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INFLUENCE OF INSECURITY DYNAMICS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF EXAMINATIONS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WEST POKOT COUNTY, KENYA

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INFLUENCE OF INSECURITY DYNAMICS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF EXAMINATIONS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WEST POKOT COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was on the influence of insecurity dynamics on the management of examinations in public primary schools in West Pokot County.

Methodology: This study was guided by Securitization and School Management theories. The study embraced mixed methodology and the concurrent triangulation design. The total sample was 245 participants consisting of 216 primary school teachers, 24 head teachers, 2 QASOs, 2 BoM members and 1 County Director of Education Teachers were randomly sampled while QASO officers and BoM members were purposively sampled. Questionnaire with Likert scales were used for teachers and there were interview schedules for the County Education Officer, QASO officers, BoM members and a document analysis guide was developed. Quantitative data was analyzed in descriptive statistics and presented in tables, frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was presented through thematic analysis.

Findings: The investigation established that insecurity in the study county hampered management of examinations. Due to insecurity, most schools spent lots of money and resources which could have been used to improve examination management. Schools reported premature closures and therefore postponement of examinations. Even the KCPE was done in harsh conditions, some pupils having to be transferred to other schools at the eleventh hour as their examination centers were unmanageable.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The securitization and school management theories were used to establish examination management in the schools. There was a warning that unless there is security in schools, examinations could not be properly managed. The study established that security management was insufficient. It was recommended that the government should put in place security measures to curb insecurity in the county and the local communities use peace talks. Further research was recommended on influence of insecurity in secondary schools and other institutions of higher learning.

Key Words: *Examinations, Influence, Insecurity Dynamics, Management, Primary Schools*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

There is a noticeable mutual association between peaceful and secure environment and education achievement and consequently education management. Evidence from Europe (Reichel, 2014; Hall & Sullivan, 2006) show clearly that the absence of terror or insecurity that is characterized by wanton acts of violence along with related factors is usually a pre-condition generally accepted for the development of vigorous educational programmes in not only Europe, but in any nation of the world (Wahab, 2005; Reichel, 2014; So'nmez, 2008). Researchers (Hall & Sullivan, 2006; Goodrich, 2012) have equally shown that political instability and relations influence the access of education by children, infrastructural developments in schools among other issues.

According to So'nmez (2008) in many African countries, particularly in Northern Africa states like Tunisia and Morocco, insecurity is understood to come out of violent eruptions based on political oppression and aggression exercised by religious, political and ethnic groups. This is in total agreement with Crisp (2009). This then puts the affected countries and states at a heightened risk of insecurity because of what can be defined as spillover influence which then affects schooling of its children.

Security issues are a matter of concern in the Kenyan education system especially given the fact that terrorists and criminals seem to be everywhere (Mileti, 2009). According to the United Nations Development Program (UNESCO) report (2010) while inter-state conflicts have reduced relatively in the recent past, an ever growing number of innocent civilians are still affected by armed conflict and its consequences. This means that not even school going children are safe and particularly the school head teachers who manage both the pupils and the schools within which learning process takes place.

Although many known cases of insecurity occurrences exist (especially government officials and border personnel) none clearly highlights the educational influence of insecurity on educational management. There are places (in Kenya) that suffer from educational insecurity and 84 percent consider this as showing a negative impact on educational areas. This, no doubt, brings down the educational image and produces education stakeholders' dissatisfaction according to Adan, Evans and Adjun (2008). Basically, studies that examine the educational sector affected by fierce political occurrences are in the opinion that insecurity and its risks threaten educational management to a greater threatening extent such imminent failure in education provision is witnessed (Penny, 2008).

In West Pokot for instance, recurrent clashes, both intra and inter community, are commonplace mostly spun about controlling and accessing natural resources especially water and pastures. The insecurity in the area is characterized by livestock raids, historical rivalry and politically prompted clashes. Even more poignant is the intercommunity clashes which, to a great extent, is as a consequence of the land question.

In the education sector, media have reported insecurity instances in West Pokot County which caused schools to close down indefinitely. Schools such as Moi Masol, Turkwel Gorge, Lokacar, Nanyapong, Natemeni and Chesegon mixed primary schools have been closed due to insecurity challenges in the county. In fact according to the County

Education Office report (2015) many other learning institutions have often been at the brink of closure due to the violent actions originating from warring communities in forms of ethnic clashes among the people of West Pokot. The report further notes that there were more than a hundred nasty cases of cattle rustling and banditry in the region between 2014 and 2015, showing the significant level of insecurity in the area.

Statement of the Problem

A noteworthy number of educational management issues like the management of examinations for children living in pastoral areas seem to have drastically failed. Intensified insecurity and even the potential of it have been touted as a major cause. According to Essner (2012), such insecurity is said to have consequently caused the movement or migration of parents and guardians together with their children from one place to another thus creating management issues for school managers such as the primary school head teachers. However, the status of security and how it affects management of examinations is not adequately investigated and this study wanted to establish this situation. As mentioned earlier, schools in West Pokot County such as Moi Masol, Turkwel Gorge, Lokacar, Nanyapong, Natemeni and Chesegon mixed primary schools were closed permanently due to insecurity challenges. In 2016, almost 30 primary schools were still closed. In fact, just in the year, 2016, a scuffle between inhabitants of different tribes forced a delay in the disbursement of KCPE and KCSE examinations in the region. This is backed by the media.

This insecurity should be addressed in West Pokot since it is hampering the provision of education in the county. If this situation is not arrested as soon as possible, there is going to be dismal failure of quality education given to learners in this area. Therefore, quick measures need to be taken speedily to save the youths of West Pokot from dangers that translate into dull future as they will not receive education for future development.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

There were two theories applied in this study.

Securitization Theory

By using the Securitization Theory, the public primary schools in West Pokot would be alerted that there is a necessity to engage more efforts in safety and security issues in their educational management. The numerous insecurity cases that have constantly been found in West Pokot primary schools are saying the word 'security' to the schools. According to the Securitization Theory when the word 'security' is spoken, there are constantly problems about security which are occurring. This is to say that if something is termed as a security matter, it becomes so. Securitization Theory is about the sense of hearing. In the current study the theory is used to label insecurity in West Pokot public primary schools as a security matter in the institutions. When the word 'security' was spoken, it meant that there were security issues that ought to be addresses as soon as possible.

School Management Theory

This theory is which was developed by Hanson (1989). The theory was about schools considering all the possible resources being taken into account for better educational management in schools. Such resources are physical and human. In this study, the researcher considered human beings in terms of the head teachers, teachers and pupils in the primary schools. Examinations were taken into consideration. Finally, the whole schools' infrastructure was taken into account. The objective covered both physical and human components in the schools therefore making the School Management Theory relevant to the research.

Influence of Insecurity Dynamics on the Management of Examinations

Insecurity has had adverse influence on the administration and management of examinations globally. In Kenya, schools situated in war torn zones, lag behind in matters education and transition to secondary schools. Since wars cause forcible transfers of population and mass relocations, education sector too is affected. Everywhere in the world, under development is found side by side with under development in education: low school attendance rates at all levels and high rates of repetition and drop out. It is by education that young people are gathered to the fold, formed in a particular mould and integrated with the social system (Hughes, Gleason & Zang, 2005).The researcher noted that Kenyan curriculum is examinations oriented and for this matter any failure in managing the same would plunge the pupils into confusion that would leave them devastated. There have been cases of pupils committing suicide for failure to achieve good KCPE grades. This shows how important examinations are in this country.

Essner (2012) in his study looking at insecurity issues found out that one of the management areas that always got affected by insecurity was the management of examinations. He argued it in the sense that often with insecurity, schools got closed and consequently the examinations were negatively affected as they could not be done at learners' homes. The construct of insecurity in influencing management of examinations is of course serious as the said examinations are the tools used to measure academic achievement of learners and allows them to progress beyond on stage to the next.

On their part, Westwood and Graham (2008) did a descriptive survey in Swedish high schools to find out how violent crimes and shooting in schools affected educational management. In their study they found out that management of examinations was hardest hit in the process as there was always no alternative once schools were closed to doing the examinations. They also noted that further, such examinations were either postponed or done away with completely which then implies that the educational accomplishment of the learners was hampered.

All children worldwide have right to elementary education. Provision of education by any government agency, whether subsidized or fully aided is one thing; ensuring other factors that may hinder a child from achieving this education is yet another thing all together. Essner (2012) notes that such education provision is improved by the taking of examinations which is basically hampered by insecurity. Though the government of Kenya has enshrined the provision of free and compulsory primary education in its

constitution, insecurity, drought, though a natural attrition, has continued to negate government's effort in attaining this goal and school improvement of performance. The researcher gives an insight into the predicament faced in providing basic education due to the hostile environment characterized by frequent drought episodes in ASAL regions. Table 1 shows the sampling grid.

Table 1: Sampling grid

West Pokot County	No. of Schools	Sample	Number of Teachers	Teacher Sample	Number of head teachers	Sample of heads	QAS O	BOM	CDE
Pokot North	2 3	7	18 5	63	23	7	1	1	
Pokot South	2 2	6	15 2	54	22	6	1	1	
Pokot Central	2 1	6	14 5	54	21	6	1	1	
West Pokot	1 4	5	12 9	45	14	5	1	1	
Totals	8 0	2 4	61 1	21 6	80	2 4	2	2	1

Source: The researcher, 2019

3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher sought views of the primary school teachers on management of exams through their questionnaire. The results were displayed as it is shown in table 2.

Table: 2 Teachers' responses on the management of examinations

Items	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1
There has been poor examination management and performance in conflict-prone areas	f118 56.7 %	f73 35.1%	f13 6.3 %	f4 1.9 %	f0 0 %
There is low transition rate to secondary school in conflict zones due to poor management of exams	f88 42.3 %	f97 46.6%	f11 5.3 %	f12 5.8 %	f0 0 %
Most teachers do not invigilate examinations due to insecurity issues	f72 34.6 %	f80 38.5%	f22 10.6%	f13 6.2 %	f21 10.1 %
The schools spent over a million yearly to restart poorly managed exams after the ills of insecurity	f43 20.7 %	f52 25 %	f33 15.8%	f38 18.3%	f42 20.2 %
Schools have been forced to close schools for fear of their lives thus postponing exams indefinitely	f81 38.9 %	f70 33.7%	f19 9.1 %	f26 12.5%	f12 5.8 %

Source: The researcher, 2019

From the table, there has been poor examination performance in conflict-prone areas as 190 (91.3 %) of the teachers concurred with the statement put across in the questionnaire. A tiny minority of 13 (6.3 %) were not sure which was insignificant for this researcher. And 4 (1.9 %) disagreed meaning that there was failure in examination management due to insecurity found in skirmish prone zones. Good performance was not expected where constant conflicts were witnessed such as ethnic clashes and cattle rustling.

The researcher did not expect high transition rate from primary schools to secondary schools in conflict zones. It was established that there was low transition rate to secondary schools in conflict zones as the majority of teachers agreed at 185 (88.9 %). A small number of 11 (5.3 %) did not want to speak while 12 (5.8 %) disagreed. It was clear that children in primary schools did not move to secondary schools. This was due to the fact that there was high rate of school dropout. Another reason could have been poor performance in KCPE since secondary schools admitted children with fairly good marks.

Examination invigilation was an issue in West Pokot County as most teachers did not want to invigilate examinations for fear of their lives. This was confirmed by a majority of 152 (73.1 %) of the teachers. This hampered examination management in the study area. The number that remained silent was 22 (10.6 %) which was insignificant according to this researcher. The percentage that disagreed was 34 (16.3 %) which again was considerably insignificant.

Primary schools in West Pokot spent colossal amounts of money annually to restart examinations after the evils of insecurity as some 95 (45.7 %) of the participants agreed with the statement. And some 33 (15.8 %) were undecided. However, 80 (38.5 %) of the teachers disagreed. This percentage was significant. One reason for this response was that teachers were not in-charge of school funds. It was the head teachers who managed school monies and so teachers remained ignorant on the expenditure in examinations. Even those teachers who agreed might have used common sense in what they saw as expenditure for examinations after skirmishes hit their schools. The school administrators were forced to close schools down for fear of their lives consequently postponing examinations indefinitely as 151 (72.6%) of the teachers agreed. Some 19 (9.1 %) of the teachers were not able to make their decisions. Another 38 (18.3 %) of the participants disagreed. The percentage that disagreed indicated that not all schools in West Pokot County were often closed down prematurely.

These responses from the primary school teachers were echoing Wright and Kate (2003) who conducted a study among Swedish schools. Violent crimes and schools' shootings significantly affected the managing of examinations in the schools. The Swedish schools were forced to close down amidst the scuffles. This forced examinations either to be postponed or, unfortunately, cancelled.

3.2 Thematic Analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis from two instruments namely: document analysis and interview schedule as it is seen in the following paragraphs.

Findings from Document Analysis

In the endeavour to determine examination management from the documents, the researcher used school log books, examination time tables and records of marks in the schools. The head teachers recorded in the log books information on dates when examinations were done in their schools. The researcher established that there was inconsistencies between the way exams were planned and when they were done. For instance, there were records showing dates when exams were to be administered but occasionally these exams did not take place as arranged. There were postponements due to insecurity reasons and this crippled the exam arrangements. Sometimes exams failed to kick off due to absence of pupils in schools especially when they were sent home to collect levies. The school log books indicated that occasionally examinations were postponed for various reasons including insecurity. In some schools, mid-term and end of term exams never took place at all. In other schools even the end of year exams were never done.

The researcher examined the examination time tables which were set by the examination departments. It was established that exams did not take place the way it had been planned. Examination time tables hung on the notice boards but when the dates were scrutinized, it was revealed that the arranged date were often times rearranged time and again. The record of marks indicated that there were columns for monthly exams, mid-term examinations, end of term examinations and end of year examinations. However, not all schools filled or showed marks in the columns indicating that some exams were never done. Most schools indicated end of term examinations as well as end of year examinations.

This was in line with So'nmez (2008) who reported that children could not participate in examinations in the midst of insecurity among the schools studied. There were numerous clashes that forced schools' security compromised. The examination processes were affected leaving children without assessment.

Findings from Interview Schedule

The researcher interviewed the County Director of Education, two BoM members and two QASO officers to solicit information on this objective. Exams were the only evidence schools could demonstrate to substantiate that they were doing some work for the pupils as CDE1 agreed,

“When you want to assess the work done in schools, you look at the KCPE results and it tells it all. To get good grades in KCPE, teachers must administer exams such as monthly continuous assessments, termly exams and any other formative exams”
(Education Officer).

It was not unusual for learners to go without exams in a whole year. This meant that there was no assessment for pupils to qualify to go to the next level. There was no alternative in such cases except to allow children proceed to the next class and hence

poor performance. It was clear that often times than not, exams were interfered with by insecurity issues as CDE1 lamented,

“I am sorry to say that in West Pokot, unlike other counties, insecurity is an issue as far as our managing education is concerned and many a time schools may not do exams due to threats of insecurity” (Education Officer).

There was poor exam performance in the county year in year out. Many children were not able to join secondary schools due to dismal results. It was evident that the government had to do something about insecurity to save schools from poor exam performance as CDE1 indicated,

“The government has to come in and save our schools from poor exam performance. One time the government gave orders to “shoot to kill” the bandits but this has its own issues as it may not be easy to distinguish bandits from normal people” (Education Officer).

It was established that Kenyan system of education was all about examinations. Without exams there was no learning. The KCPE exam was the determinant to proceed to secondary schools. The CDE1 put it,

“Our education system embraces examinations as the only way one can proof that there was learning. So when examinations are crippled by insecurity, there seems to be no learning at all” (Education Officer).

Syllabus coverage was connected to the amount of examination to be done. If the coverage was poor, then teachers examined the little they taught. The interviewees lamented that KCPE was a national exam set for all candidates irrespective of whether they covered the syllabus or not. Exams are an evidence of teaching and one has to examine pupils after teaching certain amount of materials as CDE1 said,

“Teachers examine what they have taught. If they teach little, they examine little, they teach nothing; they examine nothing” (Education Officer).

Similar sentiments were expressed by the BoM members interviewed. There were times learners would stay away from schools if the situation was not safe. Teachers also stayed away from schools. This scenario was enough evidence that there could have been no exams going on. BoM1 observed,

“I have witnessed many cases whereby children have to stay home due to insecurity and this means they cannot do exams when they are at home because the teachers are not available that time” (BoM Member).

There was a problem of transition from primary schools to secondary schools due to failure to do examinations. Secondary education was becoming a big problem without full coverage of primary school. Repeating had been the order of the day to enable pupils gain better results. BOM2 believed,

“Sometimes our children do not sit term exams. This makes them fail in the KCPE exam meaning that they cannot continue to secondary schools due to the poor grades they achieve at the primary school level.” Every parent believed in good examination performance, children must do well in exams otherwise nobody will believe that the schools are performing the duties they should perform” (BoM Member).

Examinations were not supposed to be interfered with. They determined the future of the children. Termly and yearly assessments were vital for predicting the KCPE performance. BOM1 put it,

“Nobody should interfere with examinations, so the government should put in place enough security in all the schools” (BoM Member).

Information from QASO officers showed that exams were interfered with significantly to cause poor grades in the summative exam –KCPE. Without security, there could have been no good performance. Lack of peace affected exams such that the county education officers were worried about the future of the children. QASO1 observed,

“Good KCPE grades can only be achieved if only peace in schools is witnessed. You do not expect children to do well in KCPE when there is ethnic violence from the villages” (QASO Officer).

It was agreed that there was absenteeism in schools which affected exam management. If pupils are absent in a large number, it means that there was no way improvement could be achieved. Teachers felt demoralized by the poor attendance of pupils. QASO2 perceived,

“If children do not attend school regularly due to insecurity related issues, exams are going to be administered to only a few learners. This translates into poor grades often times. You do not expect miracles to happen when pupils are not adequately prepared for exams” (QASO Officer).

QASO1 observed, *“Being a nation that believes in exams, we must ensure that security has been provided to enable our pupils sit for all necessary exams especially the KCPE” (QASO Officer).*

In some cases the children have dropped out of school prematurely. This has rendered them useless in the society. Those who never sat for KCPE were rendered not educated since that was the only basic certificate pupils could obtain as QASO2 said,

“Once a child drops out of school without sitting the KCPE examination, he is termed as one who never went to school. So there is need to encourage children to complete the primary level instead of dropping out of school” (QASO Officer).

These interview outcomes take one back to China where Ling (2012) established that children were reading on their own in their homes whenever violence broke hence failure to be examined by the teachers. The schools often times closed down as insecurity increased in the communities where they were situated. This is the situation found from data collected for this objective.

4.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The researcher drew conclusions from the findings. From the questionnaires given to the teachers in the research process, management of examinations was negatively influenced by insecurity in the study county. It was recorded that insecurity caused schools to postpone exams abruptly in fear of insecurity in the county. The researcher examined documents and conducted interviews which showed the same results. There was therefore, need to manage exams well since the pupils had to prove that they could get into the next level of education. If the examinations were not properly administered, then it showed that there was no measurable means that there was learning among the primary school children in the county.

Conclusions

From the findings, it was concluded that insecurity could not be left in influencing the pupils' examinations in the schools in the study county. Examinations had to be properly managed so that transition to secondary schools could be possible. The data analyzed indicated that there was need to control examinations properly in public primary schools in West Pokot. The examination departments in schools should be seen to be functional as the authorities controlled discipline. There was postponement of exams due to insecurity in the study county.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the study outcomes, the researcher suggested that:-

There is need to improve security in schools so that schools can manage examinations both internal and external. Head teachers and teachers should ensure that all formative and summative exams have been done by the pupils

Recommendations for Policy

The following recommendations were made for policy:-

There was need to deploy the Kenya Defence Forces in West Pokot schools to ensure that there was peace enough to enable schools conduct internal exams as well as the KCPE without being interfered with. To manage examinations, several centers could be put in one center to ensure security

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