food and goods to seal the contract. In other words, girls are given away as tokens, gifts to friends or as a source of income (cows and goats). Girls involved in such contracts are not given time to go to school; they may be married off as young as 10 years of age. In normal circumstances, many girls turning 10 are in Class Five, Six or Seven in the Kenyan education system, but some Maasai girls do not get that chance.

Child Fund International (2005) goes further to explain that in some rural areas where families experience severe poverty situations, young girls are betrothed without both their knowledge and consent. UNICEF (2005) argues that the fact that these young girls are not mature enough to make informed decisions and no one seeks their consent before making marriage arrangements; it makes early marriage a human rights issue. It is interesting to note that other than parents viewing early marriage as a harmful practice to their daughters, they take it as a cultural right and a perfect way of protecting their daughters from sexual harassment by strangers (McIntyre, 2006; Soumaoro, 2000).

Moreover, initiation into adulthood also draws many Maasai girls away from school. Otieno (1995) postulates that, “Among the pastoral communities, when children are initiated into adulthood, some of them do not return to school because they regard themselves as adults ready to marry and establish their own homes.” (p. 32). Since this is a common norm, those girls who remain in school are likely to be ridiculed and jeered at by their friends. This could also be explained as an urge of women themselves
wishing to retain their traditional roles as mothers and wives, especially in rural Kenya (Coast, 2002).

The difficult situation facing Maasai girls’ education is intensified by traditional beliefs about the role of women. Otieno (1995) pointed out that traditional African culture is based on the assumption that the place of girls and women is in the kitchen. When the mother is unwell or busy, the girls are expected to step in to assist with the heavy workloads. School, on the other hand robs mothers of their young helpers as well as keeping the females away from learning homemaking skills. In fact, Mulama (2008) reported fears of Maasai parents who viewed education as a barrier to girls becoming mothers in time. Mulama states further that when girls attend school, they meet questionable influences away from home and their sexual purity comes into question. Consequently, parents prefer keeping their daughters to preserve their dignity through marrying them off as early as possible.

To elaborate further on the challenges keeping Maasai girls’ education at bay, poverty and financial crises in Maasai families have a hand in it. Mfum-Mensah (2003) writes about financial crises among the Maasai people based on their heavy reliance on animals for their income. Natural catastrophes such as drought, shortage of water and pasture and deforestation also in addition to fueling climate change cut down Maasai animals, diminishing the community’s economic abilities that of paying school levies. This means that this group may be poorly equipped economically to support its own type of education and may have to depend on government funding. Additionally, government school funding is inadequate and has been decreasing based on the number
of students in school. As mentioned earlier, Kenyans from other parts of the country are taking full advantage of the low-cost schools provided for the Maasai children with an aim of solving their mobility problem. However, in-migration has caused overcrowded such school resources with children from other parts of Kenya and overstretched facilities, affecting the quality of education.

**Gender Disparity in Education in ASAL Regions in Kenya**

Female students from both rural and dry areas in Kenya suffer educational inequality. Some scholars attribute this situation to little importance attached to girls’ education, few places for female students in schools and colleges, women roles at home, gender bias, and pastoralism (Karani, 1987; Eshiwani, 1993; Hill & King, 1995; Sifuna, 2005; Government of Kenya, 2007; Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009).

The colonial kind of education in Kenya in the 1960s did not attach a lot of importance to girls’ education (Karani, 1987). Consequently, young girls were not taken to basic school, leave alone college. This was the practice in many rural and dry parts of Kenya. Rather, men were expected to go to school, acquire job skills, move to the cities to work in factories, offices, and engage in business while leaving their mothers and wives behind as family managers (Karani, 1987).

Further, Karani (1987) noted both high schools and colleges had very few places for female students in Kenya. For instance, a typical high school class of 40 students would have two or three female students. Needless to say, the scenario was worse in technical institutions and universities. This trend of having less girls and more boys in schools has changed much especially in basic school and has been replaced by
gender parity (Eshiwani, 1993). However, its traces are evident to date in high schools, colleges and universities in the country. The effects of gender disparity in education are still visible in rural and dry parts of Kenya such as Kajiado, Wajir and others (Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009).

Gender bias in the education system is another factor that fuels gender disparity in schools. It should be remembered that Kenya adopted the British system of education. Consequently, the country inherited British cultural and education traits—including gender biasness (Eshiwani, 1993; Sifuna, 2005). This fact explains why more boys (73%) than girls (41%) were taken to school in 1963 when Kenya attained independence (Achola & Pillai, 2000). Many rural parts of Kenya did not benefit from the early start and expansion of schools. The ASAL regions such as Wajir, Mandera, Isiolo, Tana River, Kajiado and others are good examples (Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). Women from these regions are still working their way into better education.

**Summary**

In summary, this section defines marginalization and looks at educational marginalization in Kenya. Also national and international education policies on female education in Kenya are examined. The national and international education policies on female education especially have not succeeded in minimizing gender inequality in education. For instance, there is evidence that gender disparity in education in ASAL regions in Kenya is persistent. In order to bridge the educational gapes, challenges associated with women education in ASAL regions such as Kajiado need to be
addressed. The section below gives an elaborate explanation about the Maasai people of Kenya and their way of life.

**The Maasai People**

Kenya is a land of diverse cultures, origins and backgrounds. Among the people of Kenya are the Maasai people, a Plain Nilotic group. The Maasai live in both Kenya and Tanzania. By the 17th Century, the Maasai inhabited the Uasin Gishu District, which is currently home to the Kalenjin people (Ministry of Education, 2004). However, they migrated to other parts of the country due to: overpopulation, search for green pasture, search for water, arable land, conflicts and external pressure (Ministry of Education, 2004). In 1800 A.D. the Maasai settled along the Mara plains and the north-central part of Tanzania. Along the way, they absorbed other people, who they conquered, thus, becoming very powerful (Ministry of Education, 2004). Their neighbors knew the Maasai as very fierce due to their warrior-like lifestyle in the forest protecting their land, people and animals (Ministry of Education, 2004). Therefore, they were known not to welcome strangers and intruders in their land.

The railway constructors met a lot of resistance from the Maasai people in Kenya (Ole Sankan, 2007). The railway line was not allowed to pass across their land. Further, they were unhappy with behavior of some railway contractors. For instance, several railway workers defiled Maasai girls and were attacked (Ole Sankan, 2007). The Kedong Massacre was quite severe because 500 railway workers were killed. Consequently, the railway constructors viewed the Maasai as a group which could not welcome strangers or intruders in their land because they had a strange encounter.
The Nandi people resisted the railway line across their land as well under their leader—Koitalel Arap Samoei. Their resistance was brutally ended in 1905 by Richard Meinertzhagen who killed the Nandi leader. Both the Maasai and the Nandi are a good example of Kenyan communities who viewed colonial administrators and missionaries as intruder to their privacy and taking away their land.

The Maasai are very proud of their culture and identity (Coast, 2002). They are independent people who have the ability to survive harsh climatic conditions despite incredible pressures from their neighbors, the government and animal diseases which at times clear all their cows. Stressing on pride in their culture and identity, Maasai traditional dress for both men and women and education of their youth are still intact in some regions. However, not all Maasai today dress in their traditional outfit. The ‘Maasai look has been commercialized through tourism and anybody can dress in Maasai dress and colors. In addition, formal education and ‘modernization’ today are a big threat as far as retaining their way of life is concerned (Coast, 2002). The reputation of the Maasai is known the world over especially due to tourism industry and also due to their distinctive dressing and way of life. Many tourists from the West admire this group to the extent that Gatheru (2005) refers to such admiration as “obsession.”

**Origins of the Maasai People**

Coast (2002) stated that the Maasai belong to the Nilotic-speaking peoples. They are linguistically and physically related to the Samburu, Nandi, Turkana and Oromo people. According to Finke (2003), the Maasai migrated from North Africa around 1400s, most likely around the Nile Valley in Egypt. The Maasai’s association
with North Africa makes them be viewed as the living remnants of the Egyptian civilization (Finke, 2003). This theory according to Finke is supported by the Maasai hair-dos which are similar to those that were done by the ancient Egyptians.

Around the 16th –late 17th Century, they migrated towards Lake Turkana and settled on land stretching from Kenya to Tanzania (Finke, 2003; Peachtree Publishers, 2011). Further, these authors state that in 1800s, they fully occupied the Great Rift Valley. Today, the Maasai of Kenya occupy the Mara region, Magadi, Laikipia, Namanga, Kajiado and Narok (Ministry of Education, 2004; Ole Sankan, 2007).

The political structure of the Maasai is special to the group. The whole community is divided into clans and age-sets where elders and warriors take charge as leaders and guards. Young warriors are trained after circumcision intervals of six years. In every six years, a new layer of junior elders is released into the community. The juniors work together with the senior elders in making and executing decisions concerning their community. Due to their great political structure, the Maasai were able to get into many agreements and treaties negotiating for their rights on land and other resources from the colonial government and other neighboring communities.

Gatheru (2005) in his text, *Kenya: From colonization to independence, 1888-1970* argues that in 1911, Governor Percy Girouard had been involved in many agreements with the Maasai. First, there was an agreement that resisted the railway line passing through their land. Also, they resisted forceful eviction from their fertile Laikipia land to semi-arid Kajiado and Ngong Hills, to make way for European settlers.
Sadly, in 1913, the Maasai lost much land to the colonial administration through some newly educated Maasai men and women.

After independence in 1960s, the Maasai lost land to the government during land demarcations (Ole Sankan, 2007). Some of their land has been taken in creation of the Maasai Mara Game Reserve. Although the colonial administration, missionaries and explorers knew that the community could not be short charged, the few educated Maasai appear to have betrayed this effort through shoddy agreements between the government and the Maasai elders. Although this has changed a lot, the Maasai people appear to have been left out in development matters. They have inadequate social services and amenities which went along with the colonial administration and missionaries such as good roads, hospitals and schools. As such, Kajiado District has fewer schools especially the best in the country (national and provincial schools).

**Colonial Attitude Towards the Maasai**

The Maasai are seen as a group with a history of resisting formal education and modernization, but this may be more of a mistaken belief than reality (Gatheru, 2005). This may be explained by the fact that the Maasai resisted many colonial administration demands over land and tax. For instance, the colonial administration differed with this community because they resisted paying tax and forceful evictions which were common to all other groups of people in the country. Furthermore, the Missionaries did not succeed much in converting the Maasai to Christianity. Consequently, the Maasai were viewed as archaic, uncivilized and barbaric (Gatheru, 2005).
Both men and women undergo circumcision and for women, circumcision ‘prepares’ them for marriage. Circumcision for women, popularly known as Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting (FGM/C) is one of the traditional practices that are believed to be a sign of women oppression despite the health issues that come with it (Ole Sankan, 2007). Many women organizations advocates are opposed to it basing their argument on health, education and human rights platforms. Women have no say about what happens to them after undergoing this practice. Majority of them get married as early as 8 years, thus, missing the chance to go to school.

Young men however, were trained more about warrior-hood (Moranism) and they could stay in manyatas for between 1-8 years for training (Gatheru, 2005). They were in-charge of security and cattle rustling from their neighbors. Besides, the warriors, the age sets in subsequent years and the council of elders in this community are effectively organized, despite their lack of political power in both Kenya and Tanzania.

Economically, although this is changing and this community is turning to growing maize, beans and vegetables, the Maasai kept cattle, goats, sheep, donkeys and camels. Cows are a great sign of wealth for men. The more cows a man has, the more women he could marry. It is believed that all cattle belonged to Maasai people because they were given by God (Enkai) who delivered them from heaven using a long skin as the ladder (Gatheru, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2004). As such, they had and still have some mystical attachment to cattle and anybody with cattle is believed to have stolen them from the Maasai. It is the noble duty of a Maasai moran to retrieve them
and they are justified to raid these animals for safe keeping. For them, drought and animal diseases such as rider pest and foot and mouth disease are their greatest enemies because they cause death to cattle affecting many families economically and socially. When animals die, it means lack of food, milk, blood and cows for dowry during marriage.

A Maasai home-stead is fenced with thorny bushes and forms an *Enkang*, where several houses and the cow shed were enclosed, leaving only one entrance or gate (Gatheru, 2005). The enclosure was meant for security purposes. However, many educated Maasai are changing this kind of homes for modern housing and others moving to cities, the enclosure was for security purposes. The houses were many small huts that were semi-permanent, made by the women from stakes and smeared with cow dung. Inside these small houses are two rooms where the parent (mother) and the children sleep. Married men have their own huts and the young men are warriors who stay away from home being trained how to protect and care for their people and animals.

**Cultural Practices of the Maasai People**

The domestic unit of the Maasai community is highly patriarchal (Gatheru, 2005). The father is the key figure in the family and his role in making decisions is very important because his word in the family is final. Only a senior elder or a close age mate can revoke family decisions in times of crisis. Sons could also make decisions on cattle and marriage partners in the family but not as long as their father was alive. Although this is also changing especially in towns for the Maasai, fathers are still very
powerful in family decisions (Coast, 2008). Therefore, elderly men heavily relied on their sons for family organization while women and children were required to obey (Ministry of Education, 2004). Also, old women (mothers) obey and depend on their sons too for family and property management if their husbands are dead. This practice makes those women without sons feel insecure and unprotected.

**Socialization**

The socialization process of girls and boys were quite different. Boys stayed in a *manyata* or a warrior village, away from home with elder warriors as advisors. This would start after circumcision and elder warriors (the previous cohort) would teach them the rules, regulations and responsibilities while in the *manyata*. Respect and loyalty to their peers during circumcision and after was stressed in order to form a strong bond as an age set and during their term as elders. This unquestioning acceptance of the authority of their peers was viewed as important to reinforce their decision making skills and unity in executing any terms and conditions in the community. On the other hand, girls were dominated by severe dos and don’ts and strict fear of their fathers and elders. A girl’s behavior and respect to her father and elders were important for her family to be respected and in getting married. At home, the girls were totally under their fathers and brothers. After marriage, she would be under her husband who is already an elder and other elders above the husband in seniority (Republic of Kenya, 1990). It is important to note that this rural Sub-Saharan African community is undergoing socio-economic changes in general and many things including marriage are changing (Coast, 2008).
Marriage

Although marriage arrangements are changing with modernization and education, marriages among the Maasai community were arranged by the elders and neither the brides nor their mothers were involved or consulted. Men were allowed to marry many wives and many elders who were able to pay the bride price were polygamous. Also, young girls could be given to friends by their fathers as a gift or payment of debt. Women got married at young age compared to men. Therefore, they could get married either by a young man 2-10 years older than them or to elderly men including their fathers’ age mates. If a young woman was windowed, she was not supposed to re-marry.

Inheritance

When parents die, only sons inherit their wealth in terms of animals and other forms of property from their parents: all sons inherit from their fathers while the youngest son inherits extra wealth from the mother (Ministry of Education, 2004). The logic behind the youngest son getting more animals from the mother is the expectation to take care of all other family members who may need custody: younger siblings, daughters and relatives who for one reason or another are still at home. Sadly, daughters inherit nothing. However, their feet were anointed with milk before marriage, symbolically blessing her to have plenty to eat and spill in her new home (Coast, 2008).

During their wedding day, young brides were awarded some cows for milk. All her children would feed on milk from those cows and later, the same cows would be used by the sons to build up their own herds. Sons would also acquire more cows as
gifts during circumcision and under their fathers’ supervision, they would accumulate some wealth before marriage. There were many more occasions where parents and relatives would give more cows to young men either after performing heroic acts or after killing a lion as part of proving their masculinity. Today, lion killing by Maasai warriors is no longer allowed because wild animals are no longer allowed to roam about and also the tourism industry protects these animals (Coast, 2002).

**Summary**

In summary, this section discusses about the Maasai people who are Plain Nilots. The Maasai community is found in both Kenya and Tanzania. The discussion presents the origin of the Maasai people, the colonial attitude towards them and their cultural practices. The socialization process sets both girls and boys apart in roles and expectations. For example, property inheritance is a privilege of men only in the Maasai community.

**Theoretical Framework: Africana Womanism**

**Introduction**

This segment of the study discusses Africana womanism theory under the following sub-headings: defining Africana womanism, proponents of the theory, objective of “Africana Womanism,” and self naming and self defining. Other sub-headings include the use of Africana womanism, principles and implications, and the theory application to this study. Each of these sub-headings is important in communicating the main objectives of Africana womanism as: encompassing women and men, embracing those in and out of the continent, theorizing African women in an
Afrocentric manner, and encompassing an empowering agenda by encouraging African women to take control over their lives socially, politically and economically.

Defining Africana Womanism

* Africana Womanism is a philosophy for women of African descent *(Hudson-Weems, 1998)*. Further, this fact is echoed by Reed (2001) claiming that, “Africana womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and, therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women” (p. 1). It is grounded in African culture, thus, centered on unique experiences and realities, struggles, needs, and wishes of Africana women. It critically addresses the conflicts between mainstream feminism, Black feminism, and Africana womanist. Therefore, Africana womanism is not an outgrowth or alternative to African Feminism, Black feminism, or even Walker’s womanism but an independent theory *(Hudson-Weems, 1998)*. It takes in Africana women and their daily activities.

Hudson-Weems (1997) concludes that Africana womanist’s agenda are unique and detached from those of White feminists and Black feminists. In fact, Africana womanist also differs from Africana feminism in the sense that while womanism refers to female human beings, feminism refers to the female of anything including animals and plants. It is important to note that although Hudson-Weems leaves no doubt that Africana womanism is unique and different from all other forms of theories focusing on women, the name African feminism is still very popular among many scholars in gender studies in Africa.
However, whether they use Africana womanism or African feminism their identity, values, and reality concur with those stipulated by the founder of Africana womanism. On the whole, it encourages a critical look at social ideas, beliefs, and attitudes towards African women in society and calls for change (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009; Chege & Sifuna, 2006; Brookfield, 2005; Mwale, 2002; Hudson-Weems, 1998; Mikell, 1997).

For instance, Africana womanism critiques the social status quo while calling for change in societies and cultures that are dominated by inequality, classism, racism, oppressions, and subjugation of women (Brookfield, 2005; Mikell, 1997). By standing for this agenda, the theory encourages Africana women to seek social justice and fairness. Also they are called upon to bring social change and equity for themselves and other marginalized groups through use of “self-conscious critique” (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p. 27).

**Proponents of Africana Womanism**

*Africana Womanism* was first initiated by Clenora Hudson-Weems in the 1980s as a theoretical concept. Its objective was to offer an alternative to all forms of feminisms as stated earlier. In particular, the ideology came up in 1987 and Clenora Hudson-Weems (1989) idea was to critically address the conflicts and confusion that were surrounding Africana women as they tried to fit into the feminist movement which had different ideas, perspectives, and approach to social issues.

Some renowned women whose early activities could be termed as pushing forward the agenda of Africana women include: Sajourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and
Ida B. Wells (Mikell, 1997). Although they did not exclusively focus on women issues, they are unsung African heroines. Their activities included: starting the abolition movements, speaking against women suffrage, helping the Union army as nurses, cooks, spies, leading slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad, and leading anti-lynching crusades.

Other examples of African women who have performed great activities in the liberation of their communities in the African continent include: the Queen mother Yaa Asantewaa of Ghana (1840-1921); Huda Sha’rawi of Egypt (1879-1947); Nawal El Saadawi of Egypt (1931-to date); and Wangari Maathai of Kenya (1940- to date) among others (Saadawi, 1983; Shaarawi & Margot, 1986; Maathai, 2006). All these great women were involved in many activities: fighting, healing the sick, writing books, teaching, campaigning against discrimination and social injustice, and fighting corruption. This list of activities is endless, but, their works are not well explored and made public. Failing to popularize Africana women ties with Hudson-Weems (1997) lamentation that if Africana scholars fail to popularize and use their own philosophy, they remain unpopular with less chance of being extended and developed further.

Objective of “Africana Womanism”

Reeds (2001) states that the term Africana is derived from “Africana Studies” to involve both the continent and diaspora. Also, it is a terminology and a concept that consider both ethnicity (Africana) and gender (Womanism), which embraces both women and men. The message that Africana womanism is for Africans by Africans is resounded by other African writers and theorists calling it an ideology fashioned and
intended for all African women and men in and out of the continent (Hudson-Weems, 1989; Mikell, 1997; Brookfield, 2005). One may realize that many African women writers from the continent still refer to themselves as African feminists such as Nzomo (1997), Mama (2003) and Unterhalter (2006).

Two major reasons exist as to why Africana womanism came into being. First, it takes cognizance of Afrocentrism rather than Eurocentrism in an African set-up. Second, it has an empowering agenda to Africana women and any other marginalized groups. The differences that exist between people based on race and reality were considered before coming up with a theory which understands each person’s views and values. In this case, Hudson-Weems (1997) found African women as unique in their identity, ethnicity (Africana or culturally connected to Africa) and gender (women).

Through its empowering agenda to Africana women, Terborg-Penn (1987) admits that, “the dominant voice of the feminist movement has been that of the white female. The issue of racism can become threatening, for it identifies white women as possible participants in the oppression of blacks.” (p. 3) Also, African women are encouraged to take control over their lives socially, politically and economically. In other words, Africana womanism focuses on women of African decent and involves both genders rather than the term ‘women’ in an African set-up. The theory is an African-centered ideology which places Africa at the centre of its analysis as far as Africana women are concerned.
Self Naming and Self Defining

One of the major critiques facing the many groups of African women in Africa today is the claim that they live under borrowed theory and idea (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). To counteract this accusation, Hudson-Weems (1997) affirmed that her most important mission in formulating the theory was that of naming Africana womanism as a philosophy. She felt that, if you fail to name yourself, other people will name and define you. I strongly agree with self naming and defining idea and add that failing to name and define myself increases the chances of letting the “Other” name and define me. When one is named by the other, prejudiced and inaccurate messages are likely to come up. Furthermore, why do people at times beg to differ with stories written and published about them? Anything with a name does exist. By naming Africana womanism, Hudson-Weems (1997) re-affirmed the fact that the Africana woman is, “both a self-namer and self-definer” (p. 6). Some of the advantages of naming self include telling the whole world your true name and defining your own values according to your reality.

Use of Africana Womanism, Principles and Implications

When Africana womanism is adopted in a study, it implies that the researcher finds the theory adequate as a tool of analysis. I adopted Africana womanism in my study because it is adequate and fits in interrogating the experiences of young Maasai women who originate from Kenya in Africa. By adopting this theory, I heeded to Hudson-Weems’ (1997) warning that the duplication of Eurocentric theories in analyzing African situation is inappropriate. Based on this argument, Africana
womanism is adopted to look into the education of young Maasai woman who are Africans by identity. Further, other theories might fail to capture the day to day activities of young Maasai women. Furthermore, Hudson-Weems (1997) argues that works conducted in a theory such as feminism which does not share in the vision and mission of Africana women tampers with the work’s authenticity, accuracy, meaning and value. Africana womanism agrees with the historical, current, and future interactions of African women with their communities, yet recognizing their differences in location and values.

In the academy, popular ideas get their popularity through being frequently used and discussed. Hudson-Weems (1997) encourages content use of Africana womanism when she writes: “our own critical theories for analyzing our critical experiences are needed to create institutions of ideas, Black thought, for housing and disseminating our life experiences, historically, currently and futuralistically” (p. 4). The more an idea is floated and discussed, the more it sinks in people’s minds and the more it becomes popularly used by scholars. In other words, the academy has taught us that we have to use other people’s ideas in order to develop them further, support or negate our own ideas.

According to Young (2009), Africana womanism should be viewed more of a struggle shared rather than women rivaling men. The view that seeking justice by women in representation and in those areas where they seem invisible is equivalent to outmaneuvering men is problematic for several reasons. First, womanism encourages women to find their own voices, actions, and opinions as a sign of getting empowered
and becoming partners with men in development (Hudson-Weems, 1997). Since patriarchy gives men more power over women, womanism recognizes no matter how hard women work to gain freedom from oppression and equality their efforts will be in vain unless men are willing to join the cause.

Why would men want to help a group of women, thus deny themselves the privileges they’ve had for centuries one might ask. Some men appreciate the fact that empowering women benefits more than just women. Furthermore, Hudson-Weems (1997) states that the goal of womanism is not to create a hierarchy of women but rather to eliminate hierarchies in general in order to establish a more gender neutral society. Consequently, as the main perpetrators of the oppression, a certain amount of responsibility lies with men to effect change for the betterment of society and the stride toward gender equity. In addition, African women cannot be at peace even as home makers when their men do not provide support. Their experiences and realities need to match with their aspirations and abilities supported by all family members. Therefore, embracing a theory that supports action by both men and women is not only beneficial to women but to men as well.

Africana womanism supports spiritual connection (Young (2009). From my own experience, my parents would always turn to prayer any time there was a family crisis. This theory offers many advantages to Africana women and their culture other than turning African women into singers of ‘praise songs of survival’ under Eurocentric feminism, while retaining their situations unchanged (Hudson-Weems, 1997). Africana womanism stresses on women empowerment in order to take control over their lives.
and those of their family members. In order to achieve this kind of empowerment, formal education is important (Ebunoluwa, 2009). It gives them a voice and ability to get employed and earn their own money which they can use to support their families economically. Womanism is a step in reclaiming African culture, self-pride and self-empowerment among African women.

Scholars view this theory as a discourse based on Afrocentricism (Mikell, 1997). Creation of the theory came up because Black feminists were tired of marginalization within feminism in the United States (Hudson-Weems, 1989). Consequently, African womanism makes a connection between race, gender, and class oppression, while including religious and cultural values held dear by the African people. Used as a lens, Aldridge and Wheeler (2001) claim that African womanism explains the behavior and societal impact it has on women and girls from African and the Diaspora. Further, they state that the theory provides a complete understanding of racism, classism, sexism, and religion, revealing their authentic impact on Black women and their relationships.

Africana womanism was used in this study because it is Afrocentric. Scholars have attempted to give many reasons why African women felt and still feel uncomfortable with the term feminism. First, Aldridge and Wheeler (2001) assert that in her text: *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*, Hudson-Weems puts forward an Afrocentric point of view. She stated that Black or Africana men and women are not feminists because they were not in the picture when feminism was constructed. Surprisingly, Africana women have always been accused of borrowing feminist ideas
from the west while lacking their own agenda on the same (Hudson-Weems, 1989; Mikell, 1997). To make matters worse, some African women who are deeply involved in women liberation endeavors refuse to be referred to as feminists. This has been the point of debate with Western feminists wondering if Africana women from Africa are feminists or not. One wonders whether such women are only trying to distance themselves from the controversial and revolutionary tint of the theory or antagonistic extremities of some women activists. In fact, Dolphyne (1995) publically denounces the title “Feminist” in her text:

I never consider and still do not consider myself a ‘feminist’, for the term evokes for me the image of an aggressive woman who, in the same breath, speaks of women rights to education and professional training, her right to equal pay for work of equal value, her right to vote and to be voted for in elections at all levels, as well as woman’s right to practice prostitution and lesbianism. It is this image of the feminist which made African men, some in highly-placed positions in government, and some women as well, rather uncomfortable about the idea. (p. xiii)

Dolphyne clearly gives some of the reasons why women fear to be associated with womanistic ideas. In other instances prominent politicians (women and men) in the continent appear to be uncomfortable with the thought, terming it as an idea for educated and brainwashed women. People’s look at womanism with suspicion is not only an issue in Africa. This is why hooks (1999) asserts that “In diverse black [African] communities, and particularly in poor communities, feminism is regarded with suspicion and contempt” (p. 1). This is a blatant example of how the African culture views women as of a lesser value, thus, deprived chances of taking up societal roles that are deemed male oriented.
I guess some women and men use allegations that womanism is all about seeking sexual favors and social positions by women. Do they do it in order to discourage women from competing for political positions, education and training, jobs, and demanding equal pay? Are these some of the ways being used to maintaining the status quo in society? To avoid such situations, women in Africa need to be educated on the true principles of womanism including the fact that it not an ideology that opposes male leadership.

Arndt (2000) in her interview with some African womanists (Chikwenye Ogunyemi Nigeria and Wanjira Muthoni of Kenya) discussed some of the reasons many African women from the continent shy away from being referred to as womanist. Why would people who strongly support drastic improvement of the situation of women find fault with the term womanism in this part of the world? For Mwale (2002), feminism as an ideology comes in to replace male-dominance ideology in an African set-up, something which involves changing people’s world view. Susan Arndt, Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Wanjira Muthoni concluded that the negative attitude towards the term ‘feminism’ in Africa could be based on language use. Mohanty (1986) views western feminism as a foreign idea to third world women since were not part of naming this ideology, they may view it as a Western term that does not fit in their culture, thus, uncomfortable in acquiring it. Arndt (2000) uses the terms ‘maintaining distance,’ ‘massive rejection’ and ‘discontent[ment]’ in reference to the division between the Western and the Southern groups of women when she states:

Ultimately, the distance that Africans committed to gender issues maintain from Western feminists also stems from their sense that White women as members of
Western societies, and sometimes even due to their individual behavior, contribute to other forms of the oppression of African women (and men). The massive rejection of feminism in African societies and above all, the discontent of Africans who sympathize with feminist ideas have caused some Africans-Americans and African women to conceptualize alternatives to feminism. (p. 711)

Arndt’s words are clear that feminism is not conceptualized in a similar manner by both African-Americans and African women from the continent.

As an African woman and having some experiences on what is happening to women and girls on the continent, I strongly believe every person in that part of the world should be a feminist. This kind of move cannot be regrettable in Africa, taking into account the gains that come with supporting women to their ultimate abilities in education and in skill development. Therefore, I am tempted to back the words of Aidoo (1998):

Every woman and every man should be feminist - especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives, and the burden of African development. It is not possible to advocate independence for the African continent without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. (p. 47)

Taking control over all facets of our lives as Africans needs both men and women for better results. It is also true that both men and women in Africa need not only to unite believing in the saying that: “Unity is power,” but to also be adequately skilled for development. According to Hudson-Weems (1998), “Some White women acknowledge that the feminist movement was not designed with the African woman in mind” (p. 155). In addition, Mikell (1997) states, feminism primarily appealed to educated and middle-class white women, while black and white working-class women were busy struggling to survive.
Therefore, African woman only needed to accept or reject feminism in order to become part of it. They rejected it as per Hudson-Weems (1998). The point these authors are making is quite important because, people have a tendency to accept ownership of that which makes sense to them or agrees with their worldview. As such, following other people’s ideas, values and ways that divorce you from your reality could be misleading. “If you buy a terminology, you likewise buy its agenda” (Hudson-Weems, 1997, p. 6). By reclaiming themselves from feminism, Africana women got an opening to theorize their reality under Afrocentric eyes compared to Eurocentric eyes. Also, they are in a position to state their own agenda rather than being bought into someone else’s.

Africana womanists are opposed to the adopting of feminism by Africana women because it does not support Afrocentrism. Aldridge and Wheeler (2001) assert that in the twentieth Century, Africana women realized that “feminism” failed to address their particular needs. The goals of “feminism” are often totally opposed to those of African women. For instance, while White women in the United States (US) were fighting to join the job market, African women in the same country wished to stay home and enjoy some care rather than work in their “masters”’ kitchens. As such, the theory challenges mainstream concepts of "Africana Womanhood" in the public and private arena alike (Aldridge & Wheeler, 2001).

The focus of Africana Womanism is on the experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African women of the African Diaspora. In fact, Hudson-Weems (1998) formulated a theory with an agenda of tying African women to their ancestral
homeland. This ties become important because their spell their reality and values. For instance, African women are “distinctly heterosexual, pro-natal, and concerned with many “bread, butter, culture, and power” issues. Its reference point reflects the experiences of African countries forced to negotiate the effects of neo-liberal globalization” (Mikell, 1997, p. 5). This buttresses the issues that the theory embraces including: interdependence, equal opportunities for both women and men. In other words, the concept of Africana womanism takes cognizance of African values, ideas, beliefs, and altitudes, thus, retaining what is real to the group (Hudson-Weems; 1998; Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Mwale, 2002).

Mwale (2002) asserts that Africana womanism “challenges the prevailing status quo and develops a counter-ideology that questions the prevailing status quo and then attempts to modify it.” (p. 2) According to him, it is a theory which critiques the power regimes and existing social and economic arrangements, thus, advocating for change rather than the inflexibility supported by retained status quo. It schemes for re-ordering and restructuring of society, which could be termed as empowerment. According to him, the theory is action oriented. Its activists motivate people to demand change in society through changing their lifestyles and modifying existing social, religious, political and economic relations. Leaders create strong forces and followers—women movements. The followers are encouraged to pursue what they belief in for change to happen. Thus, strict womanists are political and revolutionary. Being revolutionary in nature occasionally creates fear in that violence may arise, resulting to bloodshed.
In support of being family-oriented and culturally relevant, Africana Womanism respects African women’s mothering, and nurturing abilities (Reed, 2001). Hudson-Weems (1998) challenges some of the ideological inaccuracies about African woman written by feminists, thus, sharpening the message of cultural identity and collective consciousness among this group as central to the ultimate goal of family survival.

Women roles according to Africana womanism are: family centered, struggle oriented, flexible and respect for elders. The use of Africana womanism re-defines cultural roles of Africana Women. However, according to Hudson-Weems (1998), modern women’s movements tend to place women in a confused state concerning their true roles in the family and community. Consequently, she reminds Africana women that culturally they have always been family-centered, flexible role-players and co-partners with their males in the liberation struggle for their entire race. Also, the respect of elders is phenomenal where the young listen and heed to advice from their parents and relatives. Africana women come from a culture that belief in God. In both Christianity and Islam, men are believed to be leaders making their authority over women God given, thus, deconstructing male supremacy is discouraged (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). This reality is retained as a top priority by true African people when African womanism is used to analyze the situation of Africana women. It is important to remember that Africana women insist that their experiences are not similar based on place and context (Ebunoluwa, 2009; Hudson-Weems, 1998).

In a Kenyan situation, female womanists and politicians occasionally face humiliation, discrimination, and rejection from some members of society who view
them as radicals, thus, try to silence them. For instance, Professor Wangari Maathai, a womanist and an environmentalist in Kenya faced a painful public divorced by her ex-husband Mr. Mwangi. According to Maathai (2006), Mr. Mwangi was quoted saying that Wangari was, "too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn and too hard to control" (Maathai, 2006, p. 146). Consequently, many educated women in Kenya have resulted to shying away from politics and other associations in order to keep their families and religious ties.

Although Hudson-Weems (1998) views the Africana womanist as strong, some members of society occasionally tend to use power to control, marginalize, dominate and dehumanize African women, judging them as unable to hit back either for political, economic or social gains. In order to claim their rightful position and restore the social balance, African women are encouraged to employ many tools and styles including their strength as a way of stopping oppression including: knowledge, resistance, advocacy, strength of numbers, social mobilization of pressure groups, and social institution. All these strategies could help in reversing inequality in society, while, giving a human face to social and power relations. It is a believed that gender equality is a perspective and a commitment to transform society (Humm, 1992). However, whether change is successfully achieved or not is a different ball game because, oppressive situations seem to be increasing rather than decreasing today.

Reeds (2001) summarizes the Africana Womanism well through an interview with Clenora Hudson-Weems. She believes that Africana womanists can be defined by 18 key principles. According to Hudson-Weems (1993):
the Africana womanist is 1) a self-namer; 2) a self-definer; 3) family-centered; 4) genuine in sisterhood; 5) strong; 6) in concert with the Africana man in struggle; 7) whole; 8) authentic; 9) a flexible role player; 10) respected; 11) recognized; 12) spiritual; 13) male compatible; 14) respectful of elders; 15) adaptable; 16) ambitious; 17) mothering; and 18) nurturing. (pp. 154-155)

It re-arranges society, it defines women’s lives in Africa, it shows the peculiar situation of African women. The above quote could be termed as the belief system that Africana Womanists have to keep at the back of their minds when speaking and indulging in claiming their rights. Basically, Africa womanism theory aims at bettering social relations to avoid exploitation especially of the powerless members of society.

**Theory Application to this Study**

Globally, 54% of the out-of-school children in the year 2005 were girls (UNESCO, 2008). In sub-Saharan African region, only 21% of girls attend secondary school on average, compared to 27% of boys (UNESCO, 2006). This situation is not any better in Kenya because only 30% of young women make it to public universities while the rest are men (Republic of Kenya, 2007). Having seen the poor state of girls’ education in many parts of the world, this study focuses on the education of young Maasai women in Kajiado District in Kenya.

Women in Africa suffer a general marginalization in almost all sectors. Therefore, using a theory (African Womanism) that puts into consideration the contextual situation of African girls and women is the most appropriate in exploring their educational experiences. The study is a phenomenological case study of Maasai girls’ educational experiences and therefore, I believe that African Womanism which concerns itself with women and girls issues is an appropriate lens to focus and
understand their situation. According to Mulama (2005), Kajiado District in Kenya is inhabited by the Maasai: a pastoralist group which places petite value on girls’ education. Consequently, practices such as early marriage, Female Genital Cutting (FGC), poverty, early pregnancy, fear for girls’ safety, long distance to school and others are part of what denies the young Maasai girls education. Most often than not, the above named practices and situation marks the end of schooling for young Maasai women (Coast, 2008). Mulama (2008) observed that becoming a mother while still in school is a major cause of school disruption. Studies show that four in every ten girls become mothers before their 20th birthday (McDowell, 2003). This being the case, using African feminist theory is important in order to challenge those cultural practices which act as a barrier to girls’ education.

African Womanism advocates for African women’s liberation and enhances the same from a predominantly patriarchal society and mind-set. In this, the theoretical stand becomes the platform on which African women can stand when demanding for equity in a society which does gives women and girls an inferior position. Consequently, women and girls have been denied access to many opportunities including education. Coast (2008) argues that the Maasai community in highly patriarchal and all decisions are made by men and for men. This makes it clear that girls’ education in a nomadic pastoralist set-up is not given the seriousness it deserves and using a theory that deconstructs the patriarchal relations that creates gender power imbalance would highlight the situation with the objective of calling for change. According to hooks (2008), those who ascribe to womanism as a theory in general
have, “a firm commitment to gender equality, a painful awareness that such equality is far from [being] achieved, and a continuing desire to work toward such equality [is the best way forward].” (p. 3)

Dealing with educational inequality among any marginal groups especially women cannot be complete without understanding the gender differences and gender inequalities in society. African families are known for their patriarchal leadership structures which relegate women at the background, giving men more power and more opportunities, while leaving women behind in almost every sector of development. The theory focuses on women’s rights against discrimination, stereotypes, objectification, oppressions and patriarchy (Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1977). Therefore, using Deborah King’s (1986) concept of multiple jeopardies, young Maasai girls and women are marginalized educationally not only because of their gender but due to coming from nomadic pastoral community. From their community and culture, they struggle with effects of nomadic pastoralism, early marriage and constant droughts which cause poverty. For instance, in the year 2000, FAWE introduced a programme whereby the parents and community leaders, including the chiefs, worked together towards increasing enrolment of girls and eliminating early marriage (Mulama, 2008). However, educating girls would improve the situation to a certain degree because the educated Maasai women would revert to activism to claim their rights to education and other privileges.

The education of women from the pastoral communities in Kenya is not given priority. For instance, Mulama (2008) reported that “girls' education here is sacrificed
for the sake of livestock” (p. 13). This is a true indication that girls’ education needs to be stepped up because the more a people remain formally uneducated the more they remain marginalized and voiceless in matters affecting them. According to Ju (2007), research has shown that one of the most effective ways to improve the economic well-being of a community is to educate its women. If education has the ability to turn the situation around for young Maasai women, efforts to retain them in school will be in line with what Africana womanists are advocating for. Using Africana womanism theory, educated Maasai women are in a position to fight for the right to education of their children including girls. This would include their rights to property ownership: cows, land, control of food distribution, health care among others. Also, the theory encourages the oppressed groups to voice their challenges to power, as a way of calling for social change.

Findings by Sifuna (2005), Ju (2007), and Mulama (2008) on the education of nomadic groups in Kenya appear to come to a conclusion that the education of females is strongly resisted either for cultural, economic, and or school-related reasons. They explain how family’s wealth in these communities is measured in cows, goats and camels and how offering a young girl in marriage brings such animals home in return. What this simply means to the Maasai girl in this case is that a delayed marriage while attending school means a delay in dowry to the girl’s family. In this case, using African feminist theory would be very useful in speaking to the situation of these girls. I have no objection to their marriage but they needs to be well educated before marriage in
order to empower them socially and economically. Education will also improve their ability to serve their community better.

**Summary**

This section defines Africana womanism and presents the proponents of Africana womanism. In addition, it gives the objectives of the theory such as self-naming and self-defining of African women. Lastly, the section presents the principles of Africana womanism and discusses its application to this study. Africana womanism gives and place each woman and group of women in a unique and contextualized position, thus making it more relevant to this study. It unites both women and men in fighting for social injustice in society. Africana womanism is Afrocentric, has an empowering agenda, asking women to become self-reliance, economically stable and politically conscious.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes how this study was conducted. The study methodology is discussed following sub-headings namely: introduction, research design, qualitative research, case study, phenomenology, the rationale for using a phenomenological case study, site selection, and participants’ selection. Further, data collection methods are discussed namely: interviews, focus group, documents and observation. Additionally, the chapter continues to discuss triangulation, data collection procedure, data analysis, research ethics and informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, self as researcher, and makes concluding remarks.

Research Design

This section explains the research design in qualitative methodology. The section presents each design separately and then gives a rationale for the combined design. The adoption of a phenomenological case study was based on the combined strengths of the two, which served to counter the limitations of each. Phenomenological and case study are discussed later in this chapter.

Qualitative Research

Based on the research questions and the interview guide required in this research project, the research led itself to qualitative methodology (QI). Patton (2002) asserts that research questions have the power to dictate the best research design in order to elicit the best answers possible. Therefore, I employed qualitative inquiry because it provided the best method of answering my study questions. The questions in
this study were asking about the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the educational experiences of the participants. According to Kania (2008), qualitative inquiry is preferred by those researchers who seek to understand both lived experiences and meaning of the researched. He argues that this inquiry focuses on

Lived experiences of the participants, …[thus], enabl[ing] development of greater understanding concerning the outcomes that are important, relevant and meaningful to the people involved than would be possible by using standardized outcomes that do not capture complex individual detail. (p. 3)

Qualitative inquiry (QI) fits this study best because it seeks to unpack experiences and meaning making of the participants. Engaging QI is of benefit because it makes it possible for the researcher to focus on participant experiences and meanings in detail.

The nature of the research understanding the experiences of young Maasai women’s realities requires the researcher to embark on a qualitative study. It is only qualitative inquiry which examines people’s realities as the phenomenon under study. I believe that the reality about educational experiences of young Massai women can be explored and understood best not by exploring it quantitatively but qualitatively.

Therefore, I used qualitative research methodology grounded in an Africana womanism perspective in order to understand the educational, lived experiences of young Maasai women at Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School in Kajiado District. With this overarching question, I was drawn to Africana womanism theory because it seeks to interrogate the social context in which women live and dentify the power structure that helps to enable or oppress them. Thus, I found as an appropriate lens in understanding the experiences of my participants who live a predominantly patriarchal community. Africana womanism theory supports self-defining and self-naming in
participants’ own voices (Narayan, 1997; Hudson-Weems, 1998; Spivak, 1999). The theory fitted best in this study because it supports women empowerment through education, participation, communication, and improved potential which are strongly supported by other empowerment minded scholars (Narayan, 1997; Hudson-Weems, 1998; Spivak, 1999; Parpart, Rai, & Staudt, 2002).

This method is defined as a form of study which uses a naturalistic approach to understand phenomena in its natural settings (Glesne, 2006; Golafshani, 2003; Patton, 2002; Creswell, 1998). Patton (2002) buttresses this same point by stating qualitative research happens in a, "real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest…It is a form of inquiry which arrives at its findings through allowing the “phenomenon of interest [to] unfold naturally” (p. 39). No predetermined hypothesis is presented for testing, rather, it is a presentation of what is natural. Additionally, qualitative research is also defined as, “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). QI gives no room for causal determinations, prediction or generalization of findings.

Such inquiry sets out to unpack the uniqueness of each phenomenon under study by staying away from generalizations. To achieve this end, Patton (1985) views it as:

an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting—what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings
are, what the world looks like in that particular setting. . . . The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p.1)

As the researcher, I sought to present the stories of participants with their own perceptions and lived experiences. Best & Kahn (2003) assert that QI endeavors to analyze events and people’s experiences devoid of numerical data. In examining any type of phenomena, qualitative methodology takes an in-depth detail of a specific case. This methodology examines issues in depth and detail while providing openness and thick description to both researchers and participants. An important strength of such research is producing a wealth of detailed information about small numbers of people and cases. Such depth and detailed explanations are given to further define the context and meaning.

The phenomenon of being in high school can only be accurately told through stories and reflections of those for whom it is a reality. According to Merriam (2002), a basic interpretive qualitative research methodology is an approach to illuminating a phenomenon of interest. Further, Merriam (2002) refers to basic, interpretive qualitative research as “the most common type of qualitative research used in education” (p. 38).

In this study I sought to answer the questions “what,” “why,” and “how” of the school lived experiences of these young Maasai women in Kenya. According to Glesne (2006), research questions on “what” and “how” are better answered through a qualitative inquiry. Creswell (2007) insists that researches that focus on experiences have to answer the “what” and “how” of participant experiences. In addition to focusing on experiences, the interview questions were “experience/ behavior questions,
opinion/value questions, feeling questions” and others (Patton, 2002, as cited in Glesne, 2006, p. 82).

Qualitative research calls for an in-depth study through a rich narrative (Kania, 2008). Qualitative researchers are required to give thick or rich descriptions when reporting their findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Bearing this in mind, this researcher using qualitative research, I sought to provide a thick or rich description of the meaning young Maasai women gave to their schooling experiences. Merriam (2002) argues:

The world or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that it is assumed to be …instead, there are multiple contracts and interpretations of reality that are in flux and change over time. (p. 4)

Making meaning or sense is the main goal of this research. Qualitative methodology provides the opportunity to do this with the lived reality of this study’s participants. By gaining a deep understanding about their reality as high school students and their perspectives on what to change, I will be in a position to make these visible and clear to the audience of my study.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), QI is “context-specific” (p. 106), an approach best for my study because this inquiry does not aim to draw generalizations about the young Maasai women’s education, but hoped to provide context specific information about this group of women from Kajiado. However, QI allows transferability. Patton (2002) writes that qualitative research is not about generalizing the findings but treating each case in its uniqueness.
Patton (2002) views qualitative research as flexible and emergent. This gives me as the researcher the flexibility and emergent factors which are permissible in order to take care of naturalistic and contextual issues of the study. It is only a qualitative paradigm which gives researchers the opportunity to “let the data speak.” Therefore, the data wind blows the study into directions that cannot fit the hypothesized mode of quantitative inquiry.

According to Glesne (2006), researchers must be highly aware of the fact that the researcher's subjectivity deeply affects the research, but, encourages and suggests ways of minimizing such inter-subjectivity. Letting the participants’ views be heard is one method of minimizing researcher’s inter-subjectivity.

The strength of quantitative paradigm of thickly describing data is well taken care of by my use of several data collection methods: focus groups, interviewing, observation, and document analysis (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Myers, 2000). The many data collection modes in qualitative research are the study’s way of staying firm, and rigorous.

In short, the nature of the research problem called for a qualitative research approach. Qualitative inquiry was quite important in uncovering and understanding the lived school experiences of young Maasai women from Kajiado about which little is known. In addition, the study aimed at filling a knowledge gap in the literature whereby student voices are not often heard in what is already known or researched about young Maasai women in Kenyan high schools. This study went further to give intricate details
of the phenomena, a factor which is difficult to convey using quantitative methods of inquiry (Roberts, 2004).

**Case Study**

There are several definitions of a case study because authors do not have a commonly agreed upon one. Patton (1990) asserts that case studies are “rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from few exemplars of the phenomenon in question” (p. 54). Again Patton (2002) argues that:

> Case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time [and]...allows you to investigate phenomenon, population, or general conditions. (p. 13, as cited in Stake, 2000, p. 437)

In this situation, case studies are preferable when a researcher is in need of using a variety of data sources for cross-examination purposes (Eisenhardt, 1989; Hamey, Dufour & Fortin, 1993; Patton, 2002; Best & Khan, 2003). In my study, the use of interviews, observation and documents fitted well as a method of cross-checking the findings.

Further, Bromley (1990) defines a case study as a "systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest" (p. 302). Case studies typically examine the interplay of all variables in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of events or situations under study (Best & Khan, 2003). This type of comprehensive understanding is arrived at through thick description of each particular unit of study. This involves in-depth description of the case being evaluated, the context of use, the uniqueness of each participant involved,
and the location (Name, 1997; Patton, 2002; Glesne, 2006; Creswell, 2007). A thick
description is important to this study because it captures best the complexity of each
individual case, rather than the total number of cases. In addition, detailing the
interactions within context of each participant was a way of according special attention
to each in this study.

In summary of the above definitions, I view a case study as having the
following qualities: being time and place limited, using few participants but studying
them intensively or in detail. In addition, case studies use many data collection methods
such as interviews, focus group discussions, observation, pictures, newspapers, journal
excerpts, and documents among others (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002).
Also, case studies could be used to study people, groups, villages, practices, social
structures, activities in detail.

**Phenomenology**

Creswell (1998) defines phenomenology as that which “describes the meaning of
the lived experience for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon” (p. 51).
According to Patton (2002), researching people’s experiences using phenomenology is
important because “we can only know we experience by attending to perceptions and
meanings that awaken our conscious awareness” (Patton, 2002, p.105). This inquiry
requires methodologically, carefully and thoroughly capturing and presenting how
people experience particular phenomenon:

- how they receive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense
  of it, and talk about it with others. To gather such data, one must undertake in-
  depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of
interest; that is, they have “lived experience” as opposed to second hand
experience. (Patton, 2002, p.104)

Further, Kupers (2005) contends that:

Phenomenology is a reasoned inquiry: a method of scientific philosophy
in general which tries to discover the essences of appearances which are
anything which human beings can become conscious. More precisely the
word phenomenon means that which reveals itself. (p. 53)

Phenomenology fits this study because its major goal was to understand the educational
experiences as the phenomenon of interest. In addition, the study seeks to explain the
“what” and “how” of these experiences, which compares to asking the question, what
makes something what it is in a phenomenological inquiry (Van Maanen, 1990).

Phenomenological studies therefore seek facts and the causes of certain incidents
including understanding the lived experiences of people. In this study, I seek to reveal
facts on the socio-cultural factors that hinder the educational access of young Maasai
women.

Rationale of a Phenomenological Case Study

In my study, the two research designs adopted are phenomenology and case
study. A phenomenological case study is a qualitative research approach concerned
with understanding certain group behaviors. The group under study was asked to give
personal accounts of their lives experiences or point of view through the various acts of
consciousness.

My choice of phenomenological case study did not emerge unexpectedly. It was
as a result of my research interest to understand young Maasai women’s educational
stories and experiences. According to Patton (2002), phenomenological case study
“focus[es] on exploring on how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness both individually and as shared meaning” (p. 104). This being my objective, a phenomenological case study was the best fit for the study because, participants were asked to explain the sense they made out of being school students. A combination of the two approaches helped the researcher in illuminating a better understanding of the issue under study.

Second, the two approaches were useful as primary research tools in data collection and analyses (Merriam, 2002). The two are both investigative and inductive, while their end products have to be richly descriptive. Relating the same to my study, thick descriptions are inevitable because they form part of presenting the findings in a qualitative inquiry.

According to Yin (1994), a case study combines well with phenomenology because it investigates a phenomenon within its natural context either with clear set boundaries between phenomenon and context or when boundaries are not clearly evident. Patton (2002) claims that, “There are no perfect research designs. There are always trade-offs” (p. 223). Therefore, owing to the fact that not a single one is fully sufficient, a combination was quite important in complementing each other, making up for any deficiency in each, deepening the excavated information, thus, deepening the understanding of the issues under scrutiny. When two designs are combined, the outcome is stronger than using one only. Further, Creswell (1998) assures that researching people’s stories and experiences through a phenomenological case study provides a clear understanding of what participants view as reality to them. These two
approaches are strong where “the importance of context, setting, and subjects’ frame of reference” come under “scrutiny” (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 46). In this study, I chose to combine the two designs in order to help me “dig deeper” making the context of each case important.

Third, a phenomenological case study was preferred because the researcher sought to understand the educational experiences of young Maasai women through their own perception. The unique characteristic of phenomenological case study approach made it relevant to the study’s inter-subjectivity and acts of consciousness. In addition, this approach made it possible for each participant to be examined and quizzed for detail and better understanding of their experiences. The combination of the two designs made the study exciting and refreshing in that views collected from young Maasai women at high school and key informants (teachers, education officials and other stakeholders) were combined and analyzed in an attempt to understand the educational experiences of young Maasai women.

Fourth, many researchers on women argue that a phenomenological case study approach offers a valuable framework for examining women’s experiences in their uniqueness as well as in groups. As such, it is used to study women’s issues related to education, health, social, political, violence and cultural issues (Bennett, 1991; Munhall, 1995; Kane, 2006; Annin, 2009). Because phenomenological case studies seek to discover, grasp, interpret, and bring to fore the meaning of participants’ perceived reality, I heavily depended on it in discovering the challenges participants faced as high school students. Patton (1990) asserts that phenomenology assumes that:
there is an essence or essences to shared experiences….of different people bracketed, analyzed, and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon, for example, the essence of loneliness, the essence of being a mother, or the essence of being a participant in a particular program. (p. 70)

When compared through a phenomenological study, such experiences tell a common story of women in a similar experience, yet unique and detailed in each person’s context and reality. So, I envisage that phenomenological case study will help me tell the common stories of the young Maasai women while remaining focused to each participant’s uniqueness.

Lastly, the field of research is increasingly discovering the importance of participants’ perceptions and the meaning attached. Coincidentally, phenomenological case studies place a high premium on the richness of participants’ experiences and the power of their stories.

The opportunity to gather participants’ stories makes these two designs strong in presenting interesting and unique stories that would be problematic if presented quantitatively. Therefore, using a phenomenological case study method in my work enabled me to engage in dialogue with each participant in order to record their stories. As the researcher, I was able to engage in a dialogue with the participants to generate knowledge. The knowledge is a contribution to the deeper understanding of how young Maasai women from Kajiado District in Kenya viewed education as an empowering tool.

**Site Selection**

The study site for this research was Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School in Kajiado District, in Kenya. Kajiado District has 10 girls’ only high schools (Kajiado
Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School is one of them and the second largest girls’ school in the district, with a population of 374 students (Kajiado District Education Office, 2010). Originally, the school started as a mixed school in 1973. Due to its proximity to other nearby large boys’ schools, the community thought it wise to transform one school to a major girls’ only school. As such, boys were phased out. The last batch left in 2002. According to Loise Mkubwa, one of the key informants that I interviewed during fieldwork, many Maasai women trace their educational path from this institution (Loise Personal communication, May, 2010).

Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School was chosen as the site for this research and it represents a unique case study of the experience under study (Yin, 1994). Additionally, this educational institution which was established in 1970s has better learning facilities than the others in the district. Enoomatasiani in Kajiado District is home to the Maasai community. This is one of the pastoral groups which is facing low levels of educational access in Kenya. To illustrate the low enrollments, Oxfam (2005) stated that the pastoral districts’ enrollment rate in Kenya such as Kajiado, Garissa, Narok, Turkana, Samburu and others was only 25% with as low as 17% female enrollment. This makes Kajiado a unique and suitable area for conducting research on female students’ education and meets the purpose of this study. Refer to Figure 1 map of Kajiado District, p. 21).
Participants Selection

This study was carried out in Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School in Kajiado District, in Kenya. The first category of participants are high school students selected from this institution. This category makes up the majority of participants (75%). They are the focus of the study. The other category of participants - the key informant - was arrived at after conducting interviews with the high school participants. The rationale for including them was based on their direct role in promoting girls education in the Kajiado region. They included teachers, NGO representatives, college women, a District Education Officer and a school board member. These participants were also frequently mentioned by the participants during the interviews, and, therefore, their views about girls’ education in the area were important. In addition, their involvement brought in their experience and their interactions with the participants in school.

Purposive sampling used in this study permits researchers to connect the purpose of their studies directly to their sampling strategy. Patton (2002) contends the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. “Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). In the case of this study the choice of information rich participants led me to select two categories of participants: high school participants and the key informants. Each category fulfills the information rich criterion in being directly involved either as students or as education officers with the government or with NGOs.
A second style of purposeful sampling that I used is snowball sampling. Patton (2002) states, “Snowball sampling identifies cases of interest from sampling people who know people who know what cases are information rich, that is, good examples for study and good interview participants” (p. 243). In this study I sampled five participants who were representatives from: school counselor, a FAWE official, a school board member, a young college and working Maasai woman, and a District Education Officer (DEO). These participants made up 25% of the total and were arrived at through interviewing the student participants in high school.

While the study aimed at privileging the voices and opinions of young Maasai women on their educational experiences, other participants who were significant to them were also put in consideration. This was important for providing thick and rich data. The total number of the study had a total of 20 participants. Fifteen of them were female students in their final year in Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School. The other five were key informants who were deeply involved in matters of education in Kajiado District. Table 4 below represents the study participants based on their categories.
Table 4: Representation of study participants by category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Students</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) School counselor</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) FAWE official</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) BOG Member</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Young woman in college &amp; working</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) District Education Officer (DEO)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Data representation of study participants*

Table 4 above is a representation of the number of participants who took part in this study and where they were drawn from. In qualitative inquiry there are no strict criteria for sample size (Patton, 1990; Hoepfl, 1997). In addition, this study is not number oriented but content with participants’ views as adequate to illuminate deep and rich data from each case (Creswell, 2007). Patton (2002) argues that, qualitative researchers do not work with large populations because their main goal is the numbers but to provide information-rich cases.

Several factors were considered in selecting the 24 participants. First, this number was manageable for the two and half months I was in the field. Also, as I interviewed this number, it appeared that by the time I got to the 24th participant, there was no new information being added to the data. Data saturation is reached when the researcher gathers data to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is being added (Glase & Strauss, 1967; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).
Further, having the key informants drawn from several varied groups dealing with educational issues in Kajiado enriched my understanding of the phenomenon under study. With all the 20 participants involved, I selected five (5) participants from the high school category who formed a focus group. All participants responded to semi-structured interviews were used to collect data.

All the young Maasai participants were drawn from the Fourth Form, that is, the graduating class. They have stayed in the school the longest and have the widest experience to elicit rich, in-depth, and thick data. They also fitted the age category of my study. They had been in school long enough to tell their experiences. The gender factor of the participants was strictly geared towards privileging the voice of young Maasai women who are mostly silenced over issues to do with their education although they bear the full consequence of any decisions made by others.

**Methods of Data Collection**

Two major methods of collecting data are primary and secondary sources. While primary sources are documents that directly address the issues under study such as letter, newspapers, wills, laws, transcripts and oral testimony by participants, secondary sources do not bear a direct link to the issues under scrutiny. Patton (2002) views secondary data as that already collected by other people, agencies or written in textbooks. According to Cresswell (1998), “data collection is a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions” (p. 110). Qualitative research concerns data gathering using numerous methods (Glesne, 2006).
My major data collection methods were interviews and focus groups, documents, and observation. The rationale of using these methods was to physically meet and talk to the participants, observing them and their environment and analyzing documents for as many layers of data as possible. “Qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents” (p. 4). These varied methods were important to this study for triangulation purposes. Specifically, interviewing generated direct quotes indicating participants’ knowledge, opinions, feeling and experiences (Patton, 2002).

This study used three data collection methods namely: interviews and focus group, documents, and observation. These three data collection modes were sufficient in gathering data from the two categories of participants explained earlier in order to understand the educational experiences of young Maasai women. The section below presents each of the data sources.

**Interviews and Focus Group**

Interviewing was employed as a data collection method. Specifically, I used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to gather data from the high school participants and the key informants. According to Kahn and Cannell (1957), interviewing is “a conversation with a purpose” (p. 149). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) add that interviewing is an exchange of views between two persons about a subject matter of shared interest. These authors suggest that if anyone is interested in knowing other people’s culture, perceptions, attitudes, and their world and lives, talking to them
would solve the problem. This means one interviews people with the assumption that their perspectives are meaningful. Seidman (1991) writes:

If the researcher’s goal is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experiences, then interviewing people provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry. (Cited in Locke et al., 2000, p. 257)

Through conversation, one not only learns a person’s day-to-day struggles, voice, opinions, and thoughts, but also his or her feelings of joy, sorrow, fear and hope (Patton, 2002).

In this study, I used a semi-structured interview questionnaire what, Patton (2002) refers to as a ‘general interview guide.’ According to him, “The general interview guide approach involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before the interview begins. The guide serves as a basic checklist during the interviews to make sure that all relevant topics are covered” (p. 342). I adopted semi-structured interviews because they helped in retaining focus and conversation. Such a method allowed a two-way communication whereby any unclear answers were clarified through follow-up questions and probing. The checklist for topics of interest was important in understanding the lived experiences of young Maasai women in their final year in high school.

The art of formulation clear and meaningful interview guide is also important in research. Kvale (1996) advises researchers to ask clear questions with follow up probes to maintain the meaning because what is clear to one will be opaque to another. Abiding by Kvale’s advice, I used short, clear words that were out of jargon.

Rephrasing the questions and responses for clarity was also helpful in this study. The
interviews ended when the participant had exhausted their descriptions. Each one took between 45-80 minutes. After each, I listened to the tapes to ensure they made sense. By listening, I discovered gaps and unclear messages for which I was able to seek clarifications, elaborations, and expansions from the participants.

In some cases, follow up interviews were done through requesting the interviewees for a second chance to clarify some issues. This also includes calling the interviewees later during data analysis for clarifications. I took advantage of the field rapport generated during field work. During the transcription and writing stages, I made calls to Kenya to talk to some of the interviewees. These follow-ups served as a measure of accuracy. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that a prolonged engagement with the participant has the ability to capture rich and thick data. In my case, engaging a participant for 45 minutes or more was considered long enough to gather rich and thick data. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), “qualitative research [data] adequacy refers to the amount of data collected, rather than to the number of subjects, as in quantitative research” (p. 76). By interviewing 20 participants from the two categories in my study, I had gathered adequate data. Data collection was conducted during April and May, 2010.

Focus Group

This study also used a focus group to collect data. The five (5) members forming this focus group were recruited on voluntary basis from the high school students’ category which had 15 members. A Focus group encourages interviewing several participants together in order to elicit data based on their ideas, opinions and
feelings related to the topic under study (Krueger (1994). I moderated the focus group interviews and discussions because one member who had volunteered to moderate complained of toothache. Therefore, I also used the recorder to keep track of the discussions. Krueger and Casey (2000) defines focus group based on its purpose, size, composition and procedures. A researcher using a focus group listens and gathers information concerning the topic of interest. It gives the listener a chance to understand the issue, topic, product or a service. The data is analyzed based on the emerging themes and patterns. Focus groups are formed based on common characteristics of the members relating to the topic in question (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Greenbaum, 1998; Krueger, 1994).

Such a focus group was suitable for exploring the complexity around young Maasai women’s education within the context of lived experiences in a group setting. Therefore, my research problem led itself to use a focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2000). While conducting the focus group discussion, an interview guide was used (see Appendix C).

**Documents**

Documents are primary sources of data in qualitative research. Written documents according to Patton (2002) vary from “studying excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open ended written responses and surveys” (p. 4). Patton (2002) puts emphasis on the fact that documents constitute a particularly rich source of information. Documents give a clear
setting of the time when the document was formed, who prepared it, why it was prepared and how it was prepared.

According to Glesne (2006), document analysis deepens our understanding from interviews and observation. In addition, they help the researcher to learn other aspects to develop in the study. In fact, they reinforce the credibility of the study findings, reinforcing the importance of doing a document analysis. Document analyses are done to support data collection techniques used and to shape the study direction. Consequently, a thorough document analysis undergirded the credibility of this research.

I used documents in explaining the study site and its origins. They included: school time tables, student records, bulletins, school rules, school structure, wall posters and pictures. These documents provided insights into the perspectives, assumptions, concerns, and activities that were taking place in the school. This information was important in this study because it guided me in understanding the school organization, the school’s daily activities, and the dos and don’ts in the school compound. Student records helped me in selecting those students who fitted my sampling criteria. By analyzing the documents, I was able to verify what I observed and the claims made by the interviewees.

**Observation**

Patton (2002) refers to observation as: fieldwork, qualitative observation, and direct observation. Observation is also “a systematic process of noting and recording of events, behaviors and artifacts in a social setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 98).
One observes using the human sense of sight. It could also be reinforced by the use of technical equipments which could allow the observed data to be stored in many forms. Other than the observer herself, one could use field notebooks, battery operated tapes, recorder/ dictaphones, cameras and video tape machines (Patton, 2002). However, researchers are cautioned to keep clean records and avoid confusion later when keeping track of events and maintaining detailed images.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) view observation as the most comprehensive of research strategies. However, in a research situation, it needs to be coupled with interviewing to describe the setting, people, environment and meaning of the observed, thus strengthening the words of the interviewee (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The main focus of this style of data collection is to give thick and personal description of a social event, a phenomenon or even a program while still remaining neutral. Glesne (2006) states:

...participant observation demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study...Ideally, the researcher spends a considerable amount of time in the setting, learning about daily life there. This immersion offers the researcher the opportunity to learn directly from... [her] own experience. (p. 100)

Therefore, I used observation in this study because I believe it is a rich source of data especially if the skill is not well-mastered or coupled with much practice. Being a keen observer is encouraged by many scholars such as Van Maanen (1988), who uses a quote by Yogi Berra, “You observe a lot watching” (p. 45). For me, this statement served as a reminder that the importance attached to observation in excavating data is huge. Moreover, Patton (1990) claims that observation provides knowledge about
events while the researcher can see things of which participants themselves are unaware or just take for granted. He adds that the skilled observer has the ability to monitor verbal and nonverbal cues, and then present them to readers in clear descriptive language.

In the field, a researcher could be a participant observer and a direct nonparticipant observer. Questions have always been asked as to which position the researcher should take when studying the “Other” in order to extract accurate data. Although the researcher’s positionality may depend on the type and use of information required, he or she should remain as neutral and nonjudgmental as possible. However, varying degrees of participation by the researcher are important at certain stages of fieldwork (Glesne, 2006). In the early stages, one can hang out with the researched, although Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue that “observation involves more than just “hanging out” (p. 99). Becoming familiar and ‘accepted’ in the field is important because the researcher has the ability to graduate from observer to participant observer. Patton (2002) opines that participant observation is the best position for a qualitative researcher, but he or she should take care of the insider (emic) versus outsider (etic) perspective in order to maintain a balance.

Although participant observation sounds good and rigorous in striking rapport between the researcher and the researched, I preferred direct observation for two major reasons. First, I had three months in the field. One month was consumed with bureaucracy issues such as getting a research permit from the Ministry of Education. Therefore, only two months were available for data collection, not enough time to get
myself fully immersed into the study community; thus, my choice of a direct observer role.

Although participant observation looks more appealing and could yield better data to the researcher, this study relied heavily on observation due to time the factor. Being a participant observer calls for a long stay with the participants while observation involves being a silent observer of activities in the study site. Therefore, my observation included the activities in a typical school day, student-teacher interactions, student-student interactions, thus, inquiring how participants view them.

Second, direct observation accorded me as the researcher an opportunity to be physically present, hear, see, and record participants’ reality (Glesne, 2006). These two points acted as a guide for my choice in the field. Even if I were researching my own backyard, observation technique granted me the opportunity of taking notes about everything as though I was seeing it for the first time, therefore, taking nothing for granted. In this case, I was able to ask the participants more questions which made the familiar unfamiliar and the obvious strange (Patton, 2002). In so doing, I was able to give layers of data observation and interviewing through adding another layer of information to the study and supporting the observed data with participants’ points of view.

Reflecting on my position as an insider, I have been a teacher, and having been in the system for 8 years, I was invited to join other teachers in the district for a teachers’ conference on student performance by the District Education Officer (DEO). Also, the school principal and the deputy invited me to talk to students on the topic
Balancing friendships and studies. I took these invitations very positively as a teacher, a mentor, an elder sister, councilor, and a researcher who cares much about this group of students. I could not afford to be just a mere observer. At one point, I thought I was much removed from the culture and the education system by the virtue of being away from home and interacting with other cultures here in the United States. However, after getting to the field and making a few visits to the research location, I found everything as familiar as ever and people again accorded me my former positionality which was that of a teacher. Patton (2002) advices that researchers need to be reflective about their insider positionality.

Observation in the school compound included classes, offices, and the general impression of the school. While the classrooms were made of stone walls and iron sheets, the school was clean with neatly trimmed fences. I made notes about the school environment. I was also interested in documents related to the focus of the study. As Patton (2002) writes, “learning to use, study and understand documents and files is part of the repertoire of skills needed for qualitative inquiry” (p. 295). Documents for analysis included policy statements about the education of girls. The school had some pictures taken during different occasions in the school.

Triangulation

Triangulation according to Creswell (1998) involves using multiple data sources in a qualitative inquiry to produce clarity in understanding a phenomenon. According to Patton (2002), “some studies intermix interviewing, observation, and document analysis. Others rely more on interviews than observation, and vice versa. Studies that
use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks” (p. 248).

This study used triangulation which was useful in coordinating the two categories of participants in the study who were high school students and the key informants. While sharing and matching opinions from each participant was important, each data collection mode also helped in shaping and coordinating data. According to Berg (1995), “triangulation does not merely involve a combination of different data collection methods; rather, it is aimed at relating the different methods in order to counteract the threats to validity identified in each method” (p. 5). Triangulation in this study was important because it helped me to double-check the data and to clearly capture the context of the participants under different data collection angles, thus gaining a more holistic picture of the issue under study.

**Data Collection Procedure**

This segment presents a step-by-step procedure of what happened in the field broken down into weeks for easy management. Gaining access was quite important. In addition, research ethics, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were discussed.

Prior to contacting my former colleagues and the principal, I sought permission from the Ministry of Education to access the school. I had to acquire a research permit and an authorization letter to contact the study from the Ministry of education offices in Nairobi. After, I went to the District Education Officer (DEO), Kajiado District, to report my intention and to present the documents. The DEO filed copies of my
documents and wrote a letter to the principal, Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School, making her aware of the study. The school principal also filed copies of the documents. This is typical of the bureaucracy that one has to follow in the Kenyan system. Gaining access in the field was not problematic. Through two former colleagues as well as the school principal, I was able to interview the participants. The principal, the deputy principal and the teachers were happy to allow me to conduct the study. In addition, I collaborated with the guidance and counseling department head to sample the participants based on the sampling procedure.

From time to time, researchers have been involved in studies which harm their participants. To protect unknowing and innocent research subjects, governments demand strict adherence to research ethics. The field work was planned in a step-by-step procedure which took eight weeks.

The first week in the field was spent in asking myself as the researcher the question, “What is happening here?” to familiarize myself with the study location. I made arrangements to meet with the participants. Participant sampling was conducted based on the study criteria. Permission seeking to use records, signing of consent forms, and setting times and dates for interviews were undertaken in consultation with the participants of the study. Additionally, I carried out some observation geared towards the Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School study site. The school environment, materials, and resources were important in shaping the research and interview questions, to capture as much data as possible, and to understand the educational young Maasai women and could be physically observed.
The second week was dedicated to interviews. My target was to interview one participant each afternoon. The rationale for choosing the afternoon is because it was after classes. Therefore, this time was suitable and it did not interfere with class time or school routine. Data was saved in pen drives and in my computer. The evening was a time to listen and reflect on data in order to give myself a chance to go back with more questions for clarity and to ascertain accuracy.

The third week was dominated by both observations and interviews. I relied heavily on note-taking and seeking clarifications when puzzled by some observations and answers was important. The fourth week involved interviewing and document analysis. Already, I had gained much information. Therefore, I needed to look at some documents for cross-checking the data. Additionally, documents helped me in generating different topics to the study. This week marked the end of interviews. The data had reached saturation point. The fifth and sixth weeks were dedicated to three main activities: looking at documents available at the school, focus group discussions, and developing ideas about issues which were agreed or disagreed upon by the group members.

During the last week in the study site I asked the question, “Did I get it right?” I re-interviewed some participants with whom I felt I had something to clarify. I also took time to thank and bid farewell to the study participants, the teachers, and the school principal. In addition, I promised to share the study results with the school later.

In summary, the fieldwork plan took two months of April and May, 2010. The weekly plan for the fieldwork process involved permission acquisition from all the
relevant offices, familiarization with the study cite, participant sampling and signing of consent forms. Data collection started with observation, interviews, document analysis, focus groups, and member checks. In all these steps, data transcription, coding, and analysis continued.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is defined by Bogdan and Boklen (1982) as “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable unites, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 145). To put it differently, data analysis is organizing data through coding to generate categories, and themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Informed by the above statements, data analysis is a process which leads to interpretation and making meaning of the raw data excavated from the field.

Based on my theory and research questions which aim at finding meaning and opinions of the participants on their day-to-day experiences, the data analysis involved coding and organizing in themes to make meaning. Analyzing data by looking for patterns and themes from the findings as the case in qualitative research is guided by the research questions (Glesne, 2006). In my case, I analyzed the data by following a process of transcribing data, coding data, organizing data, immersion myself into the data, generating categories and themes, and interpretation and reporting.

The data analysis process began in the field as I collected data because it gave me the ability to collect, focus and shape the study as it unfolded (Glesne, 2006). I agree with research experts that data, when subjected to the analysis process, is reduced a
great deal, making it more manageable and easy to comprehend (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 1990). Perkins (2005) views the “final process of data analysis as that of conceptual grouping, making contrasts, comparisons and noting relationships” (p. 117). I used inductive analysis which creatively and logically brings out the critical themes and patterns that I communicate to readers in chapter four. Examining the above explanations on data coding and analysis, I developed a report which presented the critical issues concerning the education of young Maasai women. These issues are elaborated more in chapter four.

As explained above, data were transcribed, translated into English in some cases from Kiswahili, coded into themes, and analyzed looking for the narrative threads that connects to make a story, based on the nature of the topic. Data analysis involved three steps: data reading and listening, transcription (interviews) and pulling together data from all the sources. This riveted transcription of all the interviews, summarizing and putting down all the field notes made either through observation, informal talks or from documents such as pictures, circulars, board meeting minutes and others. Using multiple sources of data is compared to making a collection of many pieces of ideas which helped me to build an in-depth understanding of meaning (Warden & Wong, 2007). Each of these sources made a unique piece of information towards the final report.

Next, data organizing, categorizing, and coding was done. This step entailed breaking up, separating, and dissembling research materials into pieces or units that are manageable in order for the researcher to sort, sift, organize, classify, sequence, and
look for patterns that are meaningful (Jorgensen, 1989). This operation enabled the researcher to organize raw data into understandable patterns. Perkins (2005) states organizing data into patterns happens as the researcher immerses himself or herself into the data. I utilized a simple scheme for creating themes. This involved use of color coding, based on the sources of data. While the responses from high school participants were coded red, focus group was blue, the key informants were green and documents yellow. These colors helped me in organizing and thematizing data for clarity.

Third, I used the Africana womanism theory to explain some of the emerging themes that connoted oppression and lack of opportunity for young Maasai women. I addition, I used Africana womanism as a tool to speak against cultural oppression of women. Fourth, I cross-checked the coded data for errors and flow. This was helpful in giving a good flow of data from each participant. After coding and data confirming the flow, I wrote the study report.

Fifth, based on themes in the analyzed data, I developed a preliminary report that answered the research questions as well as presenting participants’ experiences. Inclusion of direct quotes from the interviews was very important in illustrating participants’ experiences and opinions in the report. Lastly, I reviewed the transcripts for the final time, ensuring careful consideration and consistence in all the themes and patterns. From this point, I made comparisons to determine whether the findings were supported by literature while noting the contradictions.
Research Ethics and Informed Consent

Before going to the field, I submitted an application to the Ohio University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval, to fulfill the university’s requirement using an approved proposal before data collection. This application included a brief summary of this study together with a description of how ethical integrity of the study was adhered to. The description provided guidance for obtaining permission of the participants in the study.

I made arrangements with the school administration based at their convenience for a time to access school records and to locate participants who meet my selection criteria. I clearly explained to the study to participants, laid out its objectives, and told them why their participation was important through a lay summary. The researcher made it clear that participation was purely voluntary, and anybody who was not willing to take part was free to opt out or stop in the process if she so wishes. I requested permission to record the interviews from the interviewees before the face-to-face interviews commenced. The consent process occurred prior to the interviews.

To make it clear, I reminded participants that their participation was purely voluntary as mentioned earlier. In addition, I read the consent form loudly to the participants. I gave the participants time to go over the hard copies by themselves for their informed decision before signing it and beginning the interviews.

I organized to meet each participant individually for an interview at a venue mutually agreed upon and request permission to record the interview. I carried out comfortable conversations creating a nontthreatening atmosphere and trust between the
interviewer and interviewees. I assured participants that they were free to stop the interview completely or allow for another opportunity convenient and acceptable to them. After interviews, transcribed data from the tapes and field notes were stored safely.

With their permission, I set dates with them after school (so as not to interfere with the school schedule). The schedule was made in consultation with each participant based on their personal timetables. This helped in ensuring that any other planned activities after school were also considered such as games, group discussions and clubs. My scheduled days were Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons. Each day I got to the study site early for observation purposes. The interviews would start immediately at 4:00 pm after classes.

Participants were not forced to take part in this study and those who took part were handled carefully. As the researcher, I respected and gave all the participants the freedom to opt out of the study at any point based on their wishes.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Data acquired through audio recordings was safely stored by the principal investigator using a secret password. For anonymity and confidentiality reasons, participants’ names were not used in the study. All participants were given a numbers and no names were recorded, assuring anonymity. Rather, pseudo nymes were adopted. In order to protect participants’ identity, audio recordings was held for only one year and then destroyed. Simon and Eppert state, “an ethical practice of witnessing includes
the obligation to bear witness, to re-testify, to somehow convey what one has heard and thinks important to remember”(1997, p.187).

**Self as Researcher**

Anybody reading a research piece should be in a position to understand the researcher’s values, identity, assumptions and biases (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), one’s race, gender, religion and ethnicity influence one’s knowledge production. I am a Kenyan female born, raised and educated in the eastern part of the country. Conducting this study in Kenya accorded me as a Kenyan woman a beneficial position because I know the study site quite well. I worked in Kajiado District as a teacher trainer for two years before proceeding for further studies. My personal observation and inspiration for researching young Maasai women in education is that there was not a single young Maasai woman student-teacher in my college, despite its location in a region which is home to this community. Thus, I was both an insider and an outsider. I was setting out to study this group using African feminism, which required me to take a critical look at the issue under study.

I serve as the main vehicle for data collection and interpretation. The credibility of qualitative inquiry leans heavily on the reader’s confidence with the research piece. This kind of identification is important as it helps readers to understand the researcher’s point of view. Additionally, the researchers’ ability to carry out qualitative research is displayed with an aim of determining whether they have the cultural knowledge to interpret and enhance other peoples’ experiences in their cultural context (Tillman, 2002).
Since I aimed at creating good rapport and making my participants comfortable, I took advice from Clair (2003) that the “Friendship” model of interviewing would be good, because “there is often a great deal of give-and–take in the discussion, rather than a traditional interview that follows a strict ‘interview schedule’ in which the researcher only speaks to ask a questions” (p. 31). Making participants comfortable goes a long way towards being free to develop trust and confidence.

My ability to collect data is enhanced by my ability to interact and communicate with the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, I was actively involved and immersed in the study process. Patton (2002) opines that the qualitative researcher has to be actively involved in the research process, getting involved in interviewing, analyzing documents and being a participant observer. He adds that it is the researcher’s role to set clear goals and priorities about goals, focusing on those based on the purpose and intended audience. The researcher has to be willing to engage ordinary citizens in a methodological process and a respectful manner. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) mention, data being collected by a human being is holistic (interview, observation and document analysis); provides quick feedback, probes, and verifications, and is thick because it draws more than just the required responses.

As an African woman, I am interested in researching African women but I also recognize the fact that they form varied groups based on location and context. According Patton (2002), phenomenology looks at both the shared and the unique experiences of participants. By studying Kenyan women in general and the Maasai group in particular, I acknowledge the fact that even Kenyan women cannot be taken as
a single group. This helps me in understanding myself first and those who are like me. As people say, knowledge is power. I am convinced that studying African women means exploring their belief systems and values to understand them better. As the research instrument, I identify myself both as a Kenyan woman and as an educator. Having been born, brought up and educated through college in Kenya, I have my inter-subjectivity both as a Kenyan student and as a Kenyan educator who understands the system well. My role as researcher in this situation was to capitalize on such a relationship to create a rapport or ‘alliance formation’ in order to draw upon shared experiences and attributes as a point of connection. However, I am also interested in questioning the familiar in my own backyard.

As a researcher, I was quite aware of my insider-outsider status and avoided the inter-subjectivity associated with telling the story of the Other. My role was not to tell a different story from that of the participants. Using direct quotes, I was able to present the stories of young Maasai women in their own words.

Hopkins (2007) postulates that researchers should not assume a sameness with their participants, but should aim at alliance formation and neutrality. The essence of discovering these differences or otherwise is aimed at ensuring that the research was not biased in any way based on these two factors (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). To meet such a challenge, it is advisable for the research instrument, “the researcher,” to be neutral, to be ‘in-between’ and to avoid the temptation of overcoming the differences. In other words, as a researcher I aimed at “approach[ing] the topic ‘neutrally’ and not prejudice or impose meaning or interpretations” (Thomas, 1993, p. 22; Glesne, 2006).
I attribute my interest in working with young women to my experiences across the Kenyan education system. Although I am an insider, I can also be an outsider researcher studying a group of students in the same system of education, examining it with a critical eye through Africana feminism theory. In my position as an insider-outsider, I was constantly aware of my positionality to ensure that my identity and my prior experiences do not result to inter-subjectivity in any way. I constantly remained objective and reflective about my insider positionality. According to Patton (2002), reflexivity is “a way of emphasizing self-awareness, and political/cultural self-consciousness, and ownership of one’s perspective” (p. 64). As Hopkins (2007) notes, “a researcher’s positionality together with identity and knowledge involves multiple, interwoven and intersecting ways which get revealed in the field and call for the researcher to be aware of them and to negotiate, drawing upon, contesting and managing them to maintain the ethical value” (p. 24).

My inspiration to study young Maasai women in Kenya is based on my personal experiences as female student and later as an educator working in Kenyan high schools and colleges. Having been born, brought up and educated in the Kenyan school system, I have a clear understanding of the phenomenon under study. According to Patton (2002), “understanding the phenomenon with increased depth helps the researcher to grow in self-awareness and knowledge” (p. 107). As an educator, I understand the difference it makes when teachers can speak a students’ language. Although we are tending towards highly diversified classrooms, being taught by someone who
understands their language, their culture, their identity, and their color is important to students.

   My mother inspired me and continues to urge me to do something about the education of young women. Although she lacked formal education, she was very informative and insightful. In addition to being given many leadership roles by her peers, she was a business woman and her work was exemplary in her locality. I am certain she would have been an important person if she had had a chance to pursue her educational dreams. As a Kenyan educator, I do not want other children to be born of a mother who cannot read the directions on a medical prescription which can be life threatening. Even though formal education does not always guarantee one a good life, I believe it does help to some degree.

   My objective in this study was awareness creation of the educational experience of young Maasai women in Kenyan. Conducting social research could serve as a cornerstone for social change, which is not overridden by personal interest. Stringer (1996) describes the researcher as a catalyst with the role of stimulating the participants without imposing on them his or her own ideas. The researcher has to put more weight on the process than on the product of the research. For Stringer, the participants are given the power to be in charge, taking care of the power differences. The researcher conducted social research to bring change as Carspecken (1996) posits to “find contemporary society to be unfair, unequal and both subtly and overly oppressive for many people. They do not like it and therefore work to change it” (p.7). The change I
want to see in education is for every child to be in school and to have equal opportunities.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue that the researcher has to involve the participants in order to push the objective of bringing social change through social research, which cannot be achieved single-handedly. Thomas (1993) refers to the researcher’s role of bringing change as freedom when he writes, “It is about freedom from social repression and a vision of a better society. Research helps identify what oppresses the people and how it can be altered” (p. 71). In addition to making the readers more aware and possibly taking a different direction based on the study results, I am keen to play my role as interviewer, listener, observer, transcriber and reporter.

I am Kenyan and this in part helps in defining the direction of my research. I am a product of the high school system, as well as the high school policies that guide education in the country. I believe that the researcher and his or her research are inseparable. I am also aware that I am both researcher and the instrument of analysis, and how this consciousness of my status affects the research process. I was careful about this factor in during the research process in order not to sway the research findings.

**Summary**

In summary, this chapter provided an overview of the research methodology employed to study the educational experience of young Maasai women in Kajiado District, Kenya. It presents the study design, site selection, participant selection, and methods used in data collection. Additionally, the chapter also presents interviews and
focus group interviews, documents, observation, triangulation, and data collection procedure which were all geared towards producing thick and rich data. The varied sources of information were important useful in bringing to fore the deep sentiments and experiences of the young Maasai women in high school. Finally, the data analysis, research ethics and informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, self as a researcher and the study limitations are outlined. Chapter four contextualizes this study. It discusses education among the Maasai people, the study site and the participants’ profiles.
Chapter Four: Education among Maasai and other Pastoral Groups, School

Context and Profiling Participants

Introduction

This chapter presents the formal education among the Maasai people, school context and participant profiles. Education and development in ASAL regions have been difficult compared to other parts of the country. In contextualizing Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School, observation notes, documents and pictures are presented to visually present the study site. Presenting both the participants and the study site gives the readers a better understanding of where this study took place. Each participant in this study was introduced in a narrative style and given a chance to introduce self. Two categories of participants emerged as discussed later in the chapter.

 Formal Education among the Maasai

Historically, education and development in Kajiado have been difficult compared to other parts of Kenya. Maasai Education Discovery (2003) quoting Sir Charles (former colonial governor in Kenya) asserts that the colonial government did not care much about the Maasai community and consequently the group’s access to education. This implies that the colonial leaders kept a safe distance from some communities such as the Maasai. Therefore, advancement in education and other public services were out of the picture during the colonial period. Although much has changed after independence, the low school enrollments still persist in ASAL regions, Kajiado included (Republic of Kenya, 2005). According to FAWE (2003), Kajiado District is home to the Maasai people.
Kratli (2000) asserts that education of the Maasai children was always met with stiff resistance from the community. Some studies argue that education systems and the Maasai pastoralistic way of life did not seem compatible, failing to accommodate each other (Kratli, 2000; Dyer, 2001; Mfum-Mensah, 2002; Obura, 2002). Similar sentiments were expressed by Coast (2002) and Ju (2007) who add that a parallel form of education—initiation ceremonies as rites of passage to adulthood—was the only education the Maasai considered vital and appropriate for their youth. In order to accommodate formal education, pastoral groups in Kenya and elsewhere have been forced to settle down for crop farming, a system which is problematic to their dry lands (Leggett, 2005). Mobility among Maasai families in Kajiado District today is not common due to land crises among other reasons (Coast, 2008).

Having a history of pastoralism and nomadism is a major factor that feeds gender disparity in education in some communities in Kenya, the Maasai included. Studies show that the education of pastoral groups in Kenya is faced with great difficulty, forcing many girls to stay away from school (Ju, 2007; FAWE, 2001). These authors continue to state that pastoral girls’ education needs to be improved through community sensitization and mobilization while making schools more girl-friendly.

Dry regions in Kenya are home to pastoralist communities such as the Maasai. Pastoralism is characterized by constant switching of home locations in search of water and pasture (Kratli, 2000). This mobility made children’s school experiences challenging (Mulama, 2008; Ju, 2007; Sifuna, 2005; FAWE, 2001; Ezeomah, 1997; Eshiwani, 1993). Consequently, the government initiated both boarding and mobile
schools as a viable option for students from communities connected with pastoralism in Kenya. The main objective was to limit the challenge of scarce and poorly equipped schools found in some dry parts of the country (FAWE, 2001). Ju’s (2007) study gives a full description of what it is like to be a Maasai female going through the Kenyan education system. Therefore, the current study’s outcomes will attempt to compare Ju’s findings to find any similarities and differences on female education among pastoral communities.

Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) is an organization which promotes the education of women and girls in African countries such as Kenya. This organization works towards the Education for All (EFA) goals, by advocating and supporting needy women and girls in acquiring education (FAWE, 2001). For instance, FAWE advocates for more girl-friendly schools. Making school structures, resources and school staff gender-sensitive is not an easy task in a country like Kenya where resources are limited.

The ASAL regions are dry at in some years back, families needed to move from one place to another in search of pastures and water for their animals (Coast, 2002). Although this kind of lifestyle has changed much due to climate change and land crises, school structures remained semi-permanent for a long time. This was problematic because parents were required to either move the school to new location or abandon it all together (Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). The pastoralism movements had negative effects to the schooling of girls.
Basically, gender inequality in schools in Kajiado could be attributed to the above mentioned factors. While parents attached little importance to girls’ education, schools and colleges had few places for female students. Women performed domestic roles and therefore, parents thought there was no need for much education for them. Formal education in Kenya was gender bias, a trait adopted from the British system of education. Lastly, pastoralism made it hard for school structures to take a more permanent location. Consequently, only few locations managed to retain the name school for two or more years. At times, a tree could be the only symbol of a school in some places. All these coupled with other reasons explain some of the complications in education of girls that Kajiado District had to grapple with some years back. These effects are still felt in the district.

**Challenges Associated with Women Education among Pastoral Communities**

The message that pastoral females are not well represented in schools in Kenya is echoed by Mulama (2008), who contends that families prefer educating males while females look after the animals. When females miss school to tend family livestock, they compromise precious schooling time and are extremely vulnerable to cultural practices such as early pregnancy and early marriage (FAWE, 2001; Ju; 2007; Mulama, 2008). In this situation, young women have a high chance of lacking agency because they come from a society that values the education of boys more than girls (Wangui, 2003). Viewing education as an investment, Wangui further stated that Maasai families emphasize more on the education of boys than girls.
cultural practices. Viewing education as an investment, Wangui further stated that Maasai families emphasize more on the education of boys than girls.

Early pregnancy and early marriage are two challenges associated with female education in ASAL regions such as Kajido, Wajir, Mandera and others (Wangui, 2003; FAWE, 2003; Ju, 2007; Mulama, 2008; Chogona & Chetty, 2008). Teen mothers in secondary schools tend to miss school for more time than their non-mothering peers. In many cases, teenage mothers are blamed by teachers or the school system for missing school either before they deliver or after as they tackle some of the upcoming motherhood challenges (Angwin & Kamp, 2007). Missing school is at times translated as lack of seriousness, thus, diminishing their chances of being successful in school. Teachers punishing teenage mother for missing school as a strategy to correct the anomaly is not a solution to the problem. Rather, punishments to teenage mothers divide teachers in two groups: those who feel that the youngsters are wasting their time in school and others who understand the situation, but, cannot help comparing the student-mothers with their non-mothering peers in class (Chogona & Chetty, 2008).

According to Nyassy (2006), male teachers in Kenya are increasingly not becoming trusted with teenage girls in schools. Therefore, it becomes complicated for teachers when cautioning students because they at times lack the moral authority to do so. This state of affairs is frustrating to both parents and students. In a Kenyan situation, while teachers are expected to protect school students, it appears there is need to protect students against teachers.
Premature parenthood is widely believed to seriously jeopardize the life chances of young mothers and their ability to work towards a better future (Chogona & Chetty, 2008). These authors argue that having to juggle between school and childcare for teenage mothers have a high possibility of retaining them under the yoke of poverty. The poverty cycle could become recurrent from generation to generation. In addition, researchers on teenage parenting constantly show that early parenting has a negative socioeconomic effect on those involved. Teenage parents suffer from low levels of education, no skills, no job, great dependency on parents, public assistance and unrealistic expectations (Harrison & Shacklock, 2007).

According to Harrison and Shacklock (2007), many teenage-mothers value their academic qualifications highly. However, their academic success may be impeded if they lack the support they need to complete school. Lack of support in turn makes it problematic for them to become self reliant, and the educational disadvantage can shamelessly follow them and their children. This means that a mother’s educational disadvantages can easily apply to their children.

Teenage mothers in school constantly face misunderstanding and pressure from their parents, teachers and peers. In school, they are stigmatized, viewed as less capable, their character and morals questioned, and their school attendance put into test. At home, they have a higher chance of being forced into early marriage, being reprimanded for minor mistakes and required to perform all the duties involving child-care with little or no support. Juggling between both child-care and studies could cause numerous disruptions to school attendance.
Premature parenthood causes young women to be ‘othered.’ In order to survive, they develop resistance. This resistance, which could lead to their failure as learners leading to drop-out (Chogona & Chetty, 2008). With this kind of characteristics, teenage mothers are less likely to graduate in high school and with little hope of going to college. They have an increased chance of getting a second child with little spacing, thus complicating their schooling the more. With such complications in teenage mother’s success in school as reported by Chogona and Chetty (2008), is it still important to judge their school success through attendance? Is it possible to teach teenage mothers without being worried about the number of times they attend school?

Early marriage was cited as a challenge to girls’ education in Kenya (Nyassy, 2006). According to Nyassy’s report which appeared in the Daily Nation, 250 girls in Malindi District were rescued from forced marriage are sent back to school in the year 2006. The girls were aged between 10-14 years and their husbands ages ranged between 20-80 years. In an effort to stop the practice, the report continued to state that some parents had been taken to court and others imprisoned in connection to marrying off their daughters at an unlawful age. Early marriage is viewed as one of the challenges denying girls their right to education. According to Nyassy’s (2006) report, early marriage and pregnancies cause 45% of school dropouts in Malindi District annually.

Malindi District in Kenya is a coastal region. Almost 70% of the coastal communities practice the Islamic faith. These communities also tend to be poor and to value the education of boys more than girls’. Therefore, it is very common for families
to marry off their daughters in order to supplement family income to educate their sons (Nyassy, 2006). In addition, Malindi is a coastal town with a lot of tourists. Elderly tourists at the coast hunt for young African girls for sexual favors.

On the other hand, young girls drop out of school during the peak seasons in search of jobs such as commercial sex. Girl involved in this kinds of jobs rarely go back to school because they view the coast as full of opportunities for their ‘survival.’ If the education of girls is being taken seriously by parents, the government and the civil society, there is need to take strict measures that help in retaining girls in school. There is need for laws that protect school children by making early marriage and commercial sex by school girls illegal (Republic of Kenya, 2007; FAWE, 2003). The ministries of child services, the ministry of education and the provincial administration need to find ways of protecting school girls at home and in school.

Basically, the above named challenges are among the problems that young Maasai women grapple with on their educational journeys. Moreover, coming from a dry region, a pastoral community, being a girl and coming from a poor family background are reasons enough to make educational access almost impossible. In addition, early pregnancy and early marriage are two major challenges associated with female education in ASAL regions such as Kajido, Wajir, Mandera and others (Mulama, 2008; Chogona & Chetty, 2008; Ju; 2007; Wangui, 2003; FAWE, 2003).

**Contextualizing the Study Site**

Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School is located in Kajiado District in Kenya. Kajiado District is among the regions in Kenya with low numbers of primary schools
for the size and population of the district. The district has low enrolments of girls due to the low value given to their education (Coast, 2002; Mulama, 2008). The Maasai community socializes girls to take marriage and helping at home with family chores seriously compared to education (Maasai Education Discovery, 2003). Studies conducted about the challenges facing formal education in rural Kenya reveal that many schools are poorly equipped (Webter, 1999; Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). Webter (1999) cited low-quality community-run schools as one of the challenges facing the education of girls in the dry regions of Kenya.

High cost of education makes it unaffordable to poor parents (Godwyll, 2007). Ju (2007) points out that the Kenyan Government provides free education for primary school children (equivalent of Grades I-VIII in the American system of education). This means anybody who goes beyond this level must support his or her own education and this is unaffordable to some parents especially those in dry regions. It means that much economic support is required to go through high school and university. As a result, many students stop their learning after the eighth grade and girls are more likely to stop than boys (Mulama, 2008).

Parents in the dry and rural parts of Kenya tend to be of low socio-economic status with less money to spend on school structures and fees for their children (Mulama, 2008; Ju, 2007; FAWE, 2001). This makes it difficult for families to spend money on school fees, school structures and other school levies which are charged occasionally. Further, families cannot afford to educate their children further than primary school which is free. This is particularly true of the Maasai females in
Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School. The section below gives an elaborate explanation about the study site.

**Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School**

Study findings about the school were elicited through observation, school documents and interviews of high school students. Enoomatasiani Secondary School started as a harambee school in 1972. Although Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School is among the oldest in Kajiado District, it started after Kenya’s independence in 1963. However, in the 1920s, several schools in Kenya were in operation (Ojiambo, 2007; Bogonko, 1992). The study findings therefore concur with findings by Sifuna (2005) and Roto, Ongwenyi and Mugo (2009) who assert that formal education in ASAL regions such as Kajiado started late.

Later, Enoomatasiani Secondary School was sponsored by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). Researches state that ninety percent (90%) of the schools in Kenya in 1924 were mission schools with a sole purpose of winning converts (Mule, 2008; Chege & Sifuna, 2006; Eshiwani, 1993). Therefore, the school was supported by PCEA church and parents. Some classrooms in Enoomatasiani primary school were used as structures and it was only one stream.

The demand for secondary school education around Ngong town and its environs forced Enoomatasiani Secondary to grow quickly. Data gathered from the school documents show that in 1978, the school became a two stream school for both boys and girls. Figure 4 shows pictures of parts of the school and some students which were taken from the site for this study.
Enoomatasiani Girls School started as a mixed school admitting both boys and girls. While boys were boarders, girls were day scholars. This was as a result of few boarding facilities. Also, it was assumed that the girls were safer going home to the care of their parents than spending nights in the same compound with boys. With time, Enoomatasiani High School was converted to a girl’s only high school by phasing out boys from the year 1999 till 2002.

The school stopped admitting boys but admitting girls only till the last batch of boys graduated. Most of the students in this school come from the surrounding areas of Kajiado. However, many more students come from all over Kenya. The population of

Figure 4: Snapshots Inside Enoomatasiani Girls School.

Source: Pictures from the field
the Maasai students from the whole of Kajiado District was about 40%. According to my observation, this percentage was way below expectation since the school is located in a region which is home to the Maasai community. The students interviewed came from Kajiado town, Narok, Rongai, Ngong, Kiserian, Isinya, Loitoktok and Magadi. Comparing the school with others located in other places in the country, almost 70% of students come from the school’s surroundings.

The low percentage of Maasai girls in Enoomatasiani Secondary implies that although the school is located in Kajiado District, there appears to be educational marginalization. Consequently, few women from the region attend the school. In other regions of the country, it is common to find that a majority of the students come from the school environs.

Today, Enoomatasiani Girls has two streams from Form One – Form Four (equivalent of the 9th-12th Grades in the United States). East and West with a total of 378 students. It has 23 teachers (15 women and 8 men) who are all qualified government employees. Also, there are 10 employees who are members of the non-teaching staff. They include: one (1) secretarial clerk, one (1) accounts cleark, one (1) lab technician, four (4) cooks, two (2) cleaners who also take care of school cows, and one (1) office messenger. Based on a brief chat with the school accounts clerk, the school is heavily supported by the government, parents and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in terms of government subsidies, school fees and donations.

The school motto: “Beyond the horizons.” What does it mean? The school motto is normally a guideline which all members of the school use to get direction
about their present and future aspirations. The interviewees viewed it as helping them to aim higher, thus, succeed beyond average. According to the students interviewed, the school motto is a huge motivation to them. Together with the school motto was the school anthem. For the purposes of conveying its deep message, I reproduce it below.

The Enoomatasi girls School Anthem:

1. Let us sing in praise of our country that we love
   Let us sing in praise of our school
   Let us honor God for our works and our prayers
   Let us live all our lives in his hands
   To you Matasia is of you we sing today
   May all of us here be true Matasia
   True to you all our lives and everywhere
   True to God, true to one true to all

2. For a day will come for each one of us
   To leave the lessons learned with us stay
   For our live all good let us work
   All the days all the years of our lives.

This is a patriotic song which helps the school community (students, teachers and non-teaching staff) to pray for the country and for their school and all in it. The song is a prayer for their school and all in the school. This song also shows the religious part of the African culture which is infused in each and every activity. According to Mbiti (1969), Africans are notoriously religious. Mbiti stresses that “Africans [are] so
religious: religion is in their whole system of being” (p. 3). In addition, Young (2009) states that Africana womanism supports spiritual connection. This implies that religion is part of the African culture.

The interviewees confirmed that through their school anthem. In the anthem, they express their love for God, for their country and school. In they study, they place every day in the hands of God. They also respect God and their work while in this school that they love and will remain loyal to now and forever. The school in the anthem is viewed as a unifying factor to the community as they work hard in their school activities. The song recognizes the fact that one day they will leave. By singing the song, students remind themselves of the limited time in school and how they should use it wisely to bring success and prosperity. Lastly, they are willing to take all the lessons learned with them wherever they go.

Enoomatasiani High School is well known for its good disciplined students. It performs well in national examinations and games. Academically, the school index indicated an upward trend since the year 2003. In 2009, the school mean was 8.1 ranged on a 1-12 scale. Subjects: English, Kiswahili, Religious Education, Commerce and Agriculture were the best performed while Math and sciences were poor. The school is the provincial champion in both table tennis and netball. While Enoomatasiani teams get to district level in handball, athletics, football and volleyball, many new teams are being formed; new games are being tried all within the school. The sports facilities include: school play grounds, games uniforms, athletic equipments, balls,
skipping ropes and others. The games department is well equipped with fine couches for all the games mentioned.

Young women in Enoomatasiandi take part in many school clubs and are members of societies including: Christian Union and Young Christian Students. School clubs are science club, math club, wildlife, girl guides and scouts, debate, journalism, drama, entrepreneur, dancing, modeling, and cookery. Also, the young women spend their leisure watching movies, modeling and fashion shows, dancing and artwork. Although many schools do not go beyond their school compounds in communal work, this school is different. Students take part in freedom from hunger walks, HIV/AIDS walks other than making personal donations of money and clothes to the needy. Therefore, the school supports the community by doing charity works.

When asked what else they wanted to say about their school, interviewees in the focus group unanimously agreed that their school was very beautiful. Amid laughter, they said their uniform was the best in the district and many schools were copying them. They were happy with their school principal, the deputy and all the teachers. About their teachers, I was aware that they could not say much about them because of the student-teacher relationship. Maybe they feared saying much about them for fear that it might reflect in their results. Consequently, it is wise to take their answers with caution.

Enoomatasiani has produced a good number of prominent people in Kenya. Although there was no records to show how many men and women, many business women and men known to some of the teachers, workers and students were former
students of the school. The school has received visitors from all walks of life. For example in the year 2007, Professor George Saitoti (current minister of internal security) presided over a prize giving ceremony. Other dignitaries who were on record included AMREF and World Bank officials. In 1981, the school laboratory was opened by Jean Paul F. Jesse; a representative of the European Union, which sponsored the building.

Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School is endowed with many buildings and resources including: the school plot (10 acres). Under this plot there are school structures and school farm. The structures include: administration block (8 offices), 8 classrooms, 2 science laboratories, school hall which doubles as the dining hall, kitchen, 4 large dormitories and bathrooms. Also, the school has a library which doubles as a computer lab.

Other structures in the school compound are the staff quarters. Eight teachers are housed in the school compound. As a way of minimizing the cost of milk and vegetables, the school has 7 milk cows and a two acre land under fresh vegetables. Although the school did not encourage the students to work in the farm, students taking agriculture were interested in the school project and were allowed to visit the vegetable farm during their free time. These students watered and put manure to the crops. The picture below depicts a part of the school farm.
Figure 5: The School Farm

Source: Pictures taken by the researcher during fieldwork

Figure 5 above shows the school farm with vegetables and milk cows. Both were the school’s efforts in becoming self reliant in food production. From my own observation, this school project was very vibrant and successful as depicted in Figure 5 above.

Summary

This section discusses formal education among the Maasai in Kenya. It looks at the challenges associated with educating women from the pastoral communities in the country. Lastly, the section presents the study site, Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School, showing some pictures that were taken during fieldwork. The section below presents the study participants and their profiles.

Study Participants

In this section, I present the profiles of each participant giving a brief introduction of each and adding their real voices in order to buttress what each said about herself or himself. Before understanding their experiences, it was quite in order to record the background information for each of the participants. I interviewed fifteen young women from Enoomatasiani Girls High School, and five key informants.
who were recommended to me by the participants. The key informants therefore were arrived at through snow ball sampling. It is important to note that all the names used here are pseudo names for confidentiality purposes. Therefore, if any of them has a semblance to any known person, it is purely by chance. However, the key informants were prominent people in the society holding key public offices and they all allowed the use of their names. Table 5 is a representation of the study participants by name and category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: A representation of the study participants by name and category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category (I): Secondary School Participants</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnes Mutende</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Mrembo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilian Narok,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica Tatu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Tarino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Matata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Naidoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salome Mwita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leah Msumeno</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nachipai Kasaine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelesa Kumi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellen Mali,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasandra Kituyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary OleSekuda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naomi Shonko</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total: 15** 5 **Entire Total: 20**

*Source:* Data from the fieldwork.
Categories of Participants

Two major categories of participants were involved in this study: fifteen (15) high school students and five (5) key informants. The group of the key informants included: one (1) District Education Officer (DEO), one (1) secondary school teacher/counselor, one (1) school board member/church pastor, one (1) non-governmental organization representative (FAWE officer), and one (1) college student who had already completed high school. In all, 20 participants took part in this study.

I refer to the second category of participants as due to their expertise and experience in dealing with the issues of women or girls education in Kajiado District. This category of participants is important to ensure the credibility of the study because they assist in providing a wholistic picture of the issues under investigation as well as provide thick and rich description of the phenomenon.

Secondary School Students

All the secondary school (high school) student participants were in Form Four (equivalent of the 12th Grade here in the United States). Form Four is also the final year in high school in Kenya. Their ages ranged between 18-23 years. On average the age of the fifteen young women was 20.1 years. Graduates from high school proceed to the university.

Agnes Mtende

Agnes Mtende is 23 years old, a Form Four (final year in secondary school) student comes from Mosiro village, Narok, Kenya. In 2007, she was admitted in the school, but awaiting the national examination by September to December, 2010. Agnes
is an athlete and currently she is the games prefect in her school. Agnes has a bright jovial face, with a beautiful smile. She was a candidate of early marriage at age 8, but something happened which changed her fate. The quotation below captures how Agnes introduced herself during the interview:

I am Agnes Mtende, a young Maasai girl from Narok, Mosiro village. Mosiro is quite far from Narok town. I am a Form Four student in Enomataasiani Secondary School. I stayed with my grandparents, who had already arranged for my early marriage even before I started school. Somehow I got lucky and escaped the plan. The plan to marry me off delayed me at home before starting school. I started school at age 10 compared to my peers who were between 5-7 years. I am very happy to be in school today. I have no idea where I would be if I got married. Now, I have high hopes of scoring good grades in school. I want to become a pilot. (Agnes Personal Communication, May 10, 2010)

According to Agnes, Christian Children Fund (CCF) supports her in paying her school fees. Her good scores in examinations indicated that she is a smart young woman with high hopes of a bright future. Among her peers, Agnes was friendly and sociable. After school, Agnes was her discussion group’s leader.

Asked about the reason why she wanted to become a pilot, Agnes commented that the reason why she wanted to become a pilot was because she felt it was unique and challenging. Many of Agnes’ friends choose nursing and teaching. However, Agnes stated, “I want a career which will assure me of employment in the future” (Agnes Personal Communication, May 10, 2010). Her choice could be attributed to the high rates of youth unemployment in Kenya. According to Merckx (2009), 64% of unemployed persons in Kenya are youth. Therefore, Agnes was ready to study physics and mathematics, which, were a no go zone for her peers. There is a common belief that females are not “cut out” for sciences (Ochwa-Echel, 2005, p. 149). Ochwa-Echel
(2005) statement is contradicted by Agnes, who was determined to study the sciences
in order to escape unemployment by becoming a pilot. Could other young women in
Kenya and elsewhere follow Agnes’ footsteps?

Ann Mrembo

Ann, the firstborn in her family was born 21 years ago. She sees herself as a
determined young woman with the potential to achieve whatever she wants in life.
From my own observation, she is a cheerful and focused young lady. She hopes to
become a teacher and assist her mother in educating her younger siblings because her
father has a disability and is unemployed. Her empathy for her struggling mother seems
to motivate her to work hard in school. She said:

My name is Ann and currently I am a student at Enomatasianni High School and
I love school. I love myself and want to finish school and get to the university. I
hope to finish school and help my mother in educating my younger siblings.
This is because my mother is struggling for me, I do not want her to struggle
much with the rest. My father is at home, has a disability and does not do
anything. My mother supports us and she is the only bread winner. Being the
first born in my family, I wish to assist her in educating the rest to be self reliant
in the future. (Ann, Personal Communication, April, 20, 2010)

Ann seemed aware of the challenges her family was facing including struggling to pay
her school fees. She was ready and determined to make her contribution towards
bettering the situation of her family. In her own words, it was quite clear that she
wanted to help her mother, her siblings, and her community. If this is the crop of young
women who are struggling to acquire education in Maasai community, then there is
hope that women are on the right path in empowering self and the community.
Veronicah Tatu

Veronica Tatu was a Form Four student and about to graduate from secondary school. She viewed herself as a strong young Maasai woman and proud to be one. She dreamed of becoming a doctor. She was an eloquent speaker with a sense of humor in her expressions. Because her parents had no formal education, Veronica was determined not to let them down. This reason motivated her to work hard and serve as a role model for her siblings. She couched it as:

My name is Veronica Sisisan and I am 18 years of age. I have very high hopes of doing well in my last year in high school and I dream of becoming a doctor. I am a pure Maasai from Kenya and I am proud to be a Kenyan (Laughter). I come from a family of five siblings. I am the first born. Both of my parents have never been to school. My mission in school is to use education as a means to better my life. (Veronica Tatu, Personal Communication, May 23, 2010)

Veronicah has several goals to achieve through her education: educate her parents about the importance of education, better her life in the future, pursue a medical career, become a good role model to her siblings and the whole community.

Hannah Tarino

Hannah Tarino is a beautiful quiet, polite and young Maasai woman who was ready to work hard to change her situation and that of her family. She understood the poor economic situation in her family and sought sponsors to pay her school fees. Hannah wants to become a business woman. She is an example of those girls who repeat classes or are held back but did not give in to peer-pressure to get married since all her friends were already married. In her words she said:
My name is Hannah Tarino. I am 20 years old and I started school at age six. I love school and this is the right place for me. I repeated Class Eight in primary school because my parents had no money for my high school. I come from a family of three: two girls and one boy. I have one grandmother (my father’s mother) who stays with us. Although my parents have never been to school, I enjoy strong parental support in school. My brother is young and not yet in school and so I cannot tell if my father will favor him or not. I have not been asked to marry anybody although I am the first born girl and my age mates, neighbors and friends are already married. Because of the poor economic situation in my family, Compassionate Project (NGO) partly pays for my education. Compassionate Project also gives my family food and clothes. (Hannah, Personal Communication, April 16, 2010).

It was interesting to hear Hannah’s parents encouraged her to remain in school while her peers were already into early marriage. Her parents seem to be a good example of people who do not support the culture of early marriage for girls. Is the culture of early marriage in its sunset days in the Maasai community?

Hannah’s parents seem to understand Bayisenge’s (2009) assertion that, “Early marriage contributes to a series of negative consequences both for young girls and the society in which they live. It is a violation of human rights in general and of girl’s rights in particular.” (p. 1) Research on gender, marriage and education points out that marriage at an early age has an intense impact on the education of women than men, cutting off their chances of employment in future. Further, Bayisenge (2009) asserts that early marriage denies young women a chance to grow physically, emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically. Hannah has escaped these circumstances.

**Sara Matata**

Sara Matata views herself as a person with high potential for success. She hopes to take nursing as her career like her auntie at Magadi Hospital. Sara’s parents have no salaried jobs and are poor but she aims at getting a job in a career of her choice. She
thinks parents need to be educated about the dangers of early marriage because many of her friends are victims. In her words:

I am Sara Matata. I am 22 and just about to graduate from high school. I come from Loishoibon in Ngong. My parents do not have salaried jobs and therefore we depend on cows and subsistence farming for our economic needs. I count myself lucky because I went to AIC Girls Primary School in Kajiado for my basic education and paid no fees. This school is purely for girls and has many students who are from the Maasai community. Although not all of us, many girls trying to acquire education in this school have been retrieved from early marriage or have escaped the same from home, thus having a stressed relationship with parents. I did not have the same experience but I come from a poor background. Some parents in my community believe that because they are poor and cannot afford school fees, it makes no economic sense to keep children in school because they will still drop out before completion. My parents have tried to educate all of us but in reality they cannot afford it. Two of my brothers are also in school and paying for all of us is not easy. But, I am lucky that I am now sponsored by World Vision International and whatever else is not paid I get it from my parents and my elder brother who works in Nairobi. (Sara, Personal Communication, April 13, 2010)

Sara was not a candidate for early marriage but her friends in school were. Early marriage for both boys and girls is considered an abuse to child rights. In her view, poverty is a great contribution to the practice because many parents lack money to pay for school fees. Schools have a tendency of sending students home for unpaid school fees but they may take long before getting back to school since parents lack the funds. It is important to recognize that some organizations have come up to sponsor girls’ education and families have learned to pull resources together to pay for school fees as is the case with Sara. Even if she is a girl, they still try to support her education.

**Salome Mwita**

Salome Mwita was from a polygamous family and had very interesting opinions about the way women are treated in her community. She did not understand why many
girls were denied the right to education. In her story, she uses her brothers as role models. She said:

My name is Salome and I am 20. I come from Ngong. I hope to do well in school and score a grade good grade. I hope to become a doctor. Both of my parents are farmers but my mother sells Maasai beadworks in Nairobi (Village Market). My two elder brothers are in the university and I want to follow their steps. They motivate me to work hard to get to university as well. I do not think my father discriminates between educating boys or girls. But, I think failing to educate girls is not fair. (Salome Mwita, Personal Communication, May 25, 2010)

Salome’s example is an indicative of the support some men give to the education of their daughters, sisters and nieces.

Catherine Naidoo

Talking to Catherine Naidoo during the interview process helped me to understand her background. Her parents were divorced, her fathers’ friend took care of her. Catherine was on sponsorship but she was very attached to her adopted family. She respects her parents but does not see how she could re-locate to join them as their daughter. She recounted:

My names are Catherine Naidoo. I am 21. I hope to become a church minister. I come from Ewaso Kidong village. I am the only one in school from my family because my parents are divorced. My parents divorced when I was five. I was taken to my father’s friend at that age and I have stayed there till now. This lady who ‘adopted’ me is the age of my grandmother. One of her sons is the chief of Ewaso Kidong. He asked me to fill in some forms and got a sponsor for me for high school. This is a Community Based Organization (CBO) known as Mastered Seed Program (MSP) which is under a lady known as Linda Mercy from the USA. This program pays my school fees only. Other cost such as pocket money, holiday coaching fee and shopping comes from other sources. I am lucky I have a guardian who takes care of the shopping, pocket money and transport. Also, I contact my father for more money when I have more needs. My mother is a business woman in Ngong Town. I cannot stay with her because that can be problematic. Because I grew up at my guardian’s home and I am in-charge of that home now, I cannot just leave. I came to learn about my real parents and home when I was in Class Seven (almost graduating from primary
Family breakdowns and divorce could be a big turning point to the lives of children. Catherine’s story seems to tell something about adoption in the Maasai culture. This was a unique case because from the researcher’s perception, orphans and children of divorced parents stay with other relatives from the father’s side, and not given up for adoption. In fact, Bicego, Rutstein & Jonhson (2003) state that orphaned children in Kenya especially due to HIV/AIDS are commonly under the custody of their grandmothers. Catherine’s case was different.

Also, Catherine’s story brings to light the work of CBOs and FBOs as cost sharing agents in educating young women. Since Catherine’s siblings are all not in school, did her parents’ divorce and giving her away to a friend paved way for her going to school? My perception based on her story is that she was lucky to be adopted in a family that valued education.

**Leah Msumeno**

Leah Msumeno is a cheerful girl who believes that education is the best ‘medicine’ in improving the situation of women. She sees lack of money to pay school fees as a huge problem because girls are sent home frequently, thus missing school. Leah hopes to be able to support her own family, her poor parents and the needy in her community. She said:

My name is Leah Msumeno and I am 19. I want to become a veterinary doctor because my community keeps livestock. My father has four wives. My parents keep animals such as cows and goats for our economic support. I always wish I could give medication to animals especially our cattle when they are sick and I feel bad when they die of diseases. There are three of us in high school at the
moment and three in college. My parents pay the school fees but sometimes I am sent home for non-payment of school fees. If I am lucky, it takes two weeks to come back and sometimes more. In order to stay in school, I normally apply for government bursaries (scholarship), which alleviates the economic burden for my education. As a young Maasai woman, I am very proud of my culture and I want to make a difference in my life and that of my siblings. Many of my siblings are still not through with school. My elder brothers and sisters did not attend formal school. My father believes in early marriage, but I am lucky I did not become a victim. I am an advocate of economic stability for both men and women before starting a family. I am in school today because I do not want to become a beggar later in life. (Leah, Personal Communication, May 11, 2010)

Leah and others took full advantage of government sponsorships or government scholarship as one of the key support systems for students to stay in school. Leah hopes to become a livestock doctor and a role model in her family and in her community. She hopes that parents can understand the importance of educating women through her example. She hopes to raise awareness and enable both young girls and their relatives to realize how important it is to educate women as a way to reduce poverty.

**Nachipai Kasaine**

Nachipai Kasaine is one of those who requested to be included. On enquiring why she wanted to be a part of the sample she said: “I just wondered why all my friends would take part in this project leaving me out. I wanted to hear what it is that you are talking about” (Nachipai, Personal Communication, May 4, 2010). (Laughter…). She is just curious, which is nice. She introduced herself as:

My name is Nachipai. I am 18 and a Form Four student. I come from Isinya in Ngong. I am the last born in my family. Here in school, I take part in games and I play both netball and football. I love games and especially when we go out for competitions. I am the first one in my family to get educated to this level and therefore, I am privileged. My main aim of being in school is to better my life and help my parents in old age. I also want to be a role model in my village because I already got some training to speak to girls about education by World Vision International (NGO). On realizing that few girls in my village are educated, this
organization has trained several of us who are in high school now to talk to our peers on the issue. I am happy to do just that. I want to become professional footballer. (Nachipai, Personal Communication, May 4, 2010)

As a woman who is interested in young women’s empowerment, Nachipai’s answer about why she needed to take part in the study caught me by surprise. I found her empowered already and curious enough not to just let things happen around her but become part of them. Although I had a good reason not to include her in the sample, I considered the fact that qualitative research is emergent and flexible (Patton, 2002).

**Pelesa Kumi**

Pelesa Kumi was the dining hall captain and has been elected as a leader since primary school. She has held many leadership positions including in her home church where she is the chair lady of youth. Pelesa is energetic, confident and approachable.

When asked to introduce herself, she was brief and to the point:

> My mane is Pelesa Kumi and I am a student in Form Four in Enoomatasiani High School. I am 21. I come from a family of 12. I am the only girl in school. I cannot tell if this has to do with favoring boys. But my mother is divorced. Therefore, she spends all her money in the education of those of us who are still in school. My father does not support our education. My sister dropped out and got married. The rest have not completed school. In a patriarchal society, children belong to their father. This is true about all children from the Maasai community. (Pelesa, Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

While talking to Pelesa, she was very particular about what she wants to do after school and college. She wants to buy a piece of land, build a good house for her mother and ensure all her younger siblings are educated to a level that they can become self reliant.

While reflecting about the life of her mother, it was clear that Pelesa realized the sacrifice her mother was making by spending all her money in paying school fees.
Lilian Narok’s opinion about girls leaving school and getting married was interesting and surprising at the same time. For instance, about her sister who dropped out of school and got married, Lilian did not think her parents or the culture was to blame. She blamed her sister for yielding to pressure from her friends who were already married. She stated:

My name is Lilian Narok. I am 19 and I come from Kajiado town, a small part of the town called Iseuri. Both my parents have never been to school but they value education. One of my sisters dropped out of school to get married and I guess she does not value education. Now that I reflect about it…her friends were all married and I think she yielded to pressure as a result. This is because my mother supports me so much and she is the one who motivates all of us to remain in school. In fact, my mother was so devastated when my sister left school. Also, many organizations around Kajiado Town have been educating the community about the importance of educating girls. This message is quite clear and no one can say they do not know that (Laughter…). We all need to be responsible. I want to start my school dedicated to educating girls. (Lilian, Personal Communication, April 27, 2010)

Mothers overwhelmingly supported their daughters in this study to remain in school. Although almost 50% of participants depicted their mothers as economically unstable, their support in cash and in kind was uncountable. For instance, Lilian’s mother was devastated when her other daughter left school. Having missed the chance to attend school, this mother must have felt the pain of seeing her own daughter miss the same chance in a row.

In addition, NGOs were very vigilant in supporting the education of young women in Kajido. Lillian laid strong emphasis on the many organizations around Kajiado Town which are involved in educating the community about the importance of girls’ education. Therefore, much of what is happening to young women in relation to their
education comes from peer pressure which in the scheme of things could be regarded as cultural.

**Hellen Mali**

Hellen Mali appears polite and quiet. Her teeth have a wide gap which gets exposed any time she smiles and in a shy manner. When asked to comment about her character in school, Hellen said: “I am a disciplined student and I do not get punished much” (Hellen Personal Communication, May 15, 2010). At times, Hellen would talk looking down and this prompted me to inquire from her if she was comfortable about taking part in the project. After confirming that she was fine and happy with everything, we continued with the introduction part of the process:

My name is Hellen Mali and I am 20. I come from Oleseos village in Kiserian. I am a Form Four Student and I hope to graduate this year. I also hope I will score good marks to proceed to the university. I attended Oleseos Primary School. My elder brother is in college (Teacher Training). Both of my parents are business people. My father runs butchery (selling meat) at Kiserian while my mother makes and sells Maasai beadworks and *shanga* in Kiserian, Ngong, and Nairobi. Other times, customers can order the *shangas* from my mother by calling her over the phone. My parents struggle economically to educate me and my siblings, but they are managing. I am happy to be in school and I think this is the best place for me be. I want to start a good foundation for a better live in the near future. I aspire to become a nurse. (Hellen, Personal Communication, May 15, 2010)

Like other participants, Hellen had a strong vision about her future. She had purposed to acquire a good grade, go to the university and train as a nurse. Using our parents as our role models is a common practice, including choosing their careers. Coming from a family of business minded parents, I expected Hellen or her brother to talk about wanting to become business people. Ferry (2006) states that, “Although schools, peers, and the student’s community all have an impact on the young adult’s self-identify and
career choices, the parent’s expectations and perceptions of vocational fit for their children have been found to be the key roles in shaping their career choices” (p. 28).

However, these youths chose nursing and teaching, meaning, there was a high possibility that school had managed to mold them into independent thinkers.

Kasandra Kituyi

Kasandra Kituyi was not looking like she had any issues bothering her at all. She looked happy, smart and focused. No one could tell she is an orphan and that she had only her grandmother for a guardian. I was impressed with her English because from her speech, she was clear and eloquent. Kasandra thinks the best she can do for herself in order to have a stable future is to get good education. Sharing her opinions she said:

My name is Kasandra Kituyi and I am 21. I come from Loitoktok, Enkijape Village. I am currently a Form Four student and hope to graduate by the end of this year. I attended Enkijape Primary School and graduated in 2005. I spent one year at home because my parents are both deceased and there was no one to send me to high school. When my parents passed on, my grandmother (my dad’s mother) took all what we had, used tough and abusive language on us and said, “Let them go and die as well.” This was hard for me and my four siblings. We were lucky we went to stay with our other grandmother (my mom’s mother). She is a business woman in Nairobi and through her support and support of other people and Oldonyo Wuas Trust (OWT) which pays my tuition fee, we are all in school. I cannot believe that I am about to graduate by December 2010. This background keeps me focused and I work hard in school because this is my only hope for success in life. I get frustrated at times when I do not score very good grades. I want to become a lawyer. I dream of advocating for children’s rights. No other child in my community should experience the amount of pain we faced when our parents died. (Kasandra Kituyi, Personal Communication, May 8, 2010)

From her statements, this participant strongly believes in children’s rights. She was not happy that whatever her parents owned was taken away by their paternal grandmother. Kasandra was prepared to advocate for child rights in her community because she did not want other children to share her experience. Consequently, her dream of becoming
a lawyer was born. She appeared determined to achieve that. After the death of her parents, many things can happen to the children who are left behind. However, Kasandra is using her past experience as motivation to succeed in life.

**Mary Ole Sekuda**

Coming from a family that is well to do economically appeared to be an advantage for Mary. Mary referred to her father as a rich businessman who was buying and selling wares across the country. She thought it was great to study without thinking much about school fees as her peers. Being sent home and missing school for a while is not interesting. She was strongly convinced that many fathers force their daughters into early marriage due to poverty, not culture as such. She pointed out:

“My name is Mary OleSekuda and I am 19 years. I come from Loitoktok, Kimana Village. We migrated from Lake Magadi some years back because my father bought a piece of land at Kimana. I am the fourth born in my family. My parents did not attend school and the same case applies to my elder brothers and sisters. All my younger siblings are in school. I am hoping that the rest of us in school can be the ambassadors of education to other members of society. For economic activities, my father is a popular businessman in hides and skins to local and international consumers. He also sells items made of leather. My mother does the home chores and also works in the shop when my dad is away. I do think my father favors boys in school because two of my brothers were taken to very good schools while I was brought here although I should have gone to a Moi Girls School, in Eldoret. I always fail to understand why my father changed his mind. Maybe he thinks I should go to a nearby and a cheap school to spare his money. (Mary OleSekuda, Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

Mary’s story is a typical example of many students who are in school, though their parents did not attend school. However, her parents are doing well in leather business. Therefore, how would one explain the idea that attending school makes a big difference in career choice? These are some of the situations which make parents ‘lazy’ in supporting their children in school.
Naomi Shonko

Naomi Shonko is a cheerful young woman with big eyes and very long and strong hair. Among her friends, she was popularly known as Tausi meaning peacock. Although she said she was not so conscious about it, Naomi was quite particular about her looks. Her walking style and her dress was clean, ironed and spectacular despite the fact that she was in school uniform like her peers. During my interview with her, I discovered Naomi had been taking part in national beauty contest in Nairobi sponsored by a certain beauty company in town. She was determined to follow this career and she also wanted to become a development worker. When I enquired how the two career interests operate in her life, she smiled and said “I am a people’s person. I like working with people always, not machines.” I assured her the sky is the limit and we proceeded with the interview. She introduced herself as:

Naomi Shonko is my name and I am 18 years old. A come from Embulmbul Village in Ngong and I am in my final year of high school. I love school and I love my teachers. I attended AIC Kajiado Primary School. I only went there not because there was any issue but because it is a cheap school with better facilities. I am from a family of 5 and both my father and mother are educated. My father is a high school teacher and a musician while my mother sells the Maasai shanga in Nairobi (Village Market). My mother is still in school and she will take her high school examination next year. She attends school as a private student and is also helped a lot by my father and his teacher colleagues. She inspires me a lot because she belongs to an organization (MWEEP) where all members are encouraged to go back to school for a better future. I cannot wait for her to finish high school. I will be happy to witness my mother’s university graduation. I want to become a community development worker. My dream is to work on the development issues in my community. (Naomi Shonko, Personal Communication, April 21, 2010)

Of all the participants, Naomi was different in her career interests and in her family background. Her parents were educated and her home was near Nairobi (The Capital
City of Kenya). This family was fairly well up. I encouraged Naomi to follow her heart in the modeling industry but also to keep focused on her educational goals because having the two in one basket would sell better on the job market. However, parental influence, motivation and career advice have great impact on children’s career choices.

**Summary**

The high school participants were an interesting group with varying backgrounds and aspirations. An overwhelming majority (70%) were from poor family backgrounds. Consequently, they were highly dependent on NGO economic support to remain in school. In addition, their mothers were quite supportive of them in school in cash and in kind. Generally, the participants were determined and focused to further their education. Their unwavering determination explains the reason why they were qualified as role models to other young Maasai women in Kajiado.

**Key Informants**

The key informants as stated earlier ranged from education officers, civil service officers to former high school women. All of them were actively involved in education matters in Kajiado District. Key informants were important to this study for triangulation purposes. Their profiles are presented in the section below.

**Mr. Manyuira Mukarara**

Mr. Manyuira is the DEO Kajiado but stationed in Ngong and from the chat we had in his office, he has been making sure young girls get government and NGO support in order to pursue their education. In his own words, the DEO stated:

My names are Mr. Manyuira. I am the District Education Officer (DEO) in Ngong. I am also a parent and a teacher for over ten years. I have been the
education officer in Ngong for the last 3 years. I deal with all education related issues from the ministry of education and I am based here in Ngong. I also work with colleges, schools, teachers, parents and any other organizations involved in education matters. (Mr. Manyuira, Personal Communication, April 3, 2010)

By working with schools, colleges, teachers, parents and children made Mr. Manyuira the transition between all these groups. Being a government officer, the DEO is incharge of all government plans and activities concerning education in the District.

**Loise Mkubwa**

I considered Loise as an important participant in this study to fit in as a mentor and a Maasai women who had received education at the 1960s. She had a wide experience over the issues that young women and parents alike were grappling with in relation to formal education in Kajiado. I realized that many schools in the district were doubling as schools and as rescue centers for young women who were survivors of both female circumcision and early marriage in the study site. Our discussion focused around the issues that school boards were handling in order to keep young women in school. Her views and her wide experience as a mother and business woman qualify her as a strong key informant in this study. When I asked her to introduce herself, she stated:

My name is Loise Mkubwa and I come from Isinya. I am a pastor at Isinya Pentecostal Church and a Board of Governors (BOG) member at two institutions: Moi Girls Secondary School—Isinya and AIC Girls Primary School—Kajiado. I am also a mother, a wife and a business person. All my sons and daughters have completed their university education. I have 3 adopted children who are still in school. The adopted girls are in secondary school and one in Kenya Medical Training College. (Loise, Personal Communication, April 10, 2010)

Loise was strongly involved in girls’ education in Kajiado. She was a role model to the girl-child in her community. She is a good example of educated women in her
community who was not only acting as a role model to other women but to young girls in Kajiado. She was involved in many projects, many boards, church leadership and was a renowned business woman both in Kajiado and in Nairobi the capital city.

**Hendrina Doroba**—FAWE Officer

I considered Hendrina as an important participant in this study to fit in as a non-governmental organization representative. I realized that many organizations were working with and for young women in Kajiado. These organizations are involved in many issues such as: education, training, conferences, empowerment clubs, credit facilities and conservation among others. Her views and expertise in her area of specialization qualify her as a strong key informant in this study. When I asked her to describe herself, she stated:

My name is Hendrina Doroba and I am 39 years old. I am the Senior Programs Coordination Officer with FAWE. I am in-charge of FAWE education programs based in several regions, Kajiado inclusive. We deal with many issues concerning girls and a good example is the AIC Girls Primary School, Kajiado District in Kenya. As a programs officer, I am coordinate activities and even visit some of the regions when need arises. Our major challenge as an organization in Kenya and other places in Africa is to come up with new and vital measures to sustain and expand gains that are already made in girls’ education. We strive to work with governments and education ministries in Africa in order to jointly find and replicate those effective ways that holistically address concerns of girls’ education with clear impact on the ground. I cannot say we have succeeded in doing this but some programs have born fruits especially here in Kenya. (Hendrina, Personal communication, May 30, 2010)

Henderina was a representative of FAWE and an officer who was involved in the many projects that the organization plans and funds to better girl-child education in Kenya and other parts of Africa. Her input was important in this study because she had first
hand information about FAWE activities and its links with the government in the education of women in the country.

**Caterina Nasonko** – High School Teacher and Counselor

Caterina has been teaching in Enoomatasiani Girls High School for 12 years and she is also the school counselor. Having interacted with the girls as their teacher, their counselor and their mentor, she has much knowledge about what the participants go through day by day. For this reason, I was not asking for confidential information but for her perception about the challenges her clients faced. I was careful not to breach her professional ethics as a counselor. Caterina introduced herself:

My name is Caterina Nasonko and I am 38 years old. I come from Laikipia and I have been a secondary school teacher for 14 years. I teach Kiswahili language and I am also a trained counselor. I am the chair persons, department of guidance and counseling at Enoomatasiani Secondary School. I deal with many issues including discipline, performance, career guidance, and mentoring. I invite experts to talk to students as well. (Caterina Nasonko, Personal Communication, April 12, 2010)

Caterina knew all the students under certain kinds of scholarships because at times she is involved in writing letters of recommendation for students looking for sponsors. About those who are assisted, she strongly felt that follow ups and being strict on high scores were great. Other students had been given sponsorship but did not take their studies seriously.

**Gladys Munee**

Gladys Munee is one of the most successful cases of women who were trying to better their future after their education was disrupted by early marriage. She is a student, a wife, a mother and a community mobilizer with a women empowerment group called Maasai Women Education and Empowerment Program (MWEEP). She
referred to herself as “a good example of early marriage” (Gladys, Personal Communication, May 21, 2010). Gladys is critical, enlightened and cheerful. Although she had not attended many seminars and read many papers on feminism, she seemed well aware that she needed to guard her rights as a woman. Introducing herself, she said:

I am Gladys and I am come from Loitoktok town. Now I stay in Ngong with my husband. I am married, a wife and a mother of two children – one boy and one girl. I am also a student taking a diploma in management in Nairobi- Kenya School of Management. My children are not here with me because I am in school and therefore I have taken them to relatives in order to fully concentrate on my school work. I come from a polygamous family and we are nine siblings. I must say that boys are given a better chance in education in my family than girls. All of us are educated but my brothers have a higher education while females have lower level education. For example, my step brother (my age mate) is in the university now. No one expects him to get married until he decides by himself and that will be after university. I feel bad because I had to get married, have children and now struggling to get only a diploma (a certificate lower than a bachelor’s degree). I feel that I am a good example of early marriage because I did not finish with my education first before marriage. My priorities were upside down (Laughter). (Gladys, Personal Communication, May 21, 2010)

As a participant, Gladys was concerned that her community expects girls to get married earlier than boys, making their schooling problematic. She clearly expressed her dissatisfaction with this kind of arrangement. Gladys said there was inequity in her education as a woman compared to that of her own step brother, who was still pursuing his education in the university. To solve the problem, Gladys was a student already furthering her education. Her dream was to catch up with her brother. She was working on her post secondary education in order to fulfil her dreams.

I learned a lot from Gladys. She was living the true spirit of Africana womanism of struggle and survival (Mikell, 1997). She also recognized the value of family as an
African woman (Hudson-Weems, 1997). However, she was aware of the inequality subjected to women as far as educational access in concerned in her community.

**Summary**

In summary, chapter four contextualizes the study site and the study participants. Two categories of participants took part in this study. They were secondary school participants and key informants. Both students and key informants introduce themselves using their own words. Chapter five below presents the study findings about what participants said about their life in school.
Chapter Five: Life in School

Introduction

Chapter five presents the study findings on the educational experiences of young Maasai women in Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School. Tables and figures were used for easy presentation and analyses of the study findings. The data presentation was done side by side with data analysis/discussion using literature and theoretical framework to interrogate the emerging issues.

Educational Experiences of Young Maasai Women

In order to understand young Maasai women’s life in school, it is important to look at the socio-cultural factors that influenced their education. To elicit this data, I used interviews, focus group discussions and document analyses. From the responses, the socio-cultural challenges which confront girl’s education in Kajiado District were categorized into two groups; in-school or out—of—school factors as presented in Table 6 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Factors Affecting Maasai Girls’ Education.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Out—of—School Factors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Pregnancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Factors</td>
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*Source: Data from the fieldwork.*
From Table 6 above, while the out-of-school factors influencing young women’s education were only four in number, the in-school factors included home sickness, making tough choices, education as a tough race, fear of examination, and math and sciences. In addition, fear of examinations, and math and science were not their best subjects despite the fact that many jobs available today need a science base. In order to improve on the educational access of young women, these factors need to be looked into with an aim of improving the situation. The section below discusses out-of-school and in-school factors.

Out-of-School Factors

The out of school factors that emerged from the data that were a challenge young women’s education in Kajiado District include: circumcision, early marriage, and early pregnancy. FAWE (2009) mentions the three factors and adds gender roles on the list as the major barriers to girl’s education not only in Kajiado in Kenya, but in many parts of Africa. Reflecting on how these factors impacted on the participants, they interrupt the education of young girls at some point. When girls leave school either to undergo circumcision or due to early pregnancy, the chances of getting back to school are slim. In addition, those girls who dropped out of school due to early marriage had almost a nil chance of going back according to this study participants.

Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C)

“As from 8 years, young Maasai girls go through their puberty rites and marriage can follow almost immediately. This means some young girls miss their
school dreams all together or have to shelf them for marriage” (Nachipai, Personal Communication, May 4, 2010).

Female Genital Mutilation Cutting (FGM/C), also known as Female Circumcision (FC) is, “partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reason” (Nwajei & Otiono, 2003, p. 5). This is a rite of passage among the Maasai that is used to usher young girls into the world of adulthood, specifically womanhood. Other than acting as a bridge from childhood to adulthood, The World Health Organization gives several other reasons for the practice. According to WHO (2005) the reasons include: preservation of women’s virginity and family name, source of pride, social and cultural acceptance where defectors face much pressured, discrimination or stigma among peers. In enduring pain without anesthetic, the circumcised experience “shock, bleeding hemorrhaging, infections and - for the infibulations-delayed problems such as menstrual pain, urinary tract infections, painful intercourse and difficulties in child birth” (Boyle, 2002, p. 9).

During the focus group discussion, all the members contended that the practice of FGM/C was still alive in their community. In the focus group discussions, I learned that unless one’s parents or relatives were convinced about the dangers of the practice, participants admitted that it was hard for girls to escape it. However, churches and some NGOs are preaching against FGM/C in Kajiado. In recounting the situation of FGM/C in her village, Gladys explained:

Although things are changing and many organizations and the government are fighting the practice, FGM is still prevalent in my village. Those young girls who
are still not in school are getting circumcised and because parents have learned about the anti-campaigns of FGM/C, they are doing it secretly. Others are doing it at night with no ceremonies in order to draw less attention. I went through a lot of pain myself when I was initiated. This is not fair to young girl. When I get my own children, I will protect them from the practice. It is not important anyway. (Gladys, Personal Communication, May 21, 2010)

Circumcision is losing its popularity based on the anti-FGM/C campaigns inside and outside the community. Inside the Maasai community, crusaders against FGM/C such as the study participants who negate the rite of passage’s importance to young women. The outside campaigners included the government and other stakeholders who view FGM/C as a barrier to women education, an abuse of children’s rights and a health risk (Boyle, 2002; Nwajei & Otiono, 2003; UNESCO, 2005; WHO, 2005). Therefore, the practice of circumcision in girls is facing much pressure from internal and external forces. Today, some Maasai girls have not gone through the rite of passage for one reason or another. Nachipai’s story is unique because she escaped circumcision while her peers may not be as lucky as she was. Nachipai was headed for circumcision and most possibly early marriage before her uncle intervened. She narrated that:

    My uncle is a Christian and he works in Nairobi. He saved me from circumcision. This decision caused a lot of friction between my uncle and my father. He threatened to excommunicate me but my uncle talked to him the more until he came to understand. But, because I am still in school, we do not talk much with my father. World Vision pays my school fees. If I were not in school, I would be married by now. (Nachipai, Personal Communication, May 4, 2010)

This response shows the amount of pressure being applied on the practices of early marriage and circumcision. These two practices are a hindrance to education because as early as 8 years, young Maasai girls go through their puberty rites and marriage could follow almost immediately. Since some members of the community such as Nachipai’s
uncle are already waging a strong war against the practice, it is an implication that someday, women will be free of these two practices, a reduction on the health risks involved. However, as to when this will be achieved, no one knows.

**Early Marriage**

“Marrying off young girls is the end of the road for their education.” (Loise Mkubwa Personal Communication, April 10, 2010)

The term “early marriage” refers to any formal or informal unions where girls are paired with men as their life partners before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2005). Early marriage is also known as ‘child marriage’ and viewed as, “any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically, and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibility of marriage and childbearing” (UNIFPA, 2006, p. 5). It is also important to note that sometimes early marriage may involve two young children and may not get formally registered. In other cultures, it could be conducted under religious, customary or under civil laws. Whatever form it takes, early marriage is viewed by many feminists as a way of retaining the status quo between men and women. Since young girls get married to older men who are not their age mates, the age difference serves as a form of power, giving men hegemonic authority to demand obedience from women.

Generally, 100% of all the participants in this study mentioned early marriage as a barrier to girls and women’s education in Kajiado District. Loise Mkubwa, one of the key informants, who took part in this study explained how circumcision of girls in her community could mean both the end of their childhood and the death of their school
dreams. As from 8 years, young Maasai girls go through their puberty rites and marriage can follow almost immediately. Loise Mkubwa was a Board of Governors (BOG) member in AIC Girls Primary School, Kajiado and in Moi Girls (Isinya) Secondary School, Kajiado. These are two prominent girls’ schools in the district which have been identified by FAWE centers of excellence in Kajiado District. Loise stated:

In the Maasai community, girls are circumcised between 8-14 years and, soon after, married off. Marrying off young girls is the end of the road for their education. We are working hard to change this tradition especially from the rural parts of Kajiado where school are few in number. In some of the very rural villages, parents marry off their daughters because they cannot afford school fees after completion of primary school. (Loise, Personal Communication, April 10, 2010)

Loise endorses that FGM/C among the Maasai is a rite of passage which acts as the bridge between childhood and adulthood. However, she felt that FGM/C opened the way for early marriage because girls are considered adults after the rite and now men are allowed to seek their hand in marriage. Loise’s sentiments were supported by the DEO who stated:

About the challenges facing the girl-child education in Kajiado, this community has issues with girl-child education because many parents tend to educate the boys more. They also have a tendency to marry off their daughters before they complete primary and secondary school. I am working with support from many corners mostly from government, FAWE, MWEEP, churches, community workers and others to ensure school age children remain in school. Several cases of parents refusing to pay fees and marrying off their daughter have been reported to me. Some have been taken to the police in that regard while others are still pending. We all need to do something about it because every Kenyan child needs an education. (Mr. Manyuira, the DEO’s Personal Communication, April 3, 2010)

The issues that the DEO was handling in his office are many but my main interest was on girls’ education. He was quick to mention that early marriage was something his
office was concerned about and that he was networking with other stakeholders in campaigning against the practice. The DEO was deeply involved in talking to parents on the matter as a barrier to girls’ education.

In my discussion with him, the DEO made it clear that he was not taking the issue of girls being drawn out of school for early marriage simple. He stated that he had asked all the chiefs and section leaders to be on the lookout as well as acting as protectors of young women who came to them for refuge or to file a complaint. The DEO strongly felt that the practice of early marriage was dying but at a slow pace.

Therefore, both Loise and the DEO felt that FGM/C and early marriage practices were forces to reckon with and a challenge to keeping young Maasai women in school. Loise Mkubwa’s observation agrees with Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003) study which found out that “The main factors that damage girls’ educational progress in the district [Kajiado] are female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage” (p. 107).

Interviews with the high school participants revealed that undergoing either of the two (circumcision and early marriage) and especially marriage, marked the end of school among many of their peers. Some acknowledged that some few girls were in school after circumcision. However, all these young women unanimously maintained that none of their friends was in school after marriage. This was clearly articulated by Pelesa by stating:

My friend left school and got married when we were in Form Three in high school. She was only 16 but her relatives organized for her to get married. I learned later that she was pregnant. I think she could have reported the issue to the chief, deliver her baby and get back to school. But, she did none of those. My greatest pain is that she was only one year to completion of her high school
education. Was one year too much to wait? (Pelesa Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

Getting back to school after marriage for young women is problematic. Therefore, marriage completely takes away the chance of pursuing school from young women. It could be attributed to the duties of a wife and a mother as Agnes states:

Generally, all married women stay home to cook and take care of their children. On the other hand, going back to school for a wife in order to complete school could be somehow confusing. Married girls are shy and school may make it worse especially because there are high chances of being stigmatized by peers. Teachers and some parents may view them as bad influence. Classmates may find it odd studying with a married person. But, I think it is something which needs to be initiated. (Agnes Personal Communication, May 10, 2010)

From the field data, it appears marriage proposals got first priority in women’s lives in the Maasai community. This could be attributed to the cultural value of marriage in both girls and boys, which was the highest goal or the climax in their lives (Mbiti, 1970). Rituals and ceremonies were performed in honor of the new couple in order to bless their new family with joy, fertility, and long life (Nnaemeka, 1998). However, now that women require to get empowered and become partners in development, their education is quite important. Therefore, delaying marriage, allowing married women to continue with school and making all possible arrangements to ensure that it does not disadvantage young women compared to young men is preferable.

Agnes’ response also raises the issue of ‘back to school’ policy for teenage mothers. According to Elimu Yetu Coalition, the Kenyan “government introduced the Re-Entry Program which allows girls who have given birth to be re-admitted into schools” (p. 115). Although the policy is recognized and accepted by the Ministry of Education, many policies remain on paper but not in practice. Studies show that some
headteachers and school boards prefer to send pregnant girls away from school, claiming that they can be ‘bad influence’ to others (Mulama, 2008; FAWE, 2003). In addition, participants in this study mentioned that pregnant girls are highly stigmatized by their peers and teachers. Even when the policy supports their being in school as mothers, many of them prefer to stay away from school to avoid being stigmatized. Others are forced into marriage even before they deliver. For the above listed reasons, the ‘back to school’ (also known as the ‘re-entry program’ or the ‘re-admission’) policy has not born much fruit.

**Early Pregnancy**

Early pregnancy was another major out-of-school factor that was reported as an impediment to young women’s education in Kajiado. Asked if early pregnancy was a challenge to female education in their school, 60% of the focus group members unanimously agreed that it was a challenge. Putting it in the words of participants, Ann stated:

> If you are pregnant, you are immediately expelled from school. When you get home, parents are mad with you. They see you as a disgrace. So, they ‘get rid of you’ quickly! It does not matter if you are in school or not. (Ann, Personal Communication, April 20, 2010).

In support the idea that you have to leave school, Mary quickly added:

> Getting pregnant means that one has to leave school at least to deliver the baby. People say that it is possible to get back to school but few people come back to the same school. I think taking care of the baby is complicated and many young mothers get marriage almost immediately. (Mary, Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)
From these two responses, it is the norm that expectant school girls are sent home. This happens to them although there is a government policy allowing teen mothers to go back to school (Mulama, 2006, Republic of Kenya, 2007).

These participants stated that early pregnancy was a topmost reason for terminating girls’ education in their region. Further, they mentioned names of their friends who had left school on the grounds of being expectant. According to them, none had come back to complete her education and if so, not in their school. However, they were quick to mention that the challenge is more pronounced among their counterparts in the very rural areas. A good example to buttress the challenge of early pregnancy was given by Pelesa:

Since I joined this school, I have witnessed six (6) cases. Every start of the term we all go to see the school nurse for checkup. We are always very keen to know who goes ‘missing’ after this checkup. Those who visit the school nurse for a second time go ‘missing’ almost immediately. We call it “kuchunjwa” meaning, to be segregated. (Laughter….) We are never told about the outcome but we already know. Normally expectant teens are given a dismissal letters to go home and have their babies. We have also seen girls who go back to study after delivery and some get good grades finally. But, very few do this. (Pelesa Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

Grade 12 East had 44 members by the start of Grade nine. The class had lost six (6) of their cohort members to early pregnancy. Therefore, this single class had lost 14% of their members to early pregnancy. In support of Pelesa’s point, Ann continued to explain that the Maasai people belief that:

Pregnancy ‘devalues young women.’ After having a child out of wedlock, young women are viewed as spoilt. Since no decent man would agree to marry her, anybody interested including very old men are allowed to ask for your hand in marriage. Parents are ashamed of giving young women away for marriage with a child who does not belong to the husband. It is also believed that the woman’s character is questionable. As such, the negotiations for bride wealth
are not as important as getting the young woman out of the family. (Ann Personal Communication, April 20, 2010)

Rushed marriage preparations were done in order to punish the violators as well as to show disapproval to other young women. In this situation, the welfare of the mother and her baby are thrown out of the window and the image of the family (parents’) is spared. In these rushed marriage arrangements, school going women are forced to leave school and follow their parents’ advice.

Hellen’s story was different. In this situation, the school principal was keen on asking the girl to come and complete her studies. Did she come back? Hellen explained:

Nariaka, my Form Two (equivalent of Grade 10 in U.S.) friend was asked by the school principal to come back after having her baby. Her parents were also requested to help her with child-care in order to ease her return to school decision. She was very bright in class. But, no amount of pleading made her come back. I guess much more is needed for one to return to school than just the encouragement. Also, much depends on the person. I have heard that some school encourage mothers to go back but few do. Others know they can go back but they feel shy and fear the stigma associated with being a mother while in school. Others go to other school where they are not well known but others make no attempts at all. Pregnancy becomes the end of their educational dream. But, those who make the decision still get good grades. (Hellen Personal Communication, May 15, 2010)

This response reinforced the strength of early pregnancy as barrier to girls’ education.

Cases of early pregnancy are also common in other parts of Kenya and beyond.

According to Mulama (2005), countries such as Zambia, Guinea, Kenya, and Namibia have devised ways of enforcing re-entry into school for pregnant schools girls after delivery. The re-entry or return-to-school policy is a strategy aimed at improving educational access, making it possible for teen mothers to complete their studies.
(FAWE, 2003; Republic of Kenya, 2007). However, not all are taking advantage of the policy. In addition, some schools still dismiss their pregnant students.

**Environmental Factors**

Although not all of the above factors are unique to the Maasai women, specific issues relating to pastoral lifestyle, cultural practices and the existence of rescue centres for girls drawn from early marriage are distinctive to the Maasai group.

Pastoral lifestyle has its unique challenges to children from pastoral communities. According to literature reviewed, the pastoral communities in Kenya have a history of shifting their home bases. This kind of lifestyle does not favour the development of permanent school structures. Consequently, regions occupied by pastoral communities are characterized by low enrollment rates of both boys and girls in educational institutions (Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009; Kratli, 2000). Moreover, girls’ enrollments are lower than that of boys (Mulama, 2008; Republic of Kenya, 2007; Leggett, 2005; FAWE, 2003). These authors quote poverty, pastoral lifestyles and policy challenges facing pastoral education in Kenya.

Coming from a dry region that has little economic potential is an environmental barrier to accessing education. Roto, Ongwenyi and Mugo (2009) state that children from ASAL regions are educationally marginalized. According to this report, ASAL regions in Kenya have poor equipped schools because parents are poor and cannot afford to provide some of the educational facilities as required of them by the cost sharing policy.
In addition, cultural practices such as FGM/C, early marriage, and early pregnancy are among other factors which need to be addressed to improve of the educational access of girls. Although FGM/C and early marriage for young women are acceptable in the Maasai culture, they have a high possibility of interrupting the education of young women. Therefore, their timing and demands need to be checked in order to allow young women to pursue their educational dreams.

**In-School-Factors**

In-school-factors were those issues that students face while undertaking their studies in the school environment and the relevant issues are presented in Figure 6 below:

![Figure 6: School Related Factors.](source: Developed from field data)

Figure 6 above presents some of the in-school-factors which were reported as having an influence to young Maasai women’s education. In school, some young women were suffering from home sickness, they had to make tough choices especially...
owing to the fact that they viewed education as a tough race. In addition, fear of examinations, challenge of math and science and inadequate resources were in their list of hinderances to their education.

**Home Sickness**

Fifty percent (50%) of the focus group discussants stated that home sickness was a hindrance to their education in school. Documents collected from FAWE office in Nairobi during data collection also supported homesickness as a challenge to girls’ education. The following are some examples of the opinions shared by participants of the focus group and from documents analyzed. Mary’s opinion was shared by many in the focus group:

At first, I was suffering from home sick and I missed my family so much. It took me much time to adjust. I had to make new friends, I had to eat whatever was provided and I did not like it. I missed the food at home. I missed my sibling and I also missed just being at home. Although this has changed a great deal, I still look forward to going home after closing school. I always get home and prepare what I like eating most. (Mary Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

As Mary puts it, adjusting to a new environment in a bording school is not easy. Others did not like the time for eating like Ann. She stated, “Here in school, I hate the food, the water, the weather and having to cope with new people. I find it frustrating at times. But, now I have gotten used to it” (Ann Personal Communication, April 20, 2010). In support of Mary’s point that students suffered from home sickness, Mary said:

When in school, I miss my parents. I miss my brothers and sisters. I miss my friends too who are in other schools. But, now I have new friends who are also good. We study together. We help each other and before long, school close and we go home. But, it was not easy when I was new. It took me time to even wake up early, take a shower and go to class. (Mary Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)
Veronica supported suffering from homesickness and added that not being visited by her relatives in school was challenging to her. At times, I think my parents do not like me at times, but I know it is also not easy to travel all the way. Veronica argued:

Being in school for three good months without seeing your family is not interesting. I suffer from homesickness most during visiting days when parents and relatives come to see how we are fairing. I hate visiting days where parents and relatives visit us here in school because I come from far and no one comes to visit me. I miss home the more because my friends are brought food from home. Others are visited by the whole family and this makes me very sad. I am happy I am about to complete school. I will not have to witness this any more. (Veronica, Personal Communication, May, 2010)

Pelesa introduced a new dimension to the homesickness experience:

I do not find it too bad here. I came from AIC Kajiado Primary school I did not go home for holidays at all. I was keeping company and working together with those of us who needed to be reconciled with their parents because they had escaped early marriage and going home would have been a risk. FAWE houses many young women and makes plans to reconcile them with their families later after completing primary school. (Pelesa, Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

Pelesa brought up an important factor to student homesickness in Kajiado. According to a document from FAWE offices in Nairobi, Kajiado District is known for having some schools that double as rescue centres. The rescue centers double as homes and schools for escapees of early marriage. Further, this document FAWE (2003) states that in order to fully engage the rescued girls who find it difficult to go home over the holidays:

The centre runs holiday programs including training them in income generating skills like banking, arts and crafts, remedial lessons for those lagging behind in specific subjects and hosting visits of special groups such as donor representatives and women’s groups. Also, girls are taken for trips outside the centre during Christmas holidays. (FAWE, 2003, p. 4)

Coming from such an environment as the rescue centre and getting to high school, suffering from homesickness, stigma and isolation were inevitable. The existence of
girls’ schools which doubled as rescue centers was a popular phenomena experienced by many participants in this study.

In summary, homesickness was emanating from several factors including: prolonged stay in school, lack of being visited in school and studying in “rescue centers.” This could have been as a result of having to stay in a boarding school—Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School for close to three months every school season, three times each year. Others reported that when they were in primary—particularly in AIC Kajiado Primary which also doubled as a rescue centers, they had to stay there the whole year round. Based on the above responses, detachment from family seemed to have a negative effect to learning. First, missing home food and failing to eat school food keeps one hungry and unable to study. Also, viewing school as so different from home based on the facilities provided could easily set one’s mind away from school, consequently, losing interest in learning. Schools have difficulties in providing the best of facilities to students. If students are not careful to overlook some of the minor challenges in school they can easily miss the point. However, rising against all odds and being in their last year in high school made these young women in this study brave and resilient in their own rite.

Making Tough Choices in School

Being in school for young women in Enoomatasiani was a real challenge. For instance, participants had to make choices, determining their staying to complete or dropping out of school. Consequently, 100% of the focus group discussion members felt that being in school and keeping focused was problematic. They listed home
sickness, inadequate revision books, making tough choices, and viewing education as a tough race which they had to win. In addition, participants mention that they feared examinations, were challenged by math and science and inadequate resources. The most difficult part was keeping focused in school despite the juicy and distracting opportunities. Figure 7 below displays some of the tough choices that young women are faced with as students.

**Figure 7: Making Tough Choices in School.**

*Source: From field data*

This was a picture on the wall of Form Four (equivalent of 12th Grade) East classroom. Data gathered through observation of the classroom wall revealed that the school community used the classroom walls to put up posters with important messages.
for young women. This wall poster in Figure 7 speaks volumes about in-school-experiences of young women in Kenyan schools in general and in Enoomatasiani Girls’ Secondary School in particular. I did not ask teachers about the posters on the wall, but the study participants commented on it in relation to what message they got from it.

Study participants mentioned that the poster showed them (readers/ students) the possible outcomes of the decisions they make while in school. The message was that young women in school were attracted to many things while in school, such as sex, friends, and social activities like dancing, and getting money from ‘sugar’ daddies. However, their decisions dictate whether they achieve their goals or not.

As asked to comment on the picture on their classroom wall, Kasandra, one of the focus group discussion members shared her opinion which was strongly supported by her peers on winning the many challenges facing young women in school. She acknowledged:

   Being a young women and in high school is tough. Achieving your goal in school is even tougher. For those who choose to take their education seriously, they will finally graduate and acquire their high school diplomas. For those who decide to have fun with friends, and taking not time to study, they may possibly fail their examinations. Spending four years in school and going home with nothing is not simple. Regrets and shame are part of what young women face after failing to acquire good grades to get them to the university. I guess that picture on the wall says it all. Any time I lose my focus, I look at it and I ask myself what I want to acquire: HIV/AIDS, pregnancy or a certificate?
   (Kasandra, personal communication, May 15, 2010)

Hellen’s opinion was not different:

   Many of us here come from poor homes. We lack money to buy soap and lotion. Yet, you still want to look good (Meaning to be smartly dressed). It is possible to listen to anybody who is offering such goodies. Also, some of us think too much about male friends or boyfriends. Thinking about boys is time wasting while the boys themselves are busy doing their own things. We need to be wise.
When school girls get pregnant, their male partners easily deny the responsibility. Being in school is good but it is not as easy as it seems. One has to struggle and the struggle is felt more by us females. In other words, we need to know that “Njia mbili zilimshida fisi.” The literal meaning of this Kiswahili proverb is that the hyena was unable to follow two roads. In the context of this discussion, we school women are advised not to follow two roads: studies and having fun. This is literally impossible. One has to make a choice and a decision in her life. (Hellen Personal Communication, May 15, 2010)

Responses by Kasandra and Hellen, which were strongly supported by the focus group members make the best summary of the challenges young women face in school. In helping young women to get more focused, I observed that the school organized guidance and counseling sessions to talk about many topics. For instance, I observed that the school timetable had all Tuesdays 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm booked for guidance and counseling sessions. In one of the sessions that I attended, the teacher-counselor discussed on self-esteem and how to avoid those friends who make one feel useless or not important. The counselor stressed that a genuine friend has to be interested in building the other positively.

Being in school was viewed as a tough choice for young women by study participants. Therefore, it is important to mention that those who are sent home due to early pregnancy are loose morally and therefore stigmatized. Maybe they ‘chose not to focus.’ Perhaps it was not their choice to get pregnant. However, teen motherhood in Kenyan schools presents difficulties to young women.

Winning the Education Race for Young Women

Being a student and completing school with admirable grades is the same as winning a marathon, especially for young women. Hundred percent (100%) of the focus group discussion members felt that completing school without any major
problems was doable but not easy. Figure 8 below displays some of the hurdles that young women jump before getting to the finish line.

![Figure 8](image)

**Figure 8: Winning the Education Race for Young Women.**

*Source: From field data*

As shown in figure 8 above, winning the education race is not easy for young women. Some of the education barriers to girls’ education in the poster include: having boyfriends, child labor, loose life, befriending rich men who buy expensive gifts and may even promise marriage (early marriage). In addition, hardships and poverty were among the challenges young women needed to overcome in order to succeed in school.

When asked to comment about the poster, a 100% of the focus group members believed that the information on the poster was important to them as young women in
order to remain focused in school. However, they pointed out that one needs determination, encouragement and family support in order to be successful. Moreover, focus group discussants were determined to win the education race because they were ready to make responsible choices.

A further discussion on the poster in Figure 8 in relation to girls’ voices, it was clear that the barriers differ from person to person. For example, Hellen said, “Not all of us here in school are struggling with the issues of boyfriends. However, it is true that some of us waste much school time thinking about men” (Hellen, Personal Communication, May 15, 2010). Leah said, “Child labor and doing much work at home makes us women unable to spend much time on our school work during the school holidays. Therefore, we lose focus of the things we had learned in school” (Leah, Personal Communication, May 11, 2010). This study findings is in line with Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003) which stresses that the work burden on girls at home in Kenya is a negative factor affecting their education.

Naomi stated, “I have a qurrel with those young school women who befriend elderly rich men. If you get married to an old man, when will you ever think independently as an educated women? We need to style-up in our struggle” (Naomi, Personal Communication, April 21, 2010). Responses by the participants show that they feel the need to change their style and work hard in school as women. This urge to ‘style-up’ by young women as Naomi refers to it is supported by the Africana womanism theory. According to Hudson-Weems (1997), African women need to struggle to achieve those social services that have been denied to them as women such
as education, medical care and legal services. Making responsible choices and being determined to succeed despite the barriers is part of this struggle.

In addition, the Africana women’s spirit of survival is hailed by Ntiri (1998), when she states: “The Africana womanist, focus[es] on her particular circumstances, … [in her] liberation struggles for survival, thereby resolving the question of her place in [society]” (p. 42). This means that based on her contextual situation, the African woman encounters many challenges along the way to her success, access to education being an example. Therefore, young Maasai women in school are advised to be strong in the struggle for liberation and not to be distracted by hardships and poverty. Rather, they should complete the race of education with a good certificate in their hands for a better tomorrow.

**Fear of Examinations**

Eighty percent (80%) of the high school participants mentioned that they feared examinations. A typical example of their responses was captured by Hellen who stated, “I fear that I would not do well in examinations. I fear to fail my examinations here in school” (Hellen, Personal Communication, May 15, 2010). Basically, participants reported that the thought of taking examinations was scary. Agnes stated:

Before the examination, I read a lot. But, when the examinations come, I feel some water in my stomach. During the examinations, my mind gets blocked and I cannot think straight. This makes me so discouraged. I hope in the forthcoming examination, I will not have problems. (Agnes, Personal Communication, May 10, 2010)

Mary spoke of getting nervous during the examination. She lamented:

The examination time for me is stressful because I get very nervous and anxious. Although I read hard, I forget some of the points just because my mind
gets distracted by the idea of failing the examination. I guess I need to calm down during the examination in order to remember what I am asked in the papers and to present it well. However, I hate the fact that I get anxious any time I take examinations. (Mary, Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

Ann wished she could change this status of anxiety before examinations. She affirmed:

I want to prepare properly. I am also very happy with what we are doing in our group discussions. We have been answering several examination papers and we always seek assistance from teachers when we are not able to tackle some of the questions. The more we discuss and answer these questions, the more I feel comfortable that I will change my status of anxiety during examinations. (Ann, Personal Communication, April 20, 2010)

Kasandra agreed:

During the examinations, I feel like it gets colder than normal. I even see some people trembling in a practical examination. I tend to forget some steps especially in physics and chemistry practical examinations. Sometimes, I even think I fail to do the right thing and this affects my reading for the next examination. (Kasandra, Personal Communication, May 8, 2010)

From the above responses, participants found examination time stressful. They would become anxious, fearful and unable to tackle the exams in a stable mind. Basically, examinations are a stressful experience for many students even those who prepare thoroughly. The fear of examinations by students in the Kenyan school system could be as a result of the system being so examination oriented. National examinations in Kenya are a key determinant for one’s ability to proceed to higher levels of education and for future career choices.

**Mathematics and Science Subjects**

In order to understand how young women in Enoomatasiani fared in their academic work in school, they were requested to comment about their best and worst subjects in school. In addition, they were asked to give an explanation for their answers.
From the data gathered from the high school participants, 70% of them stated that their
best subjects were languages, history, geography, and biology while only 20% were
happy with the sciences and mathematics. Some of the hindrances in math and sciences
are presented in Figure 9 below:

Figure 9: Factors Influencing Math and Science Subjects.

Source: Data from the field

Figure 9 above lists some of the hindrances that participants were grappling with in
math and sciences. They argued that peer pressure, poor syllabus coverage, lack of
further explanation from teachers, role models in sciences and fear of examinations
were letting them down as far as these subjects were concerned. This impacts on
participant’s life choices in the job market. According to Republic of Kenya (2007),
many jobs in Kenya today are tending towards sciences. Coast (2002) also mentioned
that many jobs around the dry regions in Kenya and Tanzania where the Maasai
community is found are basically on tourism and few women are employed. With this
in mind, there is need for young women to struggle and acquire better grades in math
and sciences and join other organizations away from home.
Peer Pressure

When one listens to peers other than trying to understand concepts in any given subject in school, chances are that the peers may be spreading some of their stereotypes rather than the facts.

Veronicah remarked:

I love all the other subjects but I do not do well in math and chemistry. I guess I joined the bandwagon because many girls have a negative attitude towards math. This attitude in girls that math is a hard subject creates fear. The fear is spread through peers and before long, they all come to dis-associate themselves with the subject. It is believed that math and chemistry are the hardest subjects in this school according to my peers. (Veronicah Personal Communication, May 23, 2010)

Listening to peers, acting, and thinking like them could cause more harm than good to students especially when it spreads fear about some people or subjects. However, peers can also be used positively in dispelling fear in sciences as seen in Figure 10 below.
Figure 10 above shows some senior and juniors students manipulating some science equipment in the physics lab. Being familiar with science equipment is a step in becoming a scientist in the future for young people. According to Salome, “Having and using science equipment is important for students because it arouses their curiosity to learn science. Consequently, this brings about attitude changing towards science subjects” (Salome personal communication, May 25, 2010). This was important to high school participants because, according to school performance documents observed, students had low grades in science subjects, compared to languages and art subjects. Therefore, teachers, parents, and students alike were working on moderlities of
improving the poor grades in sciences. Attitude change towards science subjects by students was one solution towards achieving this goal.

Agnes got herself into bad company. She lamented:

> I joined bad company due to peer influence and therefore felt like running away/dropping out of school by the time I got to Form 2 because I was no longer interested in school. My performance declined so badly until teachers and the school principal became so concerned. Based on their wide experience, teachers in this school know those students who have the potential and those who do not. Consequently, they all knew I had the potential and so they could talk to me quite often, a practice I did not appreciate. My greatest question any time they approached me was, why are they concerned? It is my life. I want to become a pilot like Marjory (her role model) who is a pilot, works in the USA and a sponsor with the CCF organization. (Agnes, Personal Communication, May 10, 2010)

Joining bad company wastes time. For instance, Agnes said, “I wasted the whole year in 10\textsuperscript{th} Grade doing a lot of nothing. I did not want to listen to teachers. But, I was very wrong! Teachers know better” (Agnes Personal Communication, May 10, 2010). When teachers discover one is wasting time in school that is the best time for them to ask parents for help. That is also the best time for teachers to talk to students about time management. Students at times resist teachers’ and parents’ advice. For students to succeed, they need to listen to teachers and follow their advice because teachers are more experienced.

**Syllabus Coverage**

Sometimes, students do not perform well in sciences and math due to poor syllabus coverage as explained by Gladys, “In biology, we did not cover the syllabus. By the time we took the final exam, we found out that there were some topics which we did not cover at all in class.” (Gladys, Personal Communication, May 21, 2010)
Glady’s idea was resounded by the focus group discussants who affirmed that failing to complete the syllabus was a huge challenge in subjects such as math and chemistry in their school. The discussants were positive that not finishing the syllabus was a negative motivation to them. It was a huge cause of fear during examinations for students leading to acquiring poor grades. Hannah asked, “How are we expected to know and answer questions from topics we have not been taught?” (Hannah Personal Communication, April 16, 2010)

Students are always quick to point fingers at others while they also need to work hard and read ahead of their teachers. Teachers do give students the syllabus and ask them to buy the books required in each subject. However, some students never read the said text books unless the teacher asks them to do an assignment. Any extra reading by students other than what the teacher does in class is not done. In order to master a certain concept well in sciences or in math, extra reading is encouraged among students. Reading widely in all subjects was highly encouraged by one of the key informants who took part in this study, the guidance and counseling teacher. She stated:

Although each student has the responsibility of reading ahead of the teacher and is to blame for poor grades in sciences, some science and math topics are hard and they need explanations and examples tackled before students become confident enough to read them on their own. (Guidance and counseling teacher Personal Communication, May 10, 2010)

**Lack of Further Explanations**

Teachers need to take care of both the fast and the slow learners in their subjects. However, some teachers tend to “fly” with the fast learners while leaving
behind the slow learners especially in sciences. This was the implication tabled by Pelesa when she said:

> Of course we need to work hard. However, our teachers need to explain and repeat some of the concepts and ideas which we students do not get as quickly. Some of us are slow learners and we do not understand the first time an idea is floated. There was a time in chemistry I did not understand the calculation of moles. I asked our teacher to explain further but she did not. I still struggle with it. Some male teachers give up on us so quickly. They think we are not “cut out” for sciences. Some female teachers too are very proud and they also have no time for slow learners. If I become a teacher, I want to improve on this and become a role model. (Pelesa, Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

In this sense, teachers need to be very committed to ensure that students understand the new concepts in sciences and math. Not giving young women the same chance in school and particularly in the classroom is condemned by Africana womanism. This African centered theory calls for social change through questioning and challenging practices that reinforce inequality and subalterns (Spivak, 1988; Hudson-Weems, 1998). Indeed, formal education has the power to equip young women with the voice they need to challenge the educational inequality along gender lines in their schools. In addition, the educated women in Maasai community have a higher likelihood of using their own experiences to change the status quo.

Forty percent (40%) of the members of the focus group stated that teachers’ attitude was among the factors that caused students’ poor grades in sciences in their class. For instance, Agnes commented:

> For instance, our chemistry teacher seems to have given up on me, maybe because I am a girl. I find stereotyping unfair because it deprives deserving students a chance to succeed. Whether done consciously or unconsciously, it could mean my whole life. In this school, I love those teachers who challenge me to work hard and enable me to do well in science subjects. My dream of becoming a pilot will only come true if I score good marks but it can all turn out
to be a dream if my teachers view me as unable to do well. But, I will not stop working hard to become a pilot. My grades in math and physics are not bad. Why only in chemistry? But I know I can get there! (Agnes, Personal Communication, May 10, 2010)

Agnes’ response concurs with the idea held by Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003) which states that, “Some teachers’ attitude towards girls’ performance in sciences is poor. Some teachers think sciences should be left for boys” (p. 111). Based on these findings, young women in school need to study in an empowering environment (FAWE, 2003). They need to be surrounded by people: family, friends and teachers who belief in them and their ability to succeed in all subjects. It is often taken as the norm that men have to be on top academically and women below them and more so in sciences and math.

Although this trend seems true in many schools in Kenya where often boys out perform girls in national examinations (Republic of Kenya, 2007), it is not a scientific fact that boys are superior in school than girls (Offorma, 2009). Therefore, when teachers insist that girls are not good in sciences, the stereotypes serves to affirm that the society is male centered. In addition, the stereotypes lessens the opportunity for girls to do well in math and sciences. According to Johnson (2005),

A society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being male dominated, male identified, and male centered. It is also organized around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women (p. 5).

Other science subjects have inadequate facilities. In my observation notes, the computer laboratory was good but small in size. Inside the laboratory, only 10 computers were there for the whole school (360 students). Among those ten computers, only two were functional. Students commented that the computers were not enough and they could
only access them when their teacher was in the laboratory. In this sense, there was need for more computers. Further, students needed more free time to use them to sharpen learning.

**Role Models in Sciences**

Studies show that having female teachers as role models in science subjects helps to motivate female students to better their grades (Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2003; FAWE, 2003). However, the case in Ennomatasiani Girls High School was different. From my own observation, there were 6 female teachers against 2 males in science and math subjects. However, the focus group members still admitted that although they had many female teachers in these subjects, they were not putting much effort to better their grades as explained by Sara:

> Many girls seem to have given up and they do not like trying harder when they find the subject challenging. I do well in math and biology but I read more and consult with the teachers when I do not get the idea explained in the text book. I am sure anybody can do it. I do not believe that we are just not gifted. Our teachers really try to make these subjects more interesting. (Sara, Personal Communication, April 13, 2010)

Also Mary blames her fellow counterparts for not becoming aggressive in math and sciences:

> But, as girls, we also are to blame because we do not make our teachers proud. We need all these subjects if we want to get to the university. Any time one qualifies to the university, the grades in almost all the subjects must be B and above. (Mary, Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

Sara and Mary introduce an interesting concept that all subjects are required for one to be admitted in the university and students must be aggressive in order to improve their scores. While the Ministry of Education and FAWE are working together to dispel
the negative attitude of females towards sciences in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2007; FAWE, 2003), the messages seem not to have taken effect. Going by Sara’s words above, the situation on the ground shows that girls are yet to believe in themselves as mathematicians and scientists.

Society has a way of discouraging women from becoming scientists. Other had been told some scary stories about women scientists who behaved like they had mental disturbance. Hannah shared the following story:

I was told of this woman scientist who was studying in the United States. She was an engineer and she had problems with her husband. When their daughter got sick and died, this lady posted her body to her husband in another country and she did not care about the burial. This was strange and many people attribute it to her science career. Also, this story is used to scare young women from becoming scientists. (Hannah, Personal Communication, April 16, 2010)

Hellen’s story was not any different. She argued:

We are socialized about gender roles which are socially constructed. When I think of a doctor, I think of a man but when I think of a nurse, I think of a woman. These roles force us to choose those careers which are socially accepted for women. When we show our liking for sciences and math, something tells us that we are incapable even by looking around us. (Hellen, Personal Communication, May 15, 2010)

Relating Hannah’s and Hellen’s words above to the Africana womanism theory, African women are brough up in a highly structured society. Consequently, women must remain women and men must remain men in their social roles. Women are socialized to accept without question those roles that make them to be accepted as women in society. They must do only those jobs that display their caring character such as nursing. Is this alright in today’s society where unemployment is so rampant? If a young woman can become the village water engineer, should she listen to society
which dictates that she can only become a teacher and a basic-school-teacher for that matter?

Further, Africana womanism allows Africans to re-define the cultural roles based on situation and context (Hudson Weems, 1997). However, it is unfortunate that, women scientists in this case were stereotyped as having a high possibility of divorcing their husbands and suffering from mental disorders. The power to re-define gender roles for both women and men makes it possible for people to move away from socially ‘accepted’ gender roles. Furthermore, according to a study on gender differences in mathematics performance carried out by Felson and Trudeau (1991), both genders expressed general fear of failure in the subject.

Today, I would say that the influence of Africana womanism of re-defining gender roles is taking root in Kenya. For example, FAWE (2003) reported that the FAWE organization in coalition with the Ministry of Education in Kenya were giving bursaries and sponsorships to young women interested in pursuing science oriented careers. In my own observation, preparing more women scientists calls for much guidance. Guiding young women into sciences will go a long way in making students start seeing themselves as scientists. In addition, young women need role models who encourage them in their day to day activities and through them, they can see far in the sense that they can become like them in life. Many participants in this study wanted to become good role models to other girls in their home communities. They now recognize the significance of such models which in itself is a great achievement.
Additionally, participants demonstrated some of the possible solutions that schools and students can adopt in order to improve student’s attitude towards science subjects. These solutions to math and sciences included team working among students to help their weak counterparts in the said subjects.

**Inadequate Resources in Sciences and Math Subjects**

Ninty percent (90%) of all the participants in this study mentioned inadequate resources as a barrier to educational success in Kajiado District. Lack of teaching and learning resources were more elaborate in sciences and math subjects. Among the inadequate resources mentioned by participants were text books, calculators, geometrical sets, computers and fully equipped science laboratories. In recognition to the challenges facing students in Kajiado district in math and sciences, the DEO was asked to comment on the student performance in math and sciences in the national examination in Kajiado District. He said:

Yes, I am concerned that our students, both boys and girls do not score good marks in these subjects. However, my office is working towards making learning in sciences and math better in all the schools in the district. For instance, we have bought them mathematical sets and calculators. These items are being delivered to schools with needy students. We hope to equip our science laboratories with the required facilities. We have identified donors who are willing to help us out with laboratory equipment. Also, FAWE officers are going round in both primary and secondary schools talking to our female students about their participation in sciences and math. (The DEO, Personal Communication, April 3, 2010)

When the FAWE Officer (Hendrina) was asked to comment on how the organization was promoting girls’ participation in sciences and math subjects, she stated:

We have set up a program which visits schools. In the schools, we organize activities which promote the participation of girls in mathematics, science, and technology. We are also giving funds to equip science and computer
laboratories for schools in Kajiado, Mandera, Garissa and Isiolo regions. There are places where girls are worse hit because their schools are not well equipped but they are required to get good grades. Our aim is to ensure they can do as well as other students in national and provincial schools in the country. In addition, FAWE is also establishing gender responsive school management systems and training of school management teams. We also give young women scholarships to pursue science related courses in colleges and universities. (Hendrina, Personal Communication, May 30, 2010)

From the above responses by both the DEO and Hendrina, it appears that the Kenyan government and FAWE are working together in providing teaching and learning resources to needy schools in Kajiado and elsewhere. In relation to the Africana womanism theory, resource allocation is viewed as a very important step towards empowerment (Kabeer, 1999; Hudson-Weems, 1997). Other than providing scholarships and funding to science oriented students, they are putting up science labs and equipping them. Calculators and mathematical sets are also being donated to students. Basing this collaboration to ‘manufacture’ more women scientists in Kenya to the Africana womanism theory, this is working to re-define gender cultural roles (Hudson-Weems, 1997). It is anticipated that in the near future, Kajiado District and other districts in Kenya will be proud of their own women doctors, engineers, pilots and many more.

**Summary**

In summary, this chapter covers the educational experiences of young Maasai women. Two major factors emerged which were out-of-school factors and in-school-factors. Under the out-of-school factors, four themes emerged including: FGM/C, early marriage and pregnancy, environmental factors. The in-school-factors on the other hand were: home sickness, making tough choices, education as a race, fear
of examination, mathe & sciences, inadequate learning resources. In order to improve on the educational access of young women, these factors need to be looked into with an aim of improving the situation. Chapter six discusses the meaning of be in school according to study participants. Being in school had a different meaning to each and every participant as explained below.
Chapter Six: Meaning of Being in School

Introduction

Chapter six presents the analyses of the meaning of be in school according to study participants. Life in school had a different meaning to each of the participants. Yet, all of them were in school to gain knowledge and skills required in the job market.

Meaning Making: Being in School

The second research question sought to explain the meaning which participants made out of their being in school. Responses were gathered through interviews, focus group discussion, and document analyses. From the data gathered from the above named sources, many themes emerged but I consolidated them into five major themes. The five explain the meaning that participants in this study associated with being in school including: empowerment, social, educational (knowledge), economic, and political reasons as presented in Figure 11 below:

![Diagram of the meaning of being in school]

Figure 11: Meaning of Being in School.

*Source:* Developed from data for research question two
Figure 11 above shows the five major reasons behind being in school according to high school participants.

**Empowerment**

A hundred percent (100%) of all the participants mentioned that education was a source of empowerment for both men and women. Their argument was, young women were in school to acquire formal education to enable them navigate other areas of life with much ease.

For example, Catherine talked about the fact that educated women understand their situation better. She said, “With education, I understand what I need to do in order not to remain in poverty all my life” (Catherine Personal Communication, May 13, 2010). Gladys agreed, “I am in school because I want to get empowered. I am sure when I graduate, life will not be the same again. I will be in a position to get a job and if not, I will start my own business, start a small “kibada” (kiosk) to sell chicken. I already know where to take the chicken in Nairobi” (Gladys, Personal Communication, May 21, 2010). Lilian argued, “I know that with education, my family will benefit from me because I will look for a job. I will use the money to educate my brothers and sisters. I will also become a role model in my family” (Lilian, Personal Communication, April 27, 2010).

From the above responses, young women hope to do many things after they acquire their education and after getting employed. Some aim at becoming self employed. For example, Gladys already had alternatives for herself if one plan fails. She wants to get a job but if it proves tough to get a job, she will start her own business.
This is evidence that she is strongly empowered and prepared to take up different jobs as the situation dictates.

Formal education according to Summers (1993) has higher returns to both girls and boys especially in improving on their income, but has many social benefits to girls. Summers statement is strongly supported by UNDP (1996) who adds that educating women has a multiplier effect on the well-being of families and societies. Improved literacy in women lowers their fertility rates, infant and child health improves, and increases children’s level of education. In addition, educated women have the ability to improve the household nutritional and sanitary conditions (Summers, 1993; UNDP, 1996).

Basically, young women wanted to become socially empowered, educationally empowered through gaining knowledge and skills for knowledge sake. In addition, participants mentioned that education was politically and economically empowering to both women and men. Generally, the working class people seek their rights and political representation with success. Therefore, being in school for these young Maasai women was making more sense to them because it was helping them to get empowered in and function better in their society.

Social Reasons

Eighty percent (80%) of the focus group discussants had a common belief that educated women were respected and listened to (had a voice) in society, compared to their counterparts who had not attended school. This is what I refer in this study as social empowerment. Young Maasai women perceived that their community had a soft
spot for educated women, who used their education to change their social class. As a consequence, some of the focus group members associated being educated with acquiring respect as women. Their opinions were summed up by Kasandra stating:

I am in school because I want to be respected as a woman. I want to be like those other women who are always treated with respect and referred by their career names as teacher, doctor, leader, and others. In other words, these educated women who are also working within our community are not just being viewed as women. All people treat them with respect. On the road, they are greeted. They are given free rides and some people offer to buy them lunch, tea or even a bottle of soda. (Kasandra personal communication, May 8, 2010)

Pelesa agreed and quickly added:

People see and value the services of these women in our community. I always see parents here in school talking to our teachers with a lot of respect. They know the teachers are here to help us. Our parents always ask us to emulate our teachers. Our parents see the teachers as our role models. So, I am stopping at nothing till I become that kind of a person in my community. On the other hand those women who have never been to school are treated differently. No one refers to them with any titles. No one listens to them. Their suggestions, even very good ideas are not taken seriously because people do not perceive them as insightful. I want to be different. I want to be party to sharing ideas and making decisions in my community. This is why most of us are here in school. School is giving us a chance to become respectable women in our community and much more. (Pelesa personal communication, May 12, 2010)

The message that educated women earn more respect was supported by participants.

This argument buttresses the fact that although women are majorly found at home carrying out domestic chores, those who break away from the norm are respected and viewed as role models. It is important to note that all educated women are taking additional roles. Other than becoming the mothers in their families, they are also embracing the career world.

In relation to the Africana womanism theory, taking up additional roles by African women is viewed both ‘re-defining cultural roles’ and striving to ‘survive’ for
self and family (Hudson-Weems, 1997). Viewing women who take up additional roles in society as role models, parents approach such women asking them to advice their daughters to follow their footsteps. This shows that educated women are refusing to be defined by society by performing beyond accepted roles (Hudson-Weems, 1997).

The question of gender and inheritance was also emerged. Eighty percent (80%) of young Maasai women in the focus group category were in school because it was their only way of claiming possession from their parents in form of inheritance as women. Therefore, they viewed being in school and getting their school fees paid as a way of “cheating” culture. Parents support the education cost of both girls and boys either in cash or in kind. However, according to the Maasai culture, only men inherit property from parents. Sara’s views were shared by a majority of the group members:

According to the Maasai the culture, the only property a female can inherit is education. Males inherit cows, goats, sheep and any other property from their parents while females inherit nothing. This makes education the only important inheritance for myself and therefore, I rather take it seriously. As long as I am in school, I will get my fees and other expenses paid for by my parents until I graduate. Young women get married and bride wealth is paid to the parents. But still, all that belongs to the sons. Females do not gain economically from their parents unless under special circumstances. (Sara Personal Communication, April 13, 2010)

Mary added:

As an educated woman, we need to increase our ability to own and inherit property such as land, cattle, and others. I feel that it is the high time we questioned the legal procedures in our land which deny women the ability to own property. (Mary, Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

This implies that formal education is the only possession a young woman can acquire from her family. However, Africana womanism strongly critiques social practices which serve to preserve the status quo. Rather, the theory calls for a change in societies
and cultures that are dominated by *inequality, classism, racism, oppressions, and subjugation* of women (Brookfield, 2005; Mikell, 1997). In this sense, young Maasai women can use this theory as a platform to claim their right to property inheritance from their parents.

In the Maasai culture, only sons inherit their parents’ property while daughters are expected to get married, therefore, inherit nothing (Coast, 2008; Republic of Kenya, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2004). This kind of inheritance is based on patriarchal arrangements. However, many scholars including Burn (2005) view property inheritance to males only as discriminatory to women. Whether women get married or not, they have economic needs and their parents’ support is important.

The challenge of mothers in the family being dependent on husbands and relatives economically was raised. A hundred percent (100%) of the focus group participants were unsatisfied with their mothers’ economic positions in the family and in society. In Caterina’s views, schooling for women helps them to escape the challenge of remaining a dependant. This is because, ‘*whoever pays the piper calls the tune.*’ In relation to this study, whoever holds the finances at home dictates what should be purchased. She was of the opinion that there is a danger of married women remaining solely dependent on the finances of their husbands. On the other hand, educated women had a better life. Agnes stated:

> Educated women live a good life, they educate their children well and they can take-over some economic roles from their husbands when need be. For example, I can finance some of the projects that my husband does not value much but are still important in the family. I do not need him to do everything. (Agnes, personal communication, May 10, 2010)
If one knows you cannot do without him or her, there is a tendency for him or her ‘feeling good’ about it. At times, the sole provider may suffer from ‘donor fatigue.’ In addition, in case of poor economic situations, the education of daughters may come to a halt. Based on the problem of ‘donor fatigue,’ Ann was in school because she wanted to become a solution to the economic challenges in her family. Rather, she wanted to be depended on by others:

Today, the economy is bad because I can see how my parents struggle to educate us. I am sure it is not easy for only one person to be the sole provider in a home. Through education, I want to become a team player in family economics. I want to buy land for my family, and pay school fees for my own children. If my husband has more money, we can do other projects for the family. (Ann, Personal Communication, April, 20, 2010)

Dreaming about the future for young people makes them focused. Focusing into the future is important for young people in order to see what the future might hold for them. In this study, the young Maasai women were fully aware of the meaning of empowerment. They were on the right path to getting empowered—acquiring their education. This is because the journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step. In addition, it is important for young people to dream about their future because they tend to work towards actualizing these dreams in life. The dreams keep the dreamers focused and relevant to the dream. Thus, these girls’ dreams of becoming pilots, doctors, social workers, lawyers and others are possible.

In resolving the challenge of being fully dependent on men, women are encouraged through Africana womanism to seek social justice and fairness. Also they are called upon to bring social change and equity for themselves and other marginalized groups through use of “self-conscious critique” (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p.
It is only by becoming self-conscious critiques that African woman can make their dreams come true. In addition, the theory calls upon African woman to become self-reliant (Hudson-Weems, 1997; Mikell, 1997).

**Educational Reasons**

The importance placed on education for all people cannot be underscored, but is specifically significant to girls and women. This is what I refer in this study as gaining knowledge and skills for knowledge sake. Education serves as the gateway to all other opportunities in life and more so, education of women has a multiplier effect in families and in society. A hundred percent (100%) of all the participants in this study were positive about the importance of education to women and to other members of society. Some of the responses indicating that participants were in school because they associated it with acquiring knowledge are echoed in the section below.

From the interview discussions with the high school participants, data indicates that they were in school because they viewed it as a place to gain knowledge. For example, Nachipai’s words were insightful when she said:

> I am in school because I want to gain knowledge. I want to understand myself, I want to understand society and I want to know how to better my life. I want to also know how to interact with people. As a woman, I also want to learn about women and how I can better what we do as women. In my community, many women have never been to school although that does not mean they know nothing. But, I want to be in a position to understand and educate other women and girls on how we can overcome our day to day challenges. (Nachipai personal communication, May 4, 2010)

Hudson-Weems (1997) through Africana womanism calls upon African women to become self-definners and self-namers. Nachipai’s words above displays her dreams of becoming an Africana womanist. It brings out the fact that investing in women and
girls’ education is beneficial to the individual and to the society (Sachs, 2005). In addition, Nachipai is already aware that lack of formal education does not mean that one knows nothing. In future, she is ready to use her abilities to educate women to self-reliance as advocated for by Africana womanism (Mikell, 1997).

A similar message is echoed by Agnes. She stated:

I am in school because I know with education I will better my life. Education opens door to any kind of life I may want to love and any career I may want to pursue. For that reason, I am studying hard to become a pilot. I always enjoy seeing airplanes up in the sky. Although I have never boarded one, I want to be the person making them go up and down in the sky. It is a weird dream but I know I can make it because I have a friend—a pilot who is a guiding me. I am really trying to see how best I can become one famous woman from my community. I am working at it and hopefully I will get there. My grades are good and according to Mergery—my pilot mentor, my school scores are good so far. (Agnes personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Young women are made to believe that their place is in the kitchen. However, for some of the participants like Agnes and her friends, education was making her shed away such kinds of stereotypes. She had faith that she would become this famous female pilot in her community. This buttresses the idea that education is the key to all sorts of opportunities.

Also from the focus group discussion, participants associated being in school with freedom. They argued that those women who had never been to school lack freedom of movement, freedom of speech and freedom of choosing their marriage partners. This kind of freedom was very much in their minds as they pursued their education. For instance, they noted that men in their community have the freedom to choose their brides which was some form of freedom (Sultana, 2010). Similarly, it would be correct to say that through acquiring education, young women in this study
were aspiring to become career women. By becoming useful members of society, they were hoping to gain respect as well as being listened to (having a voice) in the community. Acquiring education would differentiate them from their peers who have never been to school. It would also give them a different social status and freedom.

When asked to explain about the importance of choosing one’s marriage partner, young Maasai women in the focus group discussion stated that it was a sign of respect to females by their parents. However, only twenty percent (20%) of the participants had educated women friends who had personally chosen their husbands. Ann had this to say about choosing one’s future husband:

> Being compelled to marry any man of your fathers’ choice is the common cultural practice in the Maasai community. But, this is not what we want as educated women. We now prefer to be given the freedom to choose and then inform and involve our parents in planning for the wedding. We want to be in a position to make decisions about who and when to get married. Parents may want us to get married to men who have never been to school or others who we mind their character. We also want to decide on the number of children to have in the family without being dictated to. (Ann personal communication, April 20, 2010)

Having the freedom not to follow some oppressive cultural practices is possible for educated women compared to those who have never been to school.

From my own observation and experience, those Maasai women and men who were teachers in schools, nurses in the dispensaries or working with community based organizations were being treated differently. For example, the popular mode of transport in Kenya is the public transport. When people travel from one place to another, they use the matatu (van used as the public means of transport). Everybody has to pay for their transport including school children and all people are required to be
seated and buckled up by law. In Kajiado, this same mode of transport is in use.

However, since the *matatus* are few and there are no many police checks along the way, *matatu* owners easily sneak in extra ‘stranded’ passengers along the way. In some of my every day trips in the field, I witnessed young women and men giving up their seats to both female and male teachers, nurses and other community workers in the *matatu*. In their conversations, I would hear them being referred to as either teachers or doctors (nurses). Elderly people, expectant women and women carrying little children on their backs were also beneficiaries of this kind gesture. This was happening on a voluntary basis. I translated the act of ‘giving up seats’ as according respect to the people who render service in that community including women.

On becoming leaders, almost 80% of the high school participants interviewed were in school because it was a sure way of acquiring social status. They associated school with training for leadership skills. This is because they aspired to join other educated women who were viewed as respectable members of the community. Such women were viewed as capable of taking up social responsibilities and bringing positive change in the community. On the other hand, women who have never been to school are accorded low social status and referring to a man by a woman’s name is abusive. Hellen’s words capture this better:

> In my community, women are looked down upon. They are associated with cooking, cleaning, milking, fetching water, child care, and generally working around the homestead. In fact, referring to a man as a woman is termed as an abuse. It does not matter if you use his mothers’ or wife’s name. The man will be very furious and the remedy is a fine—two he goats. In other situations, young girls are treated like property. Their fathers can give them away as a gift or a token to a friend to cement the relationship. (Hellen Personal Communication, May 15, 2010)
This response serves to show the low social status accorded to women. In relation to Africana womanism theory, women are encouraged to seek social justice and self-empowerment for self and family benefits (Hudson-Weems, 1997; Mikell, 1997). There are many advantages of being educated and having a job as a woman. When a mother is in a position of earning a salary, she also helps her family economically. She can help her own daughters not to be given away as gifts or tokens. Earning education for women therefore becomes important not only to them as women, but, to their daughters as well.

From the interview discussions 40% of the high school participants viewed school as escape to some oppressive cultural practices such as early marriage. Coast (2002) has used the term “booking” to mean betting on the gender of an unborn child. When the unborn child turns out to be female, she is betrothed to the one who placed a bet for marriage. However, if the child is a boy, they become friends. Some parents in the Maasai community still believe that after circumcision, young girls should get married. This was the case in many Kenyan communities before the emergence of formal schools. Since formal education began, other communities shield away from the practice and are busy taking their children especially girls to school.

Since the Maasai culture practices booking of girls for marriage at a young age when they are required to be in school, those in school are guarded and protected against the practice. From the interviews, only 30% of the high school participants indicated that school keeps girls from being married off. It is a good reason for parents
and relatives to leave young women alone to study. To buttress this point, Catherine explained,

School to me means escape from early marriage. As I told you, I would have been married long time if the school idea never came into the picture. What else would I be doing at home if girls as young as eight years are considered “ripe” for marriage? But, now that I am educated, I have the ability to say no and if my parents insist, I know I can escape and report the matter to the police or to the chief. (Catherine Personal Communication, May 13, 2010)

According to Pelesa, the Maasai community is yet to change its mindset about the life of young women. It is a government policy that parents should refrain from marrying off young girls to enable them go to school. Consequently, teachers, government leaders and other stakeholders have staged strong campaigns against the practice.

Thirty percent (30%) of the participants in this study viewed school as an institution well suited for campaigning against early marriage for girls. A key informant who was part in my study—Mr. Manyuira, who was also the District Education Officer (DEO), Kajiado District revealed that teachers, students, and policy makers were partners in campaigning against early marriage in Kajiado District. Further, the DEO explained how marriage could be a barrier to the education of young women especially when it happens before completing school. In Kajiado District, protection of young girls against early marriage is done by a team of parents, teachers, relatives, the NGO sector, and the government (FAWE, 2008). Subjecting young women to early marriage without personal consent is a breach of child rights (UNICEF, 2001). Based on this understanding, schools all over the country have been engaged in campaigning against early marriage for young girls.
The purpose of this study was to understand the educational experiences of young Maasai women. Therefore, connecting the study findings to its purpose, the study participants and the community had started doing things differently. For instance, it appears that early marriage was becoming a thing of the past since young women needed to be in school.

**Economic Reasons**

Education is known for improving the economic status of poor people despite gender. This is what in this study I refer to as economically empowerment. Educated people move away from traditional methods of earning such as manual and menial jobs (Achola & Pillai, 2000; Bogonko, 1992). Manual workers especially women earn little money despite spending more hours at work. Hundred percent (100%) of the high school participants were in school because they associated it with improving their ability to move away from poverty. This was clearly brought out by the poster in Figure 9. From the poster on the classroom wall, young women expose themselves to hardships and poverty by failing to get focused in school. In addition, messages of the posters in Figures 8 and 9 display some of the barriers that young women have to overcome in their school life. The poster messages display the hidden, implicit and explicit curriculum in our Kenyan schools. While young women are required to be busy consuming the explicit curriculum, they also forced to overcome the challenges posed by the hidden and the implied curriculum.

Young women in this study had come to a realization that many women were poor because they were casual and manual laborers with less pay. For instance, Mary did not
want to do ‘minor jobs’ after getting educated. She said: “I cannot wash clothes in order to feed my children because I can do better jobs. I do not need to sell charcoal in the village” (Mary, Personal Communication, May 9, 2010). Other examples of participant views on using education to acquire skills and to move away from poverty and casual jobs were expressed by Hannah who commented:

I am in school because I do not want to do some poor paying jobs which mean I will stay poor for the rest of my life. I do not want jobs in the agricultural sector. Many women work in the flower farms, fruit farms, vegetable farms, wheat farms, coffee and tea farms. Many of these women are paid very little money [one dollar per day] and they cannot even afford to retain their children in school. This is not the kind of life I want to live. I want something different. I want a job which pays better money. For that reason, I need to be in school, I need to get a university degree and become an expert in one area. (Hannah personal communication, April 16, 2010)

This same idea of getting educated in order to escape poverty was supported by Kasandra who declared:

As a woman, I have to fight for the right to earn a good salary which can sustain me and my family. I will achieve this through getting educated. I have seen how women are treated by some employers. Salary delays to no salary at all are some of the challenges I do not want to be exposed to. I do not to be employed as a casual worker because women without skills that employers are looking for will always face exploitation and poor pay. This keeps them poor and vulnerable to exploitation. I do not want to be in this situation where even my own dignity as a woman may be put into test. As women, we need to move away from those kinds of jobs where bosses treat us like trash. I clearly want to work in a place where I am treated well and everybody knows I am important and qualified. In this situation, I do not do the job for survival but as a professional. If I am laid off today, I can get another job tomorrow. (Kasandra personal communication, May 8, 2010)

In other words, young women hoped to acquire skills in order not to work in the agricultural sector which pays its workers poorly. They did not want to be casual laborers with a high chance of facing exploitation. For this reason, young Maasai
women viewed school as having the ability to enable them to become experts in professions of their own choices.

In my own observation, the school was vigilant in organizing talks and programs geared towards making young women more aggressive in their studies. I attended one of the talks in school hall. The speaker encouraged young women to keep their grades high, thus, widening their career choices. This way, they would be sure of being hired for their qualifications and paid according to laid down job scales. Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with those jobs which retain economic inequality on gender lines in society. They were eager to fight against economic inequality facing women through education, which is the base of all other inequalities (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). Through school, women acquire the skills to represent themselves and other groups at social and political forums.

Similarly, 100% of the focus group discussants agreed that they were in school because they wanted to transform their economic situation. Many of them said they hoped that they would combine work and family without problems. They hoped to work in good working condition where their health is not compromised. Agnes captured this notion best. She said:

We are in school because we associate it with giving us the chance to become family and career women. Being able to combine family (domestic work) and work are important to us because they will enable us to move away from many: unpaid, poorly paid, and unskilled jobs. These jobs demand more of our time compared to the ones that we are hoping to be engaged in. They subject us women to poor working condition which could expose us to health problems. Unskilled jobs are done by many women for survival because they need to feed their families. On the other hand, we realize that workers in jobs such as teaching, nursing, veterinary officers and government officers receive relatively similar pay packages and benefits. We hope to acquire skills and get into jobs with better working conditions,
leave packages, and time for recreation. Who said women do not need time to relax? Laughter! (Agnes personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Based on Agnes’ words, the young women in this study were ready to embrace both traditional roles and career roles in society. Other than wanting to transform their economic situation as women, they also hoped to use their school acquired skills to access resources. This was best voiced by Salome who was certain that she wanted to acquire some wealth:

To me, being in school means I can improve my ability to access resources such as land, water, and capital. These resources are what we need in order to start a business or make one [business] stronger. This will give me economic empowerment in the near future. (Salome personal communication, May 25, 2010)

The thread of hoping to acquire resources for economic stability was taken over by Catherine. In an enthusiastic voice, she hoped to acquire a piece of land for her family. She said:

I want to buy land for my family because our land at Maasai Mara was taken away by the ministry of tourism to preserve wildlife. I also hope to pay my own fees in graduate school, my medical bills and school fees for my younger siblings. All my siblings are not in school and my parents are divorced. This means, I am the only hope because I am the only one in high school. My mother needs somewhere to settle. (Catherine Personal Communication, May 13, 2010)

The responses imply that being educated as a woman comes with added economic responsibilities. For instance, buying land for the family is not a cheap responsibility for anybody. The interesting thing was that young women were excited about becoming self reliant in the future as well as supporting their families economically. Generally, each participant had some dream to fulfill by buying some property or supporting family or the needy after becoming economically stable. This was an interesting finding because women are viewed as people who really enjoy being supported by men in the
family. This could be translated as reversing the roles of women and men in society. In addition, it is bringing women to the level of teamworking with men at family level. Many people believe that two are better than one and this is true if both the woman and the man of the house earn income.

Loise Mkubwa, a key informant participant was certain that armed with the relevant skills and good paying jobs, young Maasai women would be able to improve the gender gap in earning. She stated:

I am a good example of how educating women benefits them and their families. I also think my daughters have taken after me. I am a mother of three sons and two daughters. I am also a business woman and my husband and I have bought large tracks of land in Kajiado. I have been partnering with my husband in buying this property. At times, my business earns me good money and I support the family economically. I do not mind that my husband should be the one doing it if we follow our culture. I would say we both earn. Also, my daughters have good salaries. I at times know they spent a lot of money on me and their father than my sons. This is my personal experience. Although my sons are working too, my daughters earn better and have devised other ways of getting money. They also sell the Maasai artworks at Maasai market. In this way, I would say my daughters have succeeded in reversing the gender gap in earning. Or maybe I feel that way because they are always with me and I know what they are doing while my sons, though in good jobs, do not tell me much of what they are doing. (Loise, Personal Communication, April 10, 2010)

Data from another key informant, the DEO, supported the position that being in school was economically empowering women who in turn would improve their ability to invest in all children without discrimination. He stated:

About education and economic hardships faced by students in Kajiado, I have been handling many issues in education. Poverty is one of the challenges facing families. Students especially girls do not attend school as required due to non-payment of school fees. I always make sure that the youth; especially girls get economic support from the government and other donor agencies working in the district. For the last 3 years I have worked in this office, I can assure you there is not a single month that passes without seeing a couple of children coming to ask for economic assistance to pay school fees. The reasons they give are many but some of them are:
my family is poor, we do not have money at home and my father wants me to leave school either to work or get married mostly the girls. It is unfortunate that poor parents tend to discriminate children especially girls due to economic hardships. Therefore, I want to invest in all my children esp. in the education of girls which is the most reliable route for them out of poverty. (The DEO, Personal Communication, April 3, 2010)

In order to understand the economic challenge of financing high school education by parents in Kenya, sharing information on the cost of supporting a high school student per year is important. The cost remains prohibitive to poor Kenyan parents despite the government’s heavy subsidies to education at all levels. Keeping a child in school for a full term without being sent home for fees and other school levies cost up to Ksh. 60,000 ($750) per year (Martim, 2008). Both direct and indirect costs of supporting children in school are prohibitive to poor parents. Table 7 below shows some estimated costs that Kenyan parents have to grapple with in order to keep their children in school for a full year. Table 7 below is a typical example of the estimated cost of supporting a single student in high school.
Table 7: Estimated Direct and Indirect Cost of Education by Parents per Child per Year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Cost in $</th>
<th>Direct Cost per yr in $</th>
<th>Indirect Cost per yr in $</th>
<th>Total Expenditure per yr in $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School fees</td>
<td>Tuition fees $750</td>
<td>Paying for holiday tuition $60</td>
<td>$810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical facilities &amp; equipment</td>
<td>Classrooms, printers, computers, bathrooms, desks &amp; chairs $50</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stationary &amp; supplies</td>
<td>books, pens, box/bag, chalk, calculators, $50</td>
<td>Reading table &amp; chair, books, pens $10</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Uniform, shoes, beddings $40</td>
<td>Home clothes and shoes $30</td>
<td>$70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School transport</td>
<td>To and from school $40</td>
<td>To holiday tuition or public library $10</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocket money</td>
<td>Toiletries, outing and trips in school $20</td>
<td>Toiletries and visiting friends $10</td>
<td>$30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>School food $30</td>
<td>Home food $15</td>
<td>$45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>Doctor’s fee &amp; medication $20</td>
<td>Doctor’s fee &amp; medication $20</td>
<td>$40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel &amp; lighting</td>
<td>Paid in tuition fees</td>
<td>Electricity /Kerosene $50</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$205</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1205</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Data from Ministry of Education, 2008*

Table 7 above displays some estimates of the total direct and indirect cost of educating a single child at high school in Kenya. The cost of retaining one student in secondary (high) school is Ksh. 60,000 ($750) per year (Martim, 2008). In my own view, Kenyan parents in a rural community who majorly depend on subsistence farming and livestock earns less than Ksh. 120,000 ($1500) per year. For those parents from the Maasai community who heavily depend on livestock, their earning is more
often than not affected by constant droughts and may earn only $1000 per year. This shows how inadequate a parent’s earnings may be when he or she has only one or two children in high school.

Findings from the key informants indicated that many young Maasai women depended on scholarships to pay for their school fees. Gladys, one of the key informants stated:

I also help in a group named Maasai Women Education and Empowerment Program (MWEEP and I am the treasurer. Ours is a very small organization but we are interested in bettering ourselves as members and other people in the villages and schools. We do not have big moneys but whatever we have we either use in organizing skills training for women on certain issues of our concern. We pay school fees or fund some small projects which we think could make a difference in our community. So far, we pay school fees for some young women in several secondary schools in our area. Paying school fees is a big challenge to parents here in Kajiado and many young people in school come for assistance from MWEEP. (Gladys, Personal Communication, May 21, 2010)

Findings from documents collected from the ministry of education offices in Nairobi also supported that paying school fees for poor parents was not easy. These documents indicated that both the direct and indirect cost of secondary school for Kenya parents have a high chance of forcing their children out of school especially daughters (Republic of Kenya, 2006). Poverty is a major course of inability to pay school fees because of the cost sharing policy which dates back to 1886 (Kiveu & Mayio, 2008). Cost sharing is a policy where the Kenyan government on one hand and the households and communities on the other share the responsibilities of financing education. The challenge of cost sharing in Kenyan secondary (high) schools as discussed by several studies greatly effects poor households in the country (Kiveu & Mayio, 2008). The findings by Kiveu and Mayio (2008) are no different with this study
because the challenge of cost sharing was mentioned as a barrier to the education of young Maasai women as well.

The poor households cannot afford the cost of education which is also unaffordable to the middle income households (Martim, 2008). Consequently, schools are registering high dropouts and repetition rates among students. Also, this has resulted to unequal access, decreased quality of education and alarming wastage within the education system (Pontefract & Hardman, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 1999). Based on the cost sharing policy discussed above, school appears to perpetuate economic disparities rather than to bridge them.

More documents analyzed revealed that through school, young Maasai women wanted to improve their economic abilities. These participants did not wish to stop their education before getting to the university because they also recognized the dangers of having limited skills as women. According to Diamanka and Godwyll (2008), “With limited skills and knowledge, women are confined to unfriendly market structures that place them in low-paying jobs” (p. 116). Only economically sound people find time and reason to fully participate in social and political endeavors. However, the worth of their participation could only be of more value if guided and directed by a strong sense of knowledge and skills base. However, this study findings indicate that young women needed economic support in order to complete school because the majority were from poor households and the government was also reducing its share of support to public education.
A hundred percent (100%) of the high school participants interviewed in this study were in school in order to improve their economic abilities especially in order to secure good jobs. They strongly wished to be able to contribute to family finances. Mary, Agnes and Kasandra were tired of their own mothers’ economic status. None of these women (their mothers) could afford to buy themselves a pair of shoes. They had to borrow money all the time and this was not right according to the study participants. Mary’s statement captures the naked truth about her mothers’ economic instability:

My own mother cannot afford one hundred shillings (KSh. 100, which is equivalent to $1.25) of her own unless she is given by someone. This is not fair for an adult who is in-charge of young children like her. Is this what I want for myself? I have to look for a way out. (Mary Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

In their expedition to change this state of affairs, young Maasai women did not want to face the same economic instability their mothers were facing. For this reason, their greatest hope was to acquire good educational skills, become economically empowered and take up some economic responsibilities for self and others in the family.

Young Maasai women were in school in order to learn how to start or to join some income generating activities. They wanted to sharpen their skills in becoming businesswomen, running women self-help groups, starting credit facilities for women, make use of credit facilities from banks, and get bank loans, as steps towards economic empowerment (Burn, 2005; Kibera, 2007; Republic of Kenya, 2007). Other economic ideas mentioned by participants were: starting merry-go-rounds (taking turns in contributing money within a group) with their peers, joining a savings sacco, joining
employees saving unions, personal savings, and rural and community development agencies.

All young Maasai women affirmed in one voice that, “I am in school to fulfill my academic and economic dreams.” This could be attributed to the fact that everybody has some dreams in life which he or she always tries to make into reality. In addition, the school motto, “Beyond the horizons,” was calling upon these young women to go beyond the horizons. A good example of showing that being in school was fulfilling personal dreams was narrated by Agnes:

Being in school for me is a chance of a lifetime. I feel privileged and honored to be here. This is because many young women like me would like to get the same opportunity but are not able either because of poverty or other reasons. Although I come from a poor family, I have a chance, which may not be there for other young women from poor families. I know some of my age mates who are already married and others given away for employment as house helps. I have to study hard in order to support myself and other needy children in the future. (Agnes Personal Communication, May 10, 2010)

Though Agnes’ response did not explain what she planned to do to help her friends who were not privileged like herself, she equated being in school to being privileged. She shows the importance of supporting young people while in school in order to improve on their future. It can be seen that while some young Maasai women were in school, their counterparts at home got married because their parents could not afford the school levies. Getting married due to lack of school levies ties into girls’ lower participation in education. As explained by the gender policy in education, the government is working towards, “providing grants to some girls’ schools and is currently implementing an affirmative component in award of bursaries [scholarships] to female students” (Republic of Kenya, 2007, p. 13).
However, from the above discussion, it is clear that young women from economically disempowered families are still easily dropping out of school due to lack of small charges such as school books, activity fees, and other school levies. The fact that some young Maasai women who are not even through with school have already discovered that is what they want to concentrate on in future—supporting needy students implies that there is need for support. In Africa, it is known that, “girls remain home because poverty, gender disparity as well as the expectation that they will help their mothers with chores as preparation for marriage” (Diamanka & Godwyll, 2008, p. 13; UNESCO, 2004).

Parents in the Maasai community invest in their children especially males with the hope that the children will reciprocate at a later date. That is explained by Mary, who saw herself as being special and treasured by her parents. She says:

Yes. My parents treasure me and they always want the best for me. That is why they pay so much for me in order to become economically independent later in life. Also, my parents bank on me for economic support at their old age. If I play around in school, I will disappoint them badly. (Mary Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

Although being in school was personal to Mary, she was able to see how it was linked to other people’s sacrifice especially her parents. Viewing children as their future support for parents in not something new. However, in Mary’s case, it is new because her parents are banking on a female child. Why did these parents change the cultural trend of investing in sons?
The most important reason why being in school was associated with preparing oneself for economic stability was because other socio-economic ways had proved unreliable. For example, Mary was ready to sponsor needy students stating:

> It is my passion to sponsor needy children in school. But, I need a stable and reliable source of income. Depending on livestock here in Kajiado is risky because of long spells of drought which ‘wipes’ them away. I want to preach gender equity in education by providing support to all children both male and female. All children have a right to education. (Mary’s Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

It is important to note that all school participants appear to be cognizant of their gender position in society. This kind of awareness alters their view of power in that they may not view themselves (women) as leaders. Already, they seem to be fully soaked with the stereotype that only men can lead in society. For instance, those participants who were candidates to early marriage clearly said that their parents did not respect their rights as children. Children are not wives, they need to be protected and retained in school till completion. Consequently, they were in school because they wanted to become advocates for the right to education, and become campaigners against early marriage and child abuse. Although these young women were not policy makers, they were aware of their problems, which were also recognized by the gender policy in education advocating for, “Girls’ education among parents and communities, sensitizing them against negative socio-cultural practices and facilitating re-entry of girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy and early marriage” (Republic of Kenya, 2007, p. 14).

About 70% of the participants in this study viewed being in school as preparing women to make economic decisions. They would acquire, allocate, buy and sell assets.
Women with economic power are assertive. Earning an income liberates them from rigid traditional roles that keep them tied down to only those roles which identify and define them as women in a patriarchal society (Sachs, 2005). For example, Ann was convinced that being in school was equivalent to becoming economically stable and making sound economic decisions:

I am becoming prepared for economic leadership. It also means in a few years to come, women will not only occupy major positions in the country but run international organizations and banks. Today, I have seen women doctors, lawyers, engineers and others who are also investing in business. These women are qualified in their respective sectors including politics and economics. This is hard to say but women are replacing men in major positions in companies and organizations which were formerly dominated by men. Is society ready for that? (Ann Personal Communication, April 20, 2010)

Although women are becoming economically liberated and others running international organizations, they are paying a high price. According to Hudson-Weems (1997), gender and power relations in society are still rigid, but women are traversing gender boundaries. Women in the Maasai community especially the educated ones are not left behind. They are no longer accepting to only do the milking and cooking in the kitchen while men earn and handle the money. Ann hoped the change will be well accommodated:

We are in school to better our economic stand. But, I have heard that in some homes, women are ostracized by husbands and relatives when they earn more money or get promoted to higher positions at work. They are accused of prostitution and infidelity. Now that a few women are getting university education and will surely be qualified for big positions at work, what is the problem? Are some people happy that many women in the villages are poor and cannot afford food during drought period? (Ann Personal Communication, April 20, 2010)
Ann’s response provides a clue that women are now getting to higher positions but they have to fight it out because it is a new phenomenon. Why would a husband or a relative be annoyed that the wife is earning much money? This discussion points to the fact that mass public education needs to be carried out to make society aware of how it defines and identifies people. Since social and traditional roles are changing for both women and men, the old rigid gender roles need to be revised. In otherwords, rigid traditional roles are being challenged in practice.

Pelesa on the other hand stated that being in school was a chance to fulfill her dreams of becoming a successful person in life and a social worker:

I have an opportunity in life to live my dreams. It means I have an opportunity to drive a good car, construct my own house, bring up a good family, educate my children, and become whatever I want in life. I have a chance to pursue dream career—social worker. I want to be looking pretty and eating healthy. Actually, it makes me feel that I have the potential to be like all the successful people in the world. That is what I want—success. (Pelesa, Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

Pelesa wants basic things such as a car, shelter over her head, a family, a healthy lifestyle, and a career. Her discussion makes it clear that we are allowed to dream because imaginations have a high chance of becoming a reality some day. As young people grow up, they are encouraged to dream about their careers and their future life in general because it gives them a sense of hope and direction. It is said that dreamers have the drive, the courage, and the creativity to see beyond “what is” and “what can be” for them and for others. According to Ogola (1999), the course of the world is changed by those who dare to dream.
Yet for Catherine being in school means struggling to free oneself from economic dependency:

Struggling to succeed and do what it takes lest I lose this golden chance. I cannot afford failing my examinations because I will not manage to support my higher education as I am dreaming of. My fear is failure. If I have come this far, I must do my best to succeed and not to let so many people down including myself and my peers if I fail. I do not want to remain a beggar. I hate becoming a poor woman and waiting to stretch my hand all the time I need money. (Catherine Personal Communication, May 13, 2010)

Gladys was not only getting the qualifications for college in order to prepare herself for the world of work, but, she hoped to escape begging for money. “I want to be able to navigate whichever field I want and I want to learn different languages. I do not want to be limited by language when looking for a job. I want to be marketable” (Gladys, Personal Communication, May 21, 2010). Ann learned that, “Education is a tool that I can use to better my life, to get a good job in the future and to re-trace my road to success” (Ann personal communication, April 20, 2010). Agnes was sure that being highly skilled would help her get a good job and make her economically empowered, “if I get my education and get a good job, I will be able to do many things with or without a helping hand” (Agnes personal communication, May 10, 2010).

A hundred percent (100%) of the participants were unsatisfied with their mothers’ economic positions in the family and in society. “If one knows you cannot do without him or her, there is a tendency for him or her ‘feeling good’ about it. At times, the sole provider may suffer from ‘donor fatigue’” (Catherine, personal communication, May 13, 2010). Based on Catherine’s views, schooling for women helps them escape the challenges of depending on other people economically. She was
of the opinion that there is a danger of married women remaining solely dependent on the finances of their husbands.

Responding to the problem of ‘donor fatigue,’ theory, Ann stated:

I am in school because I want to become a solution to the economic challenges in my family. Rather, I want to be depended on by others because the economy is bad. I can see how my parents struggle to educate us. I am sure it is not easy for only one person to be the sole provider in a home. Through education, I want to become a team player in family economics. I want to buy land for my family, and pay school fees for my own children. If my husband has more money, we can do other projects for the family. (Ann, Personal Communication, April, 20, 2010)

Hannah stated that being in school for her was “one way to improve my economic opportunities as a woman” (Hannah, personal communication, April 16, 2010). Although Hannah was from a poor background, she had hoped that school would give her the means to come out of it:

I do not want to become like other village women who cannot afford to buy themselves anything unless they borrow or are given by husband, friend or relative. I want to buy salt, sugar and other kitchen stuff without much trouble. I do not want to burn charcoal or wash other people’s clothes to earn money. I want to be going to work each day and come home in the evening. I love that. I will escape poverty this way. Not taking care of cattle in the forest. I love cows but they do not belong to women. I cannot sell them as I wish. I am banking on the skills acquired here in school and in the University for Employment. (Hannah, personal communication, April 16, 2010)

Although Hannah’s hope of acquiring a job after school is great, gender inequality in the educational institutions and the job market could bar her from her goal. She did not want to do petty jobs for a living. The main cause of gender inequality—power relations between women and men—could discourage females from excelling based on their potential (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). Salome remembered:
Women in my community lack not only economic ability. They also lack voice. They remain silent and implement whichever decisions husbands (men) make. This is because they lack economic ability to change things. I do not want to be in this position. I want to make economic decisions. (Salome personal communication, May 25, 2010)

Salome’s argument outlines the economic predicaments of women in general and in families. Burns (2005) statement supports economic disability in women which fuels abusive marriages. “Every woman thinking of leaving an abusive marriage worries about finances. Women find themselves forced back into abusive marriages because they can’t earn a living” (p. 27).

Although Burns (2005) seems to amplify economic reasons as a major factor that keeps women in abusive marriages, several other reasons that are political and social tie women down too. In the Kenya society for example, how do we explain the stigma associated with remaining unmarried or getting a divorce? Also, both educated and uneducated women tend to retain abusive marriages for the sake of their children. As such, some women value cushioning their children socially and economically in a family with a mother and a father.

Educated women, according to Cassandra, are in a position to get a job and respect from their husbands and society at the same time. She said:

I have seen for myself that those women who are educated and earning a salary are not mistreated by their husbands. I am in school because as a woman I want to understand things faster, I have not given in to early marriage, I have not got into unwanted pregnancy, I dress better than those who have never been to school. (Kasandra personal communication, May 8, 2010)

In Separ’s opinion, school meant acquiring skills that made women employable and able to supplement the family’s income:
They are respected because they are also viewed as people who can provide economic support in the family. Such women do not need to borrow money all the time. I think those who give money all the time also get tired and other times they get annoyed due to lack of it. (Separ Personal Communication, May 3, 2010)

Basically, participants viewed education as a vehicle to economic advancement. As such, they associated being in school with a means of securing a future with some level of economic power and freedom. Owing to the fact that majority of the participants came from poor backgrounds, the cost of being in school for them was high. Their families struggled to keep them in school. Sara agreed that her family was economically challenged. She said, “My parents do not have salaried jobs and therefore we depend on cows and subsistence farming for our economic needs. With the current erratic climate changes, things are not good” (Sara Personal Communication, April 13, 2010).

Therefore, being in school was a struggle to both parents and children. The cost of education was weighing heavily on families and well-wishers.

The cost of financing secondary school education in Kenya by the central government is around 7-10% (Republic of Kenya, 2008). This share of the cost of education and training is still higher than any other sector in the country. It includes giving bursaries to needy students in high school who come from poor backgrounds. Interestingly, this does not seem to have the best trickledown effect as explained by Veronica. She said:

Each year, I apply for bursary because my parents are not able to pay my school fees on time. I have explained my situation to the school principal and she has even attached notes on my application forms to show how desperate my situation is. But, I have never received any bursary. At least by the grace of God I am in the 12\textsuperscript{th} Grade in high school. It has not been easy but I can see I will complete school. However, I still have much debt to pay. (Veronica personal communication, May 23, 2010)
Due to the challenge highlighted above, other bodies which participate in financing education in Kajiado District include: the local government, private sector, churches, organizations, private sector, NGOs, households, communities and external donors. It is an affirmation that the cost of education in the country calls for collaboration and partnership with stakeholders (Republic of Kenya, 2006).

**Cost of Education**

Collaboration and partnership in meeting the cost of education is a policy which helps both the government and the stakeholders. If such an organization could be well organized, “it has a chance of making the attainment of the overall goal of EFA by 2015” (Republic of Kenya, 2006, p. 13). On the other hand, without a working and effective partnership on financing education, it will be difficult to address the problems of poor access, inequality, low quality and the current heavy household financial burden. If this is not well exploited, Kenyan system of education risks facing challenges such as wastage and uncontained cost of education and training. Targeting the most needy students is important because their chances of advancing in education are limited.

Some of the document exploring gender, education, and economic empowerment state that women comprise 70% of the world’s poor and link this state of affairs to low levels of education in this group (Diamanka & Godwyll, 2008). Further, these authors continue to argue that poverty is more than lack of education, shelter and food. Poor people in society are more likely to be more vulnerable and often treated badly by social and state institutions and excluded from having any say and power in
any of these institutions. My participants witnessed this vulnerability as well in their lives. Like in other parts of the world, African women and Maasai women in particular are the most affected by poverty compared to men.

Consequently, this study findings indicate that parents and other stakeholders were teams working to funding education. The findings concur with the notion of partnership and collaboration by the government in gender and in education related issues (Republic of Kenya, 2007). In order to achieve gender parity in education, the Kenya government partners with, “United Nations (UN) agencies, development partners, other government ministries, local authorities, international and local NGOs, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, local communities, parents, boys and girls” (Republic of Kenya, 2007, p. 5).

**Political Reasons**

Young Maasai women were in school to bridge the gender gap in community leadership and in the political arena. This is what I refer in this study as political empowerment. By this they were sure of reducing the historical gender imbalance in decision-making and in politics in their community and in the country. There is a common belief that, working class people seek their rights and political representation with success. Therefore, being in school for these young Maasai women was making more sense to them if it was helping them to get empowered in these four areas. “We are in school because we want to increase our political standing in many things. Educated women are accepted as community leaders. This is not the case with other women who have never attended school” (Mary personal communication, May…2010).
For instance, Pelesa stated that as a leader (compound prefect) in school, she was able to command much respect from her peers in and outside school. Although she had the perception that men frowned on women’s leadership in her community, one “Mzee” (respectful name used to refer to old men in Kiswahili) from her village referred to her as a leader. She said:

There is an old man from home who came here in school to visit her daughter (my classmate) during the school visiting day. As the compound prefect, I was in-charge of supervising the school compound after the visiting. I did not want anybody to leave the place in a mess. As a result, I made an announcement before the parents left that all students were required to clean up before leaving the field where they were entertaining their visitors. The students were so cooperative and the clearing up was done immediately and the compound was left very clean as the visitors left. When school closed and I went home, one old man met me at the shopping centre. He greeted me and told his friends that I am a great leader in my school. (Pelesa personal communication, May 12, 2010)

To his friends, the Mzee stated about Pelesa:

She is a great leader. She is so brave and fearless. She is very eloquent in English and commands other students to clean the school compound. All the students obey her. She is very bold just like a boy. (Pelesa personal communication about old man, May 12, 2010)

Relating the comment, “bold just like a boy” mentioned above about Pelesa to the theory of Africana womanism, the tendency to associate many positive characteristics such as being brave, boldness, and courage with men is oppressive (Mikell, 1997).

When asked to comment about the episode, Pelesa confessed:

On my part, I had forgotten all about school issues. I was so surprised by the old man telling his other male friends that I am a great leader in school. I did not think that was so important until he said it. I see myself as a potential leader in my community. (Pelesa personal communication, May 12, 2010)

In this sense, being in school is a means of molding young women like Pelesa into great leaders. Pelesa was eager to acquire her education. She was also given the
responsibility of leading her peers as a dining hall captain. As such, she proved herself as a strong female leader. In this case, education serves as a means to achieve leadership prowess. However, in real life, do women always get leadership positions?

Being in school by young Maasai women in Kajiado was associated with increasing access to resources, services and rights by law and customs to women. Consequently, data from policy documents revealed that education was a basic human right in Kenya that every Kenyan child should enjoy (Republic of Kenya, 2005). Also, 100% of the high school participants supported the idea that education was their right and being in school for them was affirming that right. Consequently, they hoped to use their educationally empowered selves to improve their ability to acquire resources.

Some of the legal documents that are used to support children’s right to education, which Kenya is a signatory include: the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of Children (1989), and the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979). In Kenya for example, the basis of providing free education at primary education and offering many scholarships to the needy students at high schools is in support of the children’s right to education.

Documents collected from the Ministry of Education offices in Nairobi supported education as a legal and political right to all Kenyans. The Kenyan government is committed to attaining gender equality as per the national and international legal and policy documents (Republic of Kenya, 2007). This policy document states:
The Kenyan government is also a signatory to international protocols relating to education and human rights of women and girls, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), Convention on the elimination of all Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW] (1979), Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC] (1989), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on EFA (2000), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as Goals of the African Union. (p. 2)

The above named document are connected to education in that they all campaign for the elimination of discriminationatory policies, calling for closing gender and regional gaps in education. Therefore, participants in this study were in school to enjoy their right to education as demanded by CEDAW, CRC, EFA, and MDGs policies.

More data from policy documents supported the idea that education is a right and is a responsibility which is in the hands of both the government and parents since 2001 through an Act by the parliament. According to Republic of Kenya (2005), “The Act promotes equal educational opportunities for both girls and boys” (p. 17). Therefore, being in school for the young Maasai women was not only to their own advantage but an expectation and a need that all countries are called upon to fulfill for development purposes. According to development experts, countries which invest in educating their women for social equity also reap the benefit of development (Sacks, 2005; Abdi & Cleghorn, 2005; Kiveu & Mayio, 2008).

From the interviews with the high school participants, they felt that they would acquire more resources such as land, cattle, and credit facilities if the law and customs were tilted in their favor. Specifically, Pelesa’s voice exemplifies the case of young women owning property with a legal and cultural customs backup. She stated:

We need to question those cultural customs which deny women the right to property ownership such that even when a woman legally buys land, it has to
bear her husband’s name or so. Now that we hope to purchase our own property, should we still follow the same trend? Then, why are we educated and why do we think we are empowered as women? The law need to see all people as equal and if you own something legally, then no one should put it otherwise. Also, customs should not tie us in accessing services such as higher education. Such beliefs such as that educated women are ‘spoilt’ and break their families should be a thing of the past. (Pelesa Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

Owning property and obtaining access to credit by all despite gender were political moves which participants felt were long overdue and needed to be addressed. Property ownership, access to credit facilities by women and others are the popular legal changes that many governments are adopting. Also, young woman participants supported the notion of making some cultural customs and practices illegal as long as they bared young girls from accessing educational services. Young Maasai women associated being in school with empowering them to increase the ability of girls to attend and stay in school. On their list of those practices which needed to be changed was child-labor, girls helping their parents when they were supposed to study or being subjected to early marriage rather than improving on their educational standing. This was well pronounced by Veronica in many rhetoric questions:

As educated women, we are in school so that we, in turn, can increase the ability for girls to attend and stay in school. Why are many girls doing much of domestic work even when they are required to study to better their future in school? School is the right place for them. Where else do they fit best? There is need to evoke the power of law when parents or anybody else wants to waste young women’s time out there doing what may not benefit them. I know it is good to help parents at home but what about girls’ future lives? By being in school, they are laying down the foundation of their future life. They should be assisted to go to college, get jobs and become useful persons in Kenya. Also, churches should be used as avenues to preach about the advantages of educating girls. I think if we all work together, we will reap the fruits in the near future. Furthermore, everybody is investing in women today. Why should we do otherwise? (Veronica Personal Communication, May 23, 2010)
These two participants sum up the views of high school participants by evoking the law to be firm in property ownership and improved access to education for women and girls. Being in school for them was looking at those legal and political loopholes which needed to be sealed in order to make their future more stable. The participants perceived school as the right place for young people especially women to plan for their future. After school, they would be assured of earning an income and moving up at work without job discrimination. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kenya (2008), both men and women have equal right to inherit the property of their parents. However, the revised constitution may take long to be effected because cultures die hard.

Basically, failing to insist on keeping Kenyan youth in school is equivalent to retaining high rates of youth unemployment. For instance, Merckx (2009) stated that 64% of unemployed persons in Kenya are youth. Further, Merckx’s study showed that only 1.5% of the unemployed youth have formal education beyond high school level and the remaining over 92% have no vocational or professional skills training and the majority is found in the rural parts of the country. However, some high school participants viewed their right to education in Kenya as being challenged by many twists and turns. A good example of a high school participant who believed that their right to education was good but problematic is Leah. She explained:

I think I am in school because it is my right to be here. Also, whenever I read about education, I see statistics about how many other children in other countries are in school. However, we lack very many things in such that it challenges the quality of our education. We need text books. The government does not provide them because parents are expected to buy. But, our parent are not even able to feed us, leave alone buying books. True, the government pays
the teachers for our own benefit. Also, the government buys only costly equipment like computers, printers and construction of computer and science laboratories. I do not know why it does not buy us books and our parents are not able to afford all the new books we need here in school. Are we really becoming competing with other young people on a global level? (Leah, Personal Communication, May 11, 2010)

Leah raises a very important point by placing herself and her country on the global map. No country is an island. We are in a globalized world where education has been marketed and commercialized as a commodity that has to be bought by parents for their school aged children. In order to fit in the global world, Kenyans have to follow the global education trends, otherwise there is the risk of being left behind. As Leah puts it, the country needs highly educated citizens who can represent Kenya in international educational forums. In order to perform well and compete favorably in buying and selling of goods and services in all sectors, good bargaining power and understanding of the market terms are required. This can only be done well not by foreigners but by highly educated and informed Kenyans.

Data from the key informants specifically from Gladys encouraged women to form and join women civil organizations. Gladys lamented:

Although women unions fight and enlighten women and the community on women education and rights, many women are not members because they are disco ranged by their husbands and male friends. Many men more often view women organizations as a threat to male power at home. Women need to be made aware that women organizations have nothing to do with fighting men. They are social justice movements. (Gladys, Personal Communication, May 21, 2010)

Loise Mkumbwa explained how some women organizations together with the government had jointly supported some of the services that schools in Kajiado District were enjoying:
The Kenyan government and FAWE have been very supportive of education in this district. Although parents have been called upon to support in some student needs such as textbooks, stationery and school uniform, the government and FAWE pays teachers’ salaries, gives bursaries to needy students and had just completed some computer laboratories at Oloolaiser High School in Kajiado and Baraka Girls, Kiserian. Although not all schools have benefited, we hope many more will be supported because our district is among the ones which were earmarked for educational support through the ASAL regions program and other funding agencies. (Loise Personal Communication, April 10, 2010)

The joint funding of school projects was quite important in helping schools economically. Many school facilities were too costly for parents and assistance was highly required.

From data gathered through focus group discussion, the participants agreed that the government spends money on education. However, they felt that the money was not enough. Text books and bursaries were singled out as some things which the government needed to reconsider for many students in Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School. Veronica gave a typical scenario as to why buying of textbooks for them as students was problematic and needed to be addressed:

We are asked to buy very many text books for each subject. Since we are about to sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE), we are required to buy revision books (sample questions papers for each subject examined) as well. The writers and the sellers have discovered we need these books and so they not only change them year after year, they have increased the prices so much. We cannot afford all of them. How then are we expected to get good grades while we lack these books? I envy those students who come from rich families. They have all the books. They do not like sharing their books with us. We only have to depend on the teachers’ notes. (Veronica personal communication, May 23, 2010)

In this discussion with group, Veronica’s views were the views of every member. The young Maasai women felt disadvantaged and let down by the government for not providing text books. All that these students were asking for was that the government
consider their poor situation in acquiring learning resources (textbooks). As stated earlier, lack of textbooks and writers and bookshop owners changing and escalating the prices year after year for the required textbooks was clearly erasing the young women’s education rights and turning the service to a reserve for the rich.

The focus group discussants acknowledged that needy students from poor households were sent home frequently and needed bursaries. Needy students by policy are entitled to government bursaries and tuition waivers in order to retain them in school (Republic of Kenya, 2007). Mary commented, “I have always filled those bursary forms but I have never been awarded anything. This is my fourth and final year now” (Mary Personal Communication, May 9, 2010). The same case applied to Kasandra and Hannah. While the policy aimed at supporting bright students from poor families, it was not clear on the indicators that would be used to determine the recipients. Mary and her friends believed that they were deserving cases, yet they were denied after tendering their applications.

Quoting from the gender policy on secondary school education, the government aims to, “4. Mobilize resources in ASALs to: a) expand and increase the number of boarding schools to support girls’ education; b) provision of houses for women teachers and laboratories for girls’ schools” (Republic of Kenya, 2007, p. 15). Since the gender policy pledges to assist and support young women from Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) such as Kajiado, how then can we explain about the cases of Mary, Kasandra, and Hannah? Based on their cases, it can be concluded that not all deserving cases benefit from the government bursary. This could be attributed to the cost sharing policy
and the declining rates of government expenditure on education in the recent years (Kiveu & Mayio, 2008). It is important to remember that children from poor families who experience poverty have a 20% lower chance of mastering school work compared to those from middle-class families (Rupert & Taylor, 2009).

Knowledge and skill acquisition makes people functionally literate (Abdi & Cleghorn, 2005). This was clearly echoed by the research participants when they explained some of their reasons for being in school. For instance, Veronica, who also viewed education as a right to all children held the view that:

Educated women are ready to give their children better life such as food, education and good advice and they know educating both boys and girls is the way forward. Education is a right for all the children. They know their rights and can question their parents or report them to children’s offices if they are not happy with things at home. (Veronica Personal Communication, May 23, 2010)

The idea that education is a human right in Kenya is real and there are many signs to depict this fact. Right now, Kenyan children are enjoying free primary education in public schools and plans are underway for making high school free as well (Republic of Kenya, 2005). As stated earlier, the government heavily subsidizes education coupled with awarding bursaries to many needy students in high schools in the country. Loans and bursaries are available for students in higher institutions of learning.

Documents collected from the ministry of education offices in Nairobi highlighted the question of gender equity in educational access in the country. Gender imbalance in education has been a major concern for the last 15 years but still remains elusive. Roto, Ongwenyi and Mugo (2009) assert that countering inequality should be a major concern of educational systems. The Kenyan government has done much with
support from other stakeholders. Much policy evidence that there is political will to
tackle gender imbalance in education is found in the *Gender Policy in Education*
(2007). This policy document clearly recognizes education as a key to development
(Republic of Kenya, 2007).

These same policy documents indicated that the Free Primary Education policy
in Kenya was a major landmark which accords “equal basic educational opportunities
to boys and girls, resulting in almost gender parity in primary school enrolment”
(Republic of Kenya, 2005, p. 17). In addition, the policy supports gender
mainstreaming to include the needs of both men and women in all areas of
development. Ensuring that women are well represented in school and in work places is
a sure way of sharpening their leadership abilities in society and in politics, where they
have the chance and ability provide sound advice when necessary. Gender sensitivity
in education and in the world of work is a key boost to women and girls’ ability to use
their educational skills and to positively take part and contribute to political ideas in
society.

**Emerging Theme: Lessons from Study Participants**

First and foremost, there appears to be a new crop of women being born in this
community which is neither traditional nor modern in terms of the word. However, in
interviewing this group of young women, several issues became clear that the young
women in this study clearly understood: a) their predicaments b) the connection
between gender, education, poverty, and culture c) they were seeking a different yet
traditional lifestyle. Consequently, becoming wives as well as working women seems to
be their goal d) leadership as ability to have a job, a family and service to community. Basically, they view becoming empowered through education as a powerful solution to their predicaments. In addition, their cry for gender equity in accessing opportunities in society is loud and clear. In other words, they are not seeking handouts from their community, the government, and NGOs. All they are asking for is being supported and guided towards self-reliance. In my view, the fact that my participants are focused to help their families and community is true evidence that, ‘When you educate a woman, you educate a community.’

**Summary**

In summary, this chapter presents participants’ meaning of being in school. The school experience had individualized meaning. In general, participants mentioned that education was a tool for empowerment. The young women had faith that after acquiring education, other factors such as social, educational (knowledge), economic, and political empowerment would be easy to achieve. For example, education has the ability to improve young women’s knowledge and skills. Consequently, their being in school was associated with building any of the five themes individually or jointly. Chapter seven below is a discussion of the impact of education to young women.
Chapter Seven: Education and Shaping Lives

Introduction

The seventh chapter discusses the data on how education shapes the lives of young Maasai women. The main idea of being in school could be summarized in one word, ‘empowerement.’ Participants talked about the kind of life they anticipated in future after graduating from high school and becoming stable economically.

Research Question Three: Impact of Education in the Lives of Maasai Girls

To shape in this case was used to mean: form, outline, figure, structure, profile, and contract the lives of the young Maasai women. Participants’ explanations implied how education was empowering them and what kind of life they anticipated in the future. The reality on the ground for Maasai women was: only housewives, majority have never been to school, lack knowledge and skills, not respected, lack of economic ability, and are subjected to oppressive cultural practices including FGM/C and early marriage.

Research question 3 focused on how young women are shaped by education and how it impacts on their future aspirations. Under this question, five themes emerged i) education as empowerment, ii) education for gender equity, iii) Saying yes to some and no to other factors that negatively influence women’s and girls’ education, but embracing some of the good traditions, iv) quests for being part of the solution, and v) embracing new opportunities. These themes are presented in Figure 12 below:
Figure 12: Impact of Education Among Young Maasai Women.

Source: Themes emanating from data for research question three

Figure 12 above shows the themes that emerged from research question three. The five themes clearly indicate that all the participants drawn specifically from high school students and focus group discussion viewed education as a tool for empowerment. Armed with education, the young women in this study had already started saying no to factors that were a hindrance to their education. They wanted to eliminate gender inequity in education, thus, accepting the fact that education is an empowering tool for them. Also, they wanted to become a solution to their own problems as well as being in a position to embrace new opportunities. As such, they were also expanding their opportunities in anticipation and hope for a better future.

“Saying Yes to Some and No to Others”

Education had impacted Maasai girls to a level that they had started to question their traditional practices which were a barrier to their education. On one hand, they
embraced those practices that they viewed as positive in their culture. On the other hand, they were saying no to those cultures that negatively influence education.

Responses for the theme were heavily drawn from interviews and focus group discussion. Participants in this study had come to the realization that they needed to shun away from those factors that were acting as a hindrance to their education. On the other hand, they were not opposed to those cultural norms that are positive in their community. Therefore, in avoiding those issues that were disruptive to their ability to access education, they had to begin viewing some traditional practices as harmful to them as women as well as contravening their human rights including viewing: i) Early marriage as unlawful even before the law, ii) Early Marriage and the Kenyan Law, iii) Early marriage as abuse of child rights, iv) Early marriage as a form of gender discrimination v) Early marriage as a major cause to the alarming gender gaps in schools, vi) Early marriage and FGM/C as a great health risk, viii) early marriage not as an economic gain as many researches portray, and ix) cultural norms. Generally, participants felt that the disadvantages of these factors associated with early marriage outweighed the advantages.

i) Unlawful even before the law

Ninety percent (90%) of the high school participants were opposed to both early marriage and FGM/C. According to them, these two practices were not only oppressive to women but were also unlawful according to the Kenyan law (Republic of Kenya Law Report, 2008). I will reproduce few examples to illustrate their opinions. Hannah together with her peers felt shortchanged that they had to helplessly be dependent on
their parents’ decision over issues that concerned their entire life such as education and marriage. According to them, this was unfair and oppressive, a view that is supported by Africana womanism (Brookfield, 2005; Mikell, 1997).

Rather, the desires of my participants were different. They wanted to see change in the society. They wanted to say no to cultural norms that subjected women to domination, inequality, and subjugation. For instance, they were in favor of delaying marriage in order to complete school. Hannah declared:

I do not want to take orders all my life. This is unfair. Rather, I want to finish my education first in order to secure my future. I also want to choose my marriage partner. My parents should only trust me and consent with my choices. They also can intervene only when they are so sure my decisions are wayward. (Hannah Personal Communication, April 16, 2010)

From this response, it is clear that young Maasai women were not happy with early marriage because it was unfair. It was stopping young women from reaching their educational apex compared to young men. On the contrary, they wanted to make their own decisions on who and when to marry.

Also, Kasandra supported the notion of delayed marriage because it was favorable to young women in school. In addition she suggested:

We need to be in a situation where our needs are considered, not the needs of our parents or societal expectations on us as young women. If we always do what our parents want, this is unfair and oppressive. It would be fair if we device ways and means of making each party satisfied. How can we strike a balance between completing school and not disgracing parents by having children out of wedlock? How can we harmonize things? I suggest that students, parents, and school authorities can bring that harmony, if they draw joined strategies. This could be of use to the three parties so that we all get the best out of it. (Kasandra, one of the high school participants, May 8, 2010)
As suggested by Kasandra, students, parents and teachers need to draw a common strategy which fits in the need of the three parties. Students wish to complete school. Parents want to marry their daughters off according to their culture. Teachers want good results from students in school. Team work by all the stakeholders to make the best out of the situation could be a good solution. In general, women are delaying marriage in order to complete school, go to college, and start working. Delaying marriage would allow one to mature and get to age 18, the legal age for marriage (Republic of Kenya Law Report, 2008). Also, young women would be in a position to choose their own marriage partners because they can easily negotiate with their parents about it.

**ii) Early Marriage and the Kenyan Law**

In order to ensure that they had humble time to complete their school, high school participants wanted the full force of law to take effect against those who married off their under-age daughters. According to the Kenyan marriage act, under Chapter 150 of the Kenyan law, a lawful marriage takes place when there are no lawful impediments to the marriage proposal. Also, before the marriage takes place, the couple must have sought the necessary consent (National Council for Law Reporting, 2008). Consent could be either from parents or the person getting married or any other person who may need to give authority and consent to the marriage.

Explaining the high school participants’ position on this, Pelesa noted:

According to the Maasai people, men (fathers) who have daughters have the responsibility of ensuring that they get married and on the ‘right’ time. This makes it tricky to wait till girls are 18 years, the legal age. Since early marriage disrupts school, we want the law to strictly be enforced to stipulate that any
marriage must take place only and only when girls are 18 years. Any less age should not be allowed and if it occurs, it should be punishable by law. (Pelesa personal communication, May 12, 2010)

Traditional and civil marriages must honor the legal age of marriage where both partners can give consent. This is because, before the court presides over a marriage, at least one of the two people getting married must have been residing within the district where the marriage will take place for at least 15 days before they qualify to receive a marriage certificate (National Council for Law Reporting, 2008). Also, each of the party getting married must be 18 years of age or else the underage person is required to seek consent in writing coupled with swearing an affidavit, after which the marriage is allowed to proceed.

In support of early marriage as an illegal venture, Leah added:

Yes, we want those who perpetuate early marriage be dealt with accordingly. There should be no corruption. Those who are do it to be answerable before the law. This will serve as deterrence to others. If all parents understand that they may go to jail for marrying off their daughters early, they will stop. Further, let all adults treat children with love and care, rather, than traumatizing them under early marriage. (Leah personal communication, May 11, 2010)

Corruption could be a huge hindrance to justice in the court of law in some countries. This should not happen as far as protecting children is concerned. Participants felt that the law offers a good solution to issues where power imbalance in society can easily result to oppression of the weak by the strong (UNICEF, 2001; Bayisenge, 2008).

iii) Early marriage as abuse of child rights

Early marriage as abuse if child rights robbing the victims their childhood. Other than the law supporting early marriage as illegal, the practice was viewed by young Maasai women as an abuse to children and their rights, which in turn robs the
victims their childhood life. For this reason, high school students, focus group discussants and the key informants who took part in this study vowed to do anything in their powers to ensure that other young girls would not be subjected to the practice.

This was best explained by Gladys, one of the key informants:

No, my daughter will never go through early marriage. She will grow to maturity. I cannot imagine the suffering and the pain of being treated and expected to behave like an adult, yet you are still a child. She will be free to play and study up to the highest level possible. She will make her own choice about when and who to marry. I do not want my own daughter to face any challenges as a child. It is tough. (Gladys, personal communication, May 21, 2010)

Also, a strong opposition against early marriage as abuse to child rights was captured by Veronica, one of the high school participants as presented below:

Children have their rights and they should be protected. I will never accept to give away my own daughter or even a relative for early marriage even if she gets pregnant. If she does, I will take care of the child for her to complete her education. It is very unfair to young girls because some do not even know how to take care of children. I will protect young girls because they have a right to grow as children without being exploited. (Veronica Personal Communication, May 23, 2010)

The idea of delaying marriage in order for young women to complete school and get ready to handle a family as adults was preferred. Viewing early marriage as abuse to child rights is also supported by many scholars dealing with women studies (Bayisenge, 2009; FAWE, 2003). The legal age for marriage is 18 (UNICEF, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2008). Culturally, parents marry off their daughters after circumcision, which is becoming problematic because some undergo this rite of passage as young as 8 years (Ole Sankan, 2007). Therefore, when marriage happens to young women or men before the age of 18, it is legally wrong under the human rights
Having children at a very tender age and especially before a woman turns 18 is not only a health risk but could lead to fatal results (Bayisenge, 2009; UNICEF, 2005).

iv) Viewing early marriage as a form of gender discrimination

Other than wanting the law to be used in protecting young women against early marriage, it was also associated with gender discrimination. Early marriage affects young women more than young men in the Maasai community. As such, it denies them a chance to pursue their educational dreams. Mary, one of the high school participants lamented about the gender discrimination involved:

Why are girls expected to marry as quickly as possible but not boys? I think our community applies double standards when it comes to the time to marry. Girls after Grade Eight or Grade 12 are expected to get married immediately. This makes them lose any further chance of proceeding with their education. In fact, the matter is treated with a lot of urgency. This is something common in the whole of Maasai community. But, boys do not get married early even after completing these levels of education and not one expects them to marry that quickly. They continue with school and college more than girls. Why does the community put so much difference? My advice to girls is that they must put their personal efforts in school. They must also stand their ground that they need to complete education. If not, they will not get far educationally. We need Maasai women graduates as role models. We need our female children to know they can get higher education too. (Mary Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

Gender discrimination applies where girls and boys or women and men are treated differently. In a patriarchal society, the male gender receives more favors than the female. For instance, the notion of expecting young Maasai women to get married at a premature age is unfair because it denies them, “the opportunity for personal development as well as their rights to full reproductive health and wellbeing, education, and participation in civic life” (Bayisenge, 2009, p. 1). According to Bayisenge (2009),
forcing young girls into marriage is unfair because they are not able to decide on the
timing when marriage occurs. They cannot make informed decisions over the same and
therefore, they only act in obedience and fear of adults which also denies them their
right to choice.

However, 10% of the participants interviewed were of a different opinion. For
instance, Nachipai felt that although early marriage was fair to young girls, there were
few cases of unwanted pregnancies which were a cause for alarm to parents. Also, she
argued that early marriage retained respect and obedience to parents (fathers) from
dughters. According to Nachipai:

Many girls are not happy with early marriage and its arrangements. But, parents
have a genuine reason to want their daughters married because they are the ones
who bear great shame when their daughters have children out of wedlock. Again, a marriage arrangement is the last thing your father does for you before you leave his compound. So, why not let him do it for you? I guess we only need to bring in a bit of change for us to feel involved. I suggest fathers should get us involved in the arrangements as early as possible rather than doing it all by themselves and without our consent. This way, we will be able to bargain over the choice of partners and when to get married. We will also ask for patience in order to complete school. This would be a win-win situation for both parties. Once the plans are over, girls cannot blame parents because they were party to the arrangements. Also, no one will accuse them of being disobedience. (Nachipai personal communication, May 4, 2010)

Based on Nachipai’s words, educating young women should not automatically result to
a change in cultural practices. Rather, parents and daughters need to negotiate. In
support of the idea that parents were justified to result to early marriage for their
daughters, Catherine stated:

Putting myself in the shoes of the parents, I have a tough responsibility. I have
to struggle each day to feed, clothe and house my children decently. Notwithstanding, I have to ensure I take them to school. With fees or without, each child must eat food each day. If I am a father of seven under this tough
Based on Catherine’s views, there appears to be a strong relationship between marriage and poverty. Therefore, parents dictate early marriage to their daughters because: they fear the shame that comes with having children out of wedlock. They also wish to shed some of the economic ‘burden’ on their shoulders in the family. Catherine supported the idea that young women in her community are discriminated against and they were learning how to refuse such unfair treatment in school. Catherine admitted:

Because of the way women are demeaned in my culture because of their skills which only put them around the homestead, I refuse to learn some of those cultural skills for women. I refuse to learn milking. I refuse to learn it because I am not good at only milking. I am learning new skills in school. I refuse to be described as just a Maasai woman who is good at milking. (Catherine personal communication, May 6, 2010)

Catherine’s response could be viewed as protesting to proof a point…to break the norms in order to be herself…to claim her capability of defining herself. Although it could be viewed as an identity crisis, she has the authority to re-define herself as an African woman (Hudson-Weems, 1998). She has the ability to re-create herself, thus, breaking the barriers of patriarchy and culture. In order to re-define selves, one has to go through a double conciseness as an African woman and as a Maasai woman as well. Also, Catherine’s protest is not only in milking, it is making a point that Maasai women are not only good at milking but in many more skills. Some Maasai women learn some skills but refuse to perform some duties to proof a point. They can only perform such duties when they feel it is necessary. Cultural resistance is one way of bringing social
change in society (Sachs, 2005). In this study, Catherine was a practical example of
cultural resistance by her decision to avoid milking.

The community can be in denial of her new skills from school and therefore
refusing to milk appears to be her retaliation to a society that defines her against her
will. The point that young women have to re-define self (Hudson-Weems (1998) is
supported by Mary. Mary admitted:

Through education, we want to unlearn accepting discrimination and be
encouraged to take part in all social activities. She suggested, Young women
learn to accept the discrimination and neglect early and they internalize it. They
do not take part in many things because they assume they will not be allowed to
participate. In school, we are encouraging young women to teamwork with
young men in economics, politics, and social issues. We are educating girls
because we want them to actively take part in society and become part of the
decision making process. (Mary personal communication, May 9, 2010)

Therefore, it is important to note that the young generation wants to delay
marriage and be involved in marriage arrangements. They also want to negotiate with
their parents on the same. They want to teamwork with men. Teamwork matches the
Africana womanism view that the theory involves men and women working together
for social justice (Hudson-Weems, 1997, Mikell, 1997). This implies that they want to
mix culture and modernity where both parties are consulted.

In addition, young women want their voices to be herd too in their education
and marriage because the voices of their fathers and relatives have been dominant for
too long and proved inadequate. Their wish to be involved in matters that concern
them is enough evidence that education is shaping them into decisions makers.
Education is empowering them to get involved in all those processes where women
have been sidelined, thus giving them ownership of their lives, and ability to make choices (Sen, 1999).

v) Barriers to Maasai girls’ education: Viewing early marriage as a major cause to the alarming gender gaps in schools

Together with the key informants, high schools participants were of the opinion that the educational consequences of early marriage were manifested in the alarming gender gaps in school in Kajiado and other pastoral districts in the country. Majority (70%) attended mixed or co-educational primary schools. Their experiences in primary school were that girls were very few in their former institutions. Among the challenges which they faced in this situation according to Ann were that they felt discriminated upon in school by their teachers and their male classmates. Ann stated:

Our classmates and teachers treat us differently. We feel that we do not matter and our ideas even the brightest of them are not considered. Our voices are swallowed by our male classmates who are the majority. Teachers do not give us any special attention and therefore we are always tempted to stay silent even in class. (Ann, Personal Communication, April, 20, 2010)

Being treated differently is not only frustrating but can be a reason for one to drop out of school. A minority group always acquires this feeling that they are in the wrong place (Kabeer, 2005; Freire, 1970).

Loise Mkubwa, one of the key informants in this study strongly supported the opinion of early marriage being treated as an illegal undertaking according to the Kenyan law. Also, she revealed that she was a member of a group which was campaigning against early marriage and FGM/C in Kajiado District under the support of FAWE. The group’s wish is for the two practices to be done away with because they
are barriers to Maasai girls’ education. Loise clearly expressed her sentiments by using her personal experience. She stated:

There is much pain associated with circumcision (FG/C). When young girls at the ages 8-14 went through this rite of passage, they were expected to get married. During my time, it was the norm and if it did not happen quickly people would start talking. Any delays would lead people to question. Today, we want girls to go to school. But, there are still some parts of Kajiado where going to school after circumcision is not automatic. In this places, it is true that FGM/C and early marriage happen at a time when girls are required to be in school. Under the guidance of FAWE, we are preaching against the practices to improve educational access for young Maasai women. (Loise personal communication, April 10, 2010)

It is important to note that only some parts of Kajiado are grappling with FGM/C and early marriage as a barrier to girls’ education. Again, participants had been molded by education in a way that made them start saying no to these practices. By viewing them as a challenge to education and health, ways and means of eliminating them are on top gear.

In addition, a document analyzed supported Loise views that early marriage and FGM/C were barriers to Maasai girls’ education. A document by Bayisenge (2009) asserts that early marriage denies young women not only a chance to grow physically, emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically, but to pursue their educational dreams.

On early marriage, Bayisenge (2009) wrote:

It is a barrier to girls’ education as they drop out of school to get married which impacts negatively on the community as a whole and on the wellbeing of future generation. This practice stands in direct conflict with the objectives of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); such as the promotion of basic education, fight against poverty, the prevention of HIV/AIDS and reduction of maternal mortality rate. (p. 1)
Bayisenge’s document amplifies and lengthens the list of those challenges that face communities which are tolerant to early marriage. According to Erulkar and Ayuka (2007), 25% of Kenyan adolescent girls are married before age 18 especially in rural areas, despite the minimum legal age of 18 for both men and women. If women are to be treated on a level ground with men, no aspect of their life should be ignored.

vi) Viewing early marriage and FGM/C as a great health risk

In this study, 100% of all the categories of participants (High school students, focus group discussants and key informants) were strongly against early marriage, viewing it as a health hazard and as child-abuse. They appeared to be aware of its many disadvantages than advantages. Both early marriage and FGM/C have a great potential of causing aggravated injuries and death to both the mother and the unborn child. Mary, a member of the focus group summed up their opinions:

While FGM/C could lead to profuse bleeding and permanent damage to ones’ reproductive system, the cutting tools could also be used to transmit diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Early marriage is a health risk to the victims because other than being a psychologically traumatic experience, it could cause some physical injuries to young women’s premature body. Such young girls give birth early and therefore their chance of having many more children is very high. At very young age, not many girls are aware of using contraception or negotiating for save sex. All these and many more are a huge risk. (Mary, one of the focus group members, May 9, 2010)

Mary’s response was negated by Nanchipai who reminded us that women of the older generations underwent all these experiences and are still looking strong. Although she did not deny the fact that some health risks are involved, she remarked:

I always look at my own mother who got married at age 12. She has seven children and she has taken care of more than that. She also eats well and looks stronger than today’s women who are always talking about health and education. I just wonder why these things are being made to look and sound so
dangerous while we are born of mothers who early marriage and FGM/C were reality to them. Again, if these traditions are that dangerous, why have they not been stopped completely and replaced by what is good for all women? Why is there more talking than action in providing alternatives? (Nachipai, one of the high school participants, May 4, 2010)

Based on Nanchipai’s views, it appears holding on to the traditional norms about marriage may not be as bad as we are being made to believe. She recognizes the many health challenges that are harmful to young women who are subjected the above mentioned cultural practices. However, she raises a very important point that although there is much campaign against some cultural practices, alternatives are not yet available to all women.

Therefore, Nanchipai critiques the government and the civil societies that preach change, but drag their feet in providing effective and affordable solutions. This means that although much advocacy is going on to stop practices such as FGM/C, there is lack of facilities to reinforce change. However, she recognizes that physical circumcision in girls has several health risks and injuries which could result to death (Boadu, 2000; UNICEF, 2001; Republic of Kenya, 2007; Erulkar & Ayuka, 2007).

A document collected during data collecting on early marriage by Bayisenge (2009) states that due to the challenges the practice poses to young women and the community, several strategies have been suggested in support of young women. Bayisenge (2009) suggests that communities need to:

Promote education of girls and using mass media to increase the awareness of the whole community about the consequences of early marriage on girls themselves, their family and on the community as a whole. (Bayisenge, 2009, p. i)
Saying no to early marriage by young women, parents, and the community is a strategy which allows young girls to concentrate on their education and training. Being in school serves to empower and to give them time to grow to maturity as mothers with less risk of diseases and complications (UNICEF, 2001). On the other hand, participants in this study recognized failing to promote education of girls would amount to a continuation of the same practices, where the alternatives being preferred by the government, the civil society and the international community are available to only the privileged few.

Pelesa, one of the focus group discussants suggested an alternative rite of passage in support of young women in order to shy away from those that were a health hazard. Pelesa stated:

Some of the cultural practices among the Maasai have outlived their usefulness. I have learned to single out those cultural practices in my community that are not helpful to me or to anybody. For example, I have learned that FGM/C, and early marriage are not good for young girls. Therefore, we need alternative rites of passage which are less harmful. We need to deconstruct the old one and construct new ways which are favorable and acceptable to us. May be we can try symbolic rites. (Pelesa Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

The young women in this study made it clear that they were not against or in collision with culture simply because they were getting educated. However, they recognize that harmful cultural practices need to be done away with for health and educational reasons as a solution to women’s woes and cries. There is evidence that physical circumcision in girls has several health risks (Boadu, 2000; UNICEF, 2001; Republic of Kenya, 2007; Erulkar & Ayuka, 2007; Bayisenge, 2009). Therefore, symbolic rites were preferred.
vii) *Early marriage as a major cause of marriage breaking-ups in society*

Data for this theme was purely from the focus group discussion. Hundred percent (100%) of these young women felt that that being underage was one of the reasons of breaking a marriage. According to this group, pre-mature brides find it difficult to cope with married life. Others are not yet out of their childhood behaviors and take marriage less serious because they are not yet fully aware of its importance. Ann gave an example of some of the difficulties young brides face in the hands of older bridegrooms who may even be their fathers’ ages. She narrated:

> Many young girls get married and do not even know how to cook. The older men who also do not see the need to let the young bride grow and learn get impatience and may result to beating the poor girls. If the girls get tired of it, she can easily leave or escape. This may the end of it. Ann, Personal Communication, April, 20, 2010)

In support of pre-maturity as a source of marriage breakups, Mary observed:

> Young girls find themselves in a new home, new environment and new responsibilities as married women. They find it difficult to cope as adult married women. Pregnancy, raising children, poor financial support and little knowledge of what to do in times of crises and poverty are some of the challenges they face. Also, older husbands die, leaving the poor little wife. As such, they may become abandoned or taken back to their homes by their husbands or family. (Mary Personal Communication, May 9, 2010)

Escaping from marriage as explained above implies breaking up or dissolving the marriage. The act of escaping or breaking a marriage based on age ties with Moore and Waite (1981) argument that age can be a strong factor in determining the stability of marriage between couples. When too young people are faced with the challenges associated with parenthood, they have higher chances of breaking up, divorce or dissolve the marriage (UNICEF, 2001; Bayisenge, 2009). In this study, education had
shaped young women to understand that they needed to stay away from early marriage, complete their school and acquire some form of employment. This would be useful in a more stable marriage. High divorce rates among young people, not older ones is a clear indication that they could have been ready to face parenthood at a later date in life successfully. Basically, this shows that very young girls are not ready for marriage because some cry, escape, traumatized and abused while others play outside with other children.

viii) *Early marriage not as an economic gain as many researches portray*

Participants in this study had come to a realization that bride wealth, which was a major factor in pushing young women to early marriage, was not an important and sustainable economic survival strategy. As such, parents forcing their daughters into early marriage were not helpful to them (Bayisenge, 2009; Erulkar & Ayuka, 2007; UNICEF, 2001; Boadu, 2000).

This opinion was well captured by Kasandra, one of the high school participants based on her own experience. She felt that early marriage did not provide any financial protection to young women or even their parents because whatever was given during marriage as bride wealth was shared by the guests during the celebrations. For instance, she captured best the perceptions of her peers by saying:

*I do not think getting married to a rich man makes you as a woman rich but having your own source of income is better. A woman and her children can still remain poor even when the husband has much wealth. Therefore, it depends from person to person. This is just an assumption. It does not always work that way. Getting married to a rich man may also mean becoming his ‘servant.’ Some rich men tend not to respect women because they think they married them because of riches. Others oppress women because they know women solely depend on them and they also say they paid many cows for them. Therefore,*
families should worry more about the education of their daughters as opposed to the economic status of their future partners. At least, education gives women the skills to look for a job and support their family economically as well. (Kasandra Personal Communication, May 8, 2010)

Kasandra’s response draws attention to the social practice that men have to always remain the sole providers in a family. She makes it clear that married women need to be economically empowered as well. This was supported by Salome and she added, “I need my economic independence. I do not want to always ask money to buy salt and other small items required in the kitchen” (Salome Personal Communication, May 25, 2010). A man economic security is not always equals to the wife’s economic security. Also, this kind of thinking promotes male domination over women, thus reproducing society.

In conclusion, all participants said no to early marriage in this study because they realized it was unlawful even before the law, the Kenyan law needs to put early marriage as unlawful, and viewing the practice of early marriage as abuse of child rights. In addition, participants claimed that early marriage was a form of gender discrimination which was responsible for alarming gender gaps in schools in Kajiado. Young Maasai women were certain that both early marriage and FGM/C were a great health risk to them and their future generations. Although many scholars claim that pastoral communities practice early marriage for economic gains (Bayisenge, 2009; Mulama, 2008; FAWE, 2001), young Maasai women in this study did not view it that way. This seemed true on the face value, but in reality, all animals die of drought leaving families empty handed. Therefore, participants felt that the disadvantages associated with early marriage were more than its advantages.
Education and Gender Equity

Responses for the theme: education and gender equity are drawn from interviews with the key informants who took part in this study, focus group discussion, and documents analyzed. The documents for this section were drawn from the Kenyan dailies, FAWE and Ministry of Education offices based in Nairobi. Data addressing this theme of education and gender equity exposed alarming gender gaps in schools in many parts of Kenya, Kajiado not being an exception. All participants (the focus group discussants and the key informants—the DEO) made it clear that schools in Kajiado District registered low enrollments for girls compared to boys in both primary and high schools. Also, the documents analyzed supported this idea, noting that much needed to be done in ASAL regions to ensure gender equity in schools. Equal access to education for both boys and girls is a step towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2000), as well as Education for All (UN, 2000).

All the focus group members agreed that there was gender inequality in school whereby over 50% of schools in their region were boys’ schools. Of those which are mixes (girls and boys—co-educational), girls are few in number. Catherine summed up the opinions of her peers about their (girls’) little numbers by acknowledging:

When I was in primary school, we were only three (3) girls in our final year class out of 34 students. We used to be referred to as the “Grade Eight triplets.” This was because no one identified us as different with different hopes and different aspirations. We were treated the same by teachers and by our peers in the class. All the school community could see in us is our similarity as girls. The same treatment was extended in the classroom practice by teachers where our silence was taken as a norm in some subjects. It did not matter if we were lost in a certain concept or not. We rarely asked questions because we felt marginalized, intimidated and inferior. We were “different.” Other times I would pray that I am not asked a question. Although we worked as a team and
we all made it to high school, I imagine if one of us tried to derail the group. This would have been disastrous because we were always acting the same. I am sure this would have been different if we were more in number in that class. (Catherine Personal communication, May 13, 2010)

Catherine’s response brings to fore the challenges of being a minority group in school and in the classroom. In highlighting these challenges, the participants makes the reader aware that other than facing out-of-school challenges such as early marriage and early pregnancy, their education was viewed as of low value in their communities (Mulama, 2005). They were also struggling with in-school-factors. The explanation shows the depth of gender inequality in schools exposed to them. However, they were becoming more and more aware of the phenomenon. Although the experience of being a minority in school was not good, their personal experiences were important. They learned to resist and survive by devising ways of improving the situation for future generations.

The District Education Officer Mr. Manyuira who was in the category of key informants also sustained that gender inequality in education in Kajiado District was widespread. But, he quickly noted that the government and other stakeholders were teaming up to improve the situation. In the discussion, he listed some of the initiatives that were already in place on improving the educational access for girls in the district. He stated:

As the DEO of this district, I am concerned and committed to solving the challenges facing the education sector. The government is committed to streamlining education in general and that of girls in particular in Kajiado. Some of the strategies we are employing in order to improve the educational access for girls are also of benefit to boys including: i) expanding boarding facilities, ii) introducing mobile schools especially because this is an ASAL region, iii) affirmative action in bursary allocation and university admission, and iv) appointment of qualified female teachers and education managers. We are also engendering the curriculum and making schools and teaching methods more
gender responsive. This district is unique in that FAWE, other organizations and the government support schools that are purely focused on reclaiming girls from early marriage, helping teenage mothers through school re-admission. (DEO Personal communication, April 3, 2010)

From the DEO’s response, much is happening to improve on educational access for gender equity in education. However, it appears like the initiatives still need time before their effects become fully realized.

Loise Mkubwa, one of the key informants who took part in this study supported the improvement of educational access for young women in Kajiado. She strongly believed that her networks were a credit to her being literate. During the interview, Loise acknowledged:

I am honored to be educated in a community where an overwhelming majority of women are not. As an educated woman from the Maasai community, my networks, privileges and benefits are as a result of my education. I managed to complete Grade Eight in the 1960s during the colonial times. I am not poor because I am a prominent business woman in Kajiado and in Nairobi. I am a pastor in my church at Isinya in Kajiado. Although I have no college degree, I am a student, taking a diploma in theology. My education has brought me many benefits that I only dreamed of when I was a young girl. I have toured many places and rubbed shoulders with some of the most interesting and prominent people in the nation (Kenya). I guess very few women who have never been to school have had this chance. (Loise Personal communication, April 10, 2010)

Although there are some people who are doing well in business world but have never been to school, they are few in number. This is because education empowers one with the courage and the drive to better their skills all the time. For instance, Loise at age 65 was a theology student. This was an inspiration not only to myself, but to other young women. This is evidence that education inspires women to pursue their educational dreams despite age. Hendrina, another key informants and an officer with FAWE added:
There is a huge gender gap in education although primary schools are doing better. All other levels have many issues because of the cost and many families are poor. Also, our Kenyan people still think that educating women is a waste of money because their capacity to learn is low while others believe women do not need education and power for their place is in the kitchen. Other issues that need to be managed properly include: sexual maturation, sanitary pads, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancies, early marriage and insensitive school environments. Girls especially those in high schools and colleges need to be encouraged to take science and mathematics. Convincing them that these careers are not for men only is taking too long. Maybe it has to do with the roles we assign to boys and girls at home. In other words, we are looking into all these challenges which we have grouped into three major categories. Those related to: physical environment, academic environment and social environment. (Hendrina, Personal Communication, May 30, 2010)

If these issues are handled properly, then we will soon talk of major success in education for all in the country. Also, we need both men and women to work together in developing the country. If women remain poorly educated, we will retain poverty in the country and the population of women is high. It is unimaginable how Kenya would change if everybody is self reliant.

According to a document collected from FAWE offices in Nairobi, girls are not only poorly represented in schools but their rate of dropping out is still high as explained below. According to FAWE (2006):

Kajiado District is among the regions in the country with low numbers of primary schools for the size and population of the district, low enrolment particularly for girls, and high dropout rates. Gender disparities continue to be a distinct feature of education in Kajiado because of the low value given to girls’ education, the importance of early marriages for girls and the demand for girls’ participation in household tasks. (p. 1)

The extract reproduced above emphasizes some of the challenges facing Kajiado District as far as girls’ education is concerned. Few primary schools in Kajiado is one of the reasons why gender equity in education is still an uphill task calling for action if the MDGs and EFA policies are to become a reality in Kenya by 2015 (UN, 2000).
A similar voice resounding that girls in Kajiado District are minimal in schools was echoed by a document by Penina Mulama, the executive director of Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). In this document, the executive director of FAWE gives a brief narrative about the FAWE Centres of Excellence (COE) as a strategy to increase the number of girls in schools from disadvantaged regions in Africa. Mulama (2005) states:

The objective of this intervention is to provide access to education to girls in disadvantaged areas as well as to ensure that once they are in school the gender constraints that can lead to their dropping out of school or poor performance are minimized or eliminated. The COE intervention consists of a holistic package that addresses constraints emanating from the community and the school. The package includes interventions targeting the parents, community leaders, and community members, the teachers, school managers, boys and girls, as well as ministry of education officials at the local, district, regional and national level.” (p. 11)

Mulama appears to support the DEO’s response that the government and other stakeholders were working hard to improve on educational access in ASAL regions in the country.

For instance, two documents analyzed: one from the Kenyan dailies and another from FAWE office in Nairobi indicated that, very few girls were graduating from high schools from certain regions in the country. According to Nation Correspondence (2010), under the topic Alarm raised over low number of girls tackling KCSE exams, two districts in North Eastern Province had no girls sitting the 2010 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination. According to this report, “Out of the 163 candidates sitting for the national examination in both Safi and Mandera West Districts this year (2010), only two are girls” (Nation Correspondence, 2010, p. 11). This state of
affairs illustrates that gender inequality in education is a major challenge in Kenya in some regions.

However, all is not lost. One day, gender equity in education will become a reality. Gender discrimination in some poor families is also being shaken away as explained in Naomi’s story below. Naomi wanted to become a veterinary doctor. She once witnessed her female friend leaving the country for further studies overseas. She narrated:

My friend Rachael Nailantei was going to the United States on a scholarship for further studies. What I remember most is what her parents said to her. They reminded her that her family and community were sending her to the United States for studies like ‘a young Maasai warrior’ being commissioned to war to defend and protect the community. Before she left, she was reminded: We are sending you not with a spear and a shield, but with a pen and paper. These are the ‘weapons’ we have for you. We do not know how you will fight, but you have to, somehow. We believe you can. You have demonstrated that to us with your good grades in school. What I liked most in this ceremony was the fact that Nailantei’s family believed in her and trusted her with success, just like they would with a boy. (Naomi personal communication, April 21, 2010)

In this response, Naomi brought out the social change and shift of mind-set taking place in the Maasai community as far as gender relations are concerned. This shift stipulates that girls are also important and can be party to defending their community too. In addition, the young girl is being sent to school not with dangerous weapons like spears and shields which stipulate violence. Parents use the symbolic expressions to tell the daughter that through being educated, she is supposed to bring success using peaceful means to resolve conflicts. In essence, a pen and paper are not weapons; but if they are, they would be classified as ‘very fragile.’ However, according to Naomi’s story, educated women and men are expected to use brains to think, jaws and mouth to
negotiate, and hands to write. These are viewed as string weapons to fight for their own rights and the rights of other people in her community.

Another document analyzed from the Ministry of Education buttressed that regional gender disparities were deep in ASAL regions and the government, community and civil society were implementing some workable solutions as stated by Republic of Kenya (2004):

The Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) which are inhabited by nomadic communities are historically characterized by low enrollments. The government, [community and civil society have] constructed 160 low cost boarding schools spread out in 12 ASAL districts to enhance access amongst nomadic communities. (p. 17)

Low cost boarding schools are one strategy that has been in use in Kenya to improve access to education by children from patroist communities. However, statistics show low school enrollment rates in ASAL regions in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2007; Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). Female enrollments are low despite the construction of low cost boarding schools that give both girls and boys improved access to education. This implies that despite many government’s, community’s, and civil society’s efforts in cash and in kind to block educational inequalities, the country is reaping poor results. Education in ASAL regions for women and girls is still problematic. Spending much money on improving women’s and girl-child education as well as making policy statements directed towards gender balance in education in Kenya seem to be yielding little fruit.

According to another document analyzed, a similar trend was taking shape in the refugee camps hosted in Garissa District in Kenya (Nation Correspondence, 2010).
Out of the 3, 201 candidates who were spread over in 50 schools in the two districts, only 903 were girls. This means that in these two pastoral districts, out of every 5 students who were sitting the national exam in 2010, only one was a girl. The education officer Mr. Hassan Farah lamented that parents were still not sending their daughters to school and this was attributed to: high cost of secondary education, poverty, cultural practices, early marriage, parent illiteracy, and negative attitude among members of the pastoralist community towards formal education. Based on Hassan Farah’s words, the challenge of gender inequality in education among pastoral communities in Kenya will continue if nothing is done to improve the situation. Therefore, there is need for concerted efforts in retaining young pastoral women in school.

In summary, data from both the key informant participants and the documents analyzed from FAWE Nairobi office, the Ministry of Education and newspapers supported that there were wide gender gaps in education in Kajiado and in ASAL regions in general. It was noted that much was being done to improve on educational access for girls and to improve on their representation in school. For instance, FAWE’s COE was a great strategy for increasing the number of school girls from disadvantaged regions especially ASAL. Due to the low enrollments, very few girls were graduating from high schools from certain regions in the country. As a result, much needs to be done in these regions in order to give way to gender equity in education. Equal access to education for both girls and boys is encouraged for the sake of equity, fairness and justice.
Education as Empowerment

Responses for the theme: education as empowerment, are majorly drawn from interviews and focus group discussion. The interviewees were high school students all from Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School. The focus group discussants composed of 5 members, drawn from the same high school participants. One hundred percent (100%) of the high school participants viewed education as a tool which was helping them to get empowered. From their own words, they were becoming more equipped with knowledge and skills to better their tomorrow socially and economically. Below are typical examples of some of the voice of high school participants on what they viewed education was shaping them to become. Ann shared:

I am in school today as a result of finding education important for my future life. I need a lot of money to cater for my needs. I belief what we want as young women is to get educated in order to acquire those job skills that employers want. I want to become financially stable in order to make financial contributions in my family. How will I survive if I cannot earn a single cent? (Ann Personal Communication, April 20, 2010)

In support of Ann’s point that there is need for young women to make a transition from school to employment, thus, solidifying their tomorrow economically. Similar sentiments were expressed by her friend Veronica who added:

Investing in young women is not a useless venture. It helps us to acquire jobs either by being employed or becoming self employed. For example, we need training in those skills needed in the job world. Employers need teachers, nurses, social workers and others. Some of us will also become business women. We need these skills because the people who seem to be doing well in my villages are in these kinds of jobs. Those who depend on farming only are in a lot of problems. Jobs seem to give better economic security due to severe droughts in our country. I guess a combination of career, business and or farming would pull many families out of poverty. (Veronicah Personal communication, May 23, 2010)
Veronicah associated skill acquisition to empowerment. Pelesa strongly supported her friends’ views. She went further to present her opinion on why she thought education was empowering women and the reason why she did not want to be left behind by narrating:

In my village, I have seen Mrs. Mladi who owns a computer training college in Magadi. She went to the university and she also studied abroad. When she came back, she got married and started working in Nairobi. Now, she has started her own computer training college around Lake Magadi. She is also sponsoring young and talented women and men from Magadi to study for free in this college. I see her as empowered because she is helping the community by supporting and developing the youth. I am sure she could not do all that if she was not educated. Therefore, I see her as a good example of how education is empowering women and men alike. If she can do that, I can also try and do something for my village as well. Maybe I can start a home for children. I know I can. (Pelesa Personal communication, May 12, 2010)

Pelesa’s response brought out the fact that investing in women’s education is not a waste of money and she gives an example of Mrs. Mladi who has already started a computer training college in Magadi, her rural home. Initiating a computer training college in her home village serves to buttress the saying that, “When you educate a woman, you educate a nation” (Basiyenge, 2009, p. 8). Pelesa herself thinks of starting a children’s home. All these ideas could be attributed to acquiring education, thus, becoming aware of the needs around one’s backyard. Education acts as an eye opener to new ideas, new solutions and new ways of doing things. A similar line of thought was shared by Hellen. When she started school, Hellen remembered:

I was always reading English story books and doing the school homework at home. I wanted to learn and develop many ideas. Today, I want to acquire much knowledge and build confidence in myself. For example, if I am invited to talk about something in my school or in my community, I want to have something important to say. I do not want to drop out of school due to marriage, pregnancy or lack of school fees. I want to complete my school and start working before I
think of marriage. I want to teach my community that when you educate a woman, you educate a nation. (Hellen Personal communication, May 15, 2010)

By talking about completing her school and acquiring a job before marriage, Hellen is talking about delaying marriage as a way of empowering female students. The idea of delaying marriage by girls connects with Africana womanism’s principle of asking women to become self-directing through its empowering agenda (Hudson-Weems, 1998). Also, this is tied in Hellen’s interest in having the ability to develop and share ideas with others, and making decisions concerning her own life. For instance, she has already decided not to drop out of school for whatever reason. Other participants from the high school category were interested in getting into politics in order to represent the women folks and their constituency in political affairs as the case of Hannah:

In fact, very few women are elected into politics positions in Kajiado District. We very well know that, “Asiyekuwepo na lake halipo.” The English version of the same proverb is, “out of sight, out of mind.” The literal meaning for this Kiswahili proverb is, the absent miss their share. Now that we are getting educated, I hope many of us will become interested in politics and policy making positions. The more we remain unrepresented, the more our region will be left behind. Those in parliament and other offices do not remember people like us. We need one of our own in order to voice our agenda in the parliament. (Hannah Personal communication, April 16, 2010)

As discussed by Hannah, educated citizens have a clear understanding of how their social and political systems of government work. They also understand what needs to be done to improve the situation at various levels of leadership. In addition, the educated get to participate in both local and national issues. They have the knowledge and the ability to voice their agenda for social change, which amounts to being empowered.
Naomi Shonko supported education as empowering women to join new and interesting careers. She stated:

I know many women want to become nurses, teachers, doctors and others. For me, I want to be in the beauty industry. I want to become miss world one day. I want to spend time encouraging young women to try other careers that are not common in our community. They just need to become aware of it. But, they need education. (Naomi, Personal Communication, April 21, 2010)

Other members of this category of participants shared similar opinions that education was enabling them to become more aware, reliable, more knowledgeable and better people who are ready to move their community forward socially, economically and politically. They seem to point to the idea that education gives people skills, ability to act, a voice, and enabling them to use it for their own benefit and benefit of marginal social groups which remain muscled-up by poverty, oppression and fear (Kabeer, 2005).

An overwhelming majority (80%) of the focus group discussants held the same belief that education empowers both women and men alike, and their ideas were no different from those cited above. This means the notion that education empowers was not just an idea launched in the minds of the high school participants only. While the majority supported the idea that education empowers the powerless, the minority (20%) was of the opinion that education alone was not enough to fully empower one. The minority’s opinions were well summed by Kasandra who stated:

We are here in school because we want to be different from other village women. We want to become educated but we also want more than education. We want to make our contributions in decision making. We want to have our own say about things that concern us. We do not want to be told what to do all the time by others. We want to be able to analytically examine our situations before taking decisions that suit our context. Making our own decisions is better
because we know our problems better. We are in school because we want to device solutions to our own problems. We are acquiring some new survival tactics. We have to be in a position to gather, share and present our problems to authorities in the best way possible without being dismissed as though our problems do not matter here in Kajiado. Personally, I am in school because I want to help myself and other people. I need the skills to do so. (Kasandra Personal communication, May 8, 2010)

From the discussion above, it appears young Maasai women were getting educated alright, but they wanted more than that. They want to become prepared to deal with their own issues. They refuse to be dictated to solutions that are not related to their problems. For instance, the realization that there is need for the Maasai people to combine farming and other ways of generating income for more economic stability is phenomenal. According to Veronica:

The tough economic challenges in Kajiado today are forcing the Maasai to stop banking on cattle keeping only. Continued droughts are forcing the pastoralists to look for jobs away from home as alternatives for economic sustenance. Two or more sources of income are better in that if one fails, the other can act as support. (Veronica Personal communication, May 18, 2010)

In other words, education needs to be coupled with other factors to become more empowering. In addition, the minority’s views from the focus group discussants defended the point that education needed support from other ideas. In making this point clear, Sara stated:

We know education is quite important. The significance of education cannot be downplayed especially in a situation where women are still struggling to access education. However, education alone is not enough. How many people are educated but are jobless? We need more than education to make a difference in our society. We need better representation in big offices in the parliament. In the whole of Kajiado, not a single woman is elected in a position of power. (Sara Personal communication, April 13, 2010)
When Catherine was at primary school, she walked for a long distance to and from school. She remembered:

Usually, I would walk to school very early in the morning and it was hard under the hot sun. We are pursuing education now which is good. Lakini, bado tunataka maendeleo. (We still need development). We need more schools in Kajiado District. We do not need children to feel unsafe when going or coming from school. Some private primary schools have school buses, but public ones are few, have more children and with no transport. Using matatu (Kenyan public transport) is another challenge for school children as they are never given the priority to board. It pains me to see small children still walking to school like I did. So, as we get educated, we also need to think about developing schools, roads, and clean water. Being educated does not guarantee you clean water if you come from a place where there is none. (Catherine Personal communication, May 13, 2010)

For Sara and Catherine, the fact that they are about to graduate from high school is not enough for them to claim becoming fully empowered. Better representation by people who care and understand their problems as people from the pastoral community and having more schools, all weather roads and clean water are other empowering issues which need consideration.

In conclusion, young Maasai women based on this study findings regarded education as empowerment because it was impacting positively on their abilities to acquire employable skills, acquire jobs, and make financial contributions in their families. They viewed education as empowering them to join careers of their choices, join the working class, and stop being fully dependant on cattle for economic security.

Others associated becoming knowledgeable as becoming empowered. However, those who argued that education was not adequate as the only form of empowerment suggested that it should be paired with other factors. For them, education should be paired with job creation and representation in parliament. Also, they claimed that
education should be matched with development of social facilities such as schools, roads and clean water.

**Quests for Being Part of the Solution**

All the key informants (100%) settled for the opinion that education empowers young women to solve their own problems as women in their community, thus, supporting it. In particular, high school participants were aware that young women were not part of the problem but the solution in their community. Therefore, they insisted that education had helped much in understanding the real situation of both women and men in the Maasai community and beyond. This point was resounded by the DEO by saying:

> We are all seeking solutions to many problems in our country. For the few years I have been blessed with serving Kenyans in education, I have come to understand that real solutions to our challenges in education are the locally available ones. Any time we go for these ‘big’ meetings and given some strategies about how India, South Africa and Latin America are solving their problems, I listen. But, few of those ideas are possible here in our situation. I encourage our young men and women alike who we are struggling to educate to start thinking locally. I think we can develop very many solutions to our problems. For instance, any time we think of stopping early marriage, we engage fathers in this area and so long as they know we are watching them, the practice is diminishing. This is a clear example that our local solutions are good and they work for us. Let us not demean them. (DEO, Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

The DEO’s response reminds young people to start valuing local solutions and to think locally. There are many examples of success stories where local solutions have completely solved problems. Education is becoming more important in teaching us to value what belong to us and what works in our context. Gladys, another participant in the category of key informants put it this way:
We are struggling to educate our girls today because we have seen what other educated women have done in our community. We are interested in having our women processing some of our products. We are interested in solving the problem of FGM. We are not always happy when outsiders come here and demean our culture because they do not fully understand where we are coming from. We do not get better solutions from foreigners. At times, they have nothing to offer. At times, we even educate them. I work with an international organizations and I have seen this. So, we are capable. We have the solutions to our poverty, we have solutions to cattle diseases, solutions to low enrollment of children in schools. We just need to try them and see what happens. As a woman, see education as serving the role of re-awakening us to belief in what we have already. Africa is marred with typical examples of women struggling to acquire education. (Gladys Personal Communication, May 21, 2010)

Based on Gladys’ words, not all foreigners provide solutions to the problems facing African women and men. For instance, it is clear that Kenyan women do not have a good chance to pursue education compared to men (Karani, 1987; Chege & Sifuna, 2006; Mule, 2008; Mulama, 2008). Therefore, we do not need foreigners to tell us that. We only need to work together towards providing more opportunities for women to acquire education.

Africana womanism encourages the spirit of self-reliance (Mikell, 1997). It is interesting to note that already, women have solutions to some of the problems that stop communities from becoming self-reliant. For example, women’s desires, aspirations and dreams to help the needy in society is a solution to unequal distribution of resources. Whether deeply embedded in their culture or not, African women display a strong spirit of collectively building society and working to improve the situation of others. Their future dreams appear to be in line with the primary goal of survival deeply embedded in the Africana womanism theory. In support of African women’s spirit of survival Ntiri (1998) states:
The Africana womanist, focusing on her particular circumstances, comes from an entirely different perspective, one which embraces the concept of collectivism for the entire family in its overall liberation struggle for survival, thereby resolving the question of her place in the venue of women’s issues. (p. 42)

This means that there is common thread of seeking libration that runs across the realities of African women whether in the West or Third World. At this point, two important questions come to mind. Why do African women take it upon themselves to help others? Why is everybody in the African family in dire need of her help?

Dependency is a sign on hegemonic social relations in society. Ntiri (1998) explain that this lack of access to social and economic opportunities, hence dependency found among African families and communities is historical. It dates back to the slavery, colonial, and apartheid times where African people where socially and economically oppressed and deprived. Hudson-Weems (1998) deconstructs this kind of dependency in Africana womanism, asking woman to claim their empowerment.

Fifty percent (50%) of the key informants concurred with Mikell (1997) that the survival of African communities are highly dependent on the steps taken by women in their efforts of escaping poverty. Education was, therefore, providing young women with the ability to understand the gender inequalities which triggers the poor situation women find themselves in their community and elsewhere in post-independent Africa (Abdi & Cleghorn, 2005). According to Freire (1970), women (the oppressed) must avoid force charity Women must survive the economic crises, war, drought, poverty, disease, illiteracy and ignorance (Mikell, 1997).
Being in school for the young Maasai women influences them to figure out that women oppression and poor access to education is not peculiar to them as Maasai women. In demonstrating that they are not alone in the fight for better access to education, Pelesa gave other examples:

When I was a student at AIC Girls Primary, our school principal organized for a trip to other regions in Kenya where girls’ education is problematic like here in Kajiado. We visited and enquired more about the situation of girls’ education in Kwale District and Garissa District in Kenya. We found out that some girls drop out of school because of the long distances they have to walk to school. Parents were uncomfortable with the safety of girls to and from school. Some girls dropped out due to early pregnancy and some parents withdraw their daughters. Others drop out of school to get married. In Kwale which is a long the Kenyan coast, girls sell ground nuts, bangles and other wares to tourists. Some turn to prostitution to earn money for their families. Although we are not happy with the current situation of education of girls here in Kajiado, we are aware that we are not alone in the struggle. (Pelesa Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)

Pelesa’s discussion makes a long list of other barriers to accessing education for young girls in the country. Although being in school for young Maasai women was viewed as an avenue for looking around and seeing who else was in a similar situation or even worse, much needs to be done in other regions of the country. The trips Pelesa and her classmates made were a good motivation for them as they soldiered on in school, but an eye opener to the depth of crises facing many more girls in Kenya. Taking such a trip and learning that many more girls in Kenya were struggling in order to be educated was a motivation (we are not alone) and a shame to the country (so much is not yet accomplished). The interview with the Ministry of Education officer in-charge of the gender desk confirmed Pelesa’s trip findings and added that her office was working with education officers in each district in the country for possible solutions.
Generally, using education as a tool to solving many challenges facing humanity today is strongly supported by Africana womanism theory. This theory stand for the empowerment of Africana women by stating that African woman must struggle to survive (Aina, 1998; Hudson-Weems, 1998; Mikell, 1997). Based on Africana womanism, young women learn the bitter truth that culture, the economy, and the job market are strong forces of oppression to women. These three forces conspire to worsen the situation of women, especially those with no skills. No wonder some of the participants viewed education as a ‘struggle for success,’ which concurs with Mikell’s (1997) notion that African women struggle for their rights. In my opinion, African women struggle for almost everything in their lives. For instance, African women struggle for education, struggle to have a voice, struggle for independence and struggle for political participation among other struggles. Consequently, education appeared to mold the women into better or smart strugglers. Education teaches them to demand for fair treatment, equity and the opportunity to access resources and services.

**Embracing New Opportunities**

Technology and information was gives a high premium as a skill that was highly required for future use by secondary school participants. More than half (60%) of the secondary school participants concurred that being in school initiated their curiosity in computer skills and usage. Using the school computer lab and interacting with their computer teacher made students able to access computers and learn how to use them. Internet Communication and Technology (ICT), has become the buzz-word in education in the 21st century. The use of technology in education has been given a
high premium in both developed and developing countries. Data from documents analyzed supported the notion of need for learning new technology. However, the same documents recognized lack of computers and other resources in many schools in Kajiado (FAWE, 2003).

According to FAWE (2003), AIC Girls Primary School had insufficient textbooks, limited library stock, while there was no computer, and water storage tanks in the 1960s-1970s. However, from my personal observation, there were no much changes as far as school resources were concerned. For instance, Enoomatasi Girls Secondary school had 10 computers and only three (3) were functional.

Data gathered from the interviews revealed that participants were taking their computer skills seriously. For instance, Sara was considering becoming an online student when she commented:

Although we do not have email service here in school, I have learned how to use email service and I am able to send and receive emails from friends all over the country and outside. I know I need this kind of skill as I proceed with my studies in order to access, interact, communicate, and use information every day. We are in the age of “being connected.” Colleges are turning to online courses or “Net education.” I want to be in a position to take courses that I cannot access here in Kenya but interested in them. Becoming an online student looks like the way forward in the near future. (Sara Personal Communication, April 13, 2010)

In connection to school and sharpening one’s technological skills, Pelesa noted:

I have learned that becoming computer literate is a must. Learning how to use technology is no longer a luxury but a basic need. Every young person needs to become computer literate like in other countries where they use computer in their social and educational life. Through school, I have learned that Kenya will have many job opening related to technology and I am ready to sharpen mine. It is a pretty new field where jobs are still available. (Pelesa Personal Communication, May 12, 2010)
From this conversation, we note that education has revolutionalized the minds of young women. Their views on many issues are changing including their career choices. It is important to note that although the use of technology is taking a slow pace in Kenyan schools (Republic of Kenya, 2004), students are highly charged in tapping onto the opportunities associated with Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT). With the use of computers, mobile phone, and iPods technology, young people are ready to interact, communicate, and access information from all over the world including the girls in this study.

Students were happy to embrace the technology world as Hellen explains:

We want to better our skills in computer use. By sharpening our appetite for technology, we are widening our opportunities. This will make us Kenyan women become aware of the resources in our environment both locally and internationally. We want to be in a position to take up jobs from international companies via email and teleconferencing. If this is happening in other countries, it can also happen here in Kenya. In any case, women are poorly represented in technology. (Hellen Personal Communication, May 15, 2010)

The general issue raised by participants on the case of technology was that it has given rise to new opportunities for young women. Becoming technologically literate and compliant was good for young people to take up jobs based on technology. Young women getting interested in technology is encouraged because studies show that there are few women in research, science, and technology. What prominently featured in the data explaining about the reasons why school was important to participants is the hope of getting a good job in the future.

On the same vein, education is revolutionalizing the views of society on leadership where the qualities of a good leader are associated with men. Studies show
that education shapes our future actions and activities by acting as a training ground (FAWE, 2003; UNESCO, 2005). In a discussion with the guidance and counseling teacher, she revealed that their school was training students and involving them more on leadership related talks. She admitted:

We always take our school prefects for training after they are elected. We invite professions trainers, we show them films and we also invite them to listen to some important meetings taking place in the school concerning them as students. We want them to get out there with the required skills. We also give them the authority to run some school programs with minimal supervision. We hope the seeds of leadership we are planting in them will grow. Our student leaders are happy with these arrangements. (The school counselor, May 10, 2010)

The above views by the school counselor are supported by Sihera (2011), who found out that if schools engage students in student government issues, chances are that they will take part in voting and government issues latter in life. Involving young women in leadership prepares and makes them more willing to vote and take up leadership roles at local and national levels as suggested by Africana womanism. Consequently, this serves as a way of increasing the number of women in decision making positions where gender imbalance is huge.

In support of education serving to revolutionalize the society, young women were interested in becoming more useful in their own communities by joining both formal and informal sectors. Nachipai, one of the focus group members summed up the views of her peers on becoming useful in their community. She said:

We want to become self employed. We want to get into both the formal and informal sectors. We sell fresh milk in shops and cattle and goats to the slaughter houses. As young women, we need to think of how to process and store these products. If we process them further and store them, they can fetch us better money. Also, the processing is job creation for other members of our
society. This way, we will enable more people to put food on the table. We will also use such businesses to acquire loan facilities to expand our businesses. We will earn money to get back to school in case we need more skills and to educate our children too. (Nachipai Personal Communication, May 4, 2010)

This response raises key issues in the business world. The young women are interested in becoming not only employed but creating jobs. Primary products such as milk and meat are cheap when bought fresh from the farmer. Processing these products is a way of making them last longer in anticipation for better prices in the market.

**Summary**

This chapter focused on how the lives of young women are shaped by education and how it impacts on their future aspirations. Under this question, five themes emerged i) education as empowerment, ii) education for gender equity, iii) saying yes to some and no to other cultural practices that negatively influence women’s and girls’ education. Embracing some of the good cultural norms and traditions, iv) quests for being part of the solution, and v) embracing new opportunities. In a nutshell, young Maasai women were ready to embrace opportunities that lead them towards becoming self-reliant as women. They are not asking for add-outs but looking for those opportunities which will make them to better their future.

**Emerging Theme**

**Impact of NGOs to the Education of Women in Kajiado**

This study found that 70% of the secondary school participants partly or fully depended on NGOs and well-wishers to pay for their school fees and subsistence. This is because school funding by governments in ASAL regions and family support tends to be inadequate (Coast, 2008; Semali, 1994). Consequently, students are forced to look
elsewhere for support. In this study, Hannah stated, “Because of the poor economic situation in my family, Compassionate Project (NGO) partly supports my education. Compassionate Project also gives my family food and clothes” (Hannah, Personal Communication, April 16, 2010).

Other than paying school fees for needy students, NGOs advocated for women education in Kajiado. For example, Naomi reported that an organization named Maasai Women Empowerment Education Program (MWEEP) was supporting her mother at school. MWEEP encouraged all its members (young and old women) to study in order to better their future (Naomi Shonko, Personal Communication, April 21, 2010).

In addition, NGOs encouraged young women in Kajiado and elsewhere to participate in math, science and technology through advocacy and provision of teaching and learning resources. For instance, Hendrina stated that FAWE, “equip[s] science and computer laboratories for schools in Kajiado...[and] establishing gender responsive school management systems and training of school management teams” (Hendrina, Personal Communication, May 30, 2010). All the above examples serve to buttress the importance of NGOs in supporting educational activities in Kajiado District.

The findings concur with other studies which show the strong support of the civil society to needy students from difficult circumstances. For example, this study concurs with that by Roto, Ongwenyi and Mugo (2009) which states,

The economic activities are incapable of sustaining livelihoods, as 13.3% of all adults …live on help from local and international NGOs. Attempts to settle pastoralists have made them less efficient in using the semi-desert terrains and more dependent on emergency relief food. While populations from other
districts have diverse sources of income, ...[the dry regions are] largely dependent on livestock” (p. 9).

Based on the above statement, families in the dry region of Kenya such as Kajiado, Narok, Turkana, Samburu, Garissa and others heavily depend on livestock farming (Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). Consequently, they lack other sources of income such as credit facilities and crop farming to boost their income. Students from poor economic backgrounds are faced with poor access to education, prompting them to seek NGO support in order to remain in school. Seeking economic support to go through school by young Maasai women from NGOs is reinforcing the fact that the cost of education at secondary school is prohibitive to some families in Kenya. Chapter eight below presents the study summary, implications, suggestions and conclusions.
Chapter Eight: Summary, Implications, Suggestions, and Conclusion

Introduction

Chapter 8 is the final chapter in this study. It provides the summary of the study, major findings of the study, suggestions, and conclusion. Based on the findings of this study, I propose several important points to promote young Maasai women’s education in Kajiado District, Kenya.

Summary

The major goal of this study was to understand and describe young Maasai women’s educational experiences in Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School in Kajiado District. In telling educational stories to the study audience, I hoped to create an awareness of the challenges and opportunities available to young Maasai women in Kenyan high schools which is marked with low enrollment rates for females. This information is important to several groups of people: policy makers, parents, teachers, well-wishers, and international organizations involved in the education of girls and women. There are several studies that focus on the education of girls and women in Kenya, but there are few that focus on the educational experiences from the girls and women’s perspectives. Armed with the knowledge about what young women in high school find significant to their education is important in planning and improving the educational access of girls in general and Maasai girls in particular.
The context of the issue under investigation emanates from the cry of women for the improvement of their educational access. Women experience educational inequality on a global, national and local scale which could be attributed to social and economic reasons. This study supports the idea that, “When you educate a women, you educate a nation” (Bayisenge, 2009, p. 8). Therefore, women need education as a tool to become empowered because, “Every year of school lost represents 10-20% reduction in girls’ future incomes” (Global Campaign for Education (GCE), 2005, p. 19). In order to improve the future economic situation of women, global and nations alike have adopted several policies towards education for all, with women and girls in mind: Education for All (EFA) (2000) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000). All these policies aim at improving educational access by all and more so for women (Nrayan, 1997, Sifuna, 2005, Chege & Sifuna, 2006; Mule, 2008). These policies are improving the access to women education by making women empowerment a key agenda in their discussions. Without education, women suffer many challenges including: joblessness, marginalization in society, inequality in resource and service allocation, denial of their rights, domination by men, inadequate knowledge and skills required by employers, and general invisibility in almost all social institutions (Republic of Kenya, 2007; Population Council, 2005; UNESCO, 2005; Mosedale, 2003; FAWE, 2001).

This research sought to understand the educational experiences of young Maasai women from Kajiado District in Kenya in their final years in high school. In achieving this objective, the study was guided by questions regarding the participants’
educational experiences, social-cultural factors impacting on education and the role of education in shaping the lives of young Maasai women.

Literature was reviewed in key areas such as the situation of education in Africa and in Kenya. The background of formal education in Kenya is important because it depicts gender disparity since independence in 1963, and from the start of missionary and colonial schools in the 1920s onwards (Bogonko, 1992; Eshiwani, 1993; FAWE, 2001; Sifuna, 2005; Chege & Sifuna, 2005; Roto, Ongwenyi & Mugo, 2009). In addition, the literature review focused on other aspects such as: gender inequality in education in Kenya, education as a means of empowerment to women. The theoretical framework utilized is Africana Womanism. This theory was used as the lens to interrogate the experiences of the participants in school. The theory was used as a platform in seeking alternative strategies to ensuring gender equity in society (Hudson-Weems, 1998; Narayan, 1997; Parpart, Rai, & Staudt, 2002; Spivak, 1999).

Guided by the theoretical framework and the research questions, a phenomenological case study was adopted for the study. It was chosen because it enabled a thick and rich description of the bounded case of the experiences of the Maasai young women. For example, Africana womanism theory encourages sharing of participants’ voices giving them the chance to define and name self (Hudson-Weems, 1998; Narayan, 1997; Spivak, 1999).

Participants of the study were in two categories: secondary school students and key informants in order to enrich and provide thick data. In all, 20 participants were interviewed including 16 high school students at Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary
School and five (5) key informants drawn from school counselor, FAWE office, District Education Officer, member of school board and one (1) college student. Three sources of data were utilized, namely interviews, focus group interviews, documents, and observations for purposes of triangulation (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002).

The data were reported in the form of participants’ narrative descriptions, which are presented in themes, and patterns generated from the coded data and analyzed using the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework. Tables, figures and pictures are used for easy presentation of the findings where necessary. The major findings of the study are presented below.

Major Findings

RQ1: “Seek Yee First the Kingdom of Education”

On the extent to which socio-cultural factors influenced young Maasai women’s education in Kajiado District, two major categories of factors emerged from the field data. They are: out-of-school factors and in-school factors. The out—of—school factors included: Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C), early marriage and early pregnancy. After undergoing FGM/C between the ages of 5-12 years, young girls were ushered into the world of adulthood, specifically womanhood. According to the participants, young circumcised Maasai females missed precious school time in order to undergo their puberty rites. Consequently, they easily dropped out of school, got involved in early marriage and wanted to be treated as ‘adult women’ by their peers (Nwajei & Otiono, 2003).
According to Nachipai, “As from eight (8) years, young Maasai girls go through their puberty rites and marriage can follow almost immediately. This means some young girls miss school all together or have to shelf school for marriage” (Nachipai, Personal Communication, May 4, 2010). Therefore, FGM/C acted as one of the barriers to Maasai girls’ education. However, not all the participants in this study had undergone FGM/C. While some had escaped to rescue centres leaving their home in fear of the practice, others were lucky to still carry on with school after. Some were encouraged to get back to school by relatives, churches and NGOs operating in the area.

Additionally, both early marriage and pregnancy negatively influenced young Maasai women’s education in Kajiado District. According to the participants, marriage marked the end of school for young women and it was not a common practice for married women to be in school. Consequently, through school, young Maasai women had resolved not to give in to early marriage in favor of school. For example, Kasandra stated, “I have not given in to early marriage. I have [also] not got into unwanted pregnancy” (Kasandra personal communication, May 8, 2010). Her views could be attributed to the fact that young and married women lack time for school. Rather, they concern themselves with child bearing, child care and domestic chores. These duties are intense and attending school would only complicate the lives of the young brides. According to participants, pregnant girls were discontinued from school in order to give them time to deliver their babies. However, returning back to school was not easy for
teenage mothers due to the stigma associated with being a mother and a student. More often, teachers’ attitude, school policy, personal choice and marriage come into play.

Under the in-school-factors, 5 themes were discussed namely; homesickness, being in school as “making tough choice, education as a tough race,” fear of failure in examinations, math and sciences as a challenge to the education of young Maasai women in Kajiado District. Specifically, fear of failure negatively influenced examination results of the participants. These in-school-factors were responsible for poor performance, negative attitude towards math and science subjects, lack of focus in studies, lack of seriousness and commitment among young school women. Therefore, there is need for strong guidance and counseling program in schools in Kajiado District in order to accord help to those students suffering from homesick, those with negative attitude towards some subjects, those in fear of examinations, those swayed away from school by viewing it as a tough race.

RQ2: “Educated Women are Respected in Society”

Being in school for young Maasai women had different meanings for them. While some were in school to escape early marriage, others wanted to be respected. Four major themes that emerged from this question include social, reasons, educational (knowledge) reasons, economic reasons, and political reasons. Socially, women are placed lower in rank compared to men. Thus, gaining respect from society as women was important to them. Others were eager to acquire education for knowledge sake. A majority of participants were in school because they were interested in sharpening their economic abilities because they were having a hard time paying their school fees.
Lastly for others, being in school was for political reasons because they wanted to use their skills to advocate for equality in education and right to own property as women.

**RQ3: “Education for Gender Equity”**

Under research question three, five themes emerged i) education as empowerment, ii) education for gender equity, iii) saying yes to some and no to other factors that influence girls’ education, iv) quests for being part of the solution, and v) embracing new opportunities.

Generally, the study found that education was very important to the young Maasai women. For instance, education changed their dressing style. This was captured by Kasandra, “I dress better than those who have never been to school” (Kasandra personal communication, May 8, 2010). In addition, young women wanted to work towards gender equity in education. For instance, Mary stated, “I want to preach gender equity in education by providing support to all children both male and female. All children have a right to education” (Mary’s Personal Communication, May 9, 2010).

Also, they felt there was need to challenge those factors that were a hindrance to their education especially by becoming part of the solution to their own problems. For example, Ann argued, “I am in school because I want to become a solution to the economic challenges in my family. I want to be depended on by others because the economy is bad” (Ann, Personal Communication, April, 20, 2010). According to these young women, education was important because it was putting them in a position to embrace new opportunities. Hellen explained, “By sharpening our appetite for technology, we are widening our opportunities… both locally and internationally. In
any case, women are poorly represented in technology” (Hellen Personal Communication, May 15, 2010).

Early marriage to young Maasai women means the end of schooling for them. Yet, education is often viewed as an important key to ending forced and early marriage for young women. Pelesa captured this by saying, “My friend [dropped out of school] and got married… She was only 16 but her relatives organized for her to get married. I learned later that she was pregnant” (Pelesa Personal Communication, May 12, 2010). Pelesa’s friend dropped out of school and we are not told if she got back or not. Furthermore, handling both motherhood and domestic chores is complicated enough for young women. Yet, according to UNDP (1996), education broadens women’s chances of a better life. As parents, educated women are convinced of the benefits of educating their own children.

Participants recognized the importance of NGOs support in education in Kajiado District. This is because school funding by governments in ASAL regions is problematic (Coast, 2008; Semali, 1994). For example, Hannah stated, “Because of the poor economic situation in my family, Compassionate Project (NGO) partly supports my education. Compassionate Project also gives my family food and clothes” (Hannah, Personal Communication, April 16, 2010). Other than paying school fees for needy students, NGOs such as MWEEP advocated for women for women education in Kajiado. In addition, Hendrina stated that FAWE, “equip[s] science and computer laboratories for schools in Kajiado...[and] establishing gender responsive school management systems and training of school management teams” (Hendrina, Personal
Communication, May 30, 2010). These examples buttress the fact that NGOs were playing an active role in supporting education in Kajiado District.

The findings on young women’s perspectives on their educational experiences in Enoomataisiani Girls Secondary School, Kajiado District in Kenya are organized under the three main research questions. Also, the meaning-making Narrative Approach and the African Feminist perspective provided the framework in the analysis of the findings. The importance of paying attention to the voices of young women in our Kenyan educational system is given importance in this study because of many reasons as discussed below.

This study found that many young women in Enoomatasiani Girls Secondary School had a negative attitude towards math and sciences. For instance, Veronica stated, “Many girls have a negative attitude towards math…It is believed that math and chemistry are the hardest subjects in this school according to my peers” (Veronicah Personal Communication, May 23, 2010). Consequently, participants were not scoring good grades in these subjects.

**Implications**

**The Government**

The government needs to be more gender sensitive in awarding scholarships to needy students. This can be reinforced through policy whereby more females are awarded scholarships through an affirmative action. This will go a long way in ensuring that those female students in school especially those from dry regions such as Kajiado do not drop out of school because of school fees. Also, the Kenyan government is
committed to achieve gender equity in education (Republic of Kenya, 2007). In order to make this policy true in Kajiado District, there is need for government to make the education of young Maasai women and girls an important agenda and provide scholarships, text books and other resources. For instance, the DEO stated, “We hope to equip our science laboratories with the required facilities. We have identified donors who are willing to help us out with laboratory equipment” (The DEO, Personal Communication, April 3, 2010).

**Teachers and Parents: A Community Operation**

Awareness creation is a key step in making more women participate in secondary schools and beyond. Teachers, parents and relatives working together can give advice and act as role models to female students already in school. This participation in school should not stop at primary or high school. It needs to be extended to the university. Women and girls’ participation in math and sciences also can help in ensuring more females get into science related careers later in life. The sensitization should start from students, teachers, parents, and community. Young women in school need to be exposed to successful women in their community and elsewhere to mentor them.

In addition, teachers in the counseling departments in high schools need to provide career guidance on math and science based occupations. In addition, they need to dispel fear and stereotypes that are associated with women scientists. It appeared like society has a way of discouraging women from becoming scientists. Hannah narrated about a female scientist, “When their daughter got sick and died, this lady posted her
body to her husband in another country and she did not care about the burial. This was strange and many people attribute it to her science career” (Hannah, Personal Communication, April 16, 2010). Yet, Africana womanism allows African women to re-define themselves and the cultural roles based on situation and context (Hudson Weems, 1997).

Policy Makers: “Back to School” Policy

There is need to strengthen the “Back to School” policy for teen mothers. Much advocacy and campaigns are required to convince school dropouts and their parents to get them back to school. Teen mothers and girls retrieved from early marriage are the beneficiaries in this case. According to my study participants, getting back to school was possible and encouraged. Yet, very few girls were taking advantage of the opportunity because of several reasons. Mary argued, “Getting pregnant means that one has to leave school at least to deliver the baby...I think taking care of the baby is complicated and many young mothers get married almost immediately” (Mary, Personal Communication, May 9, 2010). In addition, Agnes stated, “Going back to school for a …could be somehow confusing. Married girls are shy. School may make it worse especially because …of being stigmatized by peers. Teachers and some parents may view them as bad influence” (Agnes Personal Communication, May 10, 2010). Therefore, the “Back to School” policy is in place but many young women fear to take the step as explained by both Mary and Agnes above.
The Civil Society

This study noted that there were many NGOs working in Kajiado District. During fieldwork, I noted that the civil society was doing much on the improvement of access to education in Kajiado District. For example, Hendrina, the FAWE Officer who took part in this study stated, “We…promote the participation of girls in mathematics, science, and technology. We…equip science and computer laboratories for schools in Kajiado... FAWE is also establishing gender responsive school management systems and training of school management teams” (Hendrina, Personal Communication, May 30, 2010).

Such projects by FAWE are important in bridging the educational gaps because the Kenyan government is not able to provide all the teaching and learning facilities. In addition, FAWE is doing a great job because Kajiado is a dry region with inadequate educational resources (Roto, Ongwenyi, & Mugo, 2009). Other important gains related to education by the civil society in Kajiado include construction of schools, science and computer labs, and provision of rescue centers for young Maasai women retrieval from early marriages.

Contribution to Literature

This research helps its readers to understanding the phenomenon of lived experiences of young Maasai women in Kajiado District in Kenya. The topic of girl-child education is widely explored (Annin, 2009). However, little is researched involving presenting the voices of young women in high schools (Balde, 2004). Therefore, after narrating their educational experiences, this study adds to the
understanding of what the study participants suggested as solutions to their predicaments. First, they generally agreed that early marriage, FGM/C and gender biasness that posed a negative impact to their education should be made a thing of the past. Pelesa’s views were strongly supported by by her peers. She urged, “Some of the cultural practices among the Maasai have outlived their usefulness… I have learned that FGM/C, and early marriage are not good for young girls…we need alternative rites of passage which are less harmful…we can try symbolic rites” (Pelesa Personal Communication, May 12, 2010). The suggestion of alternative rites of passage which are less harmful or symbolic is quite powerful. It is a solution to all the health challenges associated with FGM/C in women.

On the challenge of gender biasness, my study participants were totally against the culture of denying women property and inheritance. Sara’s words capture this best, “Males inherit land, cows, goats, sheep and any other property from their parents while females inherit nothing” (Sara Personal Communication, April 13, 2010). A similar message was echoed by Naomi, who was happy that families had stopped devaluing the education of their daughters. Rather, they were sending girls abroad for further studies. She stated, “What I liked most in this [farewell] ceremony was the fact that Nailantei’s family believed in her and trusted her with success” (Naomi personal communication, April 21, 2010).

Second, the study participants requested all parents, the Ministry of Education (government) and the civil society to support gender equity and equality as far as educational access is concerned. Both girls and boys deserve equal chance and equal
support in education. Agnes was certain that both women and men need to support each other economically. For example, Agnes said, “Educated women … educate their children well and they can take-over some economic roles from their husbands when need be…I do not need him [her husband] to do everything” (Agnes, personal communication, May 10, 2010). This is only possible if women are given same chance as men in education. In addition, Pelesa warned against society stigmatizing educated women. She stated, “Customs should not [stop] us [women] from accessing services such as higher education. Believes such as that educated women are ‘spoilt’ and break-up their families, should be a thing of the past” (Pelesa Personal Communication, May 12, 2010). In this study, participants are asking for gender equity in society where both men and women are supported on a fifty-fifty basis.

Thirdly, participants generally felt that they were in a position to solve their own problems and those of their community given the opportunity. For instance, they were ready to study hard, acquire jobs and help their families and community. Further, participants were ready to perform both traditional roles as mothers and career women as teachers, doctors, pilots and others. In general, they were eager to become self-reliant. This was well discussed by Salome when she said, “I need my economic independence. I do not want to always ask for money to buy salt and other small items required in the kitchen” (Salome Personal Communication, May 25, 2010). In addition, Ann wanted other people to depend on her. She stated, “Through education, I want to become a team player in the family economics. I want to buy land for my family, and pay school fees for my own children” (Ann, Personal Communication, April 20, 2010).
Basically, young Maasai women in this study are not asking for handouts. They need to become economically independent and self-supportive. They need to move beyond becoming mothers to joining careers of their choice. This information bridges the knowledge gap in relation to participants’ educational experiences in Kenya. From their own voices, any concerned party can now incorporate the opinions and voices of young Maasai women in any educational project in Kajiado that targets this group.

**Suggestions and Way Forward**

The participants stated that both FGM/C and early marriage had great influence to their education. Based on these findings, there is the need for campaigns against both FGM/C and early marriage because they happen at the same time when young girls are required to be in school. Also, there is the need to support teenage mothers to complete school in Kajiado District.

Additionally, there is the need for constant talks to school students on the importance of education in their future lives, the importance of science subjects in the job world and the importance of being focused and determined to succeed in school. In order to assisting students suffering from in-school challenges, the guidance and counseling department, teachers, school administration, parents, education officers and other local leaders could work together as a team to help young women to succeed in school.

It was important to be in school because they were expanding their opportunities in anticipation and hope for a better future. Other suggestions are made in order to improve on the education of young Maasai women. First, a teamwork approach
towards educating young maasai women is suggested. Second, an empowerment approach is also suggested. Each of them is discussed below:

**A Teamwork Approach To Educating Young Maasai Women**

The challenge of educating young Maasai women and girls is not a simple one but complex, thus, calling for a complex solution. Based on the study findings, young Maasai women and girls’ education is influenced by multiple factors which emanate from the culture, the family, the school, the society and the government. Therefore, there is need for coordinate activities by all stakeholders including parents, teachers, the government and the civil society to teamwork towards providing educational access to young women in Kajiado District.

First, the family can support females in school by having a positive altitude towards girls’ education. Young women need to be supported by parents and relatives while in school. Families need not allocate domestic chores to females in school when they need to concentrate on school work and preparing for examinations. Families need to avoid looking at early marriage as a solution to its economic challenges. Parents need to stop viewing the boy-child’s education as more important than that of a girl. They need to view every child as unique with unique potential and ability to help the family whenever need arises. Therefore, there is need for families to start making young women aware that they are also expected to support the family when they become of age and economically stable.

Second, there is need for teachers to support female students by encouraging them to work hard in school. Young women need to be made aware that all subjects and
important including math and sciences. Teachers need to give girls positive support by changing their attitude towards female students. Educators need to provide advice to students and to parents when necessary. They need to become the first in campaigning against FGM/C and early marriage which often leads to dropping out of school in girls. There is need to provide role models to young girls in school while soliciting for scholarships for needy students from poor family backgrounds. In addition, there is need for teachers to work together with parents whenever home-based challenges seem to affect female students in school.

Third, the government has the role of making policies that focus on improving and supporting the education of girls and women in the country. There is need to avoid politicizing education issues because this has a negative impact to the education of all learners. In order to successfully implement government policies on girl-child education: political good will in supporting the education policies, offering financial support, resource allocation, offering technical advice, and conducting constant evaluations. This could be done through budget allocation to education of women and girls, seeking donor funding and working together with the civil society. In addition, the government has the authority and resources to offer guidance to all other stakeholders. Supporting other stakeholders, offering leadership, conducting checks and balances when necessary are all important in improving the education of girls in the country and in Kajiado in particular.
Empowerment Approach Towards Educating Young Maasai Women

In an effort to improve the educational access for young Maasai women, the empowerment approach to education is also suggested. In her recent works, Kabeer Naila developed a framework for empowerment. The framework involves: resources (conditions), agency (process) and achievement (conditions) as three key factors which are important for empowerment to occur (Kabeer, 1999). Taking education as empowerment to young women involves recognizing the three named factors and striving to achieve them in order to streamline women education.

In addition, Kabeer (2005) acknowledges the cultural, material, and institutional factors to empowered agency. In order to empower young women, education becomes very important in skills training. When one is trained, he she could easily acquire employment, voice, and political representation. Furthermore, these factors are key spaces where the oppressed groups can find free space to voice their pursuits for social change. Narayan (2002) insists on participation, with its emphasis on voice, as closely linked to empowerment. If I summarize ideas by these authors, education, employment, political representation, participation and voice are what is required by any group that seeks to acquire social empowerment. In all of the above factors, education is the key element which makes the rest more relevant and meaningful as shown in Figure 13 below.
Figure 13: Education as Empowerment

Source: Personal conceptualization of education as the master tool for empowerment

Figure 13 above displays how education ignites all other forms of empowerment. When I think about empowerment, I conceptualize it as having the core course which triggers or stimulates people to reflect and see what they lack to change their situations. I see education as the master tool for empowerment because those who are educated acquire information and skills. Information is power. It makes you
understand what situation you are in, what you need to do and how to do it. One may argue that being educated is not always a solution to many problems facing society today. However, acquiring knowledge and skills is important because it improves one’s ability to think outside the box.

Also, those who seek education they do so to acquire skills for employment. Many times, the working class people are the ones who seek political representation, with a clear understanding of their systems of governments and what needs to be done to change things for better. In addition, the educated get to participate in local and national issues, giving them the knowledge and the ability to voice their agendas for social change.

According to Mulama (2006), “Education empowers girls today and saves children’s lives tomorrow.” (p. 3). Also, education becomes very important in giving people a voice since they also need the language to present that which is sub-standard or short-circuiting everybody or some specific groups in society. With a voice, you can use it for your own account or on behalf of social groups which muscled-up by poverty, oppression and fear.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

From the study findings, the following issues are recommended for further investigation:

1. There is need to investigate on the educational experiences of young women sampled from the whole of Kajiado District. This would shed some light on the challenges and opportunities available to young women in the district.
2. A similar study can be carried out in another district where nomadic pastoral communities are found in Kenya for purposes of comparison.

3. There is need to carry out an inquiry on girls’ educational experiences at high school in other countries that have nomadic pastoral groups for comparison purposes. The data was useful in understanding whether there are similarities and differences in the experiences and what can be learned in order to improve their situation.

4. An evaluation of existing policies on the education of nomadic pastoral groups needs to be carried out with a view to identify areas that need review strengthening harmonization purposes. Data gathered were help in coming up with special curriculum that serves different groups based on their needs.

5. There is need to carry out a study that targets Maasai parents about their experiences while educating their sons and daughters. Gather data can be of use to policy makers and planers of on the challenges they face while educating their children.

Conclusion

In conclusion, chapter eight provides the summary of the study findings in each research question. It presents suggestions on how to improve on the education of young Maasai women in Kajiado District. Based on the study findings, several important suggestions are made directed to key stakeholders in education. Finally, I have presented five possible topics for further research. In a nutshell, understanding the educational experiences of young Maasai women is important in solving their
educational challenges. The findings of this study are a presentation of the voices of the study participants. It is my conviction that their views and opinions can be used to improve on their educational access, which is an important step towards empowering them.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

Ohio University
College of Education

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Elizabeth Ngumbi 412-951-9783
en313107@ohio.edu

I ________________________________, have read and agreed to take part in this research study under the title: A Phenomenological Case-Study of Final Year Students at Enoomatasiani High School, Kenya. I fully understand that Elizabeth Ngumbi is using the information for her dissertation project at Ohio University. She has explained clearly that my participation is purely voluntary and I will freely choose to continue or discontinue with the interviews with no consequences thereafter.

The researcher has honestly described the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the study. Also, she has explained about the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I fully understand that the researcher will share the research transcripts with me for clarification and for my personal records. During this study, I will be asked questions concerning my personal experiences as a Maasai female student at my last year of high school and what being in school means to me. This understanding will add to the body of knowledge in the area of the female education in Kenya and elsewhere. I will be one of 15 participants taking part in this study.

I understand the interview process will take 1 hour and 20 minutes and the information gathered will be treated with confidentiality, respect and presented in a
doctoral dissertation with the possibility of publication or presentation at conferences.

Neither my name nor any other personal identifiers will be associated with what I say during the interview.

By signing below, I agreeing that:
  • I am 18 years of age or older.
  • I expect no monetary rewards or gain.
  • I may change my mind and stop participation at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which I may otherwise be entitled.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Participant Signature                                     Date

_________________________________________  __________________________
Signature and Title of Person Obtaining consent               Date
Appendix B I: Interview Guides

Students Interview Guide

Instructions:
This interview guide is divided into 4 sections: biographical data, education, education and gender, benefits of education to women and cultural impact on education. Kindly answer all the question but you are free to avoid a question if you are not comfortable with it. You are also free to terminate the interview if during the process you feel you no longer want to take in this study.

a) Biographical data:
1. Kindly explain to me about yourself
2. Where do you come from and what experiences did you have when grow up as a young girl?
3. Please narrate to me about your educational journey since you started up to today.
4. When did you start school and what age were you?
5. Who support you in school?
6. What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?
7. Who are more educated in your family, you brothers or sisters? Why?
8. What does being in school mean to you?
9. What are the benefits of being educated as a women?
10. What do you want to become in the future (career)?
11. How has education benefited/shaped you as a young woman?
12. Where do you see yourself five years from today?
13. What are the roles of women in your culture?
14. What else do you have to say about female education in your community that we have not talked about?
Appendix B II: Focus Group Interview Guide

Focus Group Discussion

1. Kindly tell me what you think about education in your community.
2. In your opinion, do you think there is need to increase the number of Maasai young women in schools/colleges? Explain.
3. Which level of education do majority of Maasai women in the village usually obtain (primary, secondary, College/university) and why would you recommend formal education for poor rural women?
4. Please tell me what contributions you aspire to make in your community in the future?
5. What can teachers/parents/government/NGOs do to improve on the numbers and the quality of education of Maasai women?
6. What suggestions would you make to better the education of Maasai women?
7. What else have I not asked you but you would like to say about Maasai women?
Appendix C: IRB Letter

A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2: research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Project Title: A Phenomenological Case-Study of Final Year Students at Maasai High School in Kajiado, Kenya

Primary Investigator: Elizabeth Ngumbi

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: Francis Godwyil

Department: Educational Studies

Jo Ellen Sherow, MPA
Office of Research Compliance

Date: 3-23-10

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Appendix D: Research Permit

CONDITIONS

1. You must report to the District Commissioner and the District Education Officer of the area before embarking on your research. Failure to do so may lead to the cancellation of your permit.
2. Government Officers will not be interviewed without prior appointment.
3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been approved.
4. Excavation, filming and collection of biological specimens are subject to further permission from the relevant Government Ministries.
5. You are required to submit at least two bound copies of your final report for Kenyans and non-Kenyans respectively.
6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to modify the conditions of this permit including its cancellation without notice.

GPK6055/3mt/10/2009

(CONDITIONS— see back page)

PAGE 2

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

Prof./Dr./Mr./Mrs./Miss. ELIZABETH NGUMBI KALUKI

of (Address) O H I O U N I V E R S I T Y USA

has been permitted to conduct research in:

KAJIADO Location,

DISTRICT, Rift Valley Province,

on the topic: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY OF THE FINAL YEAR STUDENTS AT MAASAI HIGH SCHOOL IN KAJIADO, KENYA.

for a period ending 30th June 2010

Research Permit No. NCST/RRI/12/1/SS/266
Date of issue 16/04/2010
Fee received SHS 2,000

Applicant’s Signature

Secretary National Council for Science and Technology
Appendix E: Research Authorization

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Telegrams: "SCIENCE TECH", Nairobi
Telephone: 254-020-241349, 2213122.
254-020-310571, 2213123.
Fax: 254-020-2213215, 318245, 318249.

When replying please quote

Our Ref: NCST/RR1/12/1/SS/266/5

Ms. Elizabeth Kaluki Ngumbi
Ohio University
USA

Dear Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “A phenomenological case study of the final year students at Maasai (Baraka) High School in Kajiado, Kenya” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Kajiado District for a period ending 30th June, 2010.

You are advised to report the District Commissioner Kajiado District and the District Education Officer, Kajiado District before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two copies of the research report/thesis to our office.

P. N. NYAKUNDI
FOR: SECRETARY/CEO

Copy to:

The District Commissioner
Kajiado District