



# EdQual

A Research Programme Consortium on  
Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries

## **EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS JUSTICE IN AFRICA**

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A Research Programme Consortium on  
Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article examines ways in which some of the most marginalized and disadvantaged African communities and groups are re-defining education through strategies aimed at recognition of rights and social justice. It draws on Fraser's approach to social justice and examines nature of indigenous peoples' expectations of and demands for education through the lenses of distribution, recognition and participation. Over the past ten years, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has adopted legislation protecting the rights of indigenous peoples in African countries while indigenous communities have been shaping new political and educational spaces for their participation and decision making about their development and their education. Taking the example of the East African pastoralists and the Maasai of Ngorongoro District in Tanzania, it looks at indigenous peoples' initiatives to define and achieve a qualitative education which is relevant and meaningful for their lives today. It concludes with a discussion of the potential for the indigenous movement in Africa to 'reframe' education for the benefit of not only indigenous communities but for all learners.

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## INTRODUCTION

This article examines ways in which some of the most marginalised and discriminated against populations and communities on the African continent are re-defining education through strategies aimed at recognition of rights and social justice. Colonial and post-colonial histories of development and education have marginalised groups who today identify themselves as indigenous and are engaged in advocacy for recognition of rights as indigenous peoples<sup>1</sup>. They articulate their demands for rights at different interconnected levels, from the local and national to the global, as part of an increasingly joined up social movement for recognition, equality and decision-making. The article takes a processual and relational understanding of the indigenous situation (Saugestad 2008) and a social justice approach (Fraser 2008) to argue that indigenous peoples' quest for quality education offers valuable insights and alternative routes to an education which promotes social justice, not just for indigenous peoples but for all.

Given the predominance of poverty and inequality in Africa today, Tikly and Dachi (2009) suggest that redistribution, recognition and participation are mutually reinforcing goals for an education for social justice. They note, however, that the discourse and policy processes today are dominated by issues of funding and resources, and of concern for increasing equity of access to education. These agendas limit consideration of the quality of education in terms of its meaningfulness, relevance and value for learners and their communities, and in terms of the wide range of historical and contemporary contexts in Africa in which social justice issues are defined and contested. In Africa today, where the multiple dimensions of poverty are deep-seated and persistent, indigenous peoples experience multiple forms of discrimination on the basis of gender, location, language, disability and class. These forms of discrimination intersect in highly complex ways to produce unique individual and group experiences of poverty (Sayed and Soudien 2003 Tikly and Dachi 2009). Indigenous peoples' lived realities and locally experienced expressions of marginalisation, discrimination and disempowerment are, moreover, embedded in wider national, global and historical processes of unequal development (Gray 1997). In the education arena, indigenous peoples are over-represented among learners who are marginalised and excluded from good quality education, and their concerns are under-addressed in policy agendas (ibid.). These diverse configurations of discrimination and inequality "ultimately boil down to a threat towards their right to existence as a group and to social, economic and cultural development of their own choice" (Saugestad 2008:168).

The EdQual research consortium has outlined a robust framework for investigating quality in education, which underlines the importance of recognising the values basis of not only research processes but educational policies and practices (Tikly and Barrett 2006; Barrett et al. 2006). This article is concerned with the meanings, value and relevance of education for indigenous peoples and the nature and demand for quality education from indigenous peoples and through the indigenous movement. Educational values are the values of learners, practitioners and their communities, contextualised and articulated through their lived realities. What kind of education is valued, and how is it contextualised and articulated across interconnected networks and alliances locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

After locating the approach taken here in the work of Nancy Fraser, this article discusses what 'indigenous' means in the contemporary African context where its negative connotations have contributed a vigorous reconceptualisation of the term. It then examines ways in which those people self-identifying as indigenous have been working to shape new participatory political spaces at national and global levels from where they can determine new educational practices, which respond to the challenges of their particular contexts and histories. Looking at the situation in East Africa in general and taking the example of the Maasai of Ngorongoro District in Tanzania in

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<sup>1</sup> This article uses the term 'peoples' throughout following the terminology adopted by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Report adopted by the ACHPR uses the terms 'populations' and 'communities'.

particular, it asks what kind of education is valued for, and by, young indigenous people in today's world. It concludes with a discussion of the dynamics and possibilities for re-framing education through a social movement for indigenous distributive and representative justice.

## **1. AN INDIGENOUS SOCIAL JUSTICE APPROACH**

Fraser provides a useful integrated framework for thinking about dimensions of social justice and analysing what is being examined here in terms of an 'indigenous' justice. She identifies three aspects of social justice: its distributive dimension concerned with equity in the distribution of resources; representational justice concerned with recognition of cultural pluralism; and participative justice concerned with political representation and strategies for achieving justice (Fraser 2008). Fraser identifies two levels of political injustice which are important for the argument being developed here in relation to indigenous peoples. There is what she calls 'ordinary-political misrepresentation' whereby people are denied the possibility of participating on a par with others (ibid:18). This article examines ways in which indigenous peoples in Africa have been excluded and denied participation in education of the state. She also identifies a second level of misrepresentation where questions of justice are framed in such a way that they exclude some people from consideration altogether. Indigenous peoples want 'ordinary-political' representation, but they are also contesting the way in which questions such as what is quality education, who are teachers and what is valid and valued educational knowledge are formulated. This is the terrain of struggle for indigenous peoples in Africa and their growing participation in and contribution to a global indigenous movement for rights and social justice.

Indigenous peoples have claimed and occupied seats at negotiating tables at the ILO (though the revision of Convention 169) and the UN (though the Working Group for the drafting of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the establishment of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) and other international forums for over two decades, culminating in the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly (Resolution 61/295 on 13 September 2007) in 2007 (UNPFII 2007) by the UN Human Rights Council, a moment which defined the beginning of a new struggle for the implementation of the rights in practice. The Declaration emerged slowly from a process of negotiation between representatives of indigenous organisations who have both denounced violations and abuses of rights and engaged with the legalistic wordsmithing of UN processes and documentation alongside representatives of national governments. Rights to education laid down in the Declaration have three dimensions: a distributive dimension which identifies that "Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination" (Article 14(2)), a representational dimension which recognises that "States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language" (Article 14 (3)), and a dimension that recognises indigenous peoples self-determination: "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning" (Article 14 (1)). The drafting and adoption of the Declaration is itself a measure of the strength of the determination and skills of indigenous peoples in lobbying for and achieving the right to be heard and listened to in rights-defining as well as other policy setting forums. It is a huge step forward in the struggle for formal recognition and validation of indigenous knowledge and education systems. An indigenous justice approach to education, therefore, is not about cession, separatism or exclusivity but about being able to articulate and define their own priorities for education based on their lived realities of inequality and discrimination and their aims and expectations for their futures. A just education is responsive to diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of indigenous learners, to collective and individual values, to intergenerational learning and teaching and changes these may be undergoing because of pressures and changes in social, cultural and physical environments. It is an approach that values, too, educational practices and systems outside of and independent of

formal education systems and state regulated schooling. An indigenous justice approach, moreover, is predicated on a definition and framing of participation that goes beyond passive notions of consultation to active decision-making defined through the concept of 'self-determination'. This concept is at the heart of indigenous agency and strategies for change. This discussion, then, investigates 'indigenous African approaches' to social justice and quality education and their potential, as well as their experience to date, to redefine and 're-frame' (Fraser 2008) contemporary institutionalised education in its various manifestations across Africa for the benefit of all.

## **2. BEING INDIGENOUS IN AFRICA**

In Africa today, peoples and communities who self-identify as indigenous are doing so in an effort to address their situations of marginalisation and discrimination. They have been alienated and made vulnerable by colonial and post-colonial development processes and policies which have favoured agriculture over hunting, gathering and nomadic herding. Hunter-gatherers and nomadic pastoralists have been viewed as a threat to national unity, and there is widespread stigmatisation of them as leading backward and peripheral ways of life best integrated as soon as possible. Pastoralists have been cast as "environmentally destructive agents of desertification and uneducated warring peoples largely uninterested in development" (Little et al. 2008:607). But they are diverse and cut across various economic systems and embrace a diversity of socio-linguistic groups with different cultural traditions, social institutions and religious systems. They identify with different geographical locations and include, among others, hunter-gatherers and former hunter-gatherer communities such as the Hadzabe in Tanzania, Ogiek in Kenya, Batwa in Central Africa and San in Southern Africa. They also include pastoralists such as the Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, the Barabaig, Samburu, Turkana in Kenya and Ethiopia, Karamajong in Uganda and the Touareg in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso (for more details see ACHPR 2005). Today, these indigenous peoples are experiencing rapid and radical change in their social, cultural and physical environment while land dispossession and the loss of natural resources continues as national parks and conservation areas threaten their economic, cultural and social survival. Indigenous knowledge systems and resource management, passed down generations through indigenous oral education systems, have become constrained and are unsustainable as natural resources are degraded or lost. Many individuals today no longer practice the nomadic or transhumant lifestyles of previous generations. Nevertheless, they may still maintain their indigenous values, belief systems and languages in different ways and consider themselves indigenous (IWGIA 2006).

Since 1999, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) has heard testimonies of representatives of these groups in Africa, resulting in the adoption of a Report on the human rights situation of 'indigenous populations and communities' in Africa in 2003 (ACHPR 2005). The Report is a landmark document which outlines a concept of indigenous for Africa and a framework for dealing with issues of human rights. As the Commissioner and Chairman of the ACHPR Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities states, indigenous peoples are requesting recognition, respect and human rights protection on an equal footing with other African communities (Chigovera 2005).

The Report outlines several reasons for the importance of the term 'indigenous' in Africa while recognising that all Africans are indigenous to Africa in the sense that they were there before the European colonialists arrived and have been subordinated during colonialism. In a continent where racial politics have been used to oppress, the term indigenous may still conjure up conflicts fuelled by politics of identity, essentialist concepts of aboriginality and apartheid policies. In Botswana, for example, Saugestad (2008) notes how on its independence in 1966, in an attempt to distance the country from apartheid South Africa, the constitution ignored distinct cultures, traditions or languages. However, the result of national inclusive policies was the "hegemony of one majority culture, one dominant tradition and one national language of instruction[...]which serves as a yardstick against which citizenship and adequate performance are measured" (Saugestad 2008:158). The ACHPR Report argues, however, that 'indigenous' is an internationally recognised

term by which to understand and analyse certain forms of inequalities and suppression such as those suffered by many pastoralists and hunter-gatherer groups and others in Africa. And, it insists that it does not deny the legitimate claims of other Africans to their identities and belonging or their social justice. It views the term as helpful in analysing the particularities of the sufferings of certain groups who are victims of human rights abuses that have mostly a collective nature, such as the right to existence, to land, to culture and to identity; rights which are protected by the articles in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR 2005).

The definition of indigenous being employed by the African Commission, is, therefore a contemporary one, distinct from notions of 'first people' or aboriginality accompanying the indigenous movement in, for example, the Americas. It does not reify identity or imply a sole focus on cultural difference as the basis for social injustice, but the term indigenous is used analytically to draw attention to and alleviate the particular forms of discrimination that indigenous populations experience. It emphasises the self-definition as indigenous and a special attachment to and use of land which has fundamental importance for collective physical and cultural survival as a people, and on an experience of subjugation, marginalisation, dispossession exclusion or discrimination (ACHPR 2005:93). There is, indeed, no check list of characteristics that define someone as indigenous.

The term, then, is used to recognise unjust relationships and power imbalances and support strategies for participation and self-determination over changes that affect indigenous peoples' lives. In Fraser's terms, it is about redressing misrecognition when indigenous peoples are "denied the status of a full partner in social interaction, as a consequence of institutionalised patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem" (2000:114). She argues cogently that redressing discrimination that derives from lack of recognition involves a grounded approach – that of changing the social institutions and their values. The politics of recognition does not stop at identity but seeks institutional remedies for institutionalised harms and entrenching new value patterns (ibid: 117). Education that is informed by and promotes indigenous justice is about eradicating disempowering stereotypes and practices which de-legitimise indigenous peoples' knowledges, languages and their own systems of teaching and learning. It is about educational institutions and organisations – state, private, faith-based, non-governmental - that promote indigenous participation and decision making in policy development, planning, budgeting and implementation.

By adopting the Report, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights has demonstrated the validity of indigenous peoples' rights and through constitutional and legislative recognition their right to respect and dignity, to justice and to culture and identity. It enshrines their right to land and resources, to social, economic and cultural development of their own choice and in conformity with their own identity, and to the right of equal access to medical care and attention, and the right to education. Member states of the African Union are bound by the Articles in the African Charter to recognise the rights, duties and freedoms it enshrines, and they have vowed to undertake legislative or other measures to give effect to them (ACHPR 2005). The challenge today is ensuring the progressive realisation of these rights at the national and local levels.

In 2005, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues dedicated its 5th Session to examining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This subsidiary body of the UN Economic and Social Council is mandated to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights (IWGIA 2008). The participants at this Session called for an urgent revision of the MDGs in order to ensure that the MDGs better reflect the articles of the Declaration on education, particularly in relation to the quality of state education and state recognition of indigenous education systems. The MDGs are silent on these educational issues which are of utmost concern to indigenous peoples and say nothing about offering indigenous learners a more relevant education in their own language and respectful of indigenous world views (PFII MDG 2005).



### 3. REDEFINING AND REFRAMING DEVELOPMENT

The human development approach and recognition of the multidimensionality of poverty (UN 2000; Addison et al. 2008) has contributed to a growing awareness of the severe deprivation in which many indigenous peoples live today. They are disproportionately represented among the world's poor, they have low levels of economic, social and human development, and educational indicators place them at the bottom of the heap. An accurate picture of the situation of indigenous peoples is hard to get as indigenous peoples are not identified in statistics but mostly hidden in national averages. Although there is little data on the world's indigenous peoples, the UN estimates that they comprise 15% of the world's poor and one third of the world's 900 million extremely poor people (UN 2000). This section takes the example of pastoralist peoples of East Africa to look in more depth at issues of education and indigenous justice.

Pastoralists and hunter-gatherers are categorised as poor when mainstream measures, such as assets or cash expenditures, are taken as a proxy for poverty and the subsistence nature of many indigenous peoples' economies is ignored. Pastoralists, however, may lack consumer goods and the cash to purchase them but not necessarily perceive this as poverty, and a nomadic or mobile lifestyle does not encourage the accumulation of consumer goods. Little notes that remoteness from markets, schools and health centres can be taken as an indicator of poverty, yet remoteness benefits a lifestyle dependent on taking advantage of uneven rainfall patterns and where vibrant networks of social relationships are invaluable for exchange of animals (Little et al. 2008). "Those who currently practice mobile pastoralism are less likely to be poor and less prone to drought-induced shocks than stockless, ex-pastoralists in peri-urban settings eking out a living from diverse activities" (ibid:593). Thus, as Ramos (2009) indicates, traditional economic indicators of development say little about spheres of life that are important for indigenous peoples.

Nevertheless, a human development framework and multi-dimensional approach to poverty displays the complexity of indigenous people's poverty which cannot be measured in purely economic or consumption terms. Indigenous ways of life are under threat from loss of land, conflict, and political, social and cultural discrimination. They are excluded from political decision making and control over their own lives and development - structural and historical factors and processes that marginalise the indigenous communities of Africa<sup>2</sup>.

A report by the then UN Special Rapporteur, Rudolfo Stavenhagen (2007) indicated that indigenous peoples have had little opportunity to become involved in their own development, and are more likely to be treated as objects of policies designed by others. But more than that, pastoralists have been stigmatising labels and stereotypes which deny them any legitimacy or authority in development processes (Little 2008). Policies and policy makers have not ignored pastoralists in East Africa or the Sahel and, quite the contrary, there have been many different approaches taken to 'develop' them. These range from failed attempts to establish ranching associations to increase livestock production by (in Tanzania in the 1970s) to supporting pastoralists' own effective mechanisms for managing risk through livestock accumulation and regular and opportunistic herd movements (Markakis 2004; Rass 2006). But as Stavenhagen states, the economic, social and human development levels of many nomadic pastoralist communities remains very low because development policies have not addressed the structural causes underlying their marginalisation. These causes, he argues, are directly linked to the failure to recognise, protect and guarantee their individual and collective rights (Stavenhagen 2007). So while today there are legal and formal acknowledgements of indigenous peoples and their rights through international and regional declarations, they are most likely to be objects of development, though there are some recent examples of indigenous communities' participation in PRSP processes, for example in Kenya and Uganda (Hughes 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> The South African situation is different where the very comprehensive Constitution provides broader recognition

## 4. EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

In broad global terms, indigenous peoples have lower levels of education than non-indigenous populations irrespective of how poor or wealthy a country is (Jensen 2005). Many indigenous children are excluded from formal education provision, and for those who do attend school it is generally of poor quality. This situation is seen as closely linked to issues of indigenous peoples' remoteness from urban centres and/or poverty, and in the case of pastoralists to mobility. Concern with achieving global education development goals and 'reaching the hard to reach', people 'on the margins' or 'remote dwellers' is has focused primarily on how to deliver education to such people. As Carr-Hill (2006) notes with reference to pastoralists in East Africa, nomadic groups pose a serious challenge to the national and international target of EFA by 2015, despite many attempts to establish education services to meet their perceived learning needs. While some of these initiatives have attempted to provide a measure of relevance and flexibility, they are, nevertheless, mostly adaptations of formal schooling for pastoralists by non-pastoralists with little knowledge of the physical, social and cultural realities of pastoralists' diverse lifestyles. As Kratli and Dyer note, "with rare exceptions, formal education is used as an instrument for transforming pastoralists into settled farmers, waged labourers or 'modern' livestock producers" (Kratli and Dyer 2006:15). Moreover, these authors suggest that increases in primary school enrolment in pastoral areas in the 1990s, often attributed to greater recognition of the value of education by pastoralists, may actually indicate growing impoverishment for pastoral households as they view education as an alternative to herding. "Those who go to school stop herding and those who stop herding go to school" (ibid). However, the situation is complex and varies according to context, so there are no clear prescriptions or patterns, but rather a diversity of possibilities.

Formal education policy has been used as a tool by governments for building national unity, national loyalty and for the cultural and lifestyle assimilation of pastoralists. But, as Johnson Ole Kaunga (2005), a Kenyan Maasai writes, formal education can be a double edged sword. For some, it's seen as weakening pastoralist traditional institutions and governance systems, socio-cultural interactions, pastoral livelihoods and indigenous knowledge, while for others education has been important in enabling pastoralists to access positions of leadership and authority and to organize and advance their interests and rights (Kaunga 2005). Kaunga points out that pastoralists' attitudes to schooling are not all negative, though today many are questioning its relevance and appropriateness and asking what it can contribute to their futures as an indigenous people. Education for pastoralists often means leaving home at a very young age to attend boarding school and, moreover, "those who have gone away to school rarely come back home" (ibid:38). A review of the education of nomadic peoples in East Africa (Carr-Hill 2006) concludes that the most important reason for low enrolments in pastoral communities is parents' concern that education (i.e. schooling) will lead children away from their traditional way of life.

While parents value knowledge and literacies that promote communication and interaction as citizens within the wider national society, they are also aware that a child who spends much of the day in school may grow up ill-equipped and unskilled for a life of herding (Crawhill 2006). Experience of indigenous peoples through his role as Coordinator of the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee, Nigel Crawhill insists that indigenous people who have been displaced and are living in townships and in peri-urban settlements tend to see education as an opportunity for alternative income generating possibilities (ibid.). However, those maintaining a mobile herding lifestyle are more likely to send only one child - usually a son - to school while the others remain at home to manage the family's livestock. So, instead of having two children, as their forefathers have done for centuries they have a third child and that one goes to school (Crawhill 2006:12).

Writing of Kenyan pastoralists (the Samburu, Maasai, Pokot, Turkana, Borana, and Gabbra, among others), Kaunga (2005) deplores a lack of participation of pastoralists in steering the direction of development processes, the formulation of education policies and in assessing the relevance of the educational curricula. And, while a rights discourse continues to promote education as an enabling

right, this is through an uncritical and un-contoured concept of education as “an indispensable tool with which to extricate themselves from the exclusion and discrimination that has historically been their fate, and it is the way out of poverty” (UN Special Rapporteur in Jensen 2005:4). It is, moreover, often a technician view of education (Barrett 2009) narrowly concerned with access, completion and standardized testing with no consideration of the processes of education and schooling. Consequently, the experience of schooling for many indigenous peoples as a locus of multiple discriminations – schooling as authoritarian, abusive, alienating and a place of ignorance and hunger – goes largely ignored.

But for pastoralist and other indigenous learners and their parents to value formal education, it needs to be relevant and meaningful and grounded in the realities and perspectives of learners, their communities, practitioners and policy makers. It needs to empower learners to be able to realise their human rights and extend their capabilities (see Tikly and Barrett 2006). Tikly and Dachi (2009) identify a ‘new meaning of relevance’ in the discourse and policy documents of the African Union, NEPAD and the Commission for Africa which place an emphasis on the need to develop curricula to meet Africa’s changing needs in the global world and reflect local cultures, histories and languages. This is reflected in Articles in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights of the African Union asserting the right of every individual to education (Article 17(1)) and the States duty to promote and protect community morals and traditional values (Article 17(3)). But questions remain about how these legal rights become transposed into national legislation and national policies – and, importantly, what kind of participation indigenous peoples have in these processes. The failure of many African states to recognise cultural and language rights and to celebrate cultural diversity is, according to the ACHPR Report, based on the fear that this would ‘open a can of worms’ and lead to separatist demands and challenges to the unitary state. However, it argues that this fear underestimates the important value there is in recognising cultural and language rights as cultural resources for the benefit of all (ACHPR 2005:109). And, to date there is little research or evidence to demonstrate the relationship between formal education and traditional pastoral knowledge, save for an isolated study amongst schooled and non-schooled Maasai boys (Kratli and Dyer 2006:23). Few states recognise the existence of indigenous peoples in their countries and even fewer recognise them in their constitutions or legislation.

Until there is a re-framing of schooling, the knowledges it validates and the languages it legitimises, the right to ‘education’ will continue to be “both a beacon of light and a dark shadow across rural Africa” (Crawhall 2006:10). And, until African languages are used in “meaningful” education, argues Bamgbose (2009), they will become increasingly marginalised.

In both the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Report of the African Union’s Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, indigenous education systems are recognised and have validity on a par with formal schooling of the state. Pastoralist parents who do not send their children to school may not necessarily be hampered by economic poverty and lack of opportunity but asserting their rights to educate their children in a manner appropriate to their indigenous values, knowledge and pedagogies.

## **5. AN EDUCATION OF VALUE FOR MAASAI FROM NGORONGORO DISTRICT, TANZANIA**

This section offers a glimpse of the local realities and historical, socio-economic, cultural and linguistic context of Maasai pastoralists in one District in northern Tanzania and examines some aspects of what a quality education might be for them.

The Maasai constitute one of the largest pastoral groups in East Africa (Markakis 2004) and, in Tanzania, are one of six distinct groups of pastoralists living in seven Districts. Ngorongoro District covers an area of some 14,999km<sup>2</sup> with population of approximately 120,000 people whose main livelihood activity is pastoral livestock production. These Maasai pastoralists were removed from the

Serengeti National Park in 1959 by the government on the assurance of unrestricted grazing in what is now Ngorongoro District. Today, the entire District is a wildlife conservation area of which the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) occupies about 59%. The government's policy of linking conservation of natural resources with human development has raised serious problems for the Maasai pastoralists in the NCA where they comprise 97% of the population. The District is dominated by conservation interests and the Ngorongoro crater hosts the continent's densest population of large species of wildlife, making the area a prime tourist destination (Kipuri and Sorensen 2008). Restrictions on Maasai access to dry season grazing in the higher grounds and on cultivation has made them more vulnerable during spells of drought (Kariuki and Puja 2006).

The Maasai of Ngorongoro are semi-nomadic with permanent settlements where women, small children and the elderly live, while men and especially young boys from around age seven to fourteen years and 'morans' (youths) move with the livestock during the dry season in search of pasture. Depending on the length of the dry season and the severity of drought, the livestock may have to move over long distances, in some cases over thirty kilometres from the 'permanent' home and, in times of drought, whole communities will move (Kariuki and Puja 2006). An increasing population and government restrictions on use of land has resulted in conflicts between Maasai pastoralists and Sonjo and Barabaig agro-pastoralists in the District, and pressure on resources has put severe strain on Hadzabe hunter-gatherers (Dolan 2003).

In the Tanzanian education system central government maintains responsibility for policy direction, curriculum and language policy (Kiswahili as language of instruction in primary school) and allocation and payment of teachers. Teachers are expected to capture the realities of different regions and districts through teaching a local curriculum, but this is hampered by teachers' lack of capacity and flexibility of the curriculum to do this. The District authorities are responsible for infrastructure and management which in Ngorongoro is complicated by the NCA. Literacy rates at around 25% in Ngorongoro District are among the lowest in the country and women's literacy is lower. In 2005 there were 52 primary schools in the District and 4 secondary schools (Kariuki and Puja 2006). Despite an increase in overall enrolment with the introduction of universal free primary education in 2002, girls' enrolment remains extremely low and an estimated 50% of children of school-age do not attend school (Dolan 2003).

Studies into Maasai expectations of and for education (Kariuki and Puja 2006) indicate that policy makers and government officials believe that Maasai parents have little or no interest in formal education and they are often stereotyped as being difficult and 'averse to modernity' while interviews with Maasai parents indicated a demand for schooling and expectations of skills and knowledge which could be used to lobby for land rights and improve their animal husbandry and business skills. Women in particular viewed their lack of formal education as hindering their participation in the management and decision making of development projects which was dominated by men (Kipuri and Sorensen 2008). Attitudes to schooling vary according to individuals' and communities' contexts and to the availability and quality of education. A 2001 study found that Maasai parents want their children to "hold the pen and the stick" (Amani ECCD 2001 in Dolan 2003), the stick being associated with respectfulness and with practical and ritual functions. They are reported as withdrawing their children from schooling if they consider it to be irrelevant to their needs (Dolan 2003). In 2002, frustrated with the high drop out rate of their children from primary schooling, several Maasai communities established their own community-based pre-schools. They wanted pre-schools to teach their children oral and literacy skills in Kiswahili in preparation for the cultural reality of primary schooling (Mhando 2007). These pre-schools modelled themselves on the hierarchical and authoritarian practices of school institutions and their pedagogical regimes in order to prepare their children better to bridge the social, cultural and linguistic gap between home life and primary boarding school. This resulted in at least one pre-school taking place in a dark wooden building where children sat in rows sharing tattered government textbooks (Dolan 2003).

In the small town of Loliondo, near the Kenyan border, the relatively young Maasai organisation, the Ngorongoro Education Network, has been formed to discuss Maasai priorities and actions for education and to lobby District government officials for greater local access to schools, resources for the pre-schools, and for a flexible approach to meeting the formal educational needs of Maasai children of all ages. But, the cash strapped local government has few resources with which to meet its commitments.

## **6. EDUCATION FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT**

The brief and partial glimpse of educational issues facing the Maasai in Ngorongoro District in Tanzania illustrates some of the dimensions of discrimination and injustice they experience. It also demonstrates the inadequacies of state education and the inequities of distribution and access to formal education, and a lack of recognition of Maasai values in terms of language, cultural practices and pastoralist way of life. Maasai parents and communities have very limited opportunity to participate in discussions of what would increase the relevancy and meaningfulness of schooling for the kinds of challenges they face as pastoralists living in Ngorongoro District today. Maasai parents value formal education and believe it to offer new capabilities at a time when nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralist lifestyle is hard to sustain but are aware of the way in which the education system is culturally and linguistically biased against them.

Pastoralists have complex and changing needs for education, reflecting the complex, and rapidly and radically changing social, cultural and physical environments and globally linked localities in which they live. For many pastoralists and other indigenous communities in Africa today, the educational opportunities available are inadequate for the task of extending their capabilities and empowering them to realise their rights. Institutionalised State education – schooling – is unable to provide them access to skills and understandings relevant and valuable for their lives today as pastoralists and citizens while the threats to their livelihoods, environments and cultural knowledge erode their own education systems and their self-determination. State schooling and indigenous informal education systems are, as noted earlier, are often viewed as parallel and incompatible. But indigenous peoples themselves in their struggle to realise their rights to education in all its forms are striving for a coherent and integrated education response for their young people in today's local and global world.

Pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities in Africa are working with a range of initiatives to realise their rights to education. These initiatives are diverse and respond to particular sets of conditions in particular contexts. For example, the Maasai pre-schools discussed above were motivated by parental desire for children to succeed in accessing and completing primary education despite this being discriminatory, exclusionary and of limited immediate relevance. Faced with such a school system, pre-schools were a deliberate strategy to prepare children to be successful in the rigid, hierarchical and linguistically and cultural alien reality they would face on entering primary school in a distant town. Other indigenous communities have welcomed mobile schools which move with the children and their nomadic families. Notable examples include: the Karamoja's programme with Save the Children in Uganda; Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK); and the Nigerian government's Nomadic Education Programme and the work of Pastoral Resolve (PARE) to support mobile schooling, advocate for greater awareness and support for pastoralists and pastoralist education including establishing a Centre for Training, Research and Development. Other initiatives include, for example, a programme run by OSILIGI (Organisation for the Survival of Il-Laikipiak Indigenous Group Initiatives) for mobile schooling targeting out-of-school Maasai with support from CARE Kenya (Save the Children 2000; Bello 2006; Kaunga 2005). These programmes for indigenous children are supported by a wide diversity of community based organisations and non-government organisations, faith-based organisations and government projects. The educational landscape is, however, littered with unsustainable projects and lessons unlearned.

Education initiatives by indigenous organisations are concerned with relevancy of the modality of educational provision alongside the relevance and meaningfulness of the learning and teaching.

The Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) is a networking and lobbying organisation based in Windhoek and serving San communities in Southern Africa. It established a Regional San Education Programme in 2001 to coordinate educational initiatives in Namibia, South Africa and Botswana and to challenge the relevance of what was being taught, promote new curricular content drawn from San knowledge and practice, and develop mother-tongue learning materials. It does not confine its work to primary or secondary education but has been operating a Tertiary Student Support Programme to ensure that more young San successfully complete higher education and further training so that these skills can be used to support the development of San communities (Hays and Siegruhn 2005).

Importantly, as Hays and Siegruhn emphasise in the context of the San initiatives, providing access to formal education and working to improve its quality through a more relevant curriculum and language policy "is not the whole answer to addressing educational issues" (2005:33). They view as crucial, the need to understand and value the educational 'systems' developed by indigenous peoples over centuries. What they are calling for here is a redefining and reframing of education, a jettisoning of dualities and dichotomies between poor quality irrelevant schooling and devalued indigenous learning systems, and an emphasis on the educational requirements of children based on their lived realities and drawing on what is most relevant, meaningful and valued. This is not, then, a process of adding or adapting indigenous knowledge to fit into mainstream formal school curricula. Kipuri and Sorenson (2008) discuss a 'livelihoods' programme being implemented in Ngorongoro Conservation Area with Maasai pastoralists which values and recognises Maasai peoples' knowledge and understanding of their complex ecosystem in order to re-invigorate customary land and water tenure arrangements and rotational grazing. This approach implies recognition, too, of the importance of strong Maasai social networks and the intergenerational transmission of skills, knowledge and ways of doing and knowing which are at the heart of these customary practices (ibid).

For many indigenous communities and peoples, the intimate knowledge of the lands and its resources needed for pastoral and hunter-gatherer ways of life have been eroded among younger generations through their prolonged absence from the land for formal education. Faced with the gravity of this problem, indigenous organisations in Niger, Central African Republic and Kenya, together with UNESCO, have been experimenting with new technologies such as GPS for mapping and developing cultural inventories and to advocate for the importance of their knowledge in developing new and sustainable development policies and practices for the future. Young men and elders from the Yiaku, Ogiek and Sengwer hunter-gatherer communities weighed up the benefits of using geo-spatial information technology to aid a participatory mapping process of their cultural and natural heritage in Kenya (UNESCO 2008). While the main aim of the project was to find ways of linking traditional knowledge with policy making, one major outcome was in the way the project helped the older generation of hunters to see that they had an important explanatory and teaching role for the younger members who were carrying out the mapping with them.

These varied education initiatives only touch the surface of a growing wealth and diversity of initiatives being carried out today to promote indigenous self-development. They address questions of how to evaluate and revalue indigenous knowledge, skills and practices and re-define what a meaningful and relevant education is today. This is a huge and daunting task, given the eroded base of indigenous knowledge and education systems through a history of discrimination and marginalisation. To be successful in the task of re-framing education, indigenous peoples need to forge alliances, utilise networks and partnerships at many different levels. These are educational initiatives for, by and with indigenous peoples but for everyone. The next section looks briefly at the range of knowledge, skills and values needed to be successful in redefining and reframing education for development by indigenous peoples today.

## **7. BEING INDIGENOUS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

In an address in Copenhagen in 2008, Johnson Ole Kaunga, the director of IMPACT Kenya (Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation) talked about what being indigenous in today's world meant for him, a Maasai and a pastoralist. While not claiming to represent pastoralist indigenous groups across Kenya, far less East Africa, he flagged up what he saw as important sets of issues affecting and undermining pastoralists' efforts and rights to have secure livelihoods "like other Kenyans" (Kaunga 2008:8). The first set was to do with recognition and injustice, for example: displacement from ancestral lands; dispossession of heritage, cultural resources and indigenous technical knowledge; domination by mainstream thinking; formal education administrative systems at the expense of indigenous learning and mechanisms for collective decision-making; and being treated as inferior and primitive (ibid). The second set of issues was concerned with participative injustice: struggles with government, multinationals and the private sector for representation and decision-making and for recognition as peoples with rights and responsibilities; and struggles with agents of development research, policy and practices whose processes marginalise and silence indigenous peoples and their knowledge over areas such as over wildlife conservation and pastoral livelihoods (ibid). The third set of issues was educational: the ability to be creative, adaptive, and enabled through a process of lifelong learning; to draw on both modern and indigenous skills and knowledge as different situations demand; maintaining and engaging with both modern literate institutionalised decision making systems and indigenous relationship-based oral institutions; and using this knowledge to work to ease conflict with indigenous neighbours as traditional lands diminish and tensions mount (ibid).

For Ole Kaunga negotiating his way in this 21<sup>st</sup> century world with its challenging demands means "being a hero, that is engaging in powerful processes at different levels, being a patient lobbyist and being an effective and influential communicator to raise the profile of important issues to a level that actors can no longer ignore them" (Kaunga 2008:9). This means being empowered to act, being effective and being recognised and respected by those with whom he engages in lobby and advocacy. But it also means being respected and respecting Maasai elders.

What kinds of education prepare and equip a young indigenous activist like Kaunga today? How has he succeeded where many others have failed? How has he acquired and mastered the diverse skills and discourses, ways of being in the globally interconnected world of indigenous lobby and activism? How many did not get the chance of formal education but wanted it; how many got the chance and with it lost their links with their pastoralist roots?

## **8. REFRAMING EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE.**

At the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, indigenous representatives from around the world called for an urgent redefinition of the MDGs to include the perspectives, concerns, experiences and world views of indigenous peoples and to take into account their rights and their traditional knowledge and practices (UNPFII 2006). They called for a human rights-based approach to development which respects collective and individual human rights.

Indigenous peoples are demanding a transformation of institutional structures and historical processes which exclude and deny their self-development. They are engaged in a struggle to reframe poverty and development. Reframing education is a key component of this larger challenge. Their strategies are multiple and centred on their right to self-determination, that is their right to be decision makers about their own lives and have full and effective participation in framing agendas, designing policies, implementing and monitoring programmes and evaluating change. In Africa, the indigenous movement is growing as indigenous organisations gain strength and enter into alliances with regional and global networks of indigenous organisations, both through face-to-

face meetings and virtual encounters. Nationally, indigenous peoples are in the process of forging new alliances and challenging powerful elites who control domestic decision-making structures. The Maasai activist is indicative of a new kind of indigenous leader who is not only a spokesperson for his community at the national, regional and global levels but draws his authority and status from his grounding in, and recognition by, his community.

This article has used Fraser's tripartite analysis of social justice – distribution, recognition and participation - to examine the indigenous movement in Africa in relation to its demands for rights to education. This approach has been taken to facilitate reflection on a concept of indigenous justice that critiques and rejects an essentialised and bounded notion of identity and a privileging identity politics. On the contrary, this article has investigated indigenous rights claims in terms of equality of access and utilisation of resources as citizens and members of particular states. From an educational perspective, this is about ensuring fair treatment and access to education alongside all other citizens. But, it is also about recognising that indigenous peoples have knowledges, languages and ways of doing and being embedded in their relationship with a particular territory and relationship with the lands and its resources. This is not to reify indigenous identities but to value them. It is to recognise that pastoralists and hunter-gatherer peoples have specialist knowledge and skills that have, for the most part, been ignored, marginalised and an object of discrimination. Today, however, as 'development' contributes to the destruction of landscapes and erodes ecological systems, indigenous peoples' understandings of their environments offer new opportunities for their and other people's development. Indigenous self-development will come about through an active process of participation and self-determination.

Education has a vital role to play in supporting and enabling self-determination. It requires an education which promotes a sense of value in learners of indigenous knowledges and practices, but it also requires knowledge and learning that allows them to be indigenous in today's global and interconnected world. Current educational opportunities for indigenous learners in a global world are woefully inadequate. This article has used a critical framework for investigating educational quality which identifies relevance (local and global), meaningfulness (in relation to the demands of today's fast changing and interconnected world) and value (in terms of what is valued by learners for the kind of lives they want for themselves and their communities). Faced with a profoundly discriminatory, and largely irrelevant formal education of the state, indigenous peoples have embarked on a struggle for a re-framing of education; for an education which draws on their indigenous cultural knowledge to redefine the structural and epistemological legitimacy of contemporary institutional education. Their challenge to the state and international bodies is as agenda setters and decision makers questioning orthodoxies about who counts, what matters and how a just education can be accomplished. This article has only touched the surface of a rich seam of initiatives and dynamic processes with which the indigenous peoples of Africa are engaged. Their task is immense, but there are potential benefits for all in defining and mapping out a new and socially just educational landscape.



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