



Principals' and students' perceptions on parental contribution to financial management in secondary schools in Kenya

Parental contribution to schools

61

Received 5 November 2007
Revised 1 September 2008
Accepted 20 September 2008

Peter Kiplangat Koross

Sosiot Girls' Secondary School, Kericho, Kenya

Moses Waithanji Ngware

African Population & Health Research Center (APHRC), Nairobi, Kenya

Anthony Kiplangat Sang

Faculty of Education and Community Studies, Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya

Abstract

Purpose – The management of secondary schools in Kenya has faced a number of challenges over the past few years. These challenges have been manifested in the many ways including lack of financial transparency, which culminate in unaffordable secondary schools fees. The aim of this paper is to present the findings of an investigation into the contribution of parents to the financial management of secondary schools in Kericho district of Kenya.

Design/methodology/approach – The study was exploratory in approach with a descriptive survey being used as a method of inquiry. A sample size of 30 (47 percent) was selected from 64 secondary schools in the district. From this sample, proportional sampling was then used to get seven provincial and 23 district schools into the sample. Purposive sampling was used to get the schools from each category and the respondents from each school into the sample. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to solicit information and perceptions from principals and students.

Findings – The findings of this study indicated that Principals and students perceived parental involvement in financial management as present to some degree in most schools. The results also indicated that parental involvement had positive influence on financial management outcomes. Since schools' finance is critical in school management outcomes, it is therefore important for education stakeholders to increase parental involvement.

Practical implications – Parental participation can have positive impacts on the processes of teaching and learning with active and frequent contacts between parents and school administration improving school's financial accountability and transparency. Participation will strengthen the partnership between parent teacher associations, community and school administration in addition to democratizing school governance.

Originality/value – Based on the findings of the study, parental involvement in the area of financial management is still low in the district. It was also noted that parental involvement greatly influenced the way finances in schools were managed. From these observations, parental levels of involvement in the area of school finances affect financial transparency in schools.

Keywords Principals, Students, Secondary schools, Parents, Financial management, Kenya

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

In Kenya, access to secondary education is limited with real transition rate from primary schools to secondary school being 32 percent in 2006 (Ngware *et al.*, 2007). Secondary school net enrolment rate has remained below 20 percent. Besides, public budgetary allocation to this sub sector is about 1 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), of which 95 percent goes to recurrent expenditure (Government of Kenya, 2007). This dismal performance is largely attributed to the inadequate financial resources available for secondary education.

Financing secondary education in Kenya has been an issue of concern both to the government and parents. For a long time now, the parents and communities have met a substantial proportion of the cost of secondary education. For example, before 2008, parents contributed up to 55 percent of the cost of secondary education (Ngware *et al.*, 2007). The rest was met by the government and largely consisted of central government administrative costs and teacher remuneration. This trend is likely to change after the government introduced secondary school subsidies in 2008, with each enrolled student being allocated about US\$160 per year. Apart from secondary school subsidies, the other government strategy to address the issue of secondary school financing is approaching it through a common front made up of non-public providers of education and training that can help reduce public financing (Government of Kenya, 2005). This calls for the establishment of partnerships between Government, household and local communities, private sector providers of educational services, including sector employers, religious organizations and civil society (Government of Kenya, 2005). It is hoped that such partnership will enhance access and equity, and improve the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools. In particular, the government notes that public, community and household finances are critical in the improvement of school facilities and equipment that could improve the schooling environment.

Over the years, the management of secondary schools has changed considerably. The change has been towards a more democratic decision making in schools. Such a change has come about due to changes in school size, composition, demand for greater accountability and the fact that parents, who in this case are the major stakeholders in education, are putting a lot of resources and time into the education of their children.

The day-to-day management of a secondary school is the responsibility of a school principal appointed through merit by the Ministry of Education. Each secondary school in Kenya has a Board of Governors (BoG) and a Parent Teachers Association (PTA). The former is largely appointed by the Minister of Education and but has parental representation while the later is elected by parents of the respective school. In addition, BoG enjoys legal backing from the education legislation while PTA does not. The PTA is largely concerned with resource mobilization while the BoG has the overall authority on all school affairs. Conflicts between BoG and PTA over resource use are not uncommon and in some cases are manifested through student strikes and parent demonstration against poor school management.

The importance of parental contribution in the financial management of secondary schools cannot be underestimated. The centrality of parental participation in the financial management of secondary schools is anchored in the fact that transparency and accountability in financial management will be improved and this in turn will improve the effectiveness of school's resources. Parental contribution in the financial

management of secondary schools has therefore continued to gain ground. In some cases however, school administrators do not actively involve parents in the affairs of the school and such schools are known to experience financial mismanagement. It is against this background that this paper sought to establish whether parental contribution or the lack of it in the area of school financial management has had any significant contribution in the management of finances in secondary schools in Kenya and specifically in Kericho district, as perceived by school principals and students.

The purpose of this study was therefore to establish the contribution of parents in the area of financial management in secondary schools as perceived by both principals and students. Specifically, the study sought to first, determine the contribution made by parents to the secondary schools' financial management and secondly, to investigate the relationship between parental involvement in the financial management of secondary schools and school financial management outcomes in Kericho district.

To achieve these objectives, two hypotheses were tested, namely:

- H1.* There is no significant difference in the perceptions of students on the contribution of parents to secondary schools' financial management in Kericho district.
- H2.* There is no significant relationship between parental involvement in the school financial management and financial management outcomes in Kericho District.

A review of related literature

There exists considerable literature on parental involvement in the management of schools, however such literature is more available in developed countries but scarce in developing countries and in particular sub-Sahara Africa. For example, Winkler and Yeo (2007) argue that there is evidence to date which suggests that decentralization, in particular, school autonomy can improve the delivery of schooling, with some risk of increased inequality of outcomes. However, not enough is known about how to best realize this positive potential of decentralization, especially in developing countries.

According to Glatter (1988), the turbulent environmental uncertainties with which educational institutions have been faced with are enough evidence that there is need for more stakeholders' involvement in school finance. A study that was carried out in New York on enhancing parental involvement in schools' finances revealed a number of barriers to parental involvement (Swap, 1987). The study explained why collaboration between the home and the school is difficult to achieve and how barriers to parental involvement can be overcome. The study however, suggested two basic ways to promote parental involvement in financial management, which include increasing the quality of contacts by creating varied opportunities for parent teacher contacts and increasing the number of parents who interact with the school. Making an effort to find out what parents want and need from the school, as well as actively involving them in solving problems and making decisions at the school could also help increase parental involvement in the area of finances (Government of Kenya, 2003; Onsomu *et al.*, 2004).

In Bangladesh, a female secondary school assistance project used mechanisms to encourage direct involvement of both parents and community members in the process of changing community mindsets towards the education of women (Liang, 1996). In

this project, parental and community involvement was enhanced through membership in school monitoring and parent-teacher committees. Parents also participated in ‘user groups’ that contributed 20 percent of the cost and facilitated the building of water supply and sanitation systems in schools which promoted hygiene practices in schools and among the community members (Liang, 1996). While the project provided a stipend to the female student between grade 6 and 10, parents ensured that the student attended school for more than 75 percent of the school year, obtain at least a mean score of 45 percent in the final examinations and remain unmarried until completion of grade 10. The parent-teacher and school-monitoring committees meetings were held on regular basis to provide support in addressing school issues and they succeeded in enforcing some level of accountability in the system. From the Bangladesh project, it emerged that community involvement is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of school based projects. In addition, assignment of meaningful responsibilities and control over project resources to parents and community members lead to accountable systems that had long-term sustainability.

In Armenia, an education financing and management reform project considered the role of parent and community involvement in the school governance as critical. According to Poghosyan (n.d.), when parents increase participation, school teachers and administrators will increase quality, both by improving teaching and by using resources more efficiently. In Armenia, Poghosyan (n.d.) identified the role of parents in education finance and management to be two-fold: One, raising funds for different purposes and support in after-school activities, and; two, support to the progress of children in school. For example, parental involvement in school life may help increase school supplies that support learning. In Armenia, direct community involvement in a school project aimed to support the rural schools to cover their operation and maintenance costs and to supplement the students’ lunches was able to supplement the school kitchen with around one ton of fresh vegetables (Poghosyan, n.d.).

Parents and communities react differently to involvement in school management and this call for the consideration of diversity of conditions in community environments. In the recent past, among the popular goals for parental and community participation in education have been a desire to spread the burden of resourcing, improve the volume, relevance and impact of schooling (Bray, 2003). Bray divides community participation in education into two groups. On the one hand are situations in which communities supplement government efforts to provide school resources in public education systems; and on the other hand are schools which are operated by communities outside the public school systems (Bray, 2003).

Elsewhere, teachers have been found to have some reservations about parents’ capability in taking their partnership responsibilities (Chan and Chui, 1997). Chan and Chui’s study observed that principals do not ask parents to participate in decision-making meetings because they are perceived not to have confidence in policy issues, and that they would complicate such meetings. On the other hand, it is argued that school principals fear sharing information and power (Ngware *et al.*, 2006; Chan and Chui, 1997). A study on the practice of total quality management in secondary education in Kenya reported that BoG chairperson was expected to give guidance to education stakeholders who included parents, communities, teachers and students. About 52 percent of teachers interviewed in this study agreed that the chairperson was visibly involved in playing this role while another 39 percent

disagreed (Ngware *et al.*, 2006). In some parts of Australia, teacher councillors are more optimistic than their school principals that parent councillors are able to take part in council business (Chan and Chui, 1997).

Increased parental and community participation in education is an aspect of decentralization of education management. It is notable that decentralization could have both positive and negative influence on different aspects of education – quality, relevant, attendance, equity or efficiency. There are other aspects of the parents and community that can affect the impact of decentralization on education systems. For example, whether elected school committees reflect the communities they represent or suffer from elite capture; whether newly empowered decentralized units have the capacity to carry out their new functions; and whether ministries of education and local government provide the technical and information support necessary for effective governance and accountability (Winkler and Yeo, 2007). But despite these skepticisms, if designed and implemented effectively, decentralization has the potential to improve service delivery and education quality. Winkler and Yeo (2007) provides some recent empirical evidence to support this assertion.

Winkler and Yeo (2007) argue that decentralization has the potential to improve accountability, increase parental participation, strengthen the leadership role of school directors, and increase teamwork among the teaching faculty. Going by this argument, decentralization should lead to improved schooling outcomes. Studies on the impact of education decentralization on educational outcomes take different research designs – including experimental, time-series and cross-sectional observations, and qualitative case studies.

In the experimental studies are the El Salvador's Education with Community Participation Program (EDUCO) and studies of Nicaragua's autonomous schools program (see King and Ozler, 2000; Jiminez and Sawada, 1999). In the El Salvador study, community-managed schools achieved similar academic results to traditional public schools while serving poorer students with fewer resources (Winkler and Yeo, 2007). Teacher absenteeism was also found to be lower in the community-managed schools. The positive results were explained by the high level of participation by parents in the EDUCO schools, the close monitoring of the school by the community, and the strong incentives to EDUCO teachers to perform well or lose their jobs. Similar findings were observed in the Nicaragua study where community managed schools had more autonomy than traditional schools, especially on personnel, school plan, and budget matters (Winkler and Yeo, 2007). According to the Nicaragua study, there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between the degree of decision making exercised and student achievement, with the variable on monitoring teacher activities by parents recording the strongest relationship.

In Argentina, a study on secondary school education has tested the relationship between educational outcomes, measured by test scores, and decentralization. The findings show that the provinces exhibiting good public sector management, which was proxied by size of the fiscal deficit, experienced significant and positive gains in test scores (Galiani *et al.*, 2004). The reverse was true for provinces with poor public sector management. This led to the conclusion that decentralization increased school performance but at the cost of greater inequality. In Mexico, an evaluation of the Quality Schools Program found similar results of increased disparity. However, repetition, dropout, and failure rates decreased in schools where parents and teachers

jointly developed school improvement programs except in indigenous areas (Skoufi and Shapiro, 2006). Another study in Mexico called Support for Scholar Management examined how providing training and funding to empower parent associations influenced the educational outcomes of children in highly disadvantaged areas. The findings of this study show that both grade repetition and failure rates declined as a result and concluded that such training and funding is highly cost-effective (Gertler *et al.*, 2006).

The study by Winkler and Yeo also reviewed literature from Chile, where the central government started a policy to fund school development projects as a strategy of activating greater management and parental participation at the school level. A study of 50 Chilean schools found that schools with school development projects had better student performance, but those in municipalities that fund a higher share (less participatory) of total education expenditures did worse.

In Mali, community schools are started by the community with very little government involvement. This community school model in Mali features school autonomy traits such as school management committees (SMC) made up of legitimate community representatives. The SMC has decision-making authority over teacher employment, school fees, and the day-to-day operations of the community school. An evaluation by (DeStefano, 2004) show that community schools are not only effective at increasing access to basic education and raising the completion rate of primary education, but also students from community schools perform as well as or better than students in traditional public schools as measured by language and mathematics test scores.

In Ethiopia, an in-depth qualitative study by the World Learning (2002) found increased participation to have several important effects on school quality: For example, parents more closely monitored their children's attendance and school behaviour more closely; increased parent-teacher collaboration resulted in greater security for and enrolment of girls; and parents contributed to strategies that improved school quality.

From the literature it is emerging that increasing parental and community participation in the running of local schools as, and in particular giving them more responsibilities, has a positive impact on the delivery of education services. However, how effective the parents and communities are in executing their responsibility is subject to their capacity and that of the school personnel. Literature available show that there are positive impacts of giving schools budget authority and of involving parents in school governance.

Conceptualization

This study was predicated on the concept of organizational theories based on decentralization. Baker *et al.* (2000) who are proponents of organizational theory based on decentralization suggests that in a decentralized environment, employees that are responsible for making decisions and are empowered to make decisions, have more control over their work and are accountable for their decisions. The effectiveness of the organization is improved because the employee who deals with and knows the client can alter the product or service to meet the client's needs.

Parental involvement in school management has been justified for a number of reasons (Chan and Chui, 1997 citing Kirner, 1982):

- (1) parents are the first educators of children and cannot fully delegate this responsibility to others, hence, they should therefore participate;
- (2) parents have a long-term responsibility to their children, it is therefore in the interests of the children that their parents get engaged in what is likely to shape their life in future;
- (3) parental participation is likely to increase pupil's success in learning, especially through active support in the provision of school inputs, and helping with homework;
- (4) parents have a natural right, as the first gate keepers, to make decisions that affect their children; and
- (5) parents' participation promotes the process of democratization in school management.

From these reasons, it emerges that parents' participation is likely to be affected by various reasons, among them concern for the welfare of their children, need to satisfy themselves that they are getting value for their money and their ability to participate given their background and other engagements that compete for their time.

The theoretical frame used in this paper was underpinned by two main notions: the school internal-external factor linkages and theories of action. Literature on participatory decision making shows that there are both internal and external factors conducive to the development of participatory practices within a school setting (Hallack and Poisson, 2007). Internal factors are linked to the schools decision-making and management structure and school administration. Overall, school stakeholders have a lot of influence over the internal factors. Such stakeholders include parents, community, students, school administration and local education administrators. Some of the internal factors include monopoly and discretionary power; presence of clear norms; and, regulations and management capacity among others (Hallack and Poisson, 2007). External factors are linked to the overall environment in which the school operates. The school administration has no direct influence on the external factors. According to Hallack and Poisson, strategies to improve parental participation in school management must take into consideration both internal and external factors in order to be effective. Some of the external factors include political will; social and economic structures in place; and, access to information. Moreover, there is a linkage between the internal and external factors.

According to Hildyard *et al.* (2001), participatory processes may merely be an avenue for the more powerful to exploit opportunities in public affairs and therefore serve as a vehicle to maintain exploitation and exclusion. Debate on participatory practices has been criticized for a lack of in-depth understanding of power and the power relations that exist both between central and local actors and within local groups (Hailey, 2001). According to Lewis and Naidoo (2004), simplistic understanding of power and power relations characterizes views of the relationship between decision makers at school level and local stakeholders. Education policy makers often equate education policy intention with policy practice and exhibit a simplistic understanding of the motivations of individuals to participate (Lewis and Naidoo, 2004). Theories of action, or what Lewis and Naidoo refer to as maps that guide action, inform new school participation policies in practice. The concept of theory of action provides an approach

to interrogate assumptions informing school policies and practices at systemic, programmatic and individual levels. Within a theory of action, one may distinguish between theories that are espoused, and theories that are in use.

In the context of school financial management, espoused theories may be likened to the intentions and functions that school policy documents or actors assert are the objectives of school parents and community, while the theories that are in use are linked to functions that are actually performed by parents and community. A stated policy objective or intention of school financial management reform such as promotion of participatory practices may ignore the reality of the practice. Lewis and Naidoo (2004) further argue that school participation and decentralization policies typically are based on theories of action that presume that the institutionalization of local school autonomy will have broad effects on education performance.

Methodology

The structure of the study was such that the information required was to be obtained from a diversity of school principals and students who are stakeholders in education. This diversity made it necessary that cross-sectional research design be used since data for the study involved dealing with the effects of naturally existing treatments after the occurrence of the treatments (Tuckman, 1978). Cross-sectional research design was also crucial since it entails the collection of data on more than one case and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative data in connection with two or more variables, which are then examined to detect the patterns of association (Bryman, 2004). This is because secondary schools' financial management and parental contribution is something that has been an ongoing process in the past to the time of this research.

The study was conducted in Kericho district. Sample schools were selected from all the seven administrative divisions including Belgut, Ainamoi, Soin, Kipkelion, Londiani, Sigowet and Chilchila. The population included all the principals and students of the 64 public secondary schools in the district. The target population included principals and form four students who had been prefects. The two groups were perceived to be the key informants in the area of schools financial management.

Kericho district receives more than average rainfall and it lies within the high agricultural potential areas in Kenya. The main agricultural activities include large scale and smallholder tea growing and dairy farming. In 2002, Kericho district had a head count poverty index of 47 percent compared to the national average of 56 percent (see Central Bureau of Statistics, 2005). In Kericho district, the average parental age is 44 years, with majority (51 percent) of parents having a primary school level education and another 34 percent with secondary level education (UNESCO Nairobi Office, 2005). The rest had no education and/or post secondary education. In Kenya, public secondary school enrollment was 853,083 in 2006 and Kericho had 14,530 (2 percent) (Ministry of Education, 2006). In 2004, national gross enrollment ratio (GER) was 30 percent and net enrollment ratio (NER) 19 percent while in Kericho GER and NER was 27 percent and 18 percent respectively (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2005). In Kericho, the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) was 20 with a class size of 36 in 2006, which was at par with the national average. In the same year, the number of public secondary school teachers nationally was 43,620 while Kericho had 728

(2 percent). Total number of classrooms in public secondary schools was 23,832 nationally with Kericho having 406.

A list of all public secondary schools in the district was obtained from the District Education Officer's (DEO) office. Serial numbers were then given to the schools that were on the list. A sample size of 30 schools was proportionately selected to include seven provincial level schools and 23 district level schools. Random sampling technique was applied to pick individual schools from a stratum. In Kenya, public schools are categorized into three categories – national, provincial and district schools. National schools are the best endowed with public resources in the form of teaching and learning facilities and equipment, followed by provincial schools and district schools are the least endowed with resources. Whilst national schools admit the best secondary grade one students from all over the country, provincial schools make their selection of students to admit after the national schools have selected the best, while district schools are the last to make the selection and admission. District schools admit students from within the district while provincial schools admit 85 percent from the province and the rest from the district in which they are located.

In order to get the number of the respondents to be included in each of the sample schools, purposive sampling was used. A sample of eight form four students from every school who had been prefects were included in the sample because they were deemed to be more responsible and had stayed in the school long enough while principals were the school managers and therefore the custodian of all information regarding the school.

Students in the sampled schools were supplied with objective type questionnaires using Likert rating scale. These questionnaires were collected as soon as students completed answering them. The principals were provided with interview schedules and their opinions recorded accordingly. The return rate summary was 100 percent for the students and 83 percent for the principals. Out of the 30 principals 25 responded while the rest declined an interview.

Data analysis was done based on the objectives and hypotheses of the study. Descriptive statistics that were employed included mean, mode and frequencies while inferential statistics was basically ANOVA test. Since the study sought to establish the stakeholder perceptions on parental contributions to school financial management and their level of involvement, mean and mode are measures of central tendency and can show the general direction of opinion. These measures of central tendency, together with frequency, enabled us to understand the major attributes of the distribution of the variables under consideration – including whether the distribution is skewed to the right or left, range in which most observations occur and outliers. ANOVA was chosen due to its ability to show the differences within a group and between groups. In the study, we wanted to understand whether there was any significant difference within a group (within a school community) and between groups (across school communities).

Findings

Out of all the students who were canvassed, 60 percent were girls while the rest were boys. The age range of student respondents was 16-18 years. Of the principals in the sample, 80 percent were male while the rest were female. Most of these principals had a university degree with only five having a diploma in education. On average, most of the principals had a teaching experience of not less than eight years.

Parental contribution to schools financial management

The main areas of concern that are addressed in this section include parental involvement in determining the amount of fees paid in secondary schools, developing school budgets, whether trial balances, income and expenditure statements were availed to them and whether school projects were endorsed by parents.

Parents and fees determination in schools. Student respondents were asked whether parents had been consulted or involved in determining the amount of fees charged in their individual secondary schools. Table I shows that out of those interviewed, a large proportion (61.6 percent) disagreed that parents had been involved in fee determination. From these results it would seem that schools administration decided on the amount of fees on their own and later informed parents. Another 31.5 percent agreed that parents had been involved through the Board of Governors (BOG) and the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) representatives. These results indicate that in fee determination, most secondary schools in Kericho district did not involve the wider group of parents. The information was limited to some parent representatives. It is therefore imperative to have legitimate representative capable of effectively informing parents of key financial decisions taken by the school administration. However, some small degree of parental involvement in fees determination seems to be practiced in a few secondary schools. This is a good practice that needs to be extended to more schools. The issues of secondary school fees in Kenya is within the public policy agenda, with school principal being accused of overcharging parents to cover for their administrative inefficiency. Relatively high secondary school fees are said to be largely responsible for the low gross enrolment rate (29 percent) in secondary education in Kenya (Ngware *et al.*, 2006).

From the results in Table I, most students view parental involvement in secondary schools financial management as something that is seldom done. This could explain why in most schools which were visited, the fee default rate ranged from 70 percent to 90 percent, showing that fee payment was generally poor. This view on the part of the students could easily lead to student unrest especially if they think that their parents are sidelined in matters involving finances. This is because parents are a main source of financing public secondary school non-teacher salary expenses.

Parents and budget preparation in schools. Student respondents were asked whether their parents through PTA participated in any way in developing the secondary schools' budget and whether they were furnished with financial expenditure by way of accessing monthly trial balances. Table I shows that the highest number of respondents (63.1 percent) indicated that parents were neither involved in budgets preparation (through their representatives) nor given access to financial records

Financial management aspect	Agreed (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagreed (%)
1. Parental involvement in fees determination	31.5	6.9	61.6
2. Parents participation in budget preparation	24.2	12.8	63.1
3. Parents and fund raising planning	56.7	9.9	33.5
4. Parents and schools' major projects	33	19.2	47.8
5. Parents' awareness on income and expenditure	40.9	9.4	49.8
Overall involvement in financial management	37.3	11.6	51.1

Table I.
Parental involvement in schools financial management

showing income and expenditure. However, another 24.2 percent noted that their parents had been involved to some degree in budget preparation and had gained access to financial records and statements. These results show that most secondary schools in the district either involve parents through PTA to a small extent or do not involve them at all in secondary schools' budget preparation and execution, and that financial statements remain with school administrators.

Parents and planning of fundraising in secondary schools. Students were asked whether their parents through BOG or PTA had been involved in planning and execution of fundraising in their schools. Of the students who were interviewed, 33.5 percent indicated no parental involvement in this area. However, the highest number (56.7 percent) indicated their parents had been involved in fundraising planning and execution. These findings show that most secondary schools in the district involved parents adequately in fundraising planning and execution.

Literature shows that parents react differently to involvement in school management and this call for the consideration of diversity of conditions in community environments. Bray (2003) argues that participation of parents in education is due to the desire to spread the burden of resourcing, improve the volume, relevance and impact of schooling.

The study found out that fund raising planning and execution in most secondary schools in the district received a relatively high level of parental involvement. This level of parental involvement helps parents to view these schools as their own property. This in itself is likely to be a great boost for school managers' efforts since they are sure of parental support in the area of fund raising planning. Resource mobilization is important to any school as a source of development expenditure. It ensures that resources are available for developing school infrastructure, which is critical to teaching and learning.

Parents and major secondary school projects. In this context, major school projects included all those that involved high amount of money to a tune of Kshs 500,000 (or US\$7,000) and above. This included construction of buildings, purchase of school buses, land, and cattle, among others. Student respondents were asked whether their parents were given a chance to endorse schools' projects and especially those that involved more money. Table I shows that out of the total number of students interviewed, 47.8 percent disagreed that parents had been involved in such decision. This meant that in some schools, it was likely that administrators would carry out major school projects without parental involvement. Another 33 percent of the respondents indicated that in their schools, parents' opinion on major school projects was sought hence they had been involved. It is clear from these findings that parental involvement in school projects was restricted to a few schools in the district. Parents should be involved in major school projects since they mobilize school resources. In addition, parental involvement is likely to increase transparency and accountability in the management of school projects.

Parents and school's income and expenditure. Respondents were asked whether their parents through PTA and during parents' days were made aware of how income from school's assets and other sources was spent. Table I shows that 49.8 percent of student respondents indicated that parents were not made aware. This implies that records showing income and expenditure from these assets were never available to parents. However, 40.9 percent agreed that their parents had been made aware of how

school income had been spent. This shows that most students in the sample schools knew their parents' awareness or lack of records on schools' assets income and expenditure. That a considerable proportion of students (49.8 percent) had indicated that their parents were not made aware of income and expenditure is an indication that transparency especially on financial matters is still low in most secondary schools. It is crucial that parents are made aware of income and expenditure in schools as this enhances financial transparency. In Argentina, a study on secondary school education has tested the relationship between educational outcomes and decentralization. According to Galiani *et al.* (2004), areas that exhibited good public sector management, which proxied fiscal deficits, experienced significant and positive gains in test scores. Though one cannot infer a causal relationship, between good management and improved schooling outcomes, it is clear from literature that good management can lead to improved schooling outcomes.

Hypothesis tests on parental contribution to financial management

Students' perceptions on parental contribution to financial management varied among individual groups under investigation. The groups under investigation were the students and principals from different schools. The students in one school therefore formed one group. The opinions of these individual groups were sought as this indicated the degree of parental involvement in those schools. Table II shows the various ANOVA tests results on how student respondents perceived parental contribution to financial management in various schools.

Parental involvement in schools financial management according to principals

The second objective of this study was, to investigate the perceptions of principals on the relationship between parental involvement in the financial management of secondary schools and schools' financial management outcomes. To capture the schools financial management, the issues on finances especially funds misappropriation were compared with various parental activities for the years 1999-2002. The analysis of this objective was guided by a study hypothesis, which stated that there was no significant relationship between parental involvement in the management of secondary schools and schools' financial management.

Parental involvement was seen in terms of number of activities in which parents were involved in secondary schools management during the years. On the other hand, financial management was looked at in terms of the number of cases of funds misappropriation in various secondary schools during the said years. The average number of cases of funds misappropriation in secondary schools was compared with average number of parental activities for each year. The perceptions of various principals were taken into account and compared using ANOVA test. The findings are presented in Table III.

The results in Table III indicate that for the years 1999-2002, most principals perceived that there had been an inverse relationship between parental involvement in financial management and financial transparency in schools. In the year 1999 for most schools, a considerable proportion (82 percent) of the principals indicated that when the average number of parental activities was as high as six, cases of funds misappropriation was as low as two. This is because with high number of parental

Type of parental contribution	Interaction term	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance level
Parents involved in determining the fees to be paid in sec. schools	Between groups	35.063	6	5.844	2.36	0.032**
	Within groups	485.68	196	2.478		
	Total	520.74	202			
Parents participate in drawing annual budget in sec. schools	Between groups	26.281	6	4.380	2.00	0.067***
	Within groups	427.99	196	2.184		
	Total	454.27	202			
Parents are made aware of all the areas in which money is spent in sec. schools	Between groups	35.929	6	5.988	2.54	0.022**
	Within groups	462.28	196	2.359		
	Total	498.21	202			
Parents have access to monthly trial balances in Sec. schools	Between groups	24.788	6	4.131	2.09	0.055***
	Within groups	385.69	196	1.968		
	Total	410.47	202			
Parents have access to sec. Schools' financial records	Between groups	32.988	6	5.498	3.01	0.008*
	Within groups	357.61	196	1.825		
	Total	390.60	202			
Parents access banking slips of money received in sec. schools	Between groups	12.575	6	2.096	1.10	0.364
	Within groups	373.61	196	1.906		
	Total	386.19	202			
Parents involved in planning and execution of fund raising in schools	Between groups	15.553	6	2.592	1.12	0.354
	Within groups	455.12	196	2.322		
	Total	470.67	202			
Parental involvement in financial issues causes conflict between parents and schools' administration	Between groups	25.621	6	4.270	1.83	0.095***
	Within groups	456.93	196	2.331		
	Total	482.55	202			
Parents endorse schools projects especially those that take a lot of money	Between groups	26.716	6	4.453	2.18	0.047**
	Within groups	400.97	196	2.046		
	Total	427.69	202			
Parents made aware of how income from schools' assets is spent	Between groups	19.299	6	3.217	1.27	0.272
	Within groups	495.86	196	2.530		
	Total	515.16	202			

Notes: * Significant at 1%; ** Significant at 5%; ***Significant at 10%; df = degrees of freedom; F = F-value

Table II.
ANOVA results on parental contribution to financial management

activities, monitoring was intensified and therefore a likelihood of few cases of funds misappropriation.

In the year 2000, 93.8 percent of the respondents indicated that in their schools, the average number of parental activities had gone up from six in 1999 to eight. This shows that parental involvement in this area had increased in the sample schools. During the same year, cases of funds misappropriation went down from two in the previous year to only one. On account of this also it is also evident that with increased parental activities there was a subsequent decline in the reported cases of funds misappropriation.

The same trend was experienced for the year 2001. Table III shows that during this year, a considerable proportion (87.5 percent) of the respondents had indicated that parental activities went down to five as compared to eight in the previous year. With this drop in the average number of parental activities there was a rise in the cases of funds misappropriation. The cases of funds misappropriation averaged three as compared to only one case in the previous year. This still was an inverse relationship. This trend continued in the year 2002 where 94.8 percent of the respondents indicated that with low numbers of parental activities there was the highest case of funds misappropriation. From these observations, there seem to be an inverse relationship between the frequency of parental involvement in school activities and cases of school funds misappropriation.

From these findings it is necessary for the Ministry of Education to increase parental involvement level in the area of financial management. This will save the principals and the schools from the temptation of funds mismanagement. Increased parental involvement is likely to bring about increased financial transparency in most schools.

Hypothesis testing for financial management according to school principals

The null hypothesis that was tested stated that there was no significant relationship between parental involvement in the financial management of secondary schools and financial management outcomes. Financial management outcomes basically involved looking at whether finances had been well managed with no or minimal cases of financial misappropriation. Financial management in secondary schools as perceived by school principals during the years 1999 and 2002 was determined by ANOVA test of the data from various stakeholders in the district. The results of the ANOVA test are presented in Table IV.

Table IV shows the degree of relationship between head teachers' perceptions on parental activities in secondary school management and secondary schools financial management. The ANOVA *F*-value was 2.310 while its corresponding *P*-value was

Table III.
Parental activities and
funds misappropriation
in secondary schools

Year	Average parental activities	Cases of funds misappropriation
1999	6	2
2000	8	1
2001	5	3
2002	3	4

0.035. The calculated *P*-value, in Table IV, indicates that there was a significant relationship at 5 percent significance level in the perceptions of principals between parental involvement in the financial management of secondary schools and secondary schools financial management outcomes. Most principals were of the opinion that parental involvement in area of finances in secondary schools had a strong influence on financial management outcomes. The null hypothesis at 5 percent significance level was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

From these ANOVA results it is possible to conclude that parental involvement in financial management according to various principals has a significant relationship with how finances are managed. From these results school's financial transparency could be improved through increasing parental activities on schools financial management such as development of budget, budget execution, fund raising planning and project implementation among others.

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, parental involvement in the area of financial management is still low in the district. It was also noted that parental involvement greatly influenced the way finances in schools were managed. From these observations, parental levels of involvement in the area of school finances affect financial transparency in schools.

Recommendations

- (1) Parental involvement in various schools' financial activities should be encouraged and increased by the Ministry of Education through the Board of Governors and the Parents Teachers Associations. This will increase ownership and participation by parents in schools' financial management. For this to be implemented, par. The reforms should be driven by the need to enhance participatory school management and to improve parental involvement should be provided for by the legal reforms which are underway in the education sector accountability and school governance systems.
- (2) Since all non-teacher salary funding comes from the parents, the Ministry of Education should give them a greater say in decision-making on matters of budgeting, project formulation and implementation, financial expenditure and other priority areas in school management. This will enhance transparency on the side of the school principals and they will then win confidence from the public in their financial management endeavours.

Financial management	Interaction term	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	<i>F</i> ratio	Significance level
Mean	Between groups	11.202	6	1.867	2.310	0.035*
Response	Within groups	158.407	196	0.808		
	Total	169.609	202			

Notes: *Significant results at 5% significance level; df = degrees of freedom; *F* = *F*-value

Table IV.
ANOVA test results from parental involvement and financial management

Implications for education

The findings reported in this paper have some implications for education. First, is the likely impact parental participation could have on the processes of teaching and learning. With increased parental involvement in school activities, this will strengthen participatory monitoring of the teaching process with the likely effect that teachers will adhere better to their performance contract and professional practice. This is likely to translate to improved school performance as measure by test scores. In terms of the learning process, parental involvement leads to more provision of learning equipment and facilities. Again, this is likely to be translated into effective learning.

Second, parental active involvement in school financial management is expected to improve financial accountability and transparency. If this happens, then procurement procedures and other purchasing related actions will be cost effective leading to lower costs of education. The final beneficiary will be the students and parents themselves as they will enjoy reduced school fees.

Finally, active parental involvement in school management strengthens the partnership between PTA, community and school administration. In addition, it creates a strong sense of ownership. Overall, such actions create an enabling environment for mobilizing school resources from a community and effective support to learning and teaching processes.

Among the best ways to promote parental involvement in school financial management include increasing the quality of contacts through varied opportunities for parent teacher contacts and increasing the number of parents who interact with the school. Making an effort to find out what parents want and expect from the school, as well as actively involving them in addressing challenges faced by the school and making decisions at the school could also help increase parental involvement in the area of finances. Increased frequency of parental-school contacts was found to be inversely related to incidences of fund misappropriation. Institutionalizing school visits and inspection by parents appears to be a practice that would improve resources management. Legitimate representation of parents in school committees enhances parental involvement in schools' decision making.

References

- Baker, G., Gibbons, R. and Murphy, K.J. (2000), "Informal authority in organizations", *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, Vol. 15, pp. 56-73.
- Bray, M. (2003), "Community initiatives in education: goals, dimensions and linkages with governments", *Compare*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 31-45.
- Bryman, A. (2004), *Social Research Methods*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Central Bureau of Statistics (2005), *Geographic Dimensions of Well-Being in Kenya: Who and Where are the Poor? A Constituency Level Profile Vol. II*, CBS, Ministry of Planning and National Development, Nairobi.
- Chan, B.Y.M. and Chui, H.S. (1997), "Parental participation in school councils in victoria, Australia", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 102-10.
- DeStefano, J. (2004), Meeting EFA, Mali Case Study: Community Schools (EQUIP2 Case Study), Washington, DC, Educational Quality Improvement Program 2 (EQUIP2), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Academy for Educational Development (AED).

- Galiani, S., Schargrodsky, E. and Gertler, P. (2004), *Helping the Good Get Better, but Leaving the Rest Behind: How Decentralization Affects School Performance*. Research Triangle Institute International, Washington, DC, available at: https://register.rti.org/EducationFinance/background/FiscalDec/Gertler_School%20Decentralization.pdf (accessed June 20, 2005)
- Gertler, P., Patrinos, H. and Rubio-Codina, M. (2006), "Empowering parents to improve education: evidence from rural Mexico", World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 3935, The World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Glatter, R. (1988), *Understanding School Management*, Nichols Publishing Company, Masterton.
- Government of Kenya (2003), *Report of the National Conference on Education and Training, November 27-29, Nairobi*.
- Government of Kenya (2005), *Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research*. Ministry of Education, Nairobi.
- Government of Kenya (2007), *public Expenditure Review and Medium Term Expenditure Framework 2007/08 – 2009/10: Achieving Targeted Results Through Efficient Public Spending*, Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Nairobi.
- Hailey, J. (2001), "Beyond the formulaic: process and practice in South Asian NGOs", in Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. (Eds), *Participation. The New Tyranny?*, Zed Books, London, pp. 88-101.
- Hallack, J. and Poisson, M. (2007), *Corrupt Schools, Corrupt Universities: What Can Be Done?*, International Institute for educational Planning/UNESCO, Paris.
- Hildyard, N., Pandurang, H., Wolvekamp, P. and Reddy, S. (2001), "Pluralism, participation and power: joint forest management in India", in Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. (Eds), *Participation. The New Tyranny?*, Zed Books, London, pp. 56-71.
- Jimenez, E. and Sawada, Y. (1999), "Do community-managed schools work? An evaluation of El Salvador's EDUCO Program", *The World Bank Economic Review*, Vol. 13 No. 3, p. 415.
- King, E. and Ozler, B. (2000), *What's Decentralization Got to Do with Learning? The Case of Nicaragua's School Autonomy Reform*, The World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Kirner, J. (1982), "Parental participation in the interests of every child", *Education Magazine*, Vol. 39, pp. 16-17.
- Lewis, S.G. and Naidoo, J. (2004), *Whose Theory of Participation? School Governance Policy and Practice in South Africa. Current Issues in Comparative Education*, Teachers College, Columbia University, Johannesburg.
- Liang, X. (1996), *Bangladesh: Female Secondary School Assistance. Human Development Department*, World Bank, Washington, DC, available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079934475/547667-1135281552767/Bangladesh_female_secondary_school_case.pdf
- Ministry of Education (2006), *Delivering Quality and Improving Access: An impact Evaluation of the Instructional Materials and In-service Teacher Training Programmes. Research Report I*, Ministry of Education, Nairobi.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2005), *Education Statistical Booklet 1999–2004*, Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Nairobi.
- Ngware, M.W., Wamukuru, D.K. and Odebero, S.O. (2006), "Total quality management (TQM) in secondary schools in Kenya: extent of the practice", *Quality Assurance in Education*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 339-62.
- Ngware, M.W., Onsomu, E.N., Kiriga, B. and Muthaka, D.I. (2007), "Free secondary education in Kenya: costs, financing sources and implications", KIPPRA Discussion Paper, No 75, Kenya.

- Onsomu, E.N., Mungai, J.N., Oulai, D., Sankale, J. and Mujidi, J. (2004), *Community Schools in Kenya: Case Study on Community Participation in Funding and Managing Schools*, International Institute for Educational Planning/UNESCO, Paris.
- Poghosyan, A. (n.d.), *Armenia's Education System – Recent Trends*, New York University, School of Education, Administration, Leadership and Technology Department, New York, NY, available at: www.projectharmony.org/ac2k/sati/armenia_edu.pdf
- Skoufias, E. and Shapiro, J. (2006), "Evaluating the impact of Mexico's quality schools program: the pitfalls of using non-experimental data", World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4036, The World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Swap, S.M. (1987), *Enhancing Parent Involvement in Schools*, Teachers College Press, New York, NY.
- Tuckman, B.M. (1978), *Conducting Educational Research*, Harcourt Brace Javonovich, New York, NY.
- UNESCO Nairobi Office (2005), *Challenges of Implementing Free Primary Education in Kenya: Experiences from the Districts*, UNESCO, Nairobi.
- Winkler, D.R. and Yeo, B. (2007), "Identifying the impact of education decentralization on the quality of education", working paper, Academy for Educational Development, available at: www.equip123.net/docs/e2-DecentQuality_WP.pdf (accessed 30 April, 2008).
- World Learning (2002), *Community Schools Activities Program, Ethiopia: Project Brief*, World Learning, Washington, DC.

Further reading

- Government of Kenya (1988), *The Kenya Education Report Part 2.*, Government Printer, Nairobi.
- Mugenda, O.M. and Mugenda, A.G. (1999), *Research Methods. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Act Press, Nairobi.
- NCSL (2001), *Development Framework*, National College for School Leadership, Nottingham.
- Ngware, M.W., Onsomu, E.N., Muthaka, D.I. and Manda, D.K. (2006), "Improving access to secondary education in Kenya: what can be done?", *Equal Opportunities International Journal*, Vol. 25 No. 7, pp. 523-43.

Corresponding author

Moses Waithanji Ngware can be contacted at: mngware@aphrc.org

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.