

Influence of Strategic Financial Initiatives on Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya

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Abstract: Strategic financial initiatives in schools can bring about change in students' academic performance. The dismal performance in Kisii County has raised concern from all stakeholders in the education sector. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of strategic financial initiatives on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. The study's objective was to determine the influence of financial strategic initiatives on academic performance in Kisii County public secondary schools; a theory of Education Production Function that relates inputs in education to output was applied. The study employed a descriptive survey design. A population target of 353 principals and 4354 teachers was considered from 353 public secondary schools in Kisii County. Slovin's formula with a margin error of 0.05 was used to sample 28 principals and 341 teachers as respondents. Stratified random sampling was used to get school categories: 2 schools in the national category, 24 schools at the county level, 37 county schools, and 166 secondary schools the for sub-county category. Instruments for this research include ed: the observation schedule used by the researcher, questionnaire for teachers, and interview schedule for principals. School of Education Kisii University's supervisors ascertained the validity of the research instruments. Questionnaires were considered reliable since Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha 0.998 obtained was higher than the critical Cronbach alpha of 0.7 on a scale of -1 to +1. Test re-test method was done through a pilot study of 27 public secondary schools from Nyamira County with similar characteristics as the area of study. Data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data and interview schedules were organized based on the themes of study and research objectives. Percentages means and frequency distribution tables were used to present data for easier interpretation. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze quantitative data from Likert scales. Regression analysis was used to show the influence of the financial initiatives(independent variable) on the dependent variable; academic performance. This study's findings were: strategic financial initiatives influence academic performance greatly in Extra County and national schools than in county(average/good) and subsequently in sub-county secondary schools

Keywords: Strategic Financial Initiatives, Academic Performance, Public secondary schools, Kisii County, Kenya.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that education greatly improves societal well-being. For this reason, societies have seriously invested in inclusive and quality education. In Western China, Glewwe and Zhao (2012) did research on the impact of giving free eyeglasses to students and found out that students who benefitted from this financial initiative for one year, did wonderfully well in academics. It the, therefore, for all stakeholders in education to have good management skills on school financial resources to create a pleasant school environment, a safe center that will motivate the learners to be in school always and be willing to engage fully in bottom-curriculum and curriculum activities (Osei – Owusu and Kwame,

2012). To achieve this, the government has to forgo funding other sectors and financially support education to strengthen academic performance and standards (Njihia and Nderitu, 2012). Although this initiative appears to be similar to the done study, the researcher was out to find other financial initiatives used by school principals and their influence on academic performance in Kisii County.

There is a direct relationship between student performance and the adequacy nature of the school's financial resources. This was discovered by Mascitti-Miller (2013) and Jackson, C. K. (2018) who indicated that a school with a high number of financial resources brings about a high academic standard in the school. Other scholars with similar ideas are Miles and Frank (2008) who confirmed schools that perform highly have a stable financial base which enables them to support school programs to meet the required academic standards for students. With enough finances, the school will carry out teacher professional development which enriches the teacher with experiences and hence betters student academic performance. In addition, the teachers may get a share of some fiscal resources, and incentives and be made to do other activities for motivational purposes to remain highly effective. This report concurs with the findings of the World Bank (2008) which narrates that the financial support that such schools get from well-wishers, the Ministry of Education, parents, and other stakeholders make schools do better academically in Tanzania.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the US decisions to support public education in schools, and funding is made by school district administrators and government officials. This is according to (Kreisman and Steinberg 2019) who further say that on receiving the funds, school districts control and decide on how to distribute and utilize the funds. However, to ensure that students are motivated in learning, teachers need to be the key players for them in providing knowledge and skills plus the specific materials and necessary activities needed in each classroom.

In the US, online education crowdfunding is one way which is used to pool funds. The use of this approach requires that teachers get experience by interacting with students to know which resources are required which can enhance the learning experiences of the student to uplift their academic standards. When this is done, money is collected through the internet for this work (Pearson and Moomaw, 2006). In this particular venture, teachers act as entrepreneurs when seeking funds; they must look for ways how to convince potential donors to make contributions. They are made to describe the activities relevant to the teachers' course curriculum. Here teachers have got to plan and use persuasive language for them to successively raise funds, even though, there is still no assurance that their plans of receiving money will succeed. Nevertheless, through the planning done teachers can understand the needs of the learner and then develop strategies that motivate students to learn. The students who participate in the fund rising may gain from the teachers' planning efforts even if the attempt may fail, and thus experience academic performance improvement (QiangGao, Mingfeng Lin & D. J. Wu, 2020).

The residents or parents of students consist of donors who contribute financially to specific teachers based on their connections to improve students' academic performance (Posey-Maddox, 2013). The key players in the crowdfunding program are the teachers, they, therefore, feel an obligation to reciprocate and work seriously to improve student academic performance. Since teachers are personally associated with the crowdfunding activities and closely attached to the donors, they are the likely group to be held accountable.

The reason discussed above makes online education crowdfunding to be vital as funds are effectively invested in the most priority projects initiated by teachers. These in return will likely improve students' academic performance. This study was done in California in America while the current study was on the influence of strategic financial initiatives on academic performance was done in Kisii County Kenya.

Lack of school fees was established by Shahidul and Karim (2015) in their study to be the major reason why there was an increase in girls dropping out of school. That, in China forty-seven percent of girls and thirty percent of boys drop from elementary and junior secondary schools. School income-generating activities were therefore suggested as other means of supplementing education expenditures in schools. This urge, therefore, made the researcher find out which income-generating activities in Kisii county support school programs.

Financial requirements of education have affected universal access to basic education. This is according to UNESCO (2001) who says that poverty has contributed to so many households being unable to meet the direct and indirect costs of

school resulting in many school-age children have limited or no access to education. This made Nigeria look for other alternative sources of finance to support education such as state grants, individuals, school fees, the sale of school magazines, and learners' activities; drama performances (Universal Basic Education, 2012).

According to Media Team (2022), Magoha gave a warning to all school heads that they should not deny deserving students admission because of items such as novels, mathematical sets, exercise books, class readers or set books, atlases, Mathematical tables, foolscaps and photocopy papers that are not approved by the ministry. In addition, the Education boss insisted that learners should not report with items that are not academically related such as hard brushes, hoes (jembes), hockey sticks, machetes (pangas), and slashes. The tough-talking CS explained that the aim was to make basic education affordable; a government mandate. He assured his parents from being overburdened by unnecessary expenses. "As soon as schools will open, education field officers will monitor and track down learners who fail to report to a school," he said.

"Schools must adhere to the fees guidelines showing how much parents are required to pay per category of school. As with last year, the Ministry will mount a nationwide monitoring exercise to ensure that Form One students join the schools they were selected to and that fee guidelines are strictly adhered to," said Magoha.

The government had also offered full scholarships for secondary education to 18,000 learners over the past two years. The aim according to Magoha is to, "enable many of the learners to break the ceiling and liberate their families from dehumanizing urban poverty." He advised the principals and the Board of Management (BOM) to use the money for the intended purpose; to facilitate the 100 percent transition policy.

"Bursaries and scholarships should be given to students admitted to boarding schools since day schooling is free. However, for boarding school well-wishers and philanthropists are encouraged to consider covering costs of other non-tuition related expenses such as school uniforms and personal effects for needy children," said Magoha.

All the strategic financial initiatives discussed are meant to be put into place by secondary school principals and BOMs to make education accessible and affordable hence improving academic performance. The top school management has the task of ensuring that the recommendations are implemented so as for the students to remain in school to study and progress academically. This could make a scholar carry out research hence the need for the current study.

There was a need for the researcher to look into how principals in public secondary schools in the stated county reduce costs for their schools to benefit in one way or another. The Republic of Kenya (2012) explained that principals of secondary schools should be well informed on matters of financial management to make schools run smoothly and the issue of budgetary deficits is addressed in schools. Cost-effective techniques such as the use of saving jikos and boreholes to supplement water expenses in schools may be used to reduce the cost of education (Ministry of Education, 2007). Through this schools will not run into deficits and thus students will be comfortable in their studies through the financial support they will get.

The use of financial initiatives in schools such as students slashing their compound, and cleaning their classrooms; does reduce expenses (Ministry of Education, 2008). This will make the academic atmosphere good on matters of finance. The Republic of Kenya (2010) says that other initiatives used to overcome budgetary deficits are: the hard work of the school management, and allocating more resources towards priority areas such as human capital development and other core income-generating projects. Also, the Republic of Kenya(2003) advocates for schools to participate in commercial activities to generate more income to enable them to perform better academically. How are secondary schools in Kisii County trying to accomplish this? What was the influence of this initiative on students' academic performance? This was the researcher's target.

To address budgetary deficits in schools, different means of achieving this objective must be carefully evaluated before a project is commissioned(Njeruand Orodho 2003). The Republic of Kenya (2007) explained that schools should always advertise their tenders. This aims at controlling inflated costs which may come up due to single sourcing. According to the Republic of Kenya (2011), schools should buy stock in bulk and take advantage prices of under economies of scale. This will attract higher discounts which will make the school save and use the money to uplift other academic programs(Kagendo, 2002). The researcher needed to establish whether such initiatives are implemented in Kisii County public secondary schools and their influence on academic performance.

In Narok County, Lwakasana and Getange (2016) did a study on the effects of income-generating activities in public secondary schools in Trans-Mara Sub-County. The respondents included 13 principals, 322 teachers, and 13 bursars who were sampled using purposive and stratified random techniques. Questionnaires and interview schedules were the main research instruments used to collect data. The findings were: that funds from IGAs reduced financial constraints on parents, made student enrolment go up, motivated both students and teachers, and led to improvement in academic performance.

Through this, recommendations were made for initiatives to be put in place in schools to improve income from IGAs to cater to needy students, and improve physical facilities. The current study was only comprised of principals (28) and teachers (341) by use of Slovin’s formula in sampling 353 principals and 4354 teachers and looked at more than one financial initiative.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. This design is appropriate since it describes what is the container in a given context at a given time and creates a picture of the current situation. According to (Best & Khan, 2006), facts are discussed to give valid general conclusions about current information. 4707 teachers (353 Principals and 4354 other teachers) formed the target population. Using Slovin’s formula, a sample of 341 teachers and 28 principals was used. Questionnaires for teachers, interview schedules for principals, and observation schedules for the researcher were used to collect data which was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective of the study was the determination the influence of strategic financial initiatives on academic performance. The research question was: How do strategic financial initiatives influence the academic performance of public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya?

The researcher collected data on the strategic financial initiatives implemented in public secondary schools in Kisii County, and Table 1 shows the results. The teachers’ statements on school financial initiatives were stated on a scale of one to five. The numbers represented, 1- inadequate, 2 – below average, 3 – average, 4 – good, and 5 – very good. Each statement rating was then averaged for each school category and a mean and standard deviation were calculated. The results were presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Financial Initiatives on Academic Performance

Statement	Sub-County		County		Extra-County		National	
	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.
Financing projects in order of priority	1.85	.739	3.67	.471	4.97	.048	5.00	.00
Friendly donation to the school	1.62	.653	3.47	.502	4.82	.388	5.00	.00
Students sending parents messages about fees	1.85	.739	3.67	.471	4.97	.180	5.00	.00
Regular school fundraising	1.43	.497	3.40	.492	4.79	.413	5.00	.00
Manner of fees collection	1.96	.804	3.71	.458	4.85	.358	5.00	.00
School income-generating activities	1.62	.653	3.47	.502	4.82	.388	5.00	.00

Table 1 shows: financial initiatives; financing projects in order of priority, friendly donation to school, students sending message to parents for fees, manner of fees collection and school income generating activities at sub-county public secondary schools have (Mn = 1.85,1.62,1.85,1.96 and 1.62; STD = .739, .653,.739,804 and .653) respectively. This implies that their influence on academic performance is below average. At county schools, financing projects in order of priority, students sending message to parents for fees, and manner of fees collection initiatives have (Mn = 3.67, 3.67, 3.71;STD =.471, .471 .458) respectively, indicating a good influence on academic performance while it is very good at extra-county since the initiatives have (Mn = 4.97, 4.97, 4.85; STD = .048, .180, .358), and national schools (Mn = 5.00; STD = .00) respectively.

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On the other hand, the fundraising initiative has (Mn = 1.43; STD = .497) at sub-county schools implying its influence on academic performance is inadequate. It has an average influence on academic performance at county schools (Mn = 3.40; STD = .492), very good at extra-county (Mn = 4.79; STD = .413) and national schools (Mn = 5.00; STD = .00). The friendly donation to school and school income generating activities initiatives have (Mn=3.47; STD = .502) each, at county schools. This indicates their good influence on academic performance. The same financial initiatives have got a very good influence on academic performance at extra county schools (Mn = 4.82, 4.82; STD = .388, .388), and national schools (Mn = 5.00, 5.00; STD = .00, .00).

The financial strategic initiatives discussed in the above table can be of good aid in supplementing school finances which the school gets in form of a subsidy from the MOE. The school principal and school Board of Management may initiate programs of looking for friends and well-wishers to give donations to the school, have regular school fundraising programs; once a year, initiate income-generating activities in the school such as poultry keeping, advise students to send messages to parents/guardians for school fees using school phone, advise parents during class conferences to use manner of fees payment such as M-pesa through school pay bill numbers to enhance fees collection, and follow the school strategic plan by financing projects in order of priority.

The research shows that strategic financial initiatives’ influence on academic performance is below average at sub-county schools, average/good at the county, and very good at extra-county and national secondary schools.

The researcher did the component factor analysis to determine whether all the strategic financial initiatives contributed to academic performance. Table 2 below shows the result. It shows; financing projects in order of priority, friendly donations to schools, students sending messages to parents for fees, regular school fundraising school, manner of fees collection, and school income-generating activities initiatives having components (.988, .988, .988, .978, .982, .988) respectively.

Table 2: Component Factor Analysis of Strategic Financial Initiatives

Variable	Component
Financing projects in order of priority	.988
Friendly donation to schools	.988
students sending a message to parents about fees	.988
Regular school fundraising	.978
Manner of fees collection	.982
School income-generating activities	.988
Financial initiatives component	.987

All the six variables have a correlation coefficient of more than the recommended minimum .7. Therefore, the six variables can be put into one component; financial initiatives.

The research question was further investigated by use of the following hypothesis:

H₀₁: There is no influence of strategic financial initiatives on academic performance in Kisii County secondary schools. Findings are as indicated in table 3.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance; Financial Initiatives

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	13506.218	3	4502.073	649.079	.000
Within Groups	2101.637	303	6.936		
Total	15607.855	306			

Table 3 gives the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of financial initiatives. The strategic financial initiatives have a statistically significant influence on academic performance in secondary public schools in the county of Kisii, Kenya ($p = .000 < p = .05$). The null hypothesis, H₀₁: There is no influence of strategic financial initiatives on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kisii County Kenya tested at $p < .05$ significance level, was rejected. Therefore, strategic financial initiatives influence the performance of public secondary schools in academics. The calculated F (3, 306) =

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649.079 is more than the critical value ($F = 2.997$), thus, indicating differences in the influence of strategic financial initiatives on all categories of schools in Kisii County.

The public secondary schools' principals responded to open questionnaires on how they managed finances to ensure efficient school management. The researcher administered 28 questionnaires to 28 principals and analyzed and reported the common themes as shown in Table 3. The researcher carried out the interview schedule with the principals using the open regarding the financial initiatives in the schools and found out that: 23 (82.1%) said they purchase items in bulk, 10 (35.7%) indicated that they buy items when in season, 20 (71.4%) indicated that they used locally available materials to save school finances. Only 9 (32.1%) of them indicated school has income-generating projects, while 8 (28.6%) of them mentioned that they write proposals to get bursaries, 6 (21.4%) said they introduced welfare kits for needy students, 5 (17.9%) of them indicated writing proposals to get Constituency Development Fund (CDF), and 8 (26.8%) principals said they waive or offer grants to bright needy students.

Table 4: Principals' Responses on Questionnaire on Financial Strategic Initiatives

S/No.	Common Theme	Frequency	Percentage
1	Purchasing items in bulk	23	82.1
2	Purchasing items during the harvesting season	10	35.7
3	Using locally available materials	20	71.4
4	School income-generating activities	9	32.1
5	Writing proposals to get bursaries	8	28.6
6	Welfare kit for needy students	6	21.4
7	Writing proposals to get CDF	5	17.9
8	Waiver/grants of fees for bright needy students	8	28.6

Most of the principals adopted the financial initiative of buying items in bulk and buying locally available materials, as financial initiatives to save school finances. Fairly a reasonable number indicated purchasing items in season and having school income-generating projects. A small number of principals waived or offered grants of fees for bright needy students and wrote proposals to get bursaries. Very few principals indicated the writing of proposals to the MOE to get Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and have welfare kits for needy students. The principals had the following to say when they were asked about the role of ways adopted by the schools to save school finances. A principal from a county school said;

Proper uses of finance ensure no wastage and thus enhance the implementation of academic programs effectively. The school has a welfare kit that caters to needy students allowing them to stay in school, thus attending all the academic programs. A student by the name of Seraphine Onyango who was needy and was supported scored a B+ in KCSE 2019.

Another principal from a sub-county school said that:

Needy students once supported financially remain in school throughout and concentrate on academic studies. For example, a needy student who was supported in the year 2019 got a B (plain) in KCSE 2019 and joined South Eastern Kenya University in the following year.

Another principal from a sub-county school explained that the students benefit from bursary allocations from their respective constituency development fund offices. He explained that these funds cater for their fees and as a result, they stay in school to attend the academic programs. These explanations indicate that this financing program led to an increase of students in schools besides keeping them attending lessons.

A principal from a national school said;

Our school considers the critical prioritization of projects by undertaking careful procurement measures. The savings made are used to buy revision materials to boost academic performance. Also, part of the savings is used to motivate teachers and students hence boosting academic performance. The school runs a welfare kit to support needy and bright

students to meet their personal and fee obligations to remain in school to study, this has improved the academic performance of some students. This study reveals that strategic financial initiatives influence academic performance in Kisii County.

From the above findings, a principal from a county school said that the financial support from the school welfare kit which was given to a student by the name of Seraphine Onyango made her stay in school and scored a B+ in her examinations. This is in agreement with Media Team (2022) that the aim of assisting needy students is to make them self-reliant. The student who got a B+ will get a job after training and be productive in society. This conforms also to (Glewwe, *et al.*, 2012), in Western China who researched the impact of giving free eyeglasses to students. It was found out that those students who benefitted from this financial initiative for one year performed wonderfully well in their academics. This calls for all stakeholders in education to have efficient management of school financial resources to make the school a pleasant, safe center that will increase the attendance of students, motivation, and willingness to participate fully in both curriculum and co-curriculum activities (Osei – Owusu and Kwame, 2012). To do this, the government is forced to sacrifice funding to other sectors to finance education, this aims at improving academic performance (Njihia and Nderitu, 2012).

Equally from the research findings, financing projects in order of priority, students sending a message to parents for fees and manner of fees collection initiatives implementation is below average at sub-county leading to poor academic results which rhyme with UNESCO (2001) saying that financial requirements of education have affected universal access to basic education. Poverty contributes to too many households missing to meet the direct and indirect costs of school. This leads to too many school-age children have limited or no access to schooling. To support education, some of the sources of revenue for schools in Nigeria include school fees, grants from the state, individuals, learners' activities such as drama performances, and proceeds from the sale of school magazines (Universal Basic Education, 2012).

From the current study, school fundraising initiatives are very good at extra-county and national schools, are inadequate at sub-county schools, and average at county schools in the manner they contribute to good academic performance. This is similar to other financial initiatives which other scholars have confirmed; Lwakasana and Getange (2016) did a study on the effects of income-generating activities in public secondary schools in Trans-Mara Sub-County. They confirmed that the Income Generating Activities make student enrolment go up in a school and more so the academic performance of the students is improved. The Republic of Kenya (2007), explains that schools should always advertise tenders on all of their projects and enable the public to bid for them. This will avoid inflated costs which come up as a result of single sourcing. Schools should buy stock in bulk and take advantage prices of under economies of scale (the Republic of Kenya, 2011). This will attract higher discounts which will be an advantage to the school. Such a school will use that money to benefit and improve academics (Kagendo, 2002).

The current study's findings also indicate that friendly donations to schools among other financial initiatives have got a very good influence on academic performance for the national and extra county schools. This concurs with Reisman and Steinberg (2019), who opined that those funds motivate learners in the learning process. Also in concurrence is the one done in California in America. The donors who include residents or parents of students contribute financially to specific teachers depending on personal connections to improve students' academic performance (Posey-Maddox, 2013). Since teachers are the key players in the crowd funding, they feel an obligation to reciprocate and work tooth and nail thus improving student academic performance. Holding to the fact teachers are personally associated with the crowd funding campaigns and the proximity of the donors, they are also more likely to be held accountable. This qualifies online education crowdfunding to be of great importance as funds are effectively allocated to the most promising projects championed by teachers. In return, the probability of students' academic performance improving is high.

The findings showed that strategic financial initiatives have a statistically significant influence on academic performance in secondary public schools in the county of Kisii, Kenya ($p = .000 < p = .05$). The null hypothesis, H_{01} : There is no influence of strategic financial initiatives on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kisii County Kenya tested at $p < .05$ significance level, was rejected. Therefore, academic performance in public secondary schools is influenced by strategic financial initiatives in Kisii County. The calculated $F(3, 306) = 649.079$ is more than the critical value ($F = 2.997$), thus, indicating differences in the influence of strategic financial initiatives on sub-county, county, extra-county, and national public secondary schools in Kisii County.

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Friendly donations to schools and school income-generating activities initiatives' influence on academic performance are below average at sub-county schools, average in the county, and very good at extra-county and national secondary schools in Kisii County. Equally, financing projects in order of priority, students sending a message to parents for fees and manner of fees collection initiatives' influence on academic performance is below average at sub-county very good at extra-county and national schools. On the other hand, school fundraising initiatives have an inadequate influence on academic performance at sub-county schools and average at county and national secondary schools in Kisii County.

Few of the principals indicated writing proposals to get bursaries, and a small number of them also said that proposals are written to get Constituency Development Fund (CDF), and school income-generating projects were represented by almost the same number as for getting bursaries above. Most of the principals adopted items in bulk, bought locally available materials, and purchased items in the season as a financial initiative to save school finances. A small number of principals waived or offered grants of fees for bright needy students and introduced welfare kits for needy students.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that friendly donations to schools and school income-generating activities initiatives' influence on academic performance are below average at sub-county schools, average in the county, and very good at extra-county and national secondary schools in Kisii County. Equally, financing projects in order of priority, students sending parents a message for fees and manner of fees collection initiatives' influence on academic performance is below average at sub-county, very good at extra-county and national schools. On the other hand, school fundraising initiatives' influence on academic performance is inadequate at sub-county schools and average at county and national secondary schools in Kisii County.

6. RECOMMENDATION

The study recommended that institutional principals buy goods in bulk. The MOE should advise all schools to put this idea in their school policies to enhance school savings and a proactive purchase protocol to facilitate better academic performance. Principals should be trained on proposal writing mechanisms. There is also a need to initiate income-generating activities in sub-county schools in Kisii County to get enough money to improve purchasing power and support academic programs since most sub-county schools perform dismally.

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