

Effects of Conflicts on School Management in the Third World: The Case of Kenya

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Abstract

Religious sponsors have in the past contributed immensely to the growth of education in the country. Role conflicts have however tended to arise between them and other stakeholders. The purpose of this study was to find out the effects of the emerging conflicts between religious sponsors and head teachers, education officials, parents and schools' Boards of Governors in the management of public secondary schools in Nandi South District. The survey research design was adopted for this study. The study population comprised of 38 religious sponsored Public Secondary Schools in Nandi South District, 38 Board of Governors Chairmen, 38 Parents and Teachers' Association Chairmen, 38 head teachers and 342 teachers, 6 education secretaries of the schools' religious sponsors and 5 Assistant Education Officers. The saturated sampling technique was applied. Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used to collect data. These instruments were first tested for reliability and validity. Quantitative data were analyzed critically in themes as guided by study objectives. The findings of the study indicated that most of the conflicts involved religious sponsors on one hand and other stakeholders. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education sensitizes the public secondary schools' church sponsors and other stakeholders with regards to the correct interpretation of the Education Act as a tool in schools' management. The findings of this study would therefore provide a useful reference for educational administrators and managers. The findings will also be an important addition to the body of knowledge in the field of educational management, leadership and policy.

Keywords: religious sponsors, conflict, education, secondary school, Nandi South District.

INTRODUCTION

The success of every school depends on its management. This is also essential for the development of any education system and for education to achieve its stated goals for the benefits of a nation. Schools, whether public or private have a number of stakeholders in their activities. According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (2000), the governance of a school is done through a coalition of interests performing different functions all aimed at enabling the school to operate and achieve its aims. This is in line with the observation by Owens (1987) that people in organizations have definite roles to perform and many interactive factors help to determine precisely their particular performances.

According to Government of Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 1968), the Education Act spells out the roles of sponsors in the management of Public Secondary Schools. However, reports indicate that all is not well

as regards relations between religious sponsors and other stakeholders like head teachers, parents and education officers in the management of public secondary schools.

The Report of the Committee reviewing the education system in Kenya chaired by Davy Koech (Republic of Kenya, 1999) reveals that there are a number of conflicts involving religious sponsors, parents and Parents and Teachers' Association officials, head teachers and Boards of Governors.

Several instances of conflicts in church sponsored schools have been reported. Nzwili for example reported an impasse that had arisen between the Catholic Church and the Ministry of Education over the closure of five Parochial Schools which had gone to a second week. The impasse was rooted on the grounds that Catholic Church Officials had complained about government violation of the

provision of the Education Act which requires that they should be involved in most of the decision making processes on matters affecting the management of schools.

Whereas it is the Ministry of Education to appoint principals in consultation with the sponsors, it is now the other way round. Matoke and Barasa (2001) also reported a case where the African Inland Church (AIC) had been accused of frustrating government efforts to resolve a crisis at Kapsabet Girls High School in Nandi North District. The church had refused to recognize the appointment of Board of Governors (BOG) yet it was involved in the BOG's nomination process.

The Nandi South District Secondary Schools Head's Association (NSDSSHA, 2005) manual quoted the District Education Officer, during the Heads' annual meeting, reiterating to the head teachers of the secondary schools in Nandi South District the need to have good working relations between them and the sponsors. The District Education Officer (DEO) cited the case of Meteitei Secondary School where the AIC Education Secretary had asked the District Education Office to nullify the BOG nomination exercise yet the secretary was involved in the same.

When reports of the conflicts in management of schools come up, they need to be urgently investigated with the aim of bringing about harmony and understanding amongst those involved. By so doing, the continuity and growth of education in this country would be ensured. However, there have been emerging conflicts in the management of Public Secondary Schools that were founded by religious sponsors. Yet, the effects the conflicts may have on management of the schools particularly in Nandi South District have not been systematically investigated or documented and solutions sought. This study was committed to that end.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It cannot be disputed that religious sponsors have contributed a great deal to the growth of education in this country. Indeed, in recognition of this fact, the government provided for their inclusion in the management of Public Secondary Schools in the Education Act of 1968. As time passed by, however, there were increasing reports of conflicts between them and other stakeholders like parents, education officials and head teachers despite their roles being spelt out clearly in the Education Act.

The background information reveals several cases of emerging conflicts involving religious sponsors and other education stakeholders. For example in 1998 and 2005, the AIC sponsor wanted the head teacher of Sochoi secondary school to disallow Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) students from conducting their

services while in 2005, the AIC education Secretary wanted to force the BOG nomination panel of Meteitei school to appoint certain individuals to the Board against the normal procedure. In Aldai Girls High School, the Anglican Church of Kenya sponsor wanted the Headmistress to be transferred because she had refused to pay salary to a chaplain sent to the school.

Cases like this impact negatively on the academic growth of the concerned schools in particular and Nandi south as a district in general. Despite the existence of the aforementioned conflicts, no systematic study known to the researcher has ever been done to find out and document the effects of the emergence of such conflicts on secondary schools' management.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to establish the effects of conflicts on public secondary schools' management.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research question guided this study:-
"What is the impact of the emergence of the conflicts on overall public secondary schools' management?"

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following were some of the limitations of the study:

- a). The findings of the study would be applicable to PSS with Religious Sponsors in Nandi South district, which may not be sufficient to make generalizations for all church sponsored schools in Kenya.
- b). A small number of respondents failed to fill questionnaires while others refused to be interviewed fearing victimization from either their superiors or anybody against whom they gave damning information.
- c). The length of time that the study took to complete meant that facts in the field kept changing and this forced the researcher to keep up with the changes by sometimes going back to the field so as to adjust the findings. This also contributed to the slowing of the process of analyzing data.

EXISTING LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Effects Of Conflicts On Public Secondary Schools' Management

Whenever there are conflicts involving parties to the same interests, there are always far reaching effects on the same point of their interests. Shidende (1996) on a study on the contributions of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church to education in Nyang'ori, Kenya, investigated the relationship that existed between the church and the local community. The researcher's findings established that although

the church had introduced education to the area, the local community did not like the way they were excluded from the Church's affairs especially at Nyang'ori Secondary School.

Some of the effects that came out of that conflict included the starting of a new secondary school by the local community. The local community also petitioned the Provincial education office regarding the issue of having more representation in the Board that was running Nyang'ori Secondary School. The petition was however rejected. Due to the conflict that had come up, the church lost the opportunity of having more converts as the community also lost on more social development ventures from the church.

Dimaggio and Cadge (2002) conducted a study on the role of religion in public conflict over the arts and cultural policy in Philadelphia, USA. They investigated the relations that had existed between the people who performed in various arts and the church. They found out that, on many occasions over the years, the church had viewed performers of art with suspicion. On one occasion for example, audiences in Philadelphia had refused to listen to Orchestra music because they deemed it unchristian. At the same time Rap concerts were also denied performances in the same place for the same reason.

The researchers found out that the conflicts resulted into church groups usually protesting against what they perceived to be against them. Parents also protested the presentation of religious music in suburban schools. The overall effect of the conflicts on the community was an existence of suspicion between the church and the performers of arts. The same also affected the effective implementation of curriculum policies in many local schools.

Chege (2004) also carried out a study on the effects of teachers' recruitment by BOGs on the teaching profession in Koibatek District, Kenya. He found out that in most schools in Koibatek District, appointments to school boards were being done in disregard of the Ministry of Education guidelines. As a result, people who were being appointed to schools' BOGs lacked commitment, competence and experience to properly run schools. The conflicts that had come up as a result had led to poor management of many schools in the district. They had also led to the raising of queries on the effectiveness of the teachers' recruitment exercise being done by BOGs.

The study by Nyamwaro, Murilla, Mochabo and Wanjala (2006) on conflict minimizing strategies on natural resources management and use in Transmara District revealed that there were many effects resulting from the same conflicts. The effects included the dissatisfaction of the community on solutions offered by the Kenya Wildlife Society on

the same conflicts. The conflicts had also led to lack of focus in the socio-economic development of the area. The most affected was education since students did not have properly developed schools. Students could not concentrate on their studies as long as the conflicts persisted.

Mutsotso (2004) while investigating the role of social education and ethics in the management of student violence in secondary schools in Vihiga District found out that many conflicts had come up in schools' management. The study revealed that the conflicts had resulted into some BOG members inciting students to riot so that they achieve their goals. He also found out that religious differences had created clashes, rifts and strifes among students and the wider community. A study by Waitchella, Suppiah and Raduon (2006) found out that school management conflicts resulted into many negative effects. The negative effects of conflicts included, wasted time on conflicts, low employee motivation, lower productivity and increased legal costs. The study also found out that school managers usually spent 20% of their time dealing with conflicts. That resulted into a lot of wastage of time and resources.

Studies by Lynch (2000), Amaize (2007) and Onoyume (2007) show that when conflict is not resolved, or when resolution is delayed, properties, lives and academic hours of unimaginable magnitude are lost. Delay in conflict resolution was also found to lead to disruptions of academic calendars leading to economic as well as psychological exhaustion.

Findings from the study by Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) also pointed out that school management conflicts most of the time resulted into disruption of academic programmes. Inadequate staffing due to unplanned transfers of teachers and withdrawal from active participation in school activities were also effects that resulted from conflicts. Other effects according to Okotoni and Okotoni included inequitable distribution of qualified teachers since most avoided schools with conflicts and cancellation of results. They concluded that in the final analysis, the government suffers financial losses from closure of schools while pupils and their parents suffer unquantifiable losses.

The literature reviewed this far show that this study is in line with all these previous studies albeit in different aspects of schools' management. The present study however concentrated on the effects of conflict in public secondary schools in Kenya.

Population

The study population comprised of 38 head teachers, 342 teachers, 38 BOG and 38 PTA chairmen from the schools shown in Table 1, 5 Assistant Education Officers (AEOs), from the 5 administrative divisions

and 6 religious sponsors' Education Secretaries of the various denominations in the district giving rise to a total of 467 respondents.

Table 1. Study Population

SPONSOR	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS				
	Boys	Girls	Co-educ.	Total	%
Roman Catholic	1	3	10	14	36.8
P.A.G.	--	--	2	2	5.3
A.I.C.	2	4	4	10	26.3
S.D.A.	--	--	1	1	2.6
A.C.K.	1	3	5	9	23.7
Orthodox	--	--	2	2	5.3
Grand Total	4	10	24	38	100%

SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Nandi South District, which is one of the districts in the Rift Valley Province, Kenya at an altitude of 1660M above sea level. It is bordered by Uasin Gishu District to the East, Nandi North to the West and Nyando to the South. Kisumu District borders it to the South West, Kericho District on its Northern Side while Vihiga District borders it on its Western side. It has five administrative divisions that also serve as education divisions namely; Aldai, Nandi Hills, Tindiret, Kaptumo and Lessos. The public secondary schools in this region are mainly sponsored by Christian Church denominations like the African Inland Church (AIC), The Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), The Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA), Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Currently, only Christian denominations sponsor secondary schools in the district.

METHODOLOGY

This was a descriptive study that adopted the survey research design. The descriptive approach of survey design of research is concerned with collecting data about the occurrence or instances of events in varying situations and circumstances in order to determine the opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of persons of interest to the researcher (Borg, 1981; Gay, 1992). In a similar vein, this approach enabled the researcher to investigate how interactions between sponsors and head teachers, teachers, BOG, PTA and education officials in religiously sponsored public secondary schools were leading to conflicts in schools' management. It also tried to link the sponsors' different areas of interaction with the mentioned groups and investigated the resultant effects of those interactions.

The saturated sampling technique was used. The researcher found this technique appropriate because it was in line with Orodho's (2004) observations that, small populations can form samples and be studied as distinct cases. This therefore meant that all the head teachers, teachers, Boards of Governors' chairmen & Parents and Teachers' Association chairmen from the

38 religious sponsored public secondary schools formed the study sample. All the 6 education secretaries of the religious sponsors and all the assistant education officers manning the 5 educational divisions in the district were also part of the sample. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) note that resource and time tend to be major constraints in deciding on the sample size to use. Therefore, in this study, a sample size of 467 respondents were sampled comprising of 38 BOG and 38 PTA chairmen, 38 head teachers, 6 education secretaries of the various religious denominations, 5 Assistant Education Offices and 342 teachers in the study area.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were collected by use of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The data collected through questionnaires and interviews were first subjected to pre-data analysis processes before appropriate statistics were applied to analyze the data and then the writing of the report.

Pre-Data Analysis Process

The gathered data from the questionnaires were validated, edited and then coded. The validation process enabled the researcher to determine the return rate of questionnaires which was over 90%, justifiable enough to allow analysis to go on. In editing, the instruments were scrutinized to determine the response rates. All the questionnaires were fully (100%) filled up, hence enough to provide the much needed data.

Data from interviews and open-ended items in the questionnaires, constituting the qualitative data in form of words and phrases were transcribed and then arranged as per emerging themes. Some data were however quantified where possible along with quantitative data from structured questionnaire items. Finally, all quantitative data were coded, whereby categories of responses were identified, classified and then recorded or tabulated on a prepared sheet as per the research questions or objectives of the study. Percentages were used to show the proportion of respondents giving certain responses. The analyzed data were then presented using tables accompanied by appropriate descriptions or explanations.

Survey Returns

The study entailed the distribution of questionnaires to 456 respondents of which 365 (80.0%) were completed and returned as follows:

29 (76.3%) out of 38 were collected from head teachers, 285 (83.3%) out of 342 from teachers, 24 (63.2%) out of 27 from BOG Chairmen and 27 (71.1%) from PTA Chairmen. Table 2 summarizes the data from questionnaires' returns as per various categories of respondents.

Table 2: Questionnaire returns as per categories of respondents

Respondents	N	Returned questionnaire	Frequency
Head teachers	38	29	76.3%
Teachers	342	285	83.3%
BOG Chairmen	38	24	63.2%
PTA Chairmen	38	27	71.1%
Total	456	365	100%

Referring to Table 2, in overall, the questionnaire return rate of 80% was above the 70% Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) recommend for data analysis to go on in survey research design. Also the results in Table 2 imply that data were collected from various categories of respondents representing a variety of views from all stakeholders in education for valid conclusions.

FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to establish the effects of conflicts in the management of public secondary schools that were religiously sponsored. The findings and discussions of the data collected during the study are presented here based on the research question of the study. The findings are presented under the theme:

“Effects of conflicts on Public Secondary Schools’ Management”

In discussing the results, references were made to the literature reviewed in chapter two and any other literature used in the course of the research which was not cited in the literature review. The discussion was based on the data collected through questionnaires and in-depth interviews during the study.

Effects of the Conflicts on Public Secondary Schools’ Management

The data collected were to enable the researcher to establish the effects of the emergence of the conflicts on the overall secondary schools’ management. The respondents were asked to give their views on what they considered were the effects of conflicts on public secondary schools’ management. Their responses were as follows:

According to the head teachers’ responses, low discipline among students was one of the effects of secondary schools’ conflicts. That was indicated by 21 (73.5%) head teachers. They also indicated that as a result of the conflicts, there was a high turnover of head teachers. That was indicated by 16 (55.4%) head teachers.

The teachers’ responses revealed that as a result of management conflicts in public secondary schools, there was poor performance in national exams by the affected schools. Low student discipline as indicated by 250 (87.7%) teachers. Other effects were;

- Low enrolments, as indicated by 245 (85.9%) teachers, since conflicts made students to transfer away from the affected schools.
- Low student discipline as indicated by 256 (90%) teachers.

The BOG chairmen’s responses highly concurred with those of the teachers and head teachers on the effects that conflicts had on overall public secondary schools’ management. Their responses revealed that overall students’ discipline tended to go down as a result of the management conflicts. That was indicated by 18 (75%) BOG chairmen. Another effect was high turnover of head teachers as indicated by 15 (62.5%) BOG Chairmen.

Assistant Education Officers (AEOs) responses revealed that schools that experienced conflicts suffered effects that include the following:

- Poor performance in academics as reflected in outcomes of national exams
- Low enrollment of students
- Students’ indiscipline that led to escalated strikes in schools.

DISCUSSION

The preceding findings indicate that whenever there are management conflicts in schools, overall students’ discipline tends to go down. On the high rate of head teachers’ turnover, this makes schools unstable. For instance, 20 (67.6%) head teachers whose schools had been involved in conflicts had only been in their current stations for less than two years in those stations.

In reference to the teachers’ response, it is true that students tend to perform poorly in national exams or schools usually drop in academics when there are management conflicts. Schools that are involved in conflicts also tended to lack appeal to prospective students and the overall students’ population goes down since students transfer from the affected schools, therefore leading to low enrollments. Whenever there are management conflicts in schools, overall students’ discipline tends to go down due to factors such as high turnover of head teachers whose plans end prematurely. This agreed with Okotoni and Okotoni’s (2003) study which had also found out that public schools’ management conflicts led to disruption of academic programmes and unplanned transfers of both teachers and students.

The responses of the Assistant Education Officers also indicated that most of the schools that were not performing well in academics had problems in management. This arose because the conflicts usually affected the smooth running of the schools. Teachers and even students got distracted from their work whenever there were conflicts in schools. When

schools experienced conflicts, students tended to leave and transfer to other schools. This affected the enrollments of such schools with some even being closed down because students' enrollments were too low.

Schools that had no continuity in school headship had a lot of student strikes. This occurred because of low discipline amongst the students and teachers' low morale to instill order. As a result of the many students' disturbances, there was usually a general drop in education standards in such schools. This agreed with findings from the studies by Lynch (2000), Amaize (2007) and Onoyume (2007) that had also revealed that schools' management conflicts had devastating effects. The effects included drop in academic performance and loss of lives, property and disruptions of Schools' academic calendars.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented here are a summary of the study findings, conclusions and recommendations. A summary of findings along the main theme is presented. It is then followed by conclusions of the study and recommendations.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ALONG THE MAIN THEME

A summary of the findings along the main theme is given. The theme was also the research question of the study.

Effects of Conflicts on Public Secondary Schools' Management

- a) According to head teachers, BOG Chairmen and education secretaries, the main effects of the conflicts on the well being of schools are:
 - Decline in discipline among the students
 - High turnover of head teachers which ends up stagnating schools and most of the time making schools unstable.
- b) Teachers and Assistant Education Officers concurred that schools affected by conflicts tended to perform poorly in national examinations. They also suffered low enrollments as the conflicts made students to transfer from the affected schools and also to decline in students' discipline.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the study findings, this study made the conclusions that the conflicts had brought about serious or adverse and far reaching effects in the management and well being of schools. These include:

- Poor performance
- Strikes in schools
- Low enrollments of students

- High turnover of head teachers that led to instability in the affected schools
- Frequent transfers of teachers from the affected schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and conclusions of the study.

- i) The BOG members to be appointed should be people of high academic achievement that are commensurate with the responsibilities of the school boards because lack of proper interpretation of the Education Act has been identified as one of the causes of conflicts in public secondary schools.
- ii) The provisions in education policies and guidelines regarding the length of time BOG chairmen and members should serve in schools need to be adhered to so as to avoid members developing vested interest in some schools hence leading to conflicts.
- iii) Head teachers and BOGs should be trained on conflict resolution and management techniques to avoid conflicts going on for a long time without being resolved. It would also assist in making them have the techniques to turn negative effects of conflict into having positive attributes.

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