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3

Policies and Practices of Education Inclusion for Mobile Pastoralists

Caroline Dyer

Introduction: Mobile Pastoralists and Policy Discourses of Inclusion

The Education for All (EFA) movement recognized, and made a specific pledge to address, the widespread exclusion of mobile pastoralists from formal education provision (WDEFA 1990). Since that pledge was made, UN-led Global (Education) Monitoring Reports have repeatedly highlighted that migrating groups in general continue to be marginalized in education provision (e.g. GMR 2010; GEMR 2019) and that mobile pastoralists are among the globally most excluded (Dyer 2014).

'Migrants' might now be more firmly in the gaze of scholars and development actors, but this gaze has begun to see 'migrants' in ways that may perpetuate, rather than tackle, education inequalities. Migration studies persistently focus on international/cross-border migration, reflecting a politicization of migration that is linked to perceptions of security threats and what many in the Global North see as a 'refugee crisis', which prompts scholarly concern over multiple related injustices for international migrants. This concern, justifiable though it is, deflects attention from the numerically more significant scale of internal (within country) migration (Dyer 2014) and its implications for equitable education inclusion (Dyer and Rajan 2021). But even if this semantic elision is recognized, mobile pastoralists remain a 'migrating' population segment that lies outside the general, albeit lopsided, purview of migration studies altogether.

Mobile pastoralists are people who raise domestic livestock, using mobility as a strategy to access natural resources in the highly variable conditions that characterize global drylands (de Jode 2010). In pastoralist-dominated regions,

rates of school enrolment, retention and progression lag behind – usually far behind – national averages (Ruto et al. 2009; GMR 2010; GEMR 2019). These statistical profiles reflect structural disadvantages of urban-centric development approaches that leave 'remote rural' areas with poor physical infrastructure, poor access to services and, often, weak governance (Onwu and Agu 2010; Davies et al. 2010). This has given rise to labels such as 'hard to reach' and, in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework, 'left behind', which imply that efforts should be intensified to reach and include pastoralists in existing, albeit more 'flexible', forms of provision. Policy approaches framed by this kind of discourse tend to assume mobility is *the* key barrier to be overcome and promote alternative delivery models to enable access and address 'terms of inclusion' (Dyer 2013) that obviously disadvantage migrating children, such as the requirement of being in the same place every day to attend school.

Access-focused strategies are important but do not address 'terms of inclusion' at the level of normative framings that formal education systems – through both their overt and their hidden curricula – reflect and reproduce (Dyer and Rajan 2021). These norms reflect the historical antecedents of modern education itself, as a means of developing citizens who embody the dominant values of sedentary modernity (e.g. residential fixity, being formally educated, being able to contribute to/compete in/benefit from a (globalized) market economy, being a consumer). Exclusion and marginality are situated in tensions between these kinds of norms, and the mobile, moral economies of pastoralist communities and their practices of situated, contextual learning: childhood is not sharply demarcated from adulthood in terms of labour contributions, so children have to attend to livelihood-related tasks at the times when schools run; mobility patterns counter sedentary norms around physical accessibility of fixed place provision and the curricular content of formal education does not provide knowledge or skills that support the pursuit of pastoralism and can be socially divisive (Scott-Villiers et al. 2015).

It is also important to recognize that mobile pastoralists are not a homogenous group. In contexts of often rapid change, some are 'stepping up' (intensifying pastoralism, with large animal holdings and significant wealth); others are 'staying in' (staying within pastoralism, but often diversifying to include other income-generating activities at household level) and others again are 'stepping out' (leaving pastoralism altogether) (Catley 2017). These categories are not fixed, but this broad typology points to the need for education provision to respond to the differences between, and within, them (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

The term 'mobile' pastoralist, now widely used in scholarly literature, differentiates pastoralists who move from those who rear domesticated animals in a sedentary setting. Mobility is a deliberate livestock management strategy used in zones of high variability to ensure animals have continuous access to fodder and water resources. Mobile pastoralism is highly dependent on 'common property' (as well as private) resources.

Many mobile pastoralists have a 'home', in a particular location, and they migrate away from this home in an annual, seasonal cycle (this is called transhumance). 'Nomadic' pastoralist is another term in use, sometimes meaning the same as 'mobile' pastoralist but also meaning people who permanently move and do not have a 'home' location. Agro-pastoralists are people who farm and keep animals, migrating locally.

Migration can be *vertical*, between high summer / low winter pastures in mountainous regions; or *horizontal*, across the plains. Pastoralist mobility is carefully planned: the routes taken by particular groups are broadly similar each year but mobility *en route* is responsive to local conditions and movement may, accordingly, be very frequent (a stay of just a few days) or longer. Pre-planning helps to avoid clashes with other land users and competition for resources.

'Land grabbing' and development-induced displacement are everywhere undermining mobile pastoralism by constraining access to resources. In Sub-Saharan Africa, in areas where small arms circulate because of conflict, clashes have sometimes become very violent. Climate change, which makes rains more erratic, is also enforcing change to migration patterns in the constant search for resources. It can also mean that 'shocks' (events that have a significant negative welfare effect, such as drought or flood) are more frequent. They can increase vulnerability by leaving less time to re-stock before the next shock, which may lead to 'exiting' from pastoralism.

Figure 3.1 Mobile pastoralism: Definitions, migration and mobility. *Source*: Davies et al. (2010); Catley (2017); Dyer (2014).

The next section presents case studies of Mongolia, Ethiopia and India that illustrate how policy initiatives, through both their presence and absence, approach (or ignore) education inclusion for mobile pastoralists. The conclusion reflects on implications of these cases for education in equitable and sustainable development.

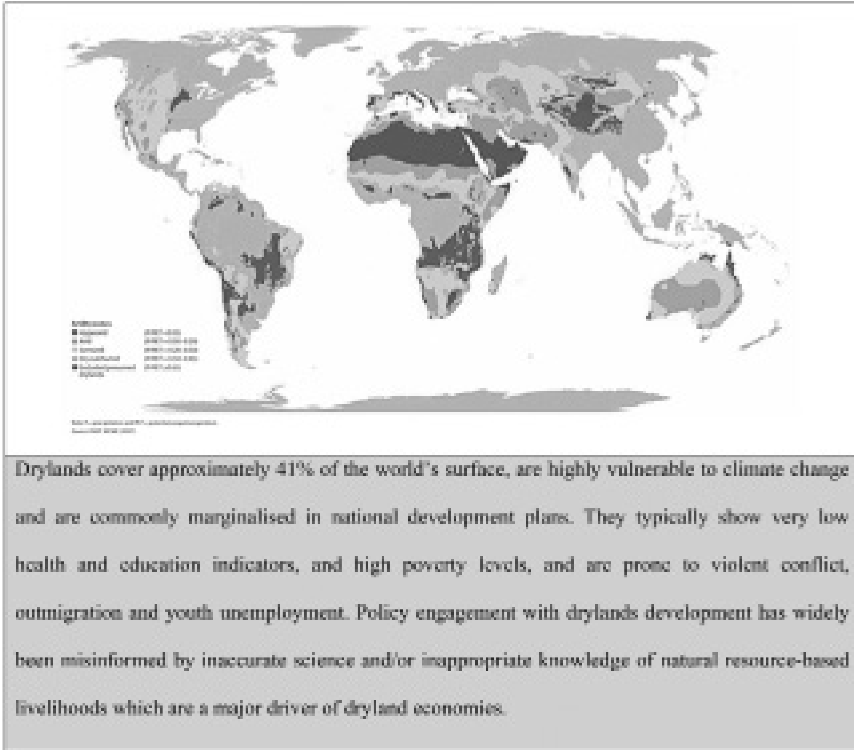


Figure 3.2 The global drylands. *Source*: de Jode (2010); Davies et al. (2010).

Policy and Practices of Educating Mobile Pastoralists: Cases of Mongolia, Ethiopia and India

Our first case is of Mongolia, which in 2018 embarked on a review of education sector policy to inform its planned 2020–30 Education Sector Master Plan. I worked there (as lead international consultant) with UNESCO representatives and national stakeholders on the Education Policy Review (EPR 2020). The review focused, at the government's request, on questions of quality, relevance, equity and inclusion, in response to national concerns that the sector, while meeting existing policy goals and numerical targets, was nevertheless 'in crisis' when it came to these issues. The next case is of Ethiopia, where the federal Ministry of Education had developed a Pastoralist Education Strategy in 2008 and sought, in 2016–17, to evaluate and update it within the scope of the externally supported Quality Education Sector Support Programme. I co-conducted an empirically based situation analysis covering four pastoralist

regions in 2016 and then co-authored the 2017 Pastoralist Education Strategy. The third case of Western India draws on my work there for over twenty years as a 'pracademic' (researcher/teacher/learner) with pastoralists (Dyer 2014, 2019). In this context, in contrast with Mongolia and Ethiopia, strategic engagement by the state with the specificities of mobile pastoralists' educational needs or aspirations is notable by its complete absence.

The Rural Past, Present and Future in Mongolia

Mongolia is one of the world's most sparsely populated countries, with a dispersed population of 3.2 million people living across a vast territory. About three-quarters of national land area is pastureland, which supports immense herds of grazing livestock, and in rural areas the population density is just two persons per km^2 (MIER 2019). In stark contrast, the capital Ulaanbaatar – a magnet for rural–urban migration – is heavily overcrowded, with 311.3 persons per km^2 (MIER 2019). By 2017, just 32 per cent of the population was living in rural areas (MIER 2019). Mongolia's distinctive ancient culture of extensive herding is integral to national identity. The country's geographic location, extreme and highly seasonal climate, fragile ecosystems and dependence on extractive industries to power economic growth have combined to make Mongolia particularly vulnerable to climate change, with an increasing frequency of *dzud* (extremely harsh winters), and desertification.

Mongolia began the transition to a multiparty, democratic polity and market economy in 1990 after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence. Structural adjustment reforms privatized public assets and enterprises, introduced liberalized markets to drive economic growth and rolled back the state. Donor agencies became critical sources of funds, technical advice and 'policy borrowing' solutions (Steiner Khamsi 2006), against a backdrop of high political instability. The extensive, high-mobility pastoralism for which Mongolia is known, and which had been integrated into the command economy via collectives, was subjected to de-collectivization, marketization and land privatization. This rural re-structuring, and lifting of regulations that tightly controlled movement, ushered in a trend of migration to urban locations where markets, better job opportunities and higher education are available (Ahearn and Bumochir 2016; UNICEF 2017). Nevertheless, some 30–40 per cent of the population are herders (sources are inconsistent) and about quarter of the population own livestock (MIER 2019), although it is heavy industry that drives national economic growth. In Ulaanbaatar, where 47 per cent of the population

now lives, public services are under severe pressure, air pollution is notorious and levels of human well-being are low for many (IoM 2018).

Like other formerly socialist states, Mongolia's education sector came close to collapse following the break-up of the Soviet Union. Soviet subsidies, which had supported free education for every child from primary school to tertiary education, suddenly ceased, and teachers left the profession. Mongolia saw the most rapid fall in school life expectancy among Central Asian transition economies. Families lacked incentives to invest in education, which, with the economy in collapse, was bringing reduced rates of returns, at least at secondary and tertiary levels. Two decades on, Mongolia had configured a new system in which, by 2015–16, the net primary enrolment rate was 96.3 per cent, and retention to grade 5 runs at 94 per cent (MIER 2019). The percentage of out-of-school children (OOSC) is higher in rural areas (1.4 per cent urban, 2.4 per cent rural). Boys comprise two-thirds of OOSC, and their dropout rate at secondary level is higher than girls', which is widely attributed to leaving school to work in pastoralism. The adult literacy rate, nevertheless, is claimed to be 98.5 per cent (MIER 2019). Tertiary provision has mushroomed, with high reliance on private sector investment: by 2018, 23 per cent of all women and 17 per cent of all men had a bachelor's or master's degree (IoM 2018). Beneath apparently healthy statistics, however, are major policy concerns over quality, notably highly didactic teaching at all levels, and relevance (EPR 2020).

In socialist times, in rural areas, children studied at the primary school in their *soum* (district), enrolled for lower secondary education in inter-*soum* secondary schools and went for upper secondary education to *aimag* (province) centres or secondary schools in large settlements. Boarding facilities were resource-intensive but well-funded and part of the rural social fabric. Children were required to complete eight years of schooling within a ten-year period, and the enrolment age was eight. But in 2005, the school entrance age was lowered from eight to seven; and just three years later, in 2008, it was lowered again, from seven to six. Structural reform aligned provision with the international norm of twelve years but had a catastrophic set of effects for pastoralists: it curtailed the period in which situated livelihood learning could take place; and it exposed children to dormitory environments at a younger age. Boys and girls in pastoralist communities comprised more than two-thirds of the 25,063 children using dormitories in 2016–17 (MIER 2019). Dormitory quality has deteriorated, due to insufficient budget and staffing constraints, to an extent that there are calls for a child protection system to address not only inadequate heating and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities but

also intimidation, group discrimination and corporal punishment (Save the Children Japan 2015).

Pastoralist families' coping strategies have various effects on schooling participation. Sometimes a child is simply sent later. Another common response is to split households during the winter months (Ahearn 2018; Batkhuyag and Dondogdulam 2018), which enables age-for-grade enrolment but avoids using dormitories. Children, usually with their mother, migrate to *soum* centres for school in the autumn, where they usually live with a family member. Men are left behind to tend animals and maintain the rural household. This response undermines rural schools, as enrolments decline (Batkhuyag and Dondogdulam 2018); and the social structure of pastoralist families is being changed. 'Winters without women' (Ahearn 2018) make divorce more common; and because women often cannot gain employment in urban settings, material poverty increases (IoM 2018) which puts pressure on the state to alleviate it.

The 2014–24 State Policy on Education requires that every child be enrolled in Early Childhood Education (ECE) provision, using different modalities of provision. Pastoralist children comprise a disproportionately low 11.5 per cent of the current total (EPR 2020), and the alternative programmes provided for them are 'not sufficient to close the school readiness gap' (Batkhuyag and Dondogdulam 2018). Almost 70 per cent of access to ECE for young pastoralist children is provided by mobile '*ger* kindergartens' which move from community to community during spring and summer. These typically offer just 21–62 days of instruction, about one-third of the learning opportunity of the 190 days offered in formal kindergartens (Batkhuyag and Dondogdulam 2018). Alternative ECE services were innovations intending to improve equity and parity of participation, but such provision relies on time-bound projects and programmes offered by development partners; and the sector itself has become fragmented in ways that undermine policy objectives of holistic, good quality ECE for all children.

Poor employability is a key focus of policy discourse around relevance. This prompted a 2019 reform of technical and vocational education that vigorously focuses on closing the gap between qualifications and employment within industries on which national development is seen to depend, such as mining and construction. Consideration of skills for those who wish to stay in mobile pastoralism is almost entirely excluded (EPR 2020). Although development partners have supported programmes aiming to blend farming and herding (Batkhuyag and Dondogdulam 2018), 'policy borrowing' is imposing norms of a sedentary ranching model rather than extensive high-mobility pastoralism.

Nor is there any relationship between mobile livestock herding and teaching programmes in the higher education sector, which is oriented towards formal professions, although the economy is not generating enough graduate level jobs (MIER 2019). Since almost all tertiary provision is in Ulaanbaatar (93 per cent of all students at this level), higher education is a significant driver of migration to the capital (IoM 2018).

Internal migration, with its dynamic effects on both rural and urban areas, is a core policy concern in Mongolia. It is driven by unequal economic and social development, and largely undertaken by movement of economically active, educated and young working-age individuals (IoM 2018), many from pastoralist backgrounds. There are high levels of participation in an education system that is, nevertheless, (re)creating forms of structural disadvantage and contributing to an ecologically and socially unsustainable development trajectory.

Alternative Basic Education in Ethiopia

Four-fifths of Ethiopia's population live in the temperate highland regions and just one-fifth in the arid lowlands. Those lowlands, however, cover 60 per cent of the country's land mass and are home to an estimated 12–15 million pastoralists (approximately 14 per cent of the population) (MoE 2015). The lowlands are optimistically now termed the 'emerging' regions but have a long history of socio-economic and political marginalization.

Under Emperor Haile Selassie (1930–74), education was used instrumentally to build national unity and identity, but since schools were concentrated in urban areas, pastoralist populations were not drawn in. The subsequent Derg regime also saw education as a means of inspiring patriotism and nationalism, and used schooling to disseminate its socialist philosophy, in the service of its project to unify the country by assimilation and homogenization (Desta 2017). Inclusion of pastoralists was limited to enrolling the children of chieftains in urban boarding schools, to prepare them to serve the regime (MoE 2008; Desta 2017). In 1991, the regime was overthrown. In 1994, the incoming government promulgated a national Education and Training Policy (ETP), which aimed to decentralize the system, included non-formal education and proposed a new curriculum that affirmed principles of equality, democracy and justice (MoE 2008). From 2005 onwards, educating pastoralists began to be mainstreamed, via Education Sector Development Plans (ESDP III onwards) which identified pastoralist education as a priority. In 2008, a specific Pastoral Areas Education Strategy (PEAS 2008), which primarily focused on access strategies and the

need to institutionalize different delivery modalities, including Alternative Basic Education (ABE), noted the need to improve the quality and relevance of primary education to Ethiopia's pastoralists.

Successive ESDPs sustain the focus on pastoralists as among Ethiopia's 'hard-to-reach' children. ESDP IV's strategic approach for such learners (alongside supportive measures such as multi-grade classes, scholarships, school feeding and provision of special support) was to expand the number of primary schools to reduce home-school distance, and to provide more ABE centres, upgrade some of those already existing into regular schools but, in the longer term, to phase out ABE provision (MoE 2010). ESDP V (2015/16–2019/20) continues the specific focus on pastoralists, via its commitment to 'broadening access for out-of-school children, with a focus on adolescent girls, children from pastoralist communities and children in emergency contexts' (MoE 2015, 82). In a notable policy shift, however, ESDP V departs from its predecessor and firmly embeds ABE as an enduring feature of the education system that will enable objectives of improving retention rates and increasing transition to higher levels (Figure 3.3).

In 2016, investigation of PEAS 2008 implementation in four pastoralist regions revealed that despite the range of possible delivery modalities that had been suggested, 'of other strategies it seems there is nothing – just total reliance on ABE' (personal communication Afar Regional Education Bureau (REB) representative 2016) (Dyer 2018). There was no evidence of any distance provision or radio-based education, mobile schools or extra investment in residential schools or hostels, a handful of which were operating. The ABE centres we visited had recently received books, although sometimes they were in Amharic when people spoke other languages; some were in makeshift structures where 'students' aged from three to twenty-two were crammed into a small space; were usually staffed by facilitators with no teaching qualifications or prioritized functioning as feeding centres (Figure 3.4). Sporadic excellence, in the shape of a well-functioning ABE centre operating as a satellite for the formal school, just as the policy had envisioned, underlined how uneven and unequal provision was.

Discussions with staff of Regional Education Bureaus revealed known weaknesses of decentralized governance in pastoralist-dominated regions (Onwu and Agu 2010; Dyer 2018). Staff turnover was often high (spectacularly so in the Afar region, where a new bureau head had been appointed every year for the last twelve years), and some REB officials were unfamiliar with the standards/implementation manual that framed operationalization of the national ABE strategy. REBs' own institutional arrangements had not evolved to keep up with

1996: ActionAid Ethiopia develops ACCESS (Accessible, Cost-effective Centres of Education within the School System), a non-formal education programme intending to improve access to basic education (particularly of girls). Gains would be made sustainable by integrating ABE into the state education system, to achieve 'a single unitary education system that is flexible, responsive to local needs and that integrates best practice from NFE experiences' (Action Aid 2002).

2003: a national Conference on ABE provided a definition of ABE, reflected in ESDP III, as non-formal education that offers those 'unable to use the formal schooling system' the chance to 'benefit from alternative educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs such as literacy, numeracy, oral expressions and problem-solving' (Radd Barna 2007: 20).

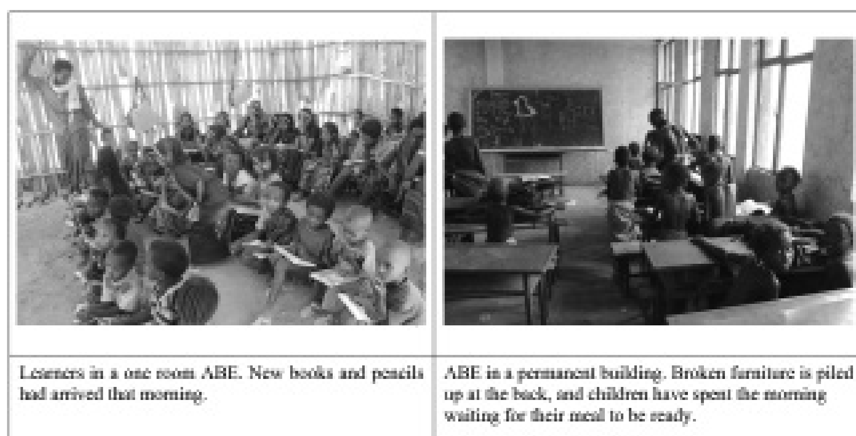
2004: USAID contracts PACT Ethiopia and its 27 Ethiopian partner NGOs to deliver the TEACH 1 (Transforming Education for Adults and Children in the Hinterlands) project. TEACH 1 rolled ABE out in eight regions, enrolling over 150,000 children from pastoralist and other groups not reached by formal schools' in 531 ABE Centres where primary (Cycle 1) equivalent education was offered. Plan Ethiopia and the Save the Children federation are active in mainstreaming ABE to enable access to basic education in 'cost-effective, flexible, easily reachable, and community-based basic education centers that are closely linked with, and that effectively serve as satellites or feeders to formal primary schools' (Bekele et al. 2007). Key features that would enable ABE to respond to pastoralist livelihoods and mobility include learner-centred teaching; flexible timings; low cost construction; teaching in the local language; facilitator selected from local community; and a focus on under-served populations.

Thereafter: ABE provision became part of government strategy in major pastoral regions particularly Somali, Afar and also pastoral areas of Oromia (EU 2008). As a systemic innovation, ABE began as school equivalency programme for children aged 7-14. It offered a compressed curriculum, covering the equivalent of the first four primary grades in three years, as an opportunity to over-age learners who had missed out to catch up and then transition into the formal system. By 2017, ABE was a recognised 'mainstream' modality, offering levels that mirror those of the formal system (ABE levels 1-4 = Grades 1-4), with no emphasis on accelerated learning. But emergence of a flexible and equitable system has been compromised by 'uncontrolled expansion' of ABE centres with poor infrastructure, inadequate resources and learning facilities, since from early on, scaling up failed to ensure 'minimum criteria' in the ABE setup were met (SCD 2003: 60). This situation persists (C4ED 2017). Nevertheless, two more Grades are to be added to larger ABE centres, so they offer the full primary cycle, but otherwise learners are expected to transition to formal schools for higher levels – all as envisaged in ESDP V.

Figure 3.3 The emergence of ABE in Ethiopia.

policy change, so attention to ABE was ad hoc and based on extending already thin arrangements for formal schooling:

> There is just one officer for ABE, special needs and adult education in the region. ABE needs support and monitoring. The office is established for formal education, so you may get a bit, but mostly it's for formal education. (Afar REB officer 1, March 2016)



Learners in a one room ABE. New books and pencils had arrived that morning.

ABE in a permanent building. Broken furniture is piled up at the back, and children have spent the morning waiting for their meal to be ready.

Figure 3.4 Snapshots of ABE centres. Photo credit: Caroline Dyer.

Poor policy clarity meant that some responsible officials thought that ABE is 'a temporary intervention so no due attention is given'. Severe budgetary constraints and unrealistic recruitment norms for teachers were implicated in quality shortcomings that were widely noted, but officials' reluctance was also shaped by an understanding of context that centralized directives were not seen to recognize:

> ABE focuses on the pastoralist child but practically it doesn't work. It is not mobile, also it's based on the regular curriculum. It's a bit different from primary but the way we are acting is for primary schools. (Afar REB officer 2, March 2016)

However, an innovative programme of 'networked schooling' (Dyer and Echessa 2019) in the Somali region, introduced by Save the Children in 2013 and later scaled up by UNICEF, demonstrated different possibilities. The intervention hinges on an understanding of education as a resource that, just like water and fodder, needs to be continuously available and is made so by prediction and preparation, which is how pastoralists manage uncertainty. It adopts the three stages of a drought management cycle. During the 'normal' phase at home, a learner card is issued to a child enrolled in a school/ABEC and likely to migrate; community/officials map the planned migration route and available education provision. The 'alert' stage triggers migration: learners collect their card, and schools on the planned route are alerted. At the 'emergency' stage, learners migrate, presenting their card to each school on their route to enable schools cumulatively to sustain an individual's learning programme. If there is no

school, the alert stage enables the local education office to re-deploy teachers from seasonally vacated provision and to pre-position blackboards, chalk and identify community resources to create learning spaces. The cycle completes and reverts to 'normal' when families return, and the home school/ABE centre re-enrols children and provides catch-up classes if needed.

This innovation is promising but highly resource-intensive for 'emerging' regions, where the infrastructure can still be too sparse to ensure continuity, and adding temporary learners puts further pressures on a fragile system. But perhaps the greatest obstacle is the federal government's insistence that mobile schools are a better solution, written into policy (in ESDP V). In this regard, Ethiopia has its own experience of failure, and international evidence shows that setting up, running and monitoring mobile schools for pastoralists are fraught with difficulties (see summaries in Krätli and Dyer 2009; Dyer 2014).

Despite proactive policy, Ethiopia's approach to pastoralists' education inclusion has often resulted in poor quality provision, and opportunities to transition to higher education levels are circumscribed by limited infrastructure, which is demotivating. From a policy perspective, ABE is promoted as a low-cost 'solution' to 'reach' where 'alternative' applies to vestiges of flexibility in timings and location but does not ensure adequate material conditions for contextualized learning or progression.

Aspirations and Realities of Schooling for Sedentarizing Pastoralists in Western India

There are an estimated thirty-five million pastoralists in India, and although mobile pastoralism is practised all over the country, it has been marginalized in policies for rural development. Kachchh, a district of Gujarat state in Western India, is a major pastoralist zone, located within in a semi-arid zone that stretches across the politically divided territories of India and Pakistan. Pastoralism in Kachchh has recently undergone rapid changes, linked specifically to an earthquake in 2001 and subsequent reconstruction, and generally, to the Gujarat's neoliberal political economy (Figure 3.5).

The Rabaris, on whom we focus here, are a major grouping of pastoralists in Kachcch. Not all Rabaris are now active in pastoralism; some are but migrate only very locally; some keep their animals permanently outside Gujarat but migrate back and forth for social events; and many practise transhumant pastoralism within Gujarat, migrating out of their home village once the rain-fed resources there are exhausted to other areas, until they return in the next monsoon.

While India's Prime Minister, and former Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, claims that Gujarat is a 'model' for India in terms of economic growth, Gujarat's growth is not translating into high human development. Rather, the 'co-operation between capitalists, politicians and bureaucrats at the expense of labour' which characterises Gujarat's political economy, means that inequalities are rising and disparities are widening. Gujarat spends less on the social sector than all other States in India, bar one (5.1 percent against the national average 5.8 percent). In the decade until 2013, Gujarat's average budget spend on education was 13.22 percent, compared with the national average of just over 15 percent.

Figure 3.5 The Gujarat model: Economic growth without human development? *Source*: Jaffrelot (2016).

Before the earthquake, 'extensive' pastoralism was a viable livelihood, although increasingly constrained by diminishing access to land and natural resources. As resource constraints squeezed, pastoralist parents recognized the instrumental importance of schooling as a means of diversifying out of pastoralism in the future and accessing employment. They saw being 'educated' as a marker of 'progress' that they wanted for their children and their community, and mobile pastoralism as a livelihood that only 'backward' and 'uneducated' people pursue; and they labelled themselves 'left behind' long before this term became part of the SDG 2030 Agenda lexicon. But mostly, the presumed advantages of schooling remained only idealistic, since for much of the year, schools are inaccessible to children who are actively engaged in mobile pastoralism, unless a child is left behind with relatives in the village or families split.

After the January 2001 earthquake, reconstruction cast in the 'Gujarat model' (Figure 3.5) transformed the region. Barren, but state-owned, land was transferred to private ownership, to be built over with factories or allocated for wind farms, which reduced the pastures available on the return to Kachchh. Rebuilt villages made new housing available; and the transforming economy generated new job opportunities. Some Rabari families adapted by settling in their home villages and reducing animal holdings or divesting altogether: an oft-cited motivation was that, as these changes would free children from responsibilities in pastoralism, they could access schooling and be able to compete for local jobs that had never before been available. This trend of settlement intensified with the passage of time, fuelled by shrinking pastures, a sense of deteriorating security and experience of organized animal theft. Some families carried on as before, migrating as a family; some split, leaving men migrating with reduced animal

holdings and women and children living permanently in Kachchh; others sold off their animals and divested from mobile pastoralism altogether.

For newly settled adults with no qualifications or abilities to read and write, the experience of sedentarization has often been one of a material poverty that they had not known while they kept animals. In many of the villages where Rabaris live, the land is dry, labour work is hard to get, wages are low and daily living expenses are high. Industrial expansion created factory jobs, but amidst competition from migrant labour from outside the state, hoped-for opportunities do not always go to local people. For older Rabari women, work that requires them to relinquish the clothing that is integral to their social identity for a factory uniform is a condition too far, although they accept this for their daughters.

The experience of Rabari children, as first-generation learners, illustrates many challenges associated with education 'inclusion'. Although there is no disaggregated information about Rabaris specifically, there is often a vast gap between aspirations of schooling and actual outcomes. While school enrolment is high, children's (especially boys') attendance is reportedly erratic, and promotion without learning is common. The village schools that sedentarizing makes available reflect the national scenario of 'learning poverty' (Beteille et al. 2020) that Gujarat has failed to tackle (Table 3.1).

Rabaris' engagement with schooling often ends when they sit the external grade 8 board examination (end of upper primary), which many fail. Boys are under pressure around that time, as marriage begins to loom. Within Rabaris' relatively egalitarian, yet still patriarchal, society, a boy should provide for his (future) family, and it is unseemly to be less educated than his (future) wife. In sedentary contexts, youths are drawn into local cultures of consumption, which puts pressures on often slender family finances to afford public markers of affluence, particularly for boys, such as smartphones and motorbikes. Many swell the ranks of those locally known as the 'half-educated': uncompetitive in the formal job market, lacking the skills, confidence and capital to be self-employed, and unwilling to do manual work. Ironically, where schooling has failed to significantly improve prospects, mobile pastoralism is being re-evaluated as an occupation that, amidst economic uncertainty, provides boys with a steady income. Boys who have dropped out of school are being called back into pastoralism, to work with their fathers, or others. Ambivalent pragmatism may be the best way to describe this trend: it is a poor return on the investment made in schooling; and there are many reservations among both boys and girls about migrating, living in the 'jungle' and the hard work associated with pastoralism.

Table 3.1 Reading and Numeracy Levels in Kachchh and across Gujarat (Rural), from ASER 2019

			Std. III to V: Learning levels		**Std. VI to VIII: Learning levels**	
	% Children (age 6–14) enrolled in private schools	% Children (age 6–14) not enrolled in school	% Children who can read Std. II–level text	% Children who can do at least subtraction	% Children who can read Std. II–level text	% Children who can do division
Kachchh	15.4	4.9	40.1	29.8	65.6	35.2
Gujarat	12.4	1.8	45.5	39.4	68.8	32.7

Source: Annual Status of Education (ASER) 2019.

Intergenerational conflicts have become sharp, as values that were part of the social fabric of pastoralism are challenged by new exigencies of sedentary living and contested by youths exposed to the values that schooling espouses. Youths conduct themselves, and their social interactions in person or via WhatsApp, in ways that contravene older Rabaris' notions of propriety. Social distance and the *mariyada* (strict moral code) that guides interactions are being eroded by freer social intermingling, both between sexes and between different communities. Because Rabari women are seen to be custodians of the community's social norms, new freedoms that girls can enjoy are also sources of pressure sometimes so extreme that they have taken their own lives.

This focus on experience among newly settled pastoralist families highlights an often vast gap between the 'education' that is idealized as a pathway to livelihoods outside pastoralism and a respectable identity, and the realities of using state-managed schools, as first-generation learners, in rural settings. It is worth remembering, too, that although splitting is a common trend, children who still migrate with families are not at all in the policy gaze. The Right to Education Act of 2009 has tied its concept of 'quality' provision to an idea of the 'neighbourhood' school that reflects an unarticulated sedentary norm which, de facto, excludes mobile pastoralist learners (Dyer 2019).

Conclusion

Successful pastoral management in extensive livestock systems depends on mobility (de Jode 2010), although patterns of that mobility are changing as pastoralists adapt to pressures – notably constraints to resource access. Those pressures themselves are often reflections of state failure to invest in pastoralist systems (Davies et al. 2010), linked to ambivalence about the contemporary relevance of mobile pastoralism.

Underinvestment in education services in pastoralist areas, facets of which these case studies illustrate, is common around the world (GMR 2010; GEMR 2015, 2019), and widely deprives pastoralists of their rights not only to but also through and from education. Improving flows of funds and changing funding formulae that are out of step with rural realities (Ruto et al. 2009; EPR 2020) would undoubtedly help to address operational constraints that existing forms of provision experience, some of which these case studies illuminate (see also Dyer 2014 and 2018). Policy concerns tend to focus on this axis of 'quality', expecting that such investment will deliver improved rates of enrolment, retention and learning achievements.

Without denying the need for financial investment, the 2030 Agenda and its lens of 'sustainable development' requires a kind of investment that goes above and well beyond this. In pastoralist regions, formal education services are currently conceived and organized in ways that leave them very poorly able to respond to the contexts of high variability in which they are situated; and they envisage 'development' largely in terms of supporting an exit from pastoralism. The investment that the 2030 Agenda calls for, fundamentally, is in mobile pastoralism itself, and in the knowledge of people whose understanding of these uncertain and fragile environments, and how to manage them, is unparalleled. Once the myths and faulty science surrounding it are revealed as such (Krätli and Dyer 2009; Dyer 2014), mobile pastoralism is, as Davies et al. (2010) point out, 'conducive to environmental stewardship' (20). Yet pastoralist voices are rarely heard when it comes to articulating curricular content, training teachers or designing the school year, all of which are ways in which non-pastoralist values inform what is desirable. All too often, those values are not conducive to environmental stewardship. This call for an alternative conception of 'investment' may sound highly idealistic, but it is perhaps ultimately also highly pragmatic. A sustainable future for the global drylands matters not only to mobile pastoralists but also to our planet and, therefore, to us all.

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