



Influence of Financial Support Services on Academic Performance of Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Comparative Study Between Protestant And Catholic Sponsored Secondary Schools in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya

*Inviolata N. Makhanu¹ Prof. Chris W. Mukwa²Dr. Salome Odongo³

¹Graduate Student Dept of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media, Moi University, Eldoret
^{2&3} Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media, Moi University, Eldoret

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ABSTRACT: It's noteworthy that whereas various mechanisms have been rolled out to mitigate runaway cost of schooling in Kenya, financing education especially in secondary schools remains out of reach for many parents in Kenya. The purpose of this study was to address this gap by examining financial support services on offer within schools and their influence on academic performance of protestant and catholic sponsored secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya. The study was guided by structural functional theory and adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design under a mixed research design paradigm. A blend of sampling techniques that involved multiphase and stratified sampling was used to select schools while purposive sampling was used to select school management staff. Out of a sample frame of 192 schools, 92 were religious sponsored hence targeted for study. A sample size of 45 schools that had been in existence for 4 years and above were selected and the 45 head teachers of these schools were principal respondents. Descriptive statistics used involved use of cross tabulations, frequencies and percentages while inferential statistics involved use of chi-square to test association between financial support services and academic performance of schools. The findings indicated that there is a significant relationship between some aspects of financial support services and students' academic performance among religious sponsored schools. It was also established that the cost of education is still beyond the reach of ordinary students and there is need for the sponsor churches to deliberately target such needy students with specific financial support services that impact on the learner's wellbeing and therefore academic performance. The study recommends that schools should be encouraged to have specific sponsor programmes packaged with specific financial support services either in cash or in-kind to cushion needy students.

Keywords: financial support, academic performance, secondary school, Kenya

I. INTRODUCTION

Education forms the basis upon which economic, social and political development of any nation is founded and that according to World Bank (2006), it's vital to a lasting positive change in children lives. It is in this vein that Kenya has undertaken a number of reforms in her education system since independence gearing up all efforts towards enhancing access, equity and quality of education to all (MOE, 2008). The Education Act 2013 section 29 (b) decrees that no child shall be denied access to education on the ground of failing to pay tuition and related school levies (ROK, 2013). It's noteworthy that whereas various mechanisms have been rolled out to mitigate runaway cost of schooling in Kenya, financing education especially in secondary schools remains out of reach for many parents in Kenya (Munda & Odebero, 2014; UNESCO, 2005). Some of these initiatives include issuance of fee guidelines to regulate free primary and day secondary education funded by the Government of Kenya (MOEST, 2015), school sponsorship supported by religious groups and other philanthropic agencies like Aga Khan foundation, save the children and World Vision. The role of the church or religious organization in the provision of education at various levels internationally has been widely documented (Nzwili, 2011). Watson (2010) for instance, averred that in nearly every society, before the state began to take responsibility for educational provision during the past century, the earliest form of schooling was religious. Kafu (2011) corroborates this assertion when he posits that Catholic and protestant churches

sponsorship of schools begun long ago, initially as a way of helping their congregation but later as a way of holistic improvement of the schools particularly performance in examinations.

In spite of documented role of education to empowering youths and general wellbeing of citizenry, millions of children and youth, in low income countries and poor communities continue to be denied access to quality education due to financial constraints (MOEST, 2013; UNESCO, 2005). The situation is worsened where infrastructure is not adequate and parents have to pay through levies like Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and directly through buying specific text books, stationary or equipments for some practical subjects like home science and computer studies (Mwiria, 2002). The resultant increase in the cost of learning not only retard transition rates from primary to secondary as averred by Munda and Odebero (2014) and UNESCO (2005) but also has an impact on their learning and performance generally (Mabeya, Ndiku & Njino, 2010). According to an annual report on education in Kenya released in 2013 by Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), Kenya is among the twelve countries contributing to half of the world's out-of-school children despite legislations decreeing access to education a basic right (MOEST, 2013). The issue of financial support Services from religious organizations and how this impacts on academic performance of sponsored secondary schools remains grey area in spite of scanty studies in some parts of Kenya. This study offers some empirical insights towards this lacuna. Moreover, despite these interventions, there are several secondary schools across the country Trans-Nzoia County inclusive that consistently perform well in KCSE, while others persistently perform poorly (KNEC, 2012; 2013). This scenario implies that there exist incentives that enable some schools to perform well and on the other hand, there exist barriers that hinder other schools from performing well. Could this be ameliorated through financial subsidies from the churches sponsoring schools? This study sought to address this dilemma through a comparative study between Protestant and Catholic sponsored secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya.

The study was guided by the structural functionalism theory as espoused by Talcott (1991). Schools in this study are seen as organizations that are large and complex social units consisting of many interacting sub-units which are sometimes in harmony but more often than not they are in diametric opposition to each other. The interaction if not well harnessed could compromise the desired positive impact that each player, like the religious sponsor in this case, could bring into the organization. As averred by Randall (1971) and Sever (2012), functionalism is at play as the interconnection of diverse issue-areas of schools being sponsored and likely impact of financial support services by religious sponsors was examined. Financial support services form a critical component of functional prerequisites of any school hence the justifiable focus on it to inform comparison between academic performance and religious sponsorship anchored on funding in Trans Nzoia secondary schools, Kenya.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research paradigm that informed this study was a Pragmatic approach which is a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies (Teddlie & Tashakkore, 2010). The study was conducted using mixed methods research design which has gained popularity as a third path or paradigm third methodological movement in the field of educational research (Gorard & Taylor, 2004; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The design was appropriate for the study because it enabled the researcher to apply the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods to effectively triangulate the data obtained by combining the two approaches. A blend of sampling techniques was used, that is, multiphase and stratified sampling was used to select schools while purposive sampling was used to select school management staff. Out of a sample frame of 192 public secondary schools, 92 were religious sponsored which were targeted for this study. However out of these, only those that had been in existence for 4years and above were selected. A sample size of 45 schools from which 45 head teachers of schools was therefore sampled. The data for the study was obtained through questionnaire, interviews, document analysis and direct observations. Descriptively frequency tables were used to analyze the data while inferential statistics was mainly by chi-square. The schools selected were based on the following strata: Public and Private Schools; boys/girls only, mixed and years in existence.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The need for sponsor churches to provide material support to schools directly or indirectly has been lauded by many studies (Lydia, 2008; Michelin, 2007; Wanyonyi, 2012). It's posited in these studies that such support cushion schools and the needy may be spared from routinely being send home for such overheads often not catered for by Government funding and lack of personal effects. From document analysis seen by the researchers, it was common to see on end of term circulars directives for students to bring listed teaching and equipments like printing paper, log tables, text books, and hockey sticks, among others which has an incremental cost on education outside tuition fee. Munda and Odebero (2014) study on influence of education costs on students' academic performance in Bungoma District secondary schools concurs with this observation on the account that several levies are added to fees above ministerial guidelines. Studies in other parts of Kenya

by Wanjiru (2012) and Michelin (2007) established that where sponsors supplied the teaching/learning resources, educational resources such as textbooks, library facilities, stationeries, bags among others as part of sponsorship to needy students, their academic standards improved and schools were well cushioned from inadequacies of such crucial materials. Since religious sponsored public schools in Trans Nzoia were 92 out of 192, being 48%, financial support services would definitely impact on a significant student population.

The researchers sought to establish the distribution of church sponsored schools by their age in years of existence. Table 1 captures the findings. As indicated in Table 1, 30 (67%) of sampled public secondary schools by the listed sponsors have been in existence for more than eleven years. Ordinarily, this implied that most schools are already established and are expected to be equipped in terms of resources both human and physical since free day secondary education has been in place since 2003. In the range of 5 years and over 30 years, the study revealed that 20 (44%) of the sampled public secondary schools were under Catholic sponsorship and 25 (56%) were sponsored by protestant churches. This implied that there were more protestant sponsored schools than Catholic sponsored schools in Trans Nzoia County. This is justifiable given the fact that Protestant as term refers to a consortium of many churches unlike Catholic which is just one.

Table 1: Distribution of Schools by Age in Years of Existence

Age of sponsor school	Sponsor of the School	Frequency	
		n	%
Below 5 yrs	Catholic	5	11
	Protestant	0	0
Sub total		5	11
6-10 yrs	Catholic	5	11
	Protestant	5	11
Sub total		10	22
11-15 yrs	Catholic	6	13
	Protestant	8	18
Sub total		14	31
16-20 yrs	Catholic	4	9
	Protestant	2	5
Sub total		6	14
21-30 yrs	Catholic	0	0
	Protestant	4	9
Sub total		4	9
Above 30 yrs	Catholic	0	0
	Protestant	6	13
Sub total		6	13
Total		45	100

Source: Field data 2016

The researchers further sought to establish the distribution of schools by type and sponsorship. Table 2 captures the findings. The findings in Table 2 revealed that there were 10 (22%) single boys schools, 10 (22%) single girls and 25 (56%) mixed public secondary schools out of the 45 sampled for the study. From the Table 2, it can be deduced that there were more mixed public secondary schools than single sex schools that are sponsored by the two broad categories of churches. This could be explained by the economies of scale that drives allocation of scarce resources among two competing entities, in this case, available space in schools being shared by both genders. In addition, key informants stated that most parents in Trans Nzoia Sub County prefer taking their children to mixed public secondary schools which are presumed to be cheaper and offer competitive environment to learners of both gender.

Table 2 Distribution of Schools by Type and Church Sponsorship

School type	Sponsor of the School	Frequency	
		n	%
Boys	Catholic	2	4
	Protestant	8	18
Sub total		10	22
Girls	Catholic	5	11
	Protestant	5	11
Sub total		10	22
Mixed	Catholic	13	29
	Protestant	12	27
Sub total		25	56
Total		45	100

Source:

Field data 2016

To gauge the impact of financial support services on student performance, five common parameters were selected and subjected to ratings by respondents as shown in Table 3. These are common services/items fronted for sponsorship from well wishers and are likely to impact positively on the wellbeing of learners.

Table 3 Nature of Financial Support Services offered by the Sponsor Churches

Church involvement in provision of Financial	Response rating	Catholic		Protestant		χ^2 Value	e ⁻ Value	Overall	
		Freq	%	Freq	%			Freq	%
The sponsor church pays fees for the needy students in my school	Agree	4	9	0	0	5.488	0.019	4	9
	Undecided	0	0	0	0			0	0
	Disagree	16	35	25	56			41	91
The sponsor church buys personal effects for the	Agree	0	0	0	0	nil	nil	0	0
	Undecided	0	0	25	56			25	56
	Disagree	0	0	0	0			0	0
The sponsor church purchases uniforms for the needy students in my school	Agree	0	0	0	0	2.616	0.106	0	0
	Undecided	2	4	0	0			2	4
	Disagree	18	40	25	56			43	96
The sponsor church gives pocket money for the needy children in my school	Agree	0	0	0	0	4.018	0.045	0	0
	Undecided	3	6	0	0			3	7
	Disagree	17	38	25	56			42	93

Source: Field data 2016 Significant at 0.05 level

On paying fees for the needy students in their schools, majority, 41(91%) of the respondents disagreed that church sponsors provided this financial support service. Out of these response, 25(56%) were from protestant sponsored schools while 16(35%) were from Catholic sponsored schools. However, only 4(9%) of the respondents agreed that Catholic sponsors pay school fees for the needy students. A chi Square test done on this variable as a component of financial support service revealed that there was a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=5.488$, =0.019) in response regarding payment of fees for the needy students between Catholic and Protestant sponsored schools as shown in Table 3. This finding implies that Catholic sponsored schools are more likely to receive financial support services in form of fees for the needy students compared to Protestant Sponsored schools. Record analysis accessed by the researchers indicated that some of the needy students were good performers and that lack school fees kept them away from classes for long which affects their performance. Poor performance of these needy students highly influences the overall performance of the school.

With regard to buying personal effects for the needy students in their schools as an aspect of financial support services, all the respondents 45(100%) rated it negatively by picking on either undecided or disagreed as indicated in Table 3. This implies that needy students are not provided with personal effects by sponsor churches yet students who lack personal effects may undergo psychological torture that may lead to involvement in drugs and early pregnancies which strongly affects performance. It also impact negatively on deviancy prevalence in schools on the account of truancy, theft, drug abuse, promiscuity, among other vices which will affect school performance (Hofferth, Smith, McLoyd & Finklestein, 2000). The assertion by Hofferth *et al.* (2000) is grounded on the fact that students from a high socio-economic status household will have access to a high number of various resources, such as having text books, pocket money, and having the ability to afford payment for extracurricular activities which is a reverse for those from low household income.

As for purchase of uniforms for the needy students in their schools, majority 43(95.6%) of the respondents disagreed that sponsor churches were likely to supply or supplied them to needy students. Of these, 25(58.1%) belonged to protestant sponsored schools while 18(41.9%) belonged to Catholic sponsored schools. Only 2(100%) respondents from Catholic sponsored schools were undecided. There was no statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=2.616$, $p=0.106$) in response between Catholic and Protestant sponsored schools as indicated in Table 3. This implies that religious sponsors rarely buy uniforms for the needy students. Uniform that is in good shape boosts the learners' esteem and self worthy which has a direct impact on their academic performance (McGoey, Munro, McCobin & Miller, 2016). Finally, on whether sponsor church gives pocket money for the needy children, none of the respondents agreed, a majority, 42(93%) of them rating disagree with 3 (7%) rating undecided as indicated in Table 3. Only 3(7%) of respondents belonging to Catholic sponsored schools were undecided regarding sponsor churches giving pocket money for the needy children in their schools. All protestant sponsored schools respondents 25(100%) disagreed on sponsor giving pocket money to needy students. There was a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=4.018$, $p=0.045$) in response between Catholic and Protestant sponsored schools. This finding implies that Catholic sponsors were more likely to give pocket money to the needy students than protestant sponsors as 7% were not so sure whereas 58% were affirmative in their disagreement with regard to protestant schools.

The findings of this study revealed a trend that sponsor churches were doing very little with regard to giving financial support services to needy students within schools of the studied area. This finding is corroborated by a study in Kiambu by Mwaura (2011) on the account that assistance of poor students by sponsor churches was poorly rated. Cherop and Wanyonyi (2012) concurs on the need for sponsors to provide student s with financial sponsorship and goes further to suggest how such institutions could expand their financial base by soliciting resource mobilization through book donations/harvest, love offering where assorted basics are brought in, among initiatives. It's also arguable that financial support services could form an important aspect of Trans Nzoia County church sponsored secondary school culture which is known to impact directly on the dual student outcomes identified by Lee, Bryk and Smith (1993) and OECD (2003) as academic achievement and student engagement consisting of their attitudes towards schooling and their participation in school activities (O.E.C.D, 2003).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Sponsor churches do very little with regard to giving financial support services to needy students within schools which affects their wellbeing in schools and impact negatively on their academic performance. This appears a common trend in the entire Country as studies done elsewhere returned a similar verdict on this aspect of sponsor sponsorship of schools. The study recommends need for sponsor churches to rethink their strategies on sponsorship particularly by boosting their welfare packages for the needy students. This will not only assist them improve academically but will also boost financial base and provisions of basic learning infrastructure to the recipient schools and therefore performance.

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