

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS SPONSORS IN MANAGING PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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Abstract

Religious school sponsors play an important of management of schools in Kenya. Most of the schools in Kenya were founded by various religious organizations. Additionally, most of faith based institutions play an important role in enhancing moral development of learners through provision of pastoral programs

KEY WORDS: Religious sponsors, Management

Introduction

The church involvement in development and management of Education in Africa and precisely Kenya is undoubtable. According to Mwanzia (2001) the history of development and spread of churches in Kenya is interwoven with its role in establishment and management of schools. Kiruthu (1998) notes that in almost all African countries, western education was pioneered by the missionaries in their endeavor to spread Christianity. The missionaries realized that teaching Africans how to read and write was the only effective way of reaching out to many souls a fact that prompted them to establish schools.

Eshiwani (1993) decrees that the first learning institution in Kenya was established by Ludwig Krapf and John Rebman at Rabai near Mombasa in 1846. The main objective of establishment of the school by the Missionary Society of Kenya was to help enlighten the converts to be able to read the bible and write. This is because the missionaries wanted to use those Africans who had received basic education to help in spreading of the gospel to fellow Africans and to act as agents of western civilization. The converts were also taught how to read and write to aid communication between them and the missionaries and colonial masters.

The British who colonized Kenya became interested in management of education in 1908 as a result of a conference in England that sought to establish strategies of how to manage imperial educational affairs. Nelson Fraser formed a commission in 1911 that advised the colonial master on how to manage and coordinate educational matters. His recommendations saw the creation of the Department of Education in 1911. The main function of the department was to help in formulation, interpretation, and supervision of policies that governed education. In addition, the department also helps in administration and management of examinations, allocation of funds to district education boards, expansion of schools and development of the curriculum (Willy and Maina, 1995)

The 1924 commission of Phelps-Stoke found out that the education which was being offered by the missionaries was too much irrelevant as it only focused on teaching Africans how to read religious books and acquisition of basic writing skills. The findings caused the rift between the missionaries and the colonial masters. The irony here was that most of the schools were owned by missionaries a fact that forced the colonial governments to collaborate with the missionaries in development of the education in Kenya. The missionaries were also faced with financial problems interims of buying teaching learning materials and payment of teachers' salaries. This necessitated formation of mutual partnership between the colonial administrators and the government that capitalized on the mutual lack of resources. The government offered financial resources and land while the missionaries on the other hand supplied teaching staff and building of the schools (Otiende et al, 1992)

Immediately after Kenya received its independence, the Government established an education act in 1968, which tasked the ministry of education with the responsibility of managing education affairs in Kenya. The act also developed organs within the ministry that were useful in management of education at all levels of the government. The District education boards were put in place to aid management of public primary and secondary schools. Kenya Institute of Education was also enacted to aid coordination of teacher training, preparation of education materials and research. Initially the work of training of teachers and management of education was a prerogative of the missionaries and each religious sect trained its own teachers. There was no uniform curriculum for training of teachers.

The state decided to partner with the church in expansion of education by referring to them as sponsors in the education act. The legislation was created with reference to learning institutions, which were formerly managed by church. They were all transferred to the local authority. The authority empowered the church to nominate former church manager as the sponsor if the community being served by the learning institution wants religious doctrines of the school to be respected. The primary role of the sponsor was to ensure that that the school gets religious instructions that are in conformity with the prescribed syllabus by the ministry of education (Juma, 1999)

The government also established a provision that bestowed the board of governors with the responsibility of managing the affair of the schools. The board was to be composed of members from the community, which is being served by the school. Education (board of Governors) order of 1969 gave the sponsor a quota of Board of Governors membership. It empowered the sponsor to prepare religious studies syllabus and teaching learning materials in this sponsored schools. However, the sponsor's responsibility was not adequately defined thus creating conflict between the church and the state on how to manage the affairs of the schools. The major issues in contention involves interpretation of the responsibilities and the rights of both the state and the church on who has the last say on the matters of education

Administration of public secondary schools and the role of religious based sponsors

Management of education in Kenyan secondary schools has undergone constant changes from independence to align the educational objectives to the current national needs. The Ominde report of 1964 gave recommendations that the state should take charge of all educational activities to enhance coordination and effective achievement of the national goals.

The Kenyan parliament in 1968 passed the education act, which gave provisions for progressive development of education in the country. The act empowered the ministry of education to formulate and oversee the implementation of all education policies and establish framework for management of education at all levels. According to the act, all secondary schools were to be managed by the Board of Governors. By 1970, the government centralizes all the activities of the ministry, which included financing and administrative machinery for the purpose of maintaining discipline and cooperation between various stakeholders in the ministry of education (Otiende et al, 1992)

Education order of 1967 redefined the word sponsor, which used to refer to religious based institution, which helped in establishment of schools to a voluntary body. The voluntary sponsor was allowed to nominate four of its members to represent its interests in the board of governors and the appointment of the boards chairman is to be done by the ministry of education in consultation with the voluntary body (Education act, 1968) .In fact, the education act did not give the sponsor an overall role of controlling the BOG as it only has four nominated members. The only privilege the act gave the sponsors in recognizing their role in formulation of religious education syllabus in schools.

Njoroge (2006) identified the salient role of religious school sponsors in advancement Kenya's education. To be specific, he recognized the role of the Catholic Church in establishment of educational institutions and hospitals in marginalized areas. A good example is the establishment of Turkana Girls and St Leo secondary schools in Turkana County. The sponsor was entrusted to spread his religious doctrines in the educational institutions they sponsored through the teaching of religious education and pastoral programs.

The government established the teacher service commission in 1967 with the functions of recruiting and deployment of teachers in various public schools. The commission is also in charge of payment of teachers and taking disciplinary measures in the event that a teacher goes against the teaching ethics. However, the law did not give provisions on the responsibility of the sponsor in the payment of teachers, which was their initial function. This strategy reduced the powers and influence of religious school sponsors in schools (Mutundu, 2001).

According to Eshiwani (1993), the sponsor through consultation with the ministry of had an upper hand in influencing appointment of preferred principals in the schools that they sponsor. For instance, the Catholic Church recommended a qualified practicing catholic with

integrity to head their schools. However all the school teachers were employees of the teacher service commission. The head teacher had the responsibility of overall management of school activities.

Otiende et al (1992), reports that education in Kenya is not solely financed by the government and that it involves partnership between the parents, community members and sponsors. Olembo et al (1992) identified that it is the role of the government to fund schools current expenditure while the parents caters for developmental expenditure. The sponsor here is not recognized as a source of funds for the schools as his role is not clearly defined (Kamau, 2001). However his contribution in development of school infrastructure cannot be ignored but is considered as a donation from well wishers

Ominde report further reviewed the responsibility of the sponsor by highlighting previous rivalry between the catholic and protestant churches that was galvanized by fear that members from the other churches will interfere with the education activities in catholic sponsored schools. The government moved with speed to quell the rivalry by directing that whatever role the sponsors should have in schools, it should not include a share in administrative management of school activities. The religious school sponsors role remained to spiritual development of the school (Kamotho, 2001). The parent teachers association was to be involved in the general development, maintenance and welfare of the schools. However, the BOG had the overall role of managing the school on behalf of the government.

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