

# Commission on Nomadic Peoples

“Pastoral Peoples and the Provision of Educational Facilities. A Case Study from Kenya”

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# Pastoral Peoples and the Provision of Educational Facilities

## A Case Study from Kenya

Anders Närman

### Background

Development, if interpreted as modernization, always involves a stratification between different groups. Normally the evolving disparities are to be found related to gender, regional habitat or class. These divisions within any African country could also in itself be taken as an indication of underdevelopment.

A regional inequality is often an expression of a complex web of factors, related to a fundamental transformation of the society. One expression of this can be found in Wisner, 1988, thus:

*The uneven development of capitalism, especially in countries with a recent colonial past, has left a legacy of a spatially unjust distribution of services and opportunities. Inequality is complicated in many cases by regional differences in culture and ethnicity. (p. 50)*

Most African countries are to be found with distinct regional varieties. Furthermore, many administrative regions are delimited according to ethnic lines. An unbalanced provision of basic human needs, as well as the control of resources to influence one's own individual destiny, can be expressed in both geographical and ethnic terms. Nomadic groups, for which national boundaries constitute no barrier for movements, are often neglected in the distribution of the modern expression of welfare.

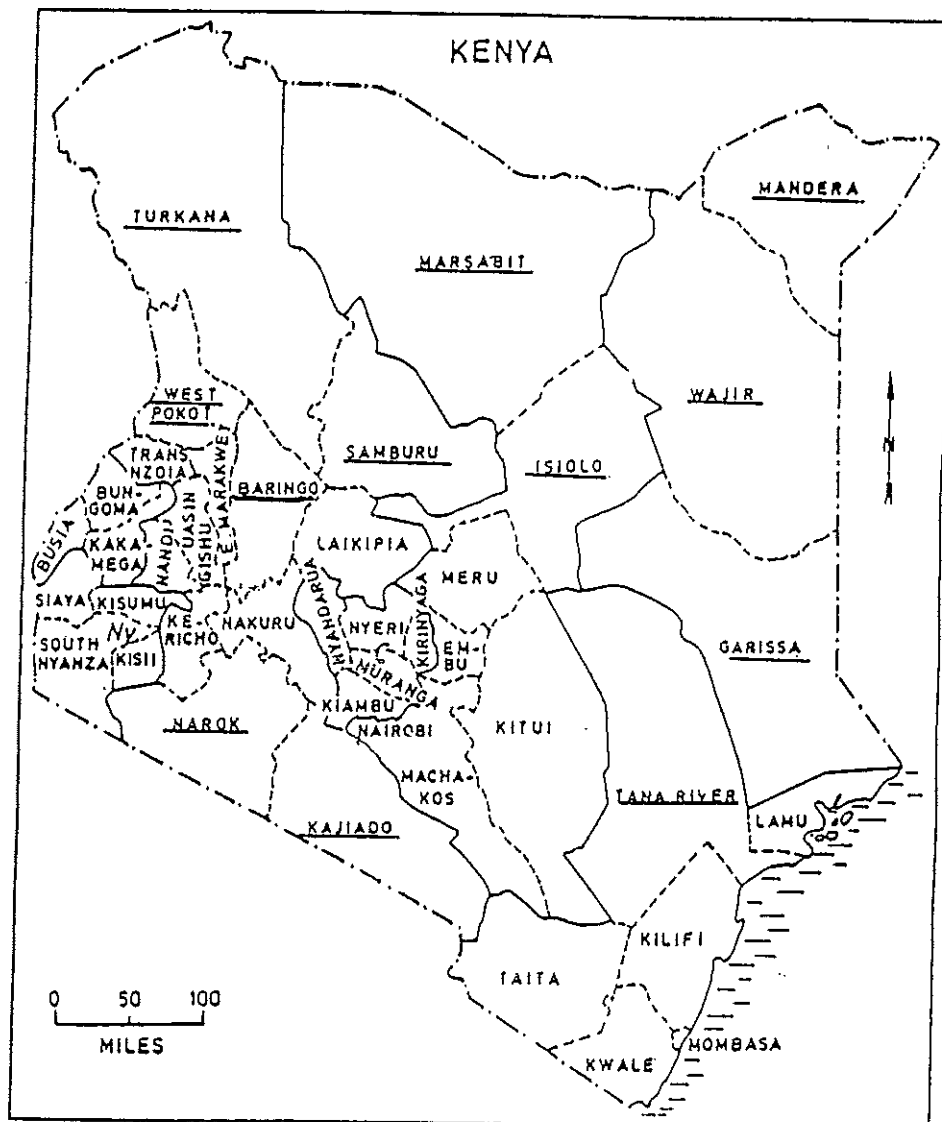
Pastoral people are always extracting a livelihood on the margin of existence. At least from a modernistic view-point their situation can be characterised as one of poverty, but their own values of life might be

distinctly different from Western concepts. However, restrictions are put on the potentials for pastoralists in their attempts to keep up with traditional modes of survival.

In the common development strategies based on the logic of modernization, the contributions from pastoralism to national wealth is scant. On the other hand, little is actually done to deliver the tools to alter the conditions for the people involved. Seldom are they provided with modern schooling or health care services, like other groups of "nationals" in the same country. This has been expressed in, for example, Africa Events (Vol 6, No 4, April 1990) by Amal Warsame in the following way concerning the Kenyan Somalis:

*Moreover, the government undertook no meaningful development programme in the Somali-populated areas. While the rest of the country surged forward, North Eastern Province had only old, derelict and dilapidated colonial forts for its schools, hospitals, dispensaries, government offices, and the people were left to their own devices to cope with the harsh environment. Those who sought better life—education, housing, business—in other Kenya, were easy prey for predatory officials. (p. 44)*

A rational choice for any government must be to either accept the pastoral life-style and allow a subsequent independent policy, or to give pastoralists an equal share in the national "development". If the latter line is pursued, pastoral people must be provided with the necessary means to participate in society, which will include, for example, a fair educational opportunity.



Map 1. Districts of Kenya. Predominantly pastoralist districts underlined.

This paper will give an analysis of the situation among pastoralists in Kenya. It will explore official statements about a common national policy. From that, the distribution of educational facilities will be discussed. That part is extracted from a larger study on education and regional development in Kenya.

## Pastoralism in Kenya

Administratively, Kenya is divided into 41 districts (Map 1). We are here ignoring some recent sub-divisions of some populous districts. Most Kenyans are living on a small-holder, agricultural production in fairly densely populated regions.

Pastoralism is the dominant way of life in eleven districts, i.e. Tana River, Garissa, Mandera, Wajir, Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana, Samburu, West Pokot, Narok and Kajiado. In these districts, some 8 per cent of the national population are living. On the other hand, it constitutes almost 70 per cent of the total land area in Kenya. Physical conditions for crop producing agriculture is very limited in these districts, that could be characterized as arid and semi-arid lands.

From the 1979 Population Census the ethnic affiliation per district is given. In some of the eleven districts, one ethnic group is totally dominant, while in others there is a more mixed population. At the time of the census there were a total of over 1.2 million people, belonging to the traditi-

onally pastoralist ethnic groups. All figures given below for pastoralists as part of district population is related to 1979, if nothing else is stated. We must keep in mind that due to the very fact that these people are nomadic, drastic changes do occur from one year to the next.

The largest single ethnic entity in this category are the Somalis. They are registered in numerous sub-groups like Gosha, Hawiyah, Ogaden, Ajuran, Gurreh and Degodia, or are classified as simply other Somalis. In 1979, they numbered a total of almost 400,000.

Somalis normally live on the border to Somalia and Ethiopia. This area is a disputed territory, which according to Somalia belongs to a Greater Somali Nation. From a Kenyan point of view the Somalis seem to be regarded with suspicion. Late last year (1989) they were subjugated to a most humiliating registration exercise, in principle branding them as some kind of second class citizens.

Most of the Kenyan Somalis live in the North-Eastern province, i.e. the three districts of Garissa, Mandera and Wajir. Close to 90 per cent of the population here are Somalis. In some other arid and semi-arid districts, the Somalis constitute a fairly substantial minority, like Isiolo (19 per cent), Tana River (11 per cent) and Marsabit (7 per cent).

Another large pastoral group is the Masai, living on both sides of the border to Tanzania. In 1979 the Kenyan Masai were almost 250,000. Most of the Masai live in the two districts of Narok and Kajiado. However, in neither case are they totally dominating. In Kajiado the Masai share of the population is 63 per cent, with not less than 23 per cent Kikuyu and 6 per cent Kamba. In Narok 56 per cent belong to the Masai group, and another 28 and 8 per cent respectively are Kalenjin and Kikuyu. In both districts, the proportion of non-Masai has increased substantially during the seventies.

From this, it can be claimed that the two districts of Narok and Kajiado are only partly inhabited by traditional pastoralists. Especially the northern part of Kajiado is influenced, in a "modern" way, due to a large extent to the geographical affinity to

the capital, Nairobi. Furthermore, members of the Masai ethnic group are often found among the national political elite, even if these leaders often are said to be of mixed heritage.

In the extreme north-west of Kenya, we find the Turkana ethnic group, with some 200,000 people. They constituted 96 per cent in the district bearing their name. This same group also made up 17 per cent of the Samburu district. In the latter district, 75 per cent belonged to an ethnic group, with the same name. There were 75,000 Samburu, in all.

There was a total of 150,000 Galla-speaking people in Kenya in 1979. They can be sub-divided into Rendille, Boran, Gabbra, Sakuye and Orma. In Marsabit district, 78 per cent of the population belonged to the Galla speaking people. For neighbouring Isiolo, we noted a substantial share of Somalis. Furthermore, in this district there are 50 per cent Galla speakers, coupled with fairly large amounts of Turkana (10 per cent), Samburu (7) and Meru (5).

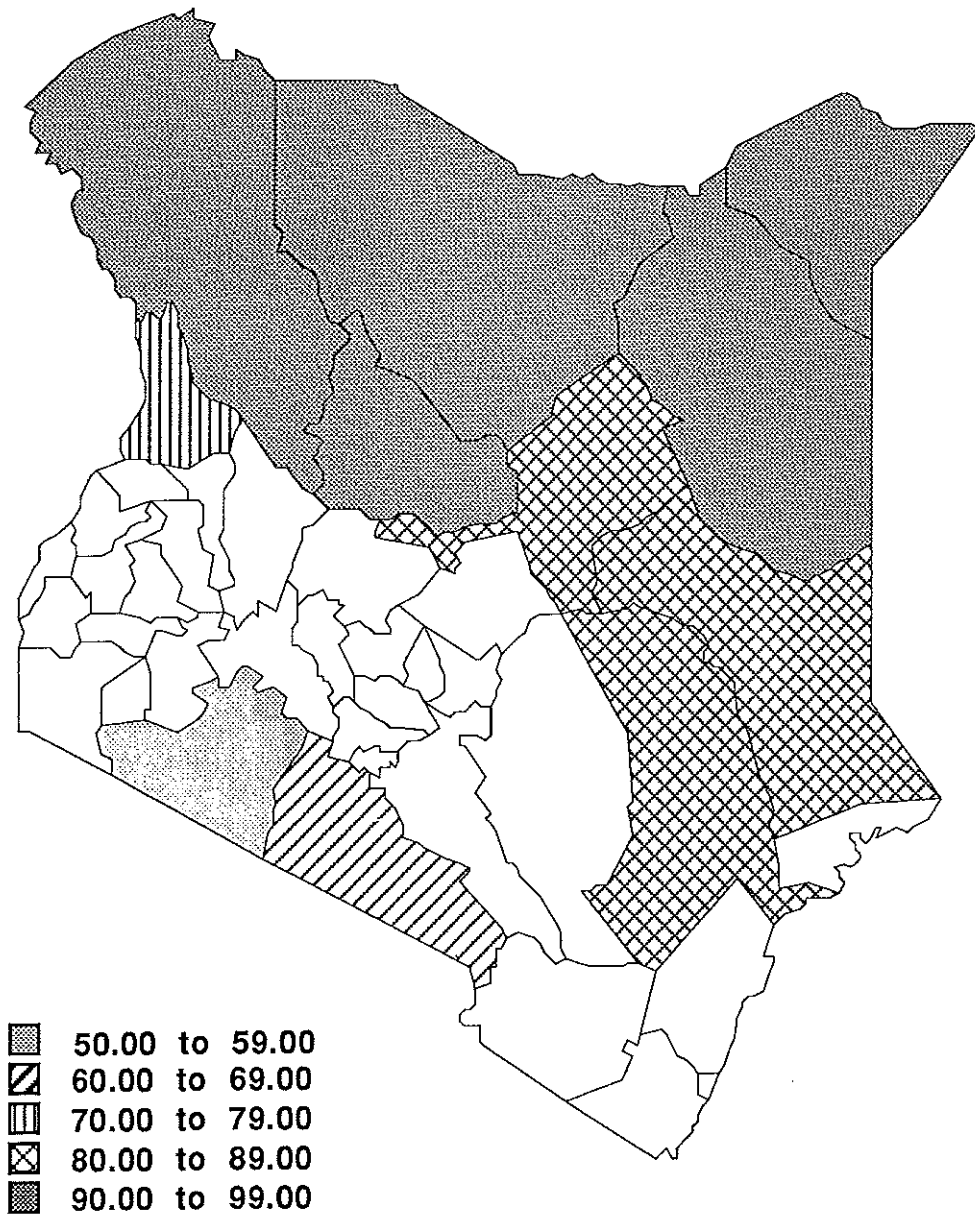
In West Pokot almost 80 per cent are members of the Pokot group, a basically pastoralist entity.

Finally, Tana River district is made up of, primarily, Galla speakers and Pokomo (35 per cent each). The latter group is traditionally, at least partially, nomadic.

Map 2 gives the proportion of the population being traditionally pastoralist.

In all, five districts, Marsabit, Mandera, Wajir, Samburu and Turkana, have a population inhabited by at least 90 per cent, belonging to one of the major pastoralist ethnic groups. In another two, Isiolo and Garissa, more than 85 per cent of the population is in the same category. In the latter two the district head-quarters have been designated as gate-way towns, which are supposed to serve as urban centers for vast "virtually undeveloped" areas (Republic of Kenya, 1983). This has resulted in an influx of people from other regions to man the service establishments.

Below, we will primarily deal with the educational advancement in these seven districts. For the remaining four, Kajiado, Narok, West Pokot and Tana River, the population is somewhat more mixed. In Kajiado, for example, as mentioned above, data



Map 2. Percentage of district population being primarily of pastoralist origin in 1979.

on social status is largely influenced by its proximity to the national capital, Nairobi.

In its official statements, the Kenyan Government has always expressed a policy to alleviate regional inequalities in the country. This can be found in the main strategy document, published just after the independence:

*Every effort will be made to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for people in less developed parts of the country. (Republic of Kenya, 1965: 56)*

This objective has, thereafter, been reiterated in consecutive development plans, like for example 1974-78:

*...expansion of the economy, with equitable sharing in its benefits; and integration of the national economy. (Republic of Kenya, 1974: 1).*

However, since independence, the Kenyan Government has realized fully the inherent conflicts between the goals of economic

growth and equitable distribution.

*One of our problems is to decide how much priority we should give in investing in less developed provinces. To make an economy as a whole grow as fast as possible, development money should be invested where it will yield the largest increase in net output. This approach will clearly favour the development of areas having abundant natural resources, good land and rainfall, transport and power facilities and, people receptive to and active in development. (Republic of Kenya, 1965: 46)*

This would clearly put the pastoral people in the arid and semi-arid lands in an awkward position for assistance from the central Government. A main development emphasis should be to put priority on the people and not an area, so that "education and training will qualify the people to find employment elsewhere." (p. 47). In certain areas it is claimed that people are not exploring the potentials of their habitat.

*In these areas a concerted and prolonged effort to overcome prejudices and suspicious is needed before development can take place. (p.47)*

Evidently, the main intention would be to offer an opportunity to individuals from the pastoral regions to participate in the national development. On the other hand, nothing is said about increasing the material well-being of pastoralists as a whole.

Education has been seen as an important tool in improving on the socioeconomic equality and in creating a feeling of nationhood. The first Commission of Education, under the chairmanship of Professor Ominde, expressed this:

*A most urgent objective of education must be to subserve the needs of national development.*

*Education must promote social equality and remove division of race, tribe and religion. (Republic of Kenya, 1964)*

In 1976 a "National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies" published

its findings.

*From an economic point of view, development resources tend to be invested where they yield the largest increase in net output. This approach tends to favour the development of areas that have abundant natural resources, good land and rainfall, transport and power facilities and the necessary human resources. Yet the fundamental purposes of national development is to effect social improvement of lives of the people as a whole. (Republic of Kenya, 1976)*

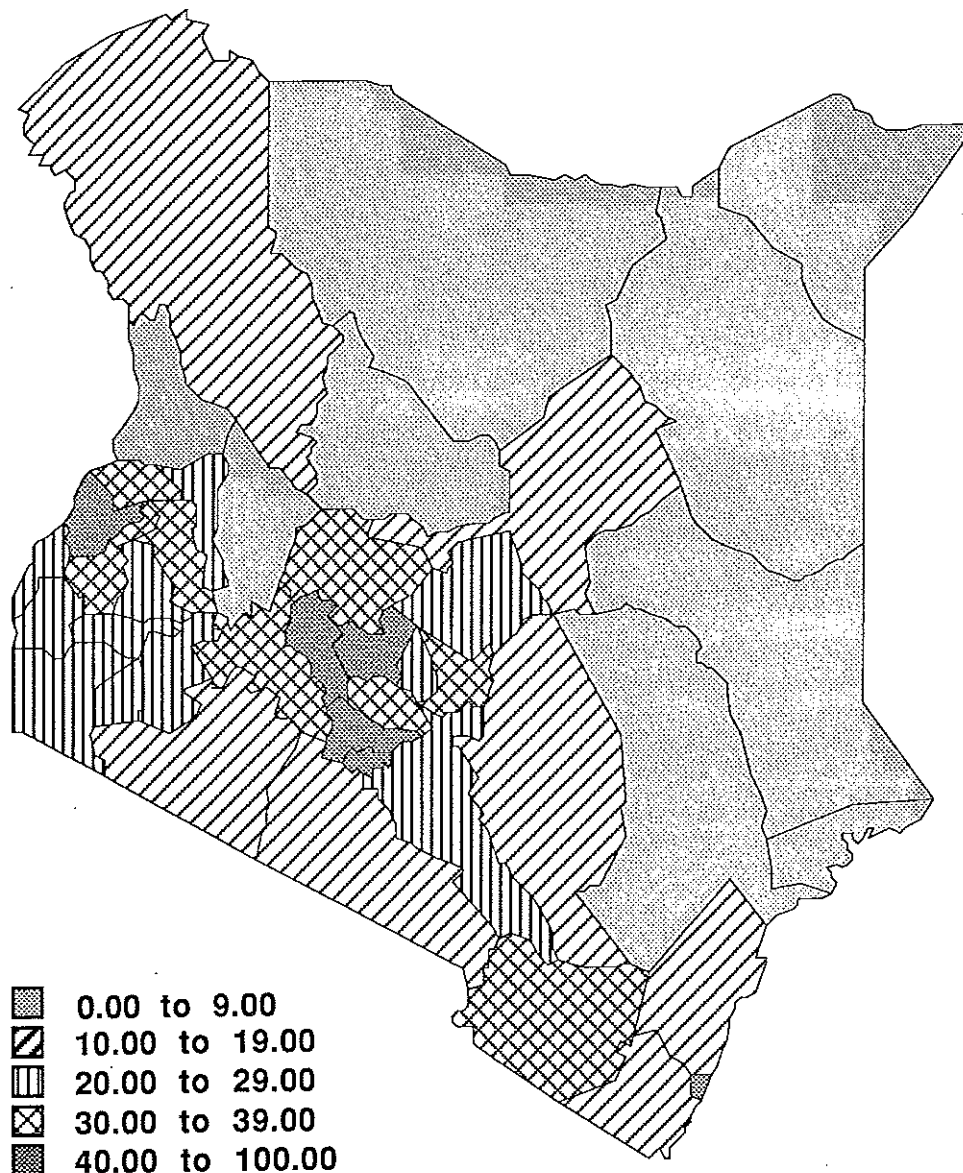
Once again at the end of the eighties a "Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond" claimed the Government's commitment to the same goal.

*The process of bringing equity in social and economic development through education is an important objective of education and training. The Government has embarked on a policy of providing equal education and training opportunities to all areas of Kenya in an attempt to correct imbalances and disparities which existed at independence. This policy should continue. (Republic of Kenya, 1988: 14)*

It would, indeed, be very difficult to detect any positive effects of this stated policy on greater equality in the distribution of educational facilities nationwide. Particularly, educational reforms favouring the pastoralists can hardly be traced at all. Below we will give some data on educational development in Kenya, putting a special emphasis on the pastoral people.

## Educational Development Among Pastoralists in Kenya

Since independence, educational facilities have expanded rapidly at all levels. This has been the case for both primary and secondary levels. However, the development has not been equally distributed throughout the whole country. We will here give special attention to educational facilities as they are provided to the pastoral people.



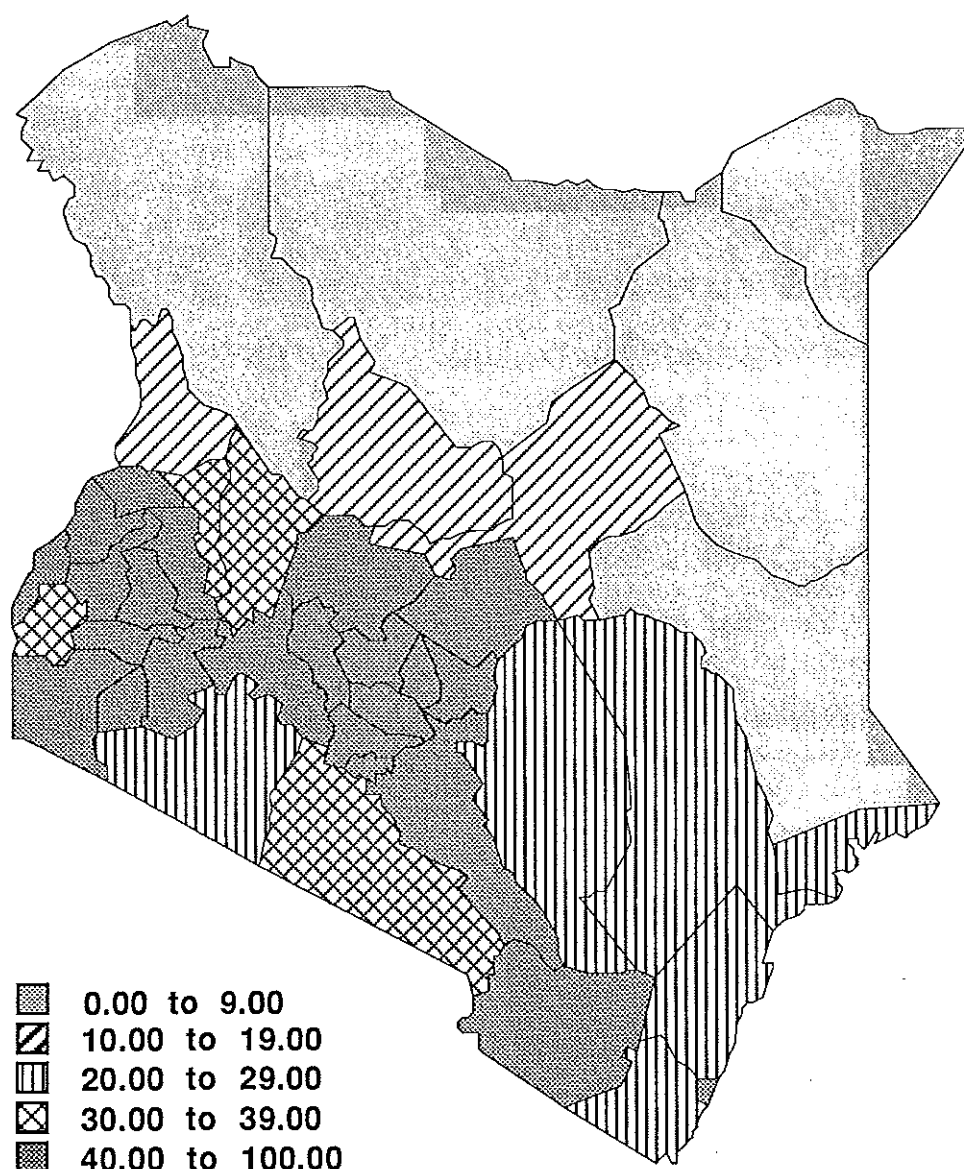
Map 3. *Percentage of the adult population with some formal education in 1969.*

Data on education, used here, is primarily based on annual reports from the Ministry of Education. This is coupled with some impressions from my own previous research on education in Kenya. Some of the information might be regarded as outdated, but unfortunately district educational statistics have been available in a rather unsystematic way during the eighties. However, nothing based on my own research, seems to indicate any changes in trends during the last decade.

In 1969, 30 per cent of the population above 20 years of age had been enrolled for

ome kind of formal education. However, as is obvious from Map 3, some districts are far behind that average. This is particularly so within the dominantly pastoral districts, i.e. Garissa (3 per cent), Mandera (1), Wajir (4), Samburu (4), Turkana (12), Marsabit (6) and Isiolo (12). Strong doubts can be expressed on the Turkana figure.

Ten years later, approximately half of the Kenyan 20 years olds and above had at least entered some kind of formal schooling. Still, however, predominantly pastoralist districts are far behind the national averages. Especially this is so for the dis-



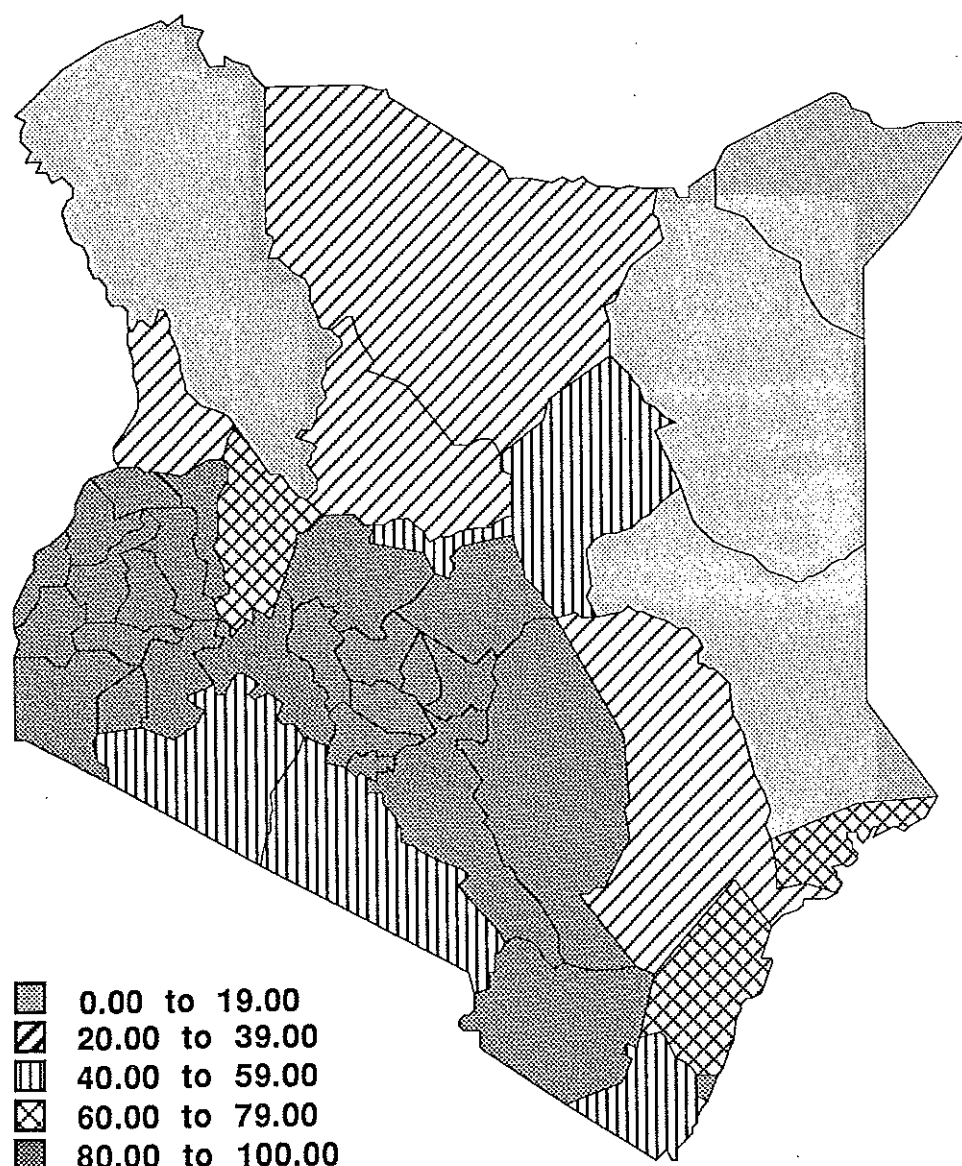
Map 4. *Percentage of the adult population with some formal education in 1979.*

districts with the highest proportion belonging to nomadic groups, i.e. Garissa (7 per cent), Mandera (4), Wajir (4), Marsabit (7), Samburu (10) and Turkana (6), while Isiolo has had a somewhat better development (Map 4).

Obviously, districts with the highest dominance of pastoralism still have a very low share of people with some kind of formal education. Furthermore, it can be assumed that people with some education are largely from outside, engaged in the district administration. It is hard to find any positive trends, if we take the expansi-

on of basic education into account.

In most parts of Kenya, an absolute majority of all children are at least enrolled in primary school. Map 5 gives an illustration to the fact that in 26 (out of 41) districts, at least 80 per cent of all children in the age group 10-14 had been to school for a longer or a shorter period of time (1979). However, for the predominantly pastoral districts, the situation is a lot more gloomy. For the districts of Wajir (10 per cent), Garissa (10), Mandera (11), Turkana (13), Samburu (23) and Marsabit (24) only a small fraction of the children were ever entered



Map 5. Children in age groups, 10-14 year olds, with at least some formal education, 1979.

for formal schooling. Once again, we can note a better figure for Isiolo with 45 per cent.

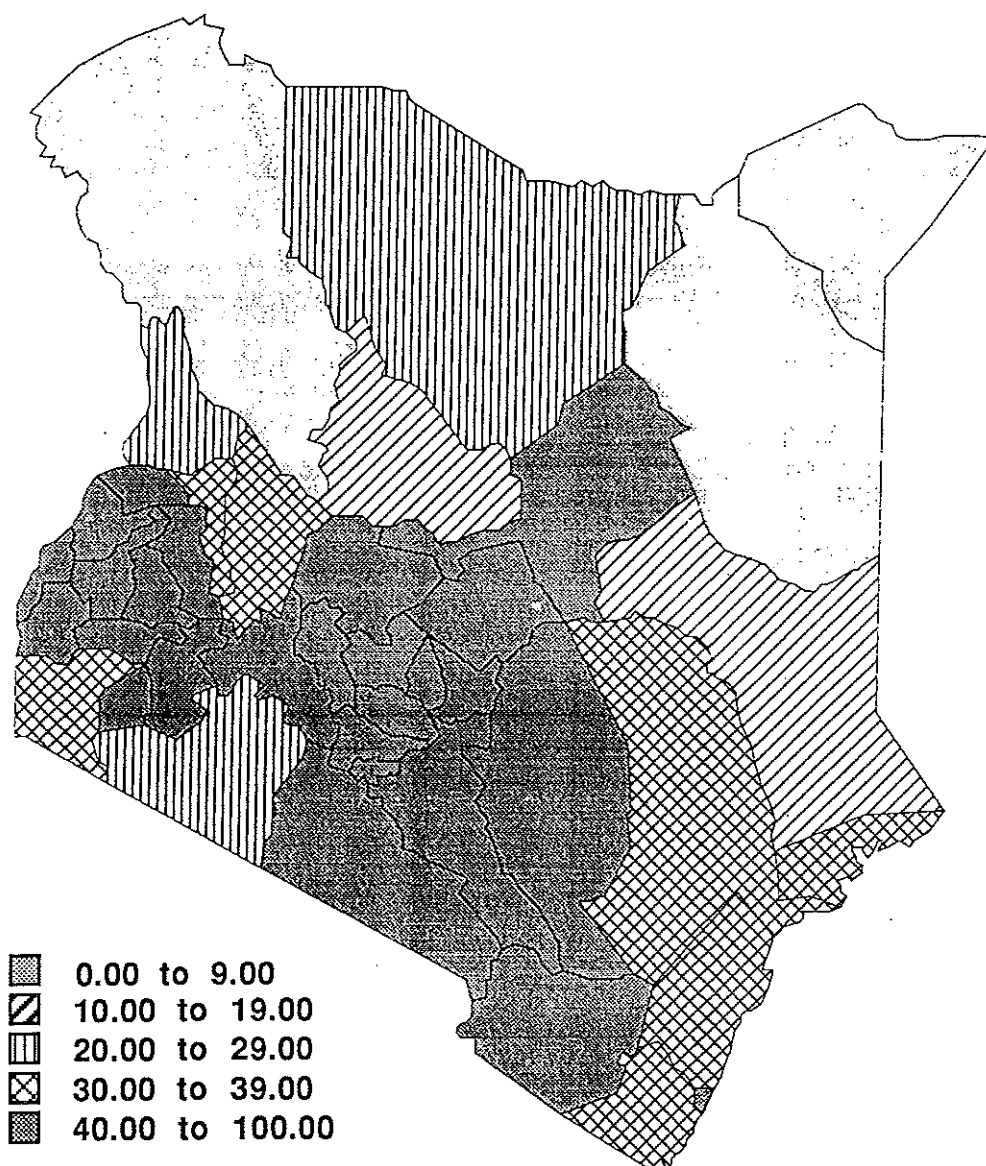
Therefore, it is clear that the pastoralists are still far from any goal stated about UPE, Universal Primary Education, which is, at least, not too distant for the rest of the country. At least, if we go by what is stated in the official statistics.

During the period 1969 to 1979, primary education in Kenya was developed in a very fast pace. In 1969, just over half of all children in relevant ages went to primary school. During the seventies, all official

school fees were abolished. Furthermore, at the end of the decade a school milk programme was introduced.

According to figures given, there are more primary school attendants, than children in what is supposed to be relevant ages, 6 to 12 year olds. This is caused by frequent repetition, but also enrolment of "over-aged" groups. For this reason the primary school statistics are difficult to interpret. Some districts report an enrolment of, as high as 131-143 per cent.

In spite of this, the pastoralist districts are noted for very low figures, even if there is



Map 6. Primary school enrolment for 1969 in comparison to the relevant age group, 6-12 year olds.

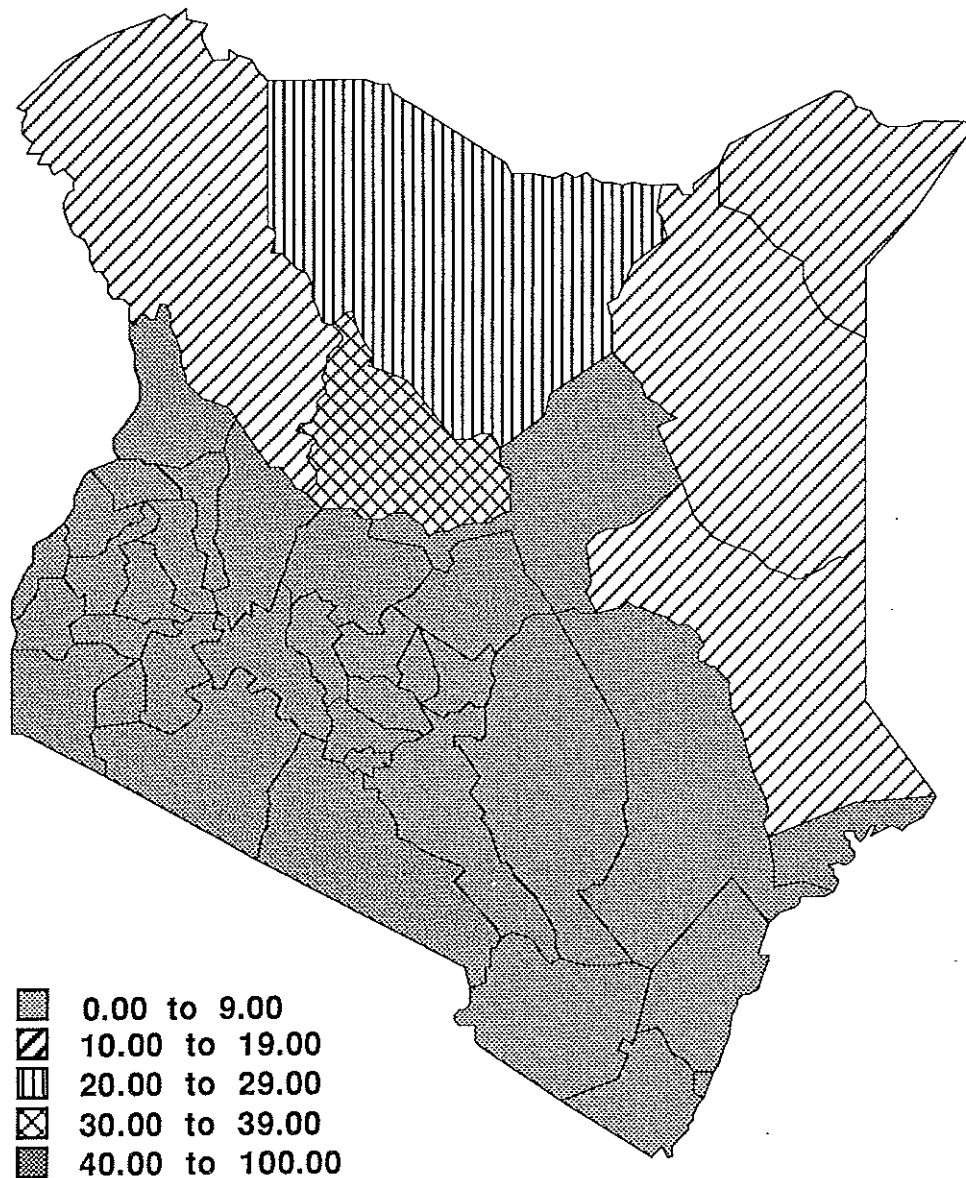
a slight increase between 1969 and 1979. Maps 6 and 7 give the details about primary school enrolment.

The situation seems to be particularly serious for the North-Eastern province and Turkana. Even in 1979, at least 85 per cent of the relevant ages were never enrolled for primary education. In the Development Plan for Garissa, for example, this is referred to the fact that people are largely nomadic. It is difficult to build schools for a population constantly on the move. Obviously, this logistical problem cannot be neglected.

Figures on percentage enrolment for pri-

mary school in relation to relevant ages for the other predominantly pastoral districts were not very impressive in 1979, i.e. Marsabit (29), Samburu (37), Isiolo (72). Similarly, we find for West Pokot (56), Narok (51), Kajiado (72) and Tana River (51).

We can also note that in some cases pupils originating from other districts attempt to repeat in schools in one of the eleven districts mentioned above, to improve their chances for vacancies in national secondary schools. For candidates from these disadvantaged districts, extra points are added to the primary examination score to even out regional differences.



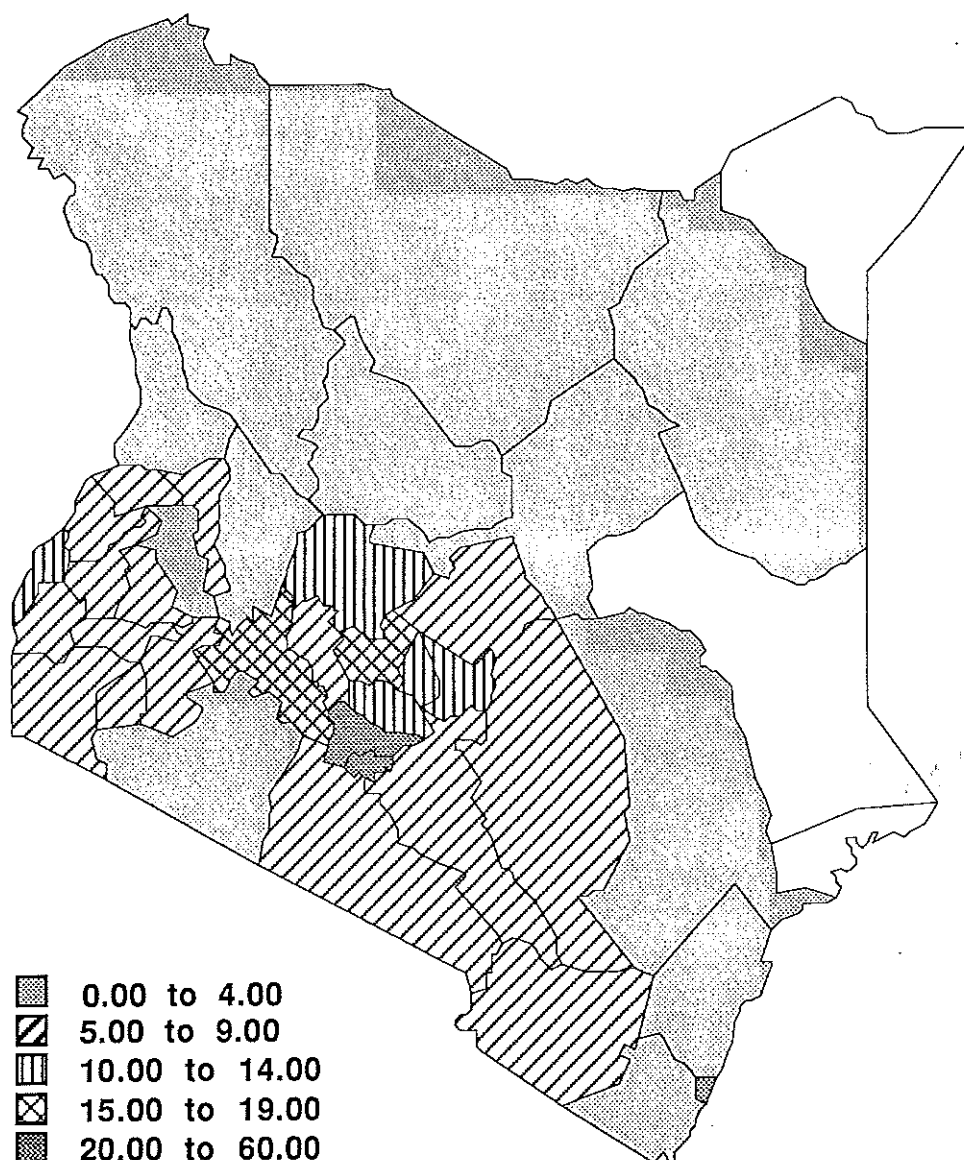
Map 7. Primary school enrolment for 1979 in comparison to the relevant age group, 6-12 year olds.

From studies on recruitment into technical secondary schools, it was obvious that many students from the major ethnical groups had a primary school examination in one of the pastoralist districts, despite the fact that they were registered for another "home" region.

Literacy and primary schooling can be regarded as constituting one of the most basic human rights. Furthermore, development within this field is essential for some kind of "modern" development in any society. Obviously, the Kenyan Government has thus far been unable to provide these basic needs for the primarily pastoralistic people of the country.

Secondary education can be regarded as the main qualification criteria for wage employment in the modern sector, even if at present it is not enough in most cases. In Kenya, we can find an extreme expansion in secondary school facilities during the seventies, but also well into the eighties. This increase in secondary schools has largely been created due to "local initiative", the so called harambee movement. Obviously it has been difficult to raise these kinds of funds within the nomadic societies.

In 1969, there was a total of 692 secondary schools in Kenya. Of these schools five were located in the seven districts which



Map 8. Secondary school enrolment for 1969 in comparison with relevant age group, 10-15 year olds.

are the focal point of this paper. Garissa and Mandera districts had no secondary schools at all. Up to 1979, the number of schools increased up to not less than 1,739 of which 15 were to be found in the same seven districts. This could be regarded as a proportionately fair increase for the pastoral districts. However, in view of the low starting point it is hardly sufficient.

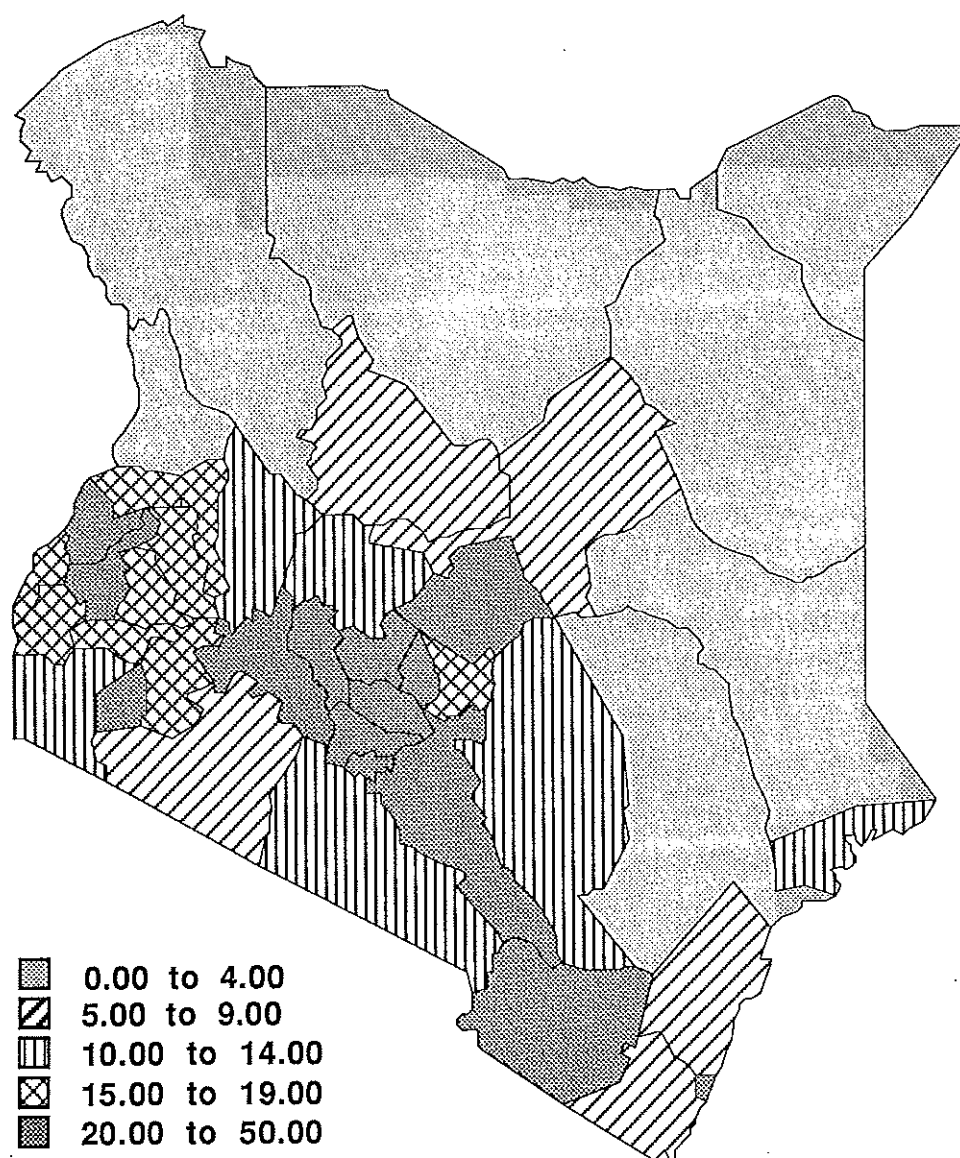
Up to 1984, the proportion of secondary schools in these seven districts seems to be improved slightly in a national context. At that time there were 25 such schools in the relevant districts, compared to a total of 2,396.

Maps 8 and 9 give the enrolment figures for

secondary schools in comparison to the national averages. For both years we can note very low attendance in school at this level, not only for the seven districts of Marsabit, Turkana, Mandera, Garissa, Wajir, Isiolo and Samburu, but also West Pokot, Narok and Tana River.

Furthermore, we can note here that there are a couple of schools in Isiolo and Samburu districts with a substantial attraction for students from other parts of Kenya.

Out of all secondary school students in 1979, 0.6 per cent were enrolled in the seven districts referred to here. During the next five years (1984), there was a slight in-



Map 9. Secondary school enrolment for 1979 in comparison with relevant age group, 10-15 year olds.

crease up to 0.8 per cent.

There is a clear variety in quality between different secondary schools in Kenya. Up to the early eighties, schools were graded according to the standard of facilities. The best schools were given "A" and the worst ones "D". A few schools were unclassified. In 1982, there was a total of 1,525 schools offering the O-level examinations, with 129 classified as grade "A". Not one of the "A" graded schools were to be found in any of the seven districts, focused on in this paper. Furthermore, seven out of 17 schools in these districts were not classified at all.

For that year, 0.8 per cent of all O-level candidates were entered in these seven districts.

As a part of the Kenyan school system, there are a number of national schools. These can be either academic ones or technically biased. In principle, the intake is supposed to be national in character. Furthermore, otherwise disadvantaged regions should be given a special opportunity, by extra points added onto the total score in the primary school examination (see above).

From two studies carried out in 1983 and

1985 (Närman, 1985; 1988a and 1988b), some results can be mentioned in reference to the pastoralist population.

In 1983, 184 fourth year students were interviewed in the two prestigious national academic schools of Alliance and Lenana. Among them the pastoralist groups were represented by six students (Masai 3 and Samburu 3).

From a similar study of eight technical secondary schools in 1985, a total of 665 fourth year students were interviewed. Among them we found Somali (5), Masai (4), Turkana (3), Samburu and Galla (1 each).

Obviously in both of these studies we found a considerably lower representation of pastoral "ethnic" groups compared to their total share of the national population (7 per cent).

Similarly, we can note a fairly low number of students, in other educational institutions, representing the "ethnic" groups relevant here. As an example of this we can mention the Kenya Science Teachers College (KSTC). During the period 1968 to 1983, a total of 1950 secondary school teachers were trained at this college. Out of them we find a total of 44 from the ethnic groups of Somali (20), Masai (10), Turkana (5), Galla (5), Pokomo (3) and Samburu (1).

The above account points to a marked neglect of educational facilities provided for people in the primarily pastoralist regions of Kenya. Partly, this can be due to the difficulty in providing education to a population, for which migration is a normal way of life. Furthermore, the value of education might not be realised fully among the pastoralists. However, there seems to be a certain reluctance on part of the government to establish a more truly "national" development.

One aspect that also has to be taken into account is the fact that educational development, as such, does not necessarily improve the situation for the relevant region. Education is, as was noted above, provided for the individual, not the community. The fact that some people will be educated, does equip them with a means to compete in the "modern" sector. This personal benefit might not always trickle down to a wider "home" community.

## Concluding Remarks

As noted above, the data referred to here is part of a larger study focusing on regional inequalities, with a special emphasis on education in Kenya. During the colonial period, an unbalanced regional structure emerged. Since independence that same pattern has been further accentuated.

One important part of development geography should be to explore existing differences over a geographical space. However, this cannot be done in a merely static way. Advantages given on certain facilities, in previously well-endowed regions, are geared to strengthen an existing pattern of inequality. For example, if educational advancement is prioritised in the already economically most "developed" regions, it tends to strengthen a state of inequality.

Furthermore, if educational demand is determining the regional distribution of schools, an existing imbalance will automatically be perpetuated. It can be assumed that among the more affluent segment of the population, investment in the education of the children is a priority. For other strata in the society, like peasants, pastoralists, landless farm workers or the urban unemployed, the mere survival strategy will be more essential.

It can be pointed out here that some symbolic token of good-will towards the educationally disadvantaged groups in the society might not have much of a positive effect. Education can be used here by the individual, as a ticket to join an urban elite cultivating interests in opposition to the local people. Therefore, educational planning must take a much more integrated approach, as part of an over-all regional strategy. In an assessment of the actual government commitment towards a more equal growth, regional educational distribution can be but one indicator.

This paper has primarily dealt with the position of the pastoralist in the "modern" development. Obviously, they have been grossly neglected in the provision of educational facilities in Kenya. On the one hand it can be argued that formal schooling is not a priority in their own traditional way of life. However, with a more national strategy they will be dragged into the realms of governmental policies of "moderniza-

tion" irrespective of their own priorities. The general Kenyan strategy, built strongly on an efficient export-oriented agricultural sector, puts pressure on available land resources. Peasants are forced to migrate into increasingly more marginal lands. This trend will eventually lead to an infringement into the traditional domains of pastoralists.

Our assumption, therefore, is that pastoralists, voluntarily or involuntarily, will be influenced by policies determined on a more central governmental level. To be able to be involved as actors, and not only objects, in such a development, at least the basic educational standards must be raised considerably. To participate more fully in all aspects of a changing society, a drastic improvement of secondary and tertiary education must be emphasised. Presently no trends seem to point in that direction.

Planning for education in favour of the pastoralists is not only a matter of building schools. Account must be given to the special problems of providing education to minority groups, both related to practical, as well as ethical issues. We can often refer here to a reluctance to adopt change or to be involved in a modernized "development" among pastoralist. The government can use such feelings as an excuse to do nothing about the problems.

A pastoralist suspicion towards modern formal education could be regarded as natural. It can, to a large extent, serve as a factor of alienation from a specific pastoral identity. Furthermore, the appropriateness of the education provided for the pastoralists can be questioned. Possibly educational planners should be more open to specific demands among different groups in the society.

In the end, the issue of providing equal opportunities to the whole population boils down to a question of the legitimacy of the government rule, as such. If the political and administrative elite cannot find ways of fostering social services to the total population, objections can be raised as to its right of rule. In Kenya, the educational system has to a large extent, been instrumental in reproducing an existing elite structure. The needs among many groups have here been grossly neglected. Among the neglected segments of the society we

can definitely find the pastoralists.

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