

Education Financing and the Provision of Quality Education in Catholic Church-Founded Primary Schools in Uganda

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Abstract. This study investigated the effect of education financing on the provision of quality education in Catholic Church founded primary schools in Uganda. Specifically, the study investigated the effects of financial stability, fund utilisation, and school governance on the provision of quality education in Catholic Church founded primary schools. A mixed methods approach was followed under the cross-sectional survey research design. A total of 260 respondents, composed of Head teachers, teachers and school bursars, participated in the study. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire and interview guide. Data analysis was done with the aid of STATA 14 to obtain both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study findings revealed that financial stability ($r = .704$; $p < .01$), funds utilisation ($r = .577$; $p < .01$), and school governance ($r = .634$; $p < .01$) are all significantly related to the provision of quality education. Collectively, the predictor variables explain 56 % of the variation in quality education provision in primary schools. It is concluded that financial stability and school governance are instrumental in the provision of quality education. It is recommended that primary schools strengthen their funding avenues and governance practices for improved quality education provision. This study contributes to the understanding of some of the key determinants of quality education provision in primary schools in Uganda.

Keywords: Financial stability, funds utilisation, school governance, quality education, primary schools

1. Introduction

Education financing and the provision of quality education is traced back to the early eighteenth and nineteenth century, when physiocrats and classical economists dealt with education as an economic phenomenon (Sjaak, Frank & Ian, 2022). The provision of quality education is associated with the training of high-quality manpower that can effectively deliver in a competitive environment (Lewin & Caillods, 2020). Adequate education financing is needed to improve the quality of access and equity in education yet this financing is limited in most developing countries (Miles & Zimmerman, 2021). Since

the colonial days, the church in Africa has played a key role in education provision. Though after independence the African governments took over the central role of education provision to ensure access and equity, the church still plays a key role in the education sector. To date, church founded schools are associated with quality education provision (Baccari, 2018). The provision of quality education is however dependent on the sustainable flow of funds to finance education activities in the schools which unfortunately is dwindling (Kiryowa, 2022; Pillay, 2020). In this study, we investigate how the flow of finances in Catholic founded schools in Uganda is shaping the learning environment and the quality of education provision.

Ansar, Klapper and Singer (2023) relates education financing to revenue generation, resource allocation, and resource utilization, all aimed at providing educational opportunities and producing educational outcomes. Abankina (2019) identifies some of the sources through funds to finance education activities can be achieved. The sources include taxation, tuition, fees, and philanthropy. In the same line, in this study, we use the term education financing to refer to the different ways education activities in the Catholic Church founded school are financed with the ultimate aim of ensuring the provision of quality education in the schools. We measure education financing in terms of the sources of funding, how the realized funds are utilized and the role played by governance to source and ensure the proper utilization of the realized funds. We use the term provision of quality education interchangeably with quality education provision to imply the provision of a holistic education to a child. It is the education that caters for the three domains; the mind, the heart and the hands. The provision of quality education is enabled by favorable learning environments characterized by adequate learning infrastructure, instructional materials and high transitional rates.

In Uganda, the Phelps-Stokes Commission in 1925 recognized the role of the church as key partner in education sector (Kiwanuka & Kasibante, 2001). During this time, the church and government worked closely in the financing of education activities. However, in 1963, the government took over the mission schools. The Church schools that were hitherto receiving support from the mother headquarters in Europe had this funding reduced. Yet government financing of mission-based educational institutions became tied to funding of general education (Pillay, 2020) ignoring most of other key essentials like the funding of capital projects. The provision of quality education as used in this study refers to a holistic type of education that trains the heart, hand and soul of the learner. Could such training be still possible with the limitations in financing avenues? There is no evidence of any research studies done relating education financing and the provision of quality education in Catholic Church founded schools. This study fills the gap in understanding the necessary financial reforms necessary to improve learners outcomes and the holistic training as a valued pillar of the Catholic Church.

In 1997, the Uganda government took on the provision of free primary education under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme with a key objective of improving equity and access to education. Under the UPE programme, learners are not supposed to pay fees, yet government financing not only delays but is often inadequate (Kiryowa, 2022). The enrolment in UPE schools is high with inadequate infrastructure to the disillusion of many parents that aspire for quality education of their children. These have shunned the UPE schools to seek the education of their children in primary schools founded by the Catholic Church with a known tradition of quality education provision. With the government now preoccupied with offering education through her own schools, funding to the Church founded schools was greatly diminished.

Kasana-Luweero Diocese is one of the many dioceses of the Catholic Church in Uganda found in Kampala ecclesiastical province. Like other dioceses, it has found several primary schools in line with the mission of the Catholic Church. Some of the schools are government aided while others are purely financed by the faithful that enroll their children in the schools. Whatever the source of funding, the parents expect their children to receive

the type of quality education known of the Catholic Church. However, the challenges posed by limitation in funding may not allow this to be easily achieved. Ever since the Uganda government introduced Universal Primary Education in 1997, the funding to Catholic Church founded but aided by government has been reducing (Kasana-Luweero Diocese Annual Education Report of 2022/23). It is reported that between 2018 to 2023, the allocation of funds from government to schools have steadily reduced from 14.7% to 11.08%. This decline has raised critical concerns about the ability of schools to sustainably provide holistic quality education to the learners. This uncertain funding phenomenon prompted this study with a view to investigate the effect of financial stability, funds utilization and school governance practices influence the quality of education provision in Catholic Church founded primary schools.

Specifically, the study was guided by three research questions: 1) What is the effect of financial stability on the quality of education provision in Catholic founded primary schools in Uganda? 2) What is the effect of funds utilization on the quality of education provision in Catholic founded primary schools in Uganda? 3) What is the effect of school governance practices on the quality of education provision in Catholic founded primary schools in Uganda?

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section we discuss the theories that guided this study. The two theories that underpinned this study provide a robust framework for the understanding of how the management of resources and the leadership practices impact the provision of quality education.

2.2 The Resource based view theory

The Resource based view cited by Madhani (2021), posits that an organization's performance is shaped by the unique combination of resources it has access to. It is the mix of these resources that offer the institution a competitive edge over other institutions. In the school setting, we have various resources among which are the financial and human resources. The efficient utilization of limited resources like finances is enabled by the human resource that often receives, allocates and monitors the efficient utilization of the acquired resources. The way institutional resources are managed have a bearing on the success of the organization. The resource based view theory is critical in explaining why schools with stable cashflows that are effectively utilized as guided by proper governance practices are in a better position to offer quality education

2.3 The Stewardship theory

In the school setting, we have management, the school management committees and staff entrusted with the duty of molding learners into responsible citizens. This arrangement fits into the stewardship theory that works on the assumption of having the behaviors of the manager aligned with the interests of the principal. This theory explains how the values and behaviors of school managers influence financial decision making and ultimately impact the education outcomes. The role of governance which is one of the constructs in the current study is better explained by this theory.

3. Literature Review

In this section we review the related literature as per the study constructs highlighting works that have been in the area under study and the gaps that exist which informed the current study.

3.1 Financial Stability and Quality Education Provision

Financial stability is essential in the provision of quality education. The limitations in funding often affect the financing of the essential academic activities necessary for the provision of quality education (Afolayan, 2019). A school that is financially stable can easily support vulnerable students and motivate its staff to perform beyond routine

activities (Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Denning et al., 2023; Mngomezulu et al., 2017; Omeje & Abugu, 2015). When students have access to bursaries, their academic performance and graduation rates improve (Bettinger, 2015; Facchini et al., 2021; Fack & Grenet, 2019; Murphy & Wyness 2023). The government in many countries is the major funder of education, yet, the finances offered by government are grossly inadequate and irregularly remitted to schools (Asma & Paulina, 2019; Getange et al., 2014). The lack of adequate funding is associated with compromises in the provision of quality education (Zipporah, 2021) with school unable to put in place or sustain basic instructional infrastructure. Haynes (2013) decried the inadequacy of financial sources in some church-founded schools which compromised the provision of quality education.

3.2 Fund Utilization and Quality Education Provision

The financial resources realized need to be put to good use to contribute to the provision of quality education. The financial resources can be used to procure instructional materials, develop and maintain the institutional infrastructure, support co-curricular activities, student support and teacher welfare. Funds utilization aims to improve the way the school functions by appropriately forecasting, recording, and executing measures related to the school budget. Success in the utilization of school funds have a large bearing on the decisions those in school leadership make. High integrity coupled with the right skills and training in handling school funds is identified among the qualities school managers should possess to effect positive change in the school environment (Stone -Johnson et al., 2023). Palma et al. (2024) calls for transparency and accountability in the utilization of school funds.

Dangara (2016) established that effective allocation of available resources leads to efficiency and effectiveness of school operations. The elimination of wastage and extravagancy in the utilization of school resources improves service delivery. Nesime and Belgin (2022) argue that effective allocation and funds utilization improve performance in the schools. The efficient use of realized funds enabled by the principles of transparency and accountability leads to improved delivery of the education services (Ngozika, 2023).

3.3 School Governance and Quality Education Provision

Good governance in this study is a set of responsibilities and procedures exercised by an institution to provide strategic direction to ensure educational objectives are achieved through effective and efficient use of resources, accountability, and participation of people in decision making. Good governance in education is concerned with how a school system composes policies, produces and expend funds, support effective teacher preparation practices and school management practices. Sarrico, Veiga and Amaral (2013) underpin the essential role played by governance practices in the provision of quality education. Governance practices dictate the mechanisms in place for quality assurance in schools. An effective quality assurance system is associated with improvements in the quality of education provision. Good governance practices dictate that school managers be accountable to their stakeholders by delivering value for money in line with the stewardship theory. The study by Muhammad et al. (2015) on governance in public schools of Pakistan revealed the positive relationship between good governance and effective school management.

Good governance practices that entail the regular monitoring and supervision of activities in the school are hailed by Bush and Clover, 2016. Quality education provision requires the existence of a quality assurance system that sets targets, monitor classroom practices and constantly reviews mechanisms to improve the delivery of education services in schools.

4. Methodology

This section provides the methodology that was employed in conducting the study, the study design, the sample selection, how data was collected and analyzed.

4.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional design that allows data collection in a snapshot (Perreault et al., 2018). The mixed methods approach that handles both quantitative and qualitative data served the purpose of triangulation. The unit of analysis were primary schools in Catholic Church founded primary schools in Kasana-Luweero diocese. The unit of inquiry was the school management and teachers in the selected primary schools. In total, a study sample of 260 respondents comprising of 13 head teachers, 13 school bursars and 234 teachers participated in the study. The quantitative sample size was arrived at using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of sample size determination. This specifically applied to the selection of the teachers. The 26 informants (head teachers and school bursars) were purposively selected and acted as a source for the qualitative data.

4.2 Instrumentation

The self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) anchored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was the main instrument of data collection (Appendix 1 & 2). The alpha coefficient for all study constructs were in the range of 0.76 and 0.9 which meets the recommended criteria of at least 0.70 (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). To guide the interpretation of the results, we take a cut off of 3.5 to represent agree and below 2.5 to represent disagree. The scores between 2.5 and 3.4 are interpreted as being neutral on the item at hand. The interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from the head teachers and school bursars that were purposively selected. The use of more than one instrument of data collection in a research study gives credence to the collected data through the process of data triangulation.

4.3 Statistical treatment of data

The quantitative data collected using questionnaires was edited, coded and analyzed with help of the STATA 14 software to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. The estimated equation is given as $Y = \beta_0 + \beta X_i + \mu_i$

Where;

Y = Quality education provision

X_i = Independent Variables (Financial stability, funds utilization and governance)

μ_i = Error term (helps to explain the unexplained variations in the model)

β_0 , is the constant term while the coefficient β was used to measure the sensitivity of (Y) to unit change in the X_i .

The qualitative data is presented in form of quotations as obtained from the field.

4.4 Ethical considerations

In the process of executing this study, we maintained the principles of privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, voluntariness, identification and anonymity.

5. Findings

This section presents the findings of the research study starting with the general characteristics of the study population, then followed by the results as per research objectives

5.1 Demographic information

The information on the characteristics of respondents is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	116	49.6
Female	118	50.4
Total	234	
Education		

Grade 3	120	52
Diploma	75	32
Graduate	33	14
Postgraduate	4	2
Total	232	
Management level		
Top	66	32
Middle	83	41
Lower	56	27
Total	205	
Employment terms		
Permanent	191	82
Contract	34	15
Volunteer	9	3
Total	234	
Experience		
1-5 years	40	17
6-10 years	77	33
More than ten years	115	50
Total	232	
Years in current school		
1-5 years	153	66
6-10 years	62	27
More than ten years	18	7
Total	233	
Age group		
20-29 years	36	16
30--39 years	87	38
40-49years	70	30
50-59 years	38	16
Total	231	
Religion		
Catholic	126	54
Anglican	61	26
Muslim	9	4
Pentecostal	30	13
Others	7	3
Total	233	

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Table 1 shows that the participation in the study by gender was balanced (males 49.6%; females 50.4%). Most of the respondents had Grade 3 qualification 120 (52%). This is not surprising because the qualification to teach in the primary school in Uganda is a Grade 3 teaching certificate. The majority of the respondents 191 (82%) were employed on permanent terms, and with experience spanning over ten years 115(50%). However, most of the respondents 153 (66%) had been in the current school at the time of the study for not more than five years. The majority of the respondents subscribed to the Catholic faith 126 (54%) which is expected as the study scope was primary schools founded by the Catholic Church.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

The general information on the study constructs was captured using the mean and standard deviation.

On the state of financial stability in schools, the overall mean (3.14) and SD (1.13) was recorded. This means that most respondents were neutral on the schools' state of financial stability but with wide variations in opinion. Despite the recorded variation in opinion, agreement was registered in terms of the schools' regularity in preparing annual budgets, that are realistic, parents willing to support the budget and proper internal controls followed. The respondents were neutral on the schools having a clear finance strategy, possessing varied funding sources, and having the ability to pay for extra workload. The findings also echoed neutral responses on the adequacy of cash flows and the impact of delayed government disbursements on the schools' operations. The general agreement expressed was the limited income generating activities available in schools.

From the interviews, one key informant described the state of funding thus:

"The problems with current school funding is the inadequacy of funds from PTA, no lunch for teachers and pupils, poor infrastructure and UPE funds not being enough. . . . addressing school funding issues, schools listed getting donors, setting up finance committees to manage school finances and parents' involvement . . ."

Another key informant expressed views on how schools could hand the problem of inadequate funding:

"The steps schools are taking to reduce on water include, harvesting rain water, use of borehole water, sensitizing pupils on maintenance and proper utilization of water to reduce costs. Furthermore, schools opt to alternate with solar energy and use of energy saving bulbs to reduce electricity bills".

In terms of how schools are utilizing the realized funds, the findings revealed agreement though still with wide variations in opinion among the respondents. There was general consensus that schools use realized funds to procure instructional materials, support co-curricular activities and contribute towards staff welfare. There was agreement through with wide variations in opinion on the regularity of annual audits, updated records on the use of funds, transparency in funds usage and value for money. The respondents were neutral on the employment of qualified school bursars and the timely remittance of the statutory obligations. The use of realized funds to support co-curricular activities was confirmed by one of the informants:

"The competitive edge is co-curricular activities. This means that some schools utilize well their funds offering pupils a range of co-curricular activities".

In the area of school governance, the findings revealed agreement but still with wide variations in opinion on most of the items. The respondents agreed and expressed similar opinions on the functionality of school management committees and its oversight roles. The staff are oriented in the ethos of the Catholic faith and received timely communication from the resolutions made by the school management committees (SMCs). There was agreement but varied opinions on the school management committees being democratically elected, lead the vision of the schools, participating in fundraising activities, possessing functional sub-committees and linking the schools to the communities. The respondents took no sides on the active involvement of the school management committees in staff recruitment.

From the informal interviews, instances demonstrating the active involvement of the SMCs in the activities of the school was expressed by one of the informants thus:

The church is supportive in aiding the education of their children through joint mock examinations for candidates, sacred music competitions, teaching catechism and counselling, church donating land and structures to the schools, paying some fees and

scholastic materials for the needy, introduction of missionary childhood animation programs, religious education festivals and also joint teachers' day celebrations as Kasana-Luweero Primary Schools' Association (KALUPSA) association for the diocese.

It is important to note that the church manages the schools it founds through the school management committees.

In terms of the state of the quality of education in primary schools founded by the Catholic Church, the respondents could not readily commit themselves to agree or disagree. The opinions were highly varied. The areas where respondents agreed with limited variation include the presence of continuous professional development activities in schools, presence of co-curricular activities and parents support to disadvantaged learners. The respondents were undecided and divided in opinion on the schools possessing adequate qualified staff, manageable teacher workloads, adequate support staff and possession of functional libraries. The indecision was also expressed on the transition rate of learners to the next level of education, dropout rate, staff retention and manageable classes. The general feeling was that schools lack well equipped science laboratories.

5.3 Inferential statistics

5.3.1 Correlation Test

The correlation test was run to establish whether there existed a relationship between the predictor and response variables. The decision on the type of correlation test to run was arrived at by performing the normality test on the corrected data. The tests revealed normality of data, so we performed a Pearson correlation test. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Test

	Financial stability	Funds utilization	School governance	Quality education
Financial stability	1.00			
Funds utilization	0.625***	1.00		
School governance	0.6003***	0.7466***	1.00	
Quality education	0.7035***	0.5771***	0.6339***	1.00

*** Significant at 1%

The results in Table 2 indicate the existence of a positive significant relationship between financial stability, funds utilization, school governance and the provision of quality education ($r = .704$; $r = .577$; $r = .634$; $p < .01$) respectively.

5.3.2 Regression and multicollinearity tests

We perform the multiple regression test to establish the contribution of the predictor variables in explaining the response variable. To ensure that our model is free from multicollinearity, we perform the variable inflation factor test. The results are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Regression and multicollinearity test

	Coef.	Std.Err	T	P>t	[95% Conf. Interval]	VIF
Financial stability	0.551	0.064	8.59	0	0.425 0.678	1.76
Funds utilization	0.039	0.073	0.53	0.60	-0.105 0.182	2.54
School governance	0.291	0.064	4.58	0	0.166 0.417	2.42
Intercept	0.377	0.180	2.09	0.037	0.224 0.733	
R -squared	0.57				Adj R- squared	0.56
Prob > F	0.00					

The regression model indicates that the predictor variables explain 56 % of the variation in the provision of quality education in Catholic Church founded primary schools in Kasana Luweero Diocese. A unit increase in financial stability increases the provision of quality education by 55% while a unit increase in school governance increases the provision of quality education by 29%. The way funds are utilized in schools have a very weak positive (3.9%) and non -significant contribution to the provision of quality education in Catholic Church founded primary schools in Kasana Luweero Diocese. The estimated model is given as:

$$\text{Quality education} = 0.377 + 0.551 \text{ Financial stability} + 0.291 \text{ school governance.}$$

The multicollinearity test shows that our model is robust enough and does not suffer from multicollinearity since the VIF values for all variables are greater than 1 but less than 10.

6. Discussion

This section provides the discussion of the results. We organize the discussion based on the study guiding research questions.

Research question 1: What is the effect of financial stability on the provision of quality education in Catholic Church founded primary schools? The study findings revealed inadequacy in the funding levels. This finding confirms other studies that expressed limited funding in Church founded schools (Haynes, 2013). The schools were found wanting when it comes to the diversification of funding sources which aligns with the study by Zipporah (2021). The practice of annual budget preparation is supported by Asma and Paulina, 2019. The schools are not performing well in the area of diversifying the sources of funding as advocated for by Dangara, 2016. The finding revealed the existence of poor infrastructures in schools and the inability of schools to adequately motivate staff. This aligns with Denning et al., 2023 of the need for stable funding to enable the acquisition of the essential infrastructure. The correlation results revealed the existence of a strong positive relationship between financial stability of the school and its ability to provide quality education. This confirms earlier findings by Naidoo, 2019. This result was confirmed in the multiple regression test where a unit increase in financial stability increase quality education provision by 55%. These results underpin the need for schools to have stable sources of funding that hitherto provided by the government (Unicef, 2021).

Research question 2: What is the effect of fund utilization on the provision of quality education in Catholic Church founded primary schools? The findings revealed that schools use funds to support activities related to the wholesome development of the learners, such as, the co-curricular activities and the purchase of instructional materials. The neutral response from the respondents is an indication that transparency in the use of funds needs improvement. The correlation results revealed the existence of a positive and significant relation ship between the way funds are utilized and the provision of quality education. In the overall model, the contribution of funds utilization to the provision of quality is not only weakly positive but also insignificant. This seems imply that it may not matter so much what you spend if you aim to achieve quality education. Indeed, often times the provision of quality education is priceless. The responsible parties should be willing to do whatever it takes to fund the required activities in the provision of quality education. This echoes Dangara (2016).

Research question 3: What is the effect of school governance on the provision of quality education in Catholic Church founded primary schools? The findings revealed that school governance is not only positively related but also contributes positively to the provision of quality education. This finding aligns with Sarrico, Veiga and Amaral, 2013. The school management committees are functional though need to improve in the areas of resource mobilization and linking the schools to the communities. The SMCs oversee the management of the schools and their functionality is essential for the provision of quality education.

7. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it is concluded that financial stability is an essential factor in the provision of quality education in Catholic Church founded primary schools in Kasana-Luweero Diocese. The schools have challenges with financing education activities mostly arising from the overreliance on the very limited funding sources. The way funds are utilized have a positive relationship to the provision of quality education though when analyzed with other factors, its contribution is not significant. The implication is such that in the search of providing quality education, the issue of how much is spent may not matter much. That is, you may have to spend whatever it takes if you are to achieve the quality you want.

School governance significantly positively contributes to the provision of quality education. It is recommended that the functionality of school management committees be supported and strengthened. This is intended to enable these committees to effectively play their oversight role in schools. Functional committees make school management more accountable and transparent. Most donors get attracted to fund institutions that are transparent and accountable. This will endear the schools to the potential donors and contribute to the future cashflows of the school. By strengthening these committees, the Catholic Church will be able to rediscover her place as the number one provider of quality education in the country.

8. Implication for Practice

To hedge against the dangers of uncertain fund flows given the dwindling support from poverty and the general poverty among the parents, schools need to develop clear financial mobilization strategies that emphasize diversification of funding sources. This is essential to eliminate overreliance on a single funding source. The strategy should as well spell out how the realized funds could be efficiently utilized to avoid wasteful spending. The school management may need to be trained or provided with refresher courses on how to live within the budget.

The governance structures of the schools, the school management committees (SMCs) should be strengthened through appropriate and timely orientation. Functional SMCs are critical in building donor confidence and community trust through prioritizing transparency and accountability. The SMCs should be in position to mobilize all the key stakeholders including the communities and alumni to contribute generously towards the financing of the school activities.

The Catholic Church Diocese of Kasana- luweero in particular and other Dioceses in general should come up with a financial mobilization framework to guide all schools under the Catholic Church on resource mobilizations techniques and tactics. Guidelines should be provided on how schools can enhance their financial sustainability through setting up income generating projects. This is critical if schools are to maintain their mission of leading providers of holistic education. The promotion of holistic education relies heavily in making the right type of investment that prioritize quality irrespective of the cost.

For the over role regulator, the government, this study has demonstrated the need for the government not to focus on reducing her financing to the schools, but looking for avenues to increase their funding sources. For example, the government should take the lead in institutionalizing the training of the school management committees as a mandatory obligation.

The current study was geographically limited to Catholic Church Founded Primary Schools in Kasana-Luweero Diocese. It is recommended that a study covering all primary schools of different ownership in the country be conducted. We recommend a comparative study that will consider how the constructs studied play out with schools under the different foundation bodies. Our choice of variables was also limited to only three

predictors. A study involving more predictors or new predictors is recommended. Similarly, a study involving a different outcome variable is a step in the right direction.

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