

# THE EDUCATIONAL MARGINALIZATION OF COASTAL KENYA

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## ABSTRACT

*Although the coastal peoples were the first exposed to western education, their participation and attainment rates are still among the poorest in Kenya. This review examines the historical and political context of educational development on the coast. Particular attention is given to the Muslim community, which resisted western schooling and expansion of the wage economy throughout most of the colonial period. Since independence, participation rates have greatly increased due to many factors, including competition for land and employment with other more educationally and economically advantaged ethnic groups. However, recent gains are threatened by the impoverishment of the coastal population which limits self-help efforts as well as by the persistent low quality of government education. Improving the educational indicators for Coast Province will also require special measures, including more local autonomy in determining the organisation and content of schooling, schemes to reallocate funding from rich to poor communities, and expansion of opportunities at the secondary and tertiary levels.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Muslim peoples of coastal Kenya were the first to be exposed to western education. However, in contrast to other African coastal societies – the Yoruba and Ibo in West Africa, for example – they resisted western schooling and expansion of the wage economy, which had effects devastating to their society. In coastal Kenya, western schooling was provided initially to freed slaves converted to Christianity, tangible evidence of the good brought about by the suppression of the slave trade. That was the justification for British involvement in the dismantling of the Zanzibari federation of Arab trading centres and, subsequently, for British colonisation of East Africa. European missionary activity and colonial administration transformed a centuries-old Arab society which flourished on the coastal trade and plantation production into an economic and educational backwater of modern Kenya.

This review examines the historical and especially the political context of educational development in coastal Kenya. It focuses on the educational responses of the peoples, particularly Muslims, to colonialism and independence. The Muslim community's present low level of educational attainment has put it at a serious disadvantage vis-à-vis other communities in the country in claiming the economic benefits which development planning promises. At the same time, the community has lost through national integration the relative political autonomy and protection from the market economy that colonialism afforded. A sign posted at the entrance of a school in Kwale District succinctly states the importance of western education for Muslim children and their parents: "No English, No Jobs" (Eisemon 1988: 12). The implications are self-evident: no schooling, no well paid employment, no income to secure land claims, in sum, no means to resist the centripetal influence of the modern state.

#### CHRISTIANITY, SLAVERY AND LAND ALIENATION

The first Christian missionaries representing the Church Missionary Society (CMS) began work among the Mijikenda at Rabai, north-west of Mombasa, in 1846. A second mission station was established sixteen years later at nearby Ribe under the auspices of the United Free Methodists. Neither mission had much success in converting the Mijikenda to Christianity. But they soon found a different and more promising role in educating Africans freed in the British Navy's suppression of the slave trade. In the 1870s the CMS expanded its activities in East Africa with the founding of a mission for freed slaves at Freretown (1875), opposite Mombasa, where Africans were educated for evangelical work, and another in the city itself in 1888. The early association of missionary activity with the destruction of the coastal plantation economy upon which the Mijikenda indirectly depended arrested the development of western schooling for the indigenous population throughout the colonial period (Mambo 1980).

This was not for lack of missionary effort, however. In 1862, the Methodists attempted to open a station south of Mombasa among the Digo. The two European CMS missionaries appointed for this task contracted malaria and the enterprise was abandoned. An African missionary sent to the same area in 1878 was sacrificed in a Mijikenda ritual (Mambo 1980). In 1882 the CMS made another attempt to establish a mission on the south coast. It was closed in 1897. If missionary activity was to show appreciable results, then care had to be taken to work only among those for whom the Gospel had already brought salvation, i.e. the slaves and the African societies subject to the deprecations of the slave trade.

The missions at Rabai, Ribe and Mombasa grew with the increasing efficiency of the British Navy and the influx of slaves from the Arab coastal towns. These were loosely federated to the Sultanate of Zanzibar until 1890, when Seyid Ali ibn Said sought British protection. In that year, Britain established a High Court in Zanzibar for its subjects in East Africa whose legal status was ambiguous and a source of conflict as the missionaries provided refuge at their stations to fugitive slaves. The slave trade was suppressed in measured steps culminating in the annexation of East Africa. In 1845 the British prohib-

ited the trade of slaves from the mainland, Zanzibar and Pemba, and thirty years later (1873), the trade with Zanzibar and Pemba was discontinued. Slavery on the East African coast was not altered by these actions. The willingness of missionaries to harbour and educate fugitive slaves at this time became "a major cause of conflict (...) between Swahili and the missions on the one hand, and between the missions and Mijikenda on the other. The Swahili attacked several of the mission stations and Mijikenda objected to the settling of foreigners (ex-slaves) on their land" (Spear 1978: 139). In the 1880s, the Imperial British East Africa Company made amends by compensating slave owners. Slavery was finally abolished in 1907, twelve years after the British Protectorate was proclaimed. By then it had become manifestly evident to the Arab, Afro-Arab and Mijikenda peoples that missionary work and the modernising influences it represented threatened the pre-eminent role that Muslim communities had enjoyed for centuries, despite the fact that Muslim law and institutions were unaffected by the proclamation.

The Muslim population did not passively accept the onset of colonial rule. In 1895-96, insurrections occurred from Malindi to Vanga, the most serious led by the Swahili chief Mbaruk and his confederate, Khamis bin Kombo, who instigated the rebellion in the south. The sons of Mbaruk, Ayub and Sebe, returned during the First World War to assist the Germans in their raids on the coastal towns of southern Kenya (Salim 1973). Earlier, in 1914, the colonial government's efforts to conscript the northern Giriama into the Carrier Corps provoked armed resistance. The lack of missionary success with the indigenous Muslim population, together with their potential for disloyalty and rebellion, dictated a policy of caution and avoidance of unnecessary interference in their affairs.

In the first years of the protectorate, the British administered coastal Kenya through existing institutions of governance, specifically through the *liwalis* and *mudirs*, who previously represented the Sultan of Zanzibar and now acted as agents for the colonial government among the Arab community. They adjudicated disputes according to Muslim law and ensured that the roads and other public conveniences were well maintained. As the pretence of British protection of the rights of the Sultan on the Kenyan coast slowly gave way to overt colonial control, the importance of Arab administration diminished. Zanzibar itself was made subject to colonial regulations in 1913. When a Legislative Council was created for the colony in 1907, requests for Arab representation were rejected (Salim 1973).

The new Council passed an ordinance (1908) giving the colonial government the right to expropriate native land. Intended to facilitate construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway and stimulate European settlement of the fertile highlands of central Kenya, the ordinance was also applied in the coastal districts where slavery had been recently abolished. Europeans soon established plantations on the land 'vacated' by Arabs and other coastal peoples. Large tracts were acquired by East African Estates Ltd., Magarini Estates, British East Africa Rubber and Cotton Estates and the British East Africa Corporation. Since the freeborn population showed no interest in agricultural wage labour, labour was recruited from other regions. Salim (1973: 118) remarks in this connection that "by 1910, the bulk of labour for European plantations on the coast was from interior tribes. Some of these men walked the 300 miles to Mombasa. One attraction was the fact

that coast planters paid Rs.7-10 per month as against Rs.3-5 in the Highlands." In time many migrant wage labourers were to settle on the coast, where land was less expensive than in their home areas, increasing the cultural heterogeneity of the population.

Once the centre of British interests in East Africa, the coastal districts faded in importance as missionaries and government officials and the settlers moved inland to create a prosperous agricultural economy with the labour of the Kikuyu, Luo and others who embraced Christianity and missionary education with enthusiasm. The political changes that took place up-country in the next fifty years – the agitation for settler self-government, the circumcision controversy, increasing African discontent on the issue of land alienation, the escalation of political consciousness among African societies and, finally, the independence movement – were followed with interest by coastal peoples. But they played no major part in these events, and have remained at the periphery of national political and economic affairs.

#### COLONIAL KENYA: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

An Education Department was established by the colonial government in Nairobi in 1911, principally to oversee the activities of missionary societies which had begun work among the sedentary agriculturists of the interior, largely in areas alienated for European settlement. In the early colonial period and, in fact, until independence, European missionaries took upon themselves the responsibility for representing African interests to the colonial government. This, of course, brought them into frequent conflict, especially with the settler population, which required African land and African labour for its material prosperity. A notable early example was missionary opposition to the eviction of the Maasai from their ancestral lands in 1904 and 1911 (Ole Sena 1986). However, missionary activity was considered crucial to parliamentary support for construction of the East African railway and other infrastructure investments that made European colonisation possible. Missionaries undertook the 'good works' which made colonialism palatable to an often sceptical British public. The activities of British missionaries in Kenya and other parts of Africa were financed by public subscription and were the object of much public interest. Neither colonial officials nor the European settler community had constituencies as large or as politically influential as those which missionary activity generated. Conversion through education was perhaps the most important work of the missionaries, and by 1919 more than thirty thousand Africans were attending 410 mission schools (Sheffield 1973).

In 1922, the colonial government began providing funds to mission schools which inspection indicated to be well administered and that provided a sound practical training to Africans (Sheffield 1973). The grants scheme gave colonial authorities a measure of control over the activities of missionary societies that had opened East Africa to European governance and settlement and ultimately made them subordinate institutions in colonial society. The missionaries' sphere of influence, educationally, was delineated at the Le Zoute Conference of Protestant Missions in 1926. They were to be mainly responsible for primary and secondary education. Whatever further education might be required

locally would be provided by the colonial governments of East Africa (Sheffield 1973). The state retained residual responsibility at the primary and secondary levels. In Kenya a school was established for Europeans in Nairobi in 1904, and by the early 1920s the government operated five schools for Europeans, two for Asians, and seven for Africans, four of these located in coastal districts (Mambo 1980). The government and missionary schools were articulated into an educational system organised along racial lines. In 1924, the government created advisory committees for European, Asian and African schooling and made separate arrangements for financing each. In the same year, the government allowed the establishment of Local Native Councils, which had the power to raise and expend funds for educational purposes.

Three native reserves were formed out of the unalienated land cultivated by Africans along the Kenyan Coast: Nyika, the largest one, comprised the present day Kilifi and Kwale Districts, and two others further inland, Pokomo and Taveta. Local Native Councils raised funds for African schooling, and collected the hut and poll taxes for the colonial government. They received no grants from Nairobi for educational purposes. In the Central Province, the Councils were active in financing the expansion of education in the Kikuyu districts where they fostered the growth of the independent African schools and churches. The great financial sacrifices which the Kikuyu made to increase school enrolments placed them educationally well ahead of other groups, especially those on the coast. The Local Native Councils at Kilifi, Kwale, Tana River, and Taita Taveta allocated less than one percent of their expenditures to schooling in the years preceding the Depression (Mambo 1980). The coastal councils opened few new schools, preferring to provide supplementary funding to the missionary schools.

The Church Missionary Society founded a multiracial school in Mombasa in the 1890s which enrolled Europeans and Asians, in addition to Arabs and Swahilis. However, Asian Muslim parents, whose children accounted for the majority of the pupils, soon established their own school (Mambo 1980). In 1912, Arab parents in the city petitioned the government for an Arab school to be operated at public expense. This became by the late 1920s the nucleus of a small system of about ten Arab schools and outschools which extended along the coast from Malindi to Vanga and taught Koranic subjects, English and, in the school at Mazaras, agriculture as well (Salim 1973). Attendance at most of these institutions was very low (less than 150 at the largest one in Mombasa). Eventually, the Local Native Councils were required to take over many of these institutions on the grounds that the pupils were mostly non-Arabs and, hence, not entitled to government funding (Mambo 1980). The government fared no better in its efforts to promote technical training. The first government technical school was opened at Machakos during the First World War and a second was built at Waa, south of Mombasa, in 1921 which taught carpentry, masonry skills, and tailoring, subjects thought by colonial educators to be "in touch with rural requirements" (Sheffield 1973: 23). About 75 students were attending the Waa school in 1922, half of them Christians (Mambo 1980). Disappointment followed indications of future success, and the school was handed over to the Roman Catholic missionaries in 1935.

In the interwar years neither the government nor the missionaries or the Local Native

Councils had much success in their educational activities in most coastal districts. The Muslim community remained resistant to Christian evangelism and rapidly grew with the conversion of Mijikenda particularly on the south coast. Unlike the African societies of the interior, coastal societies "had long been in contact with alien cultures and a proselytising religion (...) their familiarity with other cultures made their own more resilient" (Spear 1978: 140). Confronted with Christianity and the European plantation economy, Mijikenda remained peasant proprietors and many became Muslims. What is important to emphasise is that these Mijikenda had a choice to make. Although they were subject to land alienation, the Mijikenda were not displaced or coerced into participating in the colonial government's plans to make the country suitable for European settlement. The Arab population was even less affected by colonial administration owing to its protected status. For the Arabs and Muslims, generally, schooling had acquired negative connotations from the association of missionary and government initiatives with the decline or the importance of the Muslim community. The attractiveness of western schooling had not increased despite various attempts to divorce Christianity from secular instruction and to give secular schooling an Islamic, practical orientation. Muslims had little to gain by going to school. Graduates of the Coast Technical School at Waa, for instance, were unemployable (Mambo 1980). Not even the Local Native Councils on the coast would hire them when it was proposed in 1928 that this would have a good effect on African youths.

The expansion of the Koranic education paralleled efforts to promote secular schooling. At Waa the Muslim community built a *madrasa* on adjacent land, and within a few years the government school closed and was relocated in Mombasa. *Madrasas* proliferated as communities raised funds to construct buildings and pay Koranic teachers to organise instruction for their children. The expansion of Koranic education in the colonial period was in part a response to external pressures on the Muslim community, especially to government attempts to incorporate religious instruction into secular schooling. *Madrasas* became important institutions of cultural resistance, allowing the Muslim community to remain spectators to pervasive land alienation, forced labour, and similar measures adopted by colonial authorities to bring modernity to the interior of Africa (Eisemon & Wasi 1987).

Among the coastal Muslims, only the Asian community, through Indian emigration at the beginning of the century, had become demographically substantial and politically conscious of its future in Kenya. It was greatly involved in the colonial economy and intent upon developing its educational capacity. By 1911 the Asian community in Kenya was about three times as large as the number of European settlers: 10,651 to 3,175 (Hailey 1957). In 1920 Kenya became a colony with the political privileges of the settler community preserved. A 1923 White Paper on British colonial policy in Kenya made reference to the primacy of African interests in denying Asians political representation in proportion to their numbers (Bennett 1963). The effect of the restrictions on land acquisition and political participation was to strengthen the position of the Asian community in colonial commerce and in skilled occupations in government and the private sector. Separate taxation for education of the Asian, African and European communities was

introduced in 1926, when approximately two thousand (1900) Asian pupils were attending schools operated by government as well as by religious and philanthropic societies. Per pupil expenditures, however, were only slightly higher than those for Africans, each representing about a sixth of the expenditure for Europeans (Sheffield 1973). Asian educational activities developed very rapidly in the 1920s and throughout the Depression. In Mombasa, the number of students increased from an estimated 300 in 1923 to more than twenty-five hundred (2,578) in 1936, almost half (46%) of them attending government schools (Mambo 1980). Several Asian secondary schools were established prior to the Second World War; Allidina Visram High School, the oldest, began instruction in 1921. This inspired the government in 1931 to establish a residential secondary school for the Asian population at Shimo-la-Tewa, north of Mombasa, whose graduates were to enter government service.

The educational development of the Asian community, Arab and African historians have implied, had a retarding influence on the indigenous coastal peoples, particularly the Arabs. Asian graduates were recruited into government service, whereas in the early years of the Protectorate, colonial authorities had relied on Arab functionaries. Asian representation on the first colonial Legislative Council offended the Arab community almost as much as it offended the settlers and Sir Percy Girouard, one of the first governors of the East African Protectorate, who expressed indignation at the proposal that "the small Indian community here should be represented and the highly educated and responsible Arabs from whom we took over the country, be (...) classified as subordinate" (Salim 1976: 96). When the composition of the Legislative Council was being reassessed in response to Asian agitation in the early 1920s, the Arabs formed an association, the Coastal Arab Association (1921), to demand electoral representation. In the end, the Arabs were granted one seat compared to five seats for the Asian community and eleven for the Europeans. Africans were represented by two missionaries, who served on the Council and its Executive Committee (Salim 1976).

#### PREPARATION FOR INDEPENDENCE

The annual report for the Coast Province issued at the end of the Second World War indicated that of the almost 17,000 African children of school age in Mombasa, the most educationally advanced coastal district, a little more than two thousand (2,211) were in school. Interestingly, 1,426 of these children, the great majority, were attending Koranic schools. The others were enrolled in government and missionary schools, which had by then a long history of very limited success. The number of African children enrolled in primary school districts, including Mombasa, was reported to be almost 12,000 (11,098) in 1952 for an estimated population of 460,000, of which perhaps half were of school age (Mambo 1980).

A notable development at this time was the establishment of the Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education for East African Muslims, with an endowment from the Aga Khan and the blessings of the colonial government and the Sultan of Zanzibar. The Institute taught technical and vocational subjects in addition to Islamic studies. Conceived as an inter-

racial territorial school, it admitted Arabs and Africans, but Indian Muslims who had greater access to primary schooling predominated. Educational expansion was particularly slow in Lamu and Kwale Districts, where resistance from the Arab population was strongest. The colonial educational officer in Lamu, for instance, drew attention in 1951 to the "apathetic population who are not enthusiastic about education" in a report on an Arab school, whose principal, he felt, "requires some assistance working as he does among fisherfolk (...)" (Mambo 1980: 266). His colleagues in Kwale attributed low school participation to the opposition of the local *sharifs*. Kwale District was as late as 1948 served by fifteen primary schools managed by missionary societies whose facilities were, in the judgement of colonial authorities, "really appalling" (Mambo 1980: 268). The number of primary schools in the district increased from twenty-one in 1948 to thirty-three in 1959, just before independence. Most of the new schools were operated by the Local Native Council.

Somewhat more significant progress was made in expanding opportunities for primary schooling for Africans in the other coastal districts of Kilifi, Taita Taveta and Tana River. These districts were wealthier and had proportionately larger numbers of Africans from reserves up-country, which had more educational facilities. The Local Native Councils in the three districts opened many new schools after the war, but expansion was limited not only by lack of interest, but by financial penury among the Muslim population. The colonial government still preferred expansion of missionary institutions or those which it operated to encouragement of the educational efforts of the Local Native Councils. The Councils in the reserves in Central Province continued to tax and invest heavily in school expansion, while those on the coast could not afford to do the same and, thus, fell further and further behind other districts in the country in the provision of formal schooling.

In the years immediately after the war, the colonial government had become increasingly concerned about the political implications of primary school expansion, which was undirected either by the government or by the missionary societies. In 1949, the Education Department commented on the low standards, poor facilities and high wastage of the unaided primary schools (Sheffield 1973). The government's response was to appoint a Committee on African Education headed by Leonard Breecher, a minister of the Church Missionary Society who represented African interests on the Legislative Council. The Committee's report released later that year proposed a reorganisation of the primary cycle into two four-year stages, to be followed by four years of secondary education. Insofar as improving standards of instruction was concerned, the Breecher report placed emphasis on greater inspection and supervision of schools, reinforced by more government control of school finances. The report's intent, at least as many Africans perceived it, was to slow educational expansion and bring the independent African schools under greater government scrutiny.

#### EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION

That the structure of the colonial educational system was considered unsuitable for an independent country was signalled by Tom Mboya in a speech he gave in 1961, in which

he outlined a new educational system "aimed at instilling in the minds of our boys and girls the pride that they are Africans" (Sheffield 1973: 65). Attention would be given in the first years of independence to changing three related features of colonial education: the separation of races for educational purposes; the reliance on missionary societies to provide schooling in rural areas; and the 'practical' emphasis in the primary school curriculum for Africans.

Even before independence, Kenyatta's party, the Kenya African Union, requested Professor Griffiths of Cambridge University to report on ways to make schooling more relevant to rural development. The resulting report took note of the country's urgent need for trained Africans and proposed expansion of technical and vocational education to remedy the situation (Sheffield 1973). One of the first acts of the new Kenyan government was to appoint a national commission to study the need for educational reform. Griffiths served as a consultant to this commission, which was headed by Simeon Ominde (Kenya 1965). Its 1964 report recommended expansion of secondary and higher education to ensure that the country would be able to satisfy its high level and technical manpower requirements. The length of the primary cycle, eight years after the implementation of the Breecher report, would remain unchanged, but English would become the compulsory medium of instruction and examination. The missionary emphasis on vernacular and agricultural instruction was rejected in favour of more academic preparation leading, in exceptional cases, to entry into secondary schools. Ominde recommended that the government undertake financial responsibility for primary education, allowing the missionary societies to sponsor but not to manage schools. This would permit standardisation of primary school curricula, monitoring of school construction and instructional conditions, and uniformity in teacher training and remuneration. Finally, the racial organisation of education at the primary and secondary levels was to be abolished and the European, Asian and Arab schools opened to Africans.

*Table 1* Primary school enrolment by province, 1964

	School age Population ('000)	Enrolment ( '000)	Enrolment (%)
Central	265.9	250.0	94.0
Coast	120.3	55.1	45.8
Eastern	337.4	166.9	49.5
Nairobi*	29.0	39.8	137.3
Nyanza	354.1	193.7	54.7
North Eastern	44.8	0.9	2.1
Rift Valley	373.7	144.2	38.6
Western	232.5	164.2	70.6
Total	1,757.7	1,014.8	57.7

\* The school participation rate of Nairobi exceeds 100% due to the transfer of students from other parts of the country into Nairobi schools.

Source: Kenya 1965: 9.

Ominde's recommendations were adopted by the government and implemented in stages in the late 1960s. They continue to guide educational policy at the primary and secondary levels, the most significant departures from the recommendations of the 1964 report

being the reduction of the primary cycle to seven years in 1976, and its subsequent lengthening to eight years with greater vocationalization of the curriculum as a result of the introduction of the 8+4+4 scheme in 1987. The Ominde Commission drew attention to the large variations in primary school participation between the agricultural Central and Western Provinces, and other areas of the country, especially those with pastoral populations. Its report recommended that "the main effort of the Government should be directed towards raising the level of enrolment in those areas in which the percentage of primary school participation falls seriously short of the national average" (Kenya 1965: 9). Lower school fees, more boarding schools, and, in the case of pastoralists, a more imaginative use of teachers involving organising instruction in conformity with nomadic life, were suggested as remedial measures. Table 1, reproduced from the Ominde report, compares school participation rates in various provinces in 1964.

The predominantly pastoral societies of northern Kenya had the lowest rate of primary school enrolment. Among the provinces without significant pastoral populations, Coast Province ranked last in school participation (46%), below the national average (58%), and much below that of the densely populated Central (94%) and Western (71%) Provinces. Although no official estimates of the school age population in coastal districts were available for this year, the wide variations in school participation are evident from Table 2.

Table 2 Primary school enrolment estimates for coastal districts, 1965

	Total Population (‘000)*	Enrolment Estim. (‘000)	Enrolment (%)
Kilifi	247.8	13.2	26.6
Kwale	157.8	7.6	24.1
Lamu	23.0	0.4	8.7
Mombasa	179.6	20.1	56.0
Taita Taveta	90.2	14.4	79.3
Tana River	42.7	1.6	18.7
Coast Total	741.1	57.5	38.8
National	8,636.3	1,010.8	58.5

\* School age population (7-13 years) estimated at 20% of total population.

Source: Kenya 1967: 15, 125.

Assuming that about 20% of the total population was between the ages of 7 and 13 (a national estimate derived from the 1962 census), the school participation rate in the Arab settlement of Lamu was less than 10%, while in Mombasa the rate (55%) was slightly below the national average for the previous year. In Kwale District, about a fourth (23%) of the school age children were in school.

After 1974, when school fees were gradually abolished, primary school participation in Kenya increased to about 90% of the age cohort, and dramatic gains had occurred in coastal districts. Still, districts such as Kwale lagged far behind. In the early 1970s it was estimated that only 60% of the district's children were enrolled in primary schools. Ten years later, despite a doubling of Kwale primary school enrolment (from 31,258 to 62,227), the proportion school-age children in school was about the same (64%, Ministry

of Education, personal communication, 1984).

The coast remains one of the least educationally developed regions in the country. Gross enrolment rates reported in 1993 (Table 3) obtained from household surveys reveal that Mombasa, whose population has grown through immigration from up-country, is comparable to major urban centres in primary school participation. However, the rural coastal districts continue to lag behind other regions, although the variations among them have been considerably reduced. Notwithstanding the progress made in the last decade, especially in Kilifi, Kwale and Lamu, enrolment rates are only about three fourths of the national average.

Table 3 Primary school enrolment rates by sex and region, 1993

	Male	Female	Total
Kilifi	.60	.50	.55
Kwale, Taita Taveta	.74	.70	.72
Lamu, Tana River	.60	.56	.79
Mombasa Urban	.77	.86	.81
National	.81	.83	.82

Source: World Bank 1994: 31.

In the 1990s, adjustment policies requiring reduction of public expenditure have shifted educational costs onto families. Primary enrolments have stagnated and begun to decline in many poor districts. Both dropout and repetition rates are rising. Nationally, it is estimated that less than half (44%) of students who enter the first standard successfully complete primary school (Mitha *et al.* 1995).

The poverty of the coastal population continues to be a major impediment to school participation and attainment. Despite the abolition of tuition fees at the primary level in 1979, school costs are high and represent, according to a recent survey, nearly a third (31%) of total costs and a similar proportion of 33% of disposable household income. This includes fees for school uniforms, textbooks, contributions for classroom construction and school rehabilitation, and other indirect costs (Mitha *et al.* 1995). Secondary school costs are double those of primary schooling. The financial sacrifices poor parents make to educate their children are comparable to those of middle class American families with children in private universities!

Poverty and poor nutrition and health status interact to produce poor educational outcomes. Of children under 5 years, 59% exhibit mild or severe stunting, 16% of babies in some districts had a birth-weight of less than 2,500 grams, diarrhoea is common, and malaria, bilharzia and other parasitic diseases endemic. These conditions are detrimental to cognitive development, contributing to the low achievement levels of students. The performance of students in national examinations is worse than any other area of the country. Since 1990, for instance, Mombasa has been last among municipal districts and Kilifi, Kwale, Tana River and Lamu Districts have ranked among the lowest ten districts in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education national ranking of fifty districts (Mitha *et al.* 1995). In 1992 and 1993, for example, Kwale, Tana River and Lamu were last in the "national order of merit". It is hardly surprising that migrants to the coast tend to send

their families back home when the children reach school age (Wakajumah 1986).

Lack of educational opportunities at the secondary and tertiary levels limits access and quality in primary education. In 1992, there were less than 150 secondary schools in Coast Province. The participation rate (18%) was 25% below the national average. There are wide variations among coastal districts in the availability of secondary schools. The shortage of school places is particularly serious in Kwale, Kilifi and Tana River, where there is only one school for more than 1,500 secondary school-age students. Educational opportunities at the tertiary level are similarly limited. The tertiary sector comprises Mombasa Polytechnic and teacher training colleges, including two established to train Koranic teachers that were recently registered by the government. Despite its long history of western education, the coast still does not have a college or university.

The educational 'underdevelopment' of Coast Province results from and also perpetuates its political and economic marginalization. Migration, increasing land pressure, and integration into the national economy have prompted coastal peoples to catch-up with other regions educationally. Nevertheless, recent gains are threatened by spontaneous decentralisation in educational finance and a poor infrastructure of government education. Historically, private provision and financing have played an important role in educational development on the coast. Community initiatives were responsible for the spread of *madrasas*, creation of a network of institutions serving the Asian community, expansion of Harambee secondary schools, and for the establishment of religious teacher training colleges. In recent years, there have also been repeated proposals to found a private university to serve the coast (Daily Nation 1998)

While these initiatives reveal the willingness to invest in formal education, government policy must be supportive and the government has a role to play in targeting public expenditure on education to the poorest communities. From the colonial period to the present, educational policy has taken little account of community and household preferences. This is especially true on the coast and among the Muslim population whose Koranic schools are held strictly accountable to the parents that support them for what they teach, how they organise instruction, as well as for student learning (Eisemon & Wasi 1987). Now that parents are expected to make a larger financial contribution to the cost of public schooling, they should have greater influence on what happens in school. This will require in the first instance more flexibility in national policies on implementation of the school curricula and more local control of recruitment and retention of teachers and headmasters/ headmistresses.

The poverty of many coastal communities is the principal constraint on educational development. Self-help efforts cannot redress educational inequalities if levels of fiscal effort are already not sustainable. In the independence period, educational policies assumed that inequalities could be redressed through assertion of government responsibility for the provision and financing of schooling in all regions of the country. That is no longer sustainable. Government must concentrate educational expenditure on providing a high quality of schooling for the poorest populations. And it has not yet developed effective resource allocation mechanisms to do this.

Finally, the limited provision of secondary and higher education at the coast is an

obstacle to increasing participation, attainment, and achievement at lower levels. Here government has an especially important role to play in stimulating expansion of community-supported secondary education through co-financing of capital and operating costs, as well as by facilitating the development of public and private higher education.

## CONCLUSION

Coastal Kenya, despite its longer exposure to western culture and the early establishment of missionary schooling, was marginalized economically, politically and educationally by the processes which, on one hand, destroyed the slave-based plantation economy and, on the other, transformed the interior of the colony into the locus of colonial development. The Muslim population, or rather those deemed by colonial authorities to be Arabs, derived a measure of autonomy from the coast's status as a protectorate. This fostered the hope of obtaining political autonomy at independence. Western schooling and wage labour were considered activities suitable for freed slaves and 'Africans'.

Coastal peoples, especially Muslims, distanced themselves from the latter activities and colonial racial policies encouraged them to do so by maintaining the social position of the Arab plantocracy long after its economic and political *raison d'être* had disappeared. This had three effects of lasting significance: first, it accelerated Islamicisation of the indigenous Mijikenda population; second, it undermined missionary and government efforts to increase school participation; and, finally, it left development initiatives to Europeans, Asians, and to other Africans who were encouraged to settle on the coast.

Although Coast Province still lags behind, there have been gains in educational participation and attainment. These gains are now threatened by adjustment policies which have transferred educational costs from government to poor communities and also by the persistent poor quality of government schooling. School participation rates in the country have begun to decline at all levels for the first time since the transplantation of western education. The impact is probably greatest in Coast Province and other disadvantaged regions. Economic recovery is a prerequisite to reversing these trends. But improving the educational indicators for Coast Province will also require special measures, including more local autonomy in determining the organisation and content of schooling; schemes to reallocate funding from rich to poor communities; and expansion of opportunities at the secondary and tertiary levels.

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## REVIEW DETAILS

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### Source

Eisemon T.O. (2000). The Educational Marginalization of Coastal Kenya. In Hoorweg J., Foeken D. & Obudho R. eds. *Kenya Coast Handbook: Culture, resources and development in the East African littoral*. (pp. 249-260). Hamburg: LIT Verlag