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Factors Influencing Education Development in West Pokot County, Kenya

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Abstract:

The Pokot community is conservative and has resisted change in its culture from any quarter, including government policies, which have had little impact in the region since the colonial period to date. This situation has militated against school enrolment witnessed in many schools of the County and reluctance to use modern technologies in farming and SME activities. Political power has lacked recognition among the Pokots and, consequently, has had no impact on the region's social, economic, and technological developments. The purpose of this study was to establish factors influencing education development among the Pokot people of West Pokot County. The research was guided by four objectives, which included:

- To determine the influence of schooling on education development in West Pokot County, Kenya
- To investigate the influence of religion on education development in West Pokot County, Kenya
- To examine the influence of population explosion on education development in West Pokot County, Kenya, and
- To assess the influence of devolved government on education development in West Pokot County, Kenya

This study was guided by the Human Capital Theory propounded by Theodore W. Schultz in 1960, who believed education and training enable the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities, which increase human value. The target population was 200,000, which is the number of people in active life who are creating wealth for their families in West Pokot County. A sample of 400 respondents was used to provide data, 100 from each constituency, namely: Kapenguria, North Pokot, South Pokot and Central Pokot. Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. Interview schedules were used to collect data, and the test-retest technique was used to test the validity and reliability of the instruments. Data collected was analyzed, and relationships between the independent and the dependent variables were established. The findings established that high levels of poverty were prevalent, and the bulk of the population was illiterate with no innovative or entrepreneurial skills. The study established that traditional education was designed to encompass control of livelihood in the region, making it difficult for new forms of education and ideas to be accepted. The study made four recommendations:

- The county government should expand social facilities such as schools and health units in the region
- The county government should abolish repugnant cultural practices
- The county government should provide credit facilities to the active population in the county for entrepreneurial activities, and
- The government and non-governmental organizations should make provision for training selected groups of the community population on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to boost wealth creation for education development

Keywords: Youth, adult and lifelong learning, religion, politics, population

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

West Pokot County is among the 47 counties in Kenya, located in the north rift region, neighboring Trans-Nzoia and Elgeyo Markwet counties to the south, Baring County to the east, Turkana County to the north and Kenya Uganda boarder to the west. The County is inhabited by the Pokot people, who practice a pastoralist way of life and a variety of crop farming. The region was one of those branded closed districts during the colonial period in the early 20th century, curtailing freedom of movement in and out, which denied exposure to the residents (Mutsotso, B.M., 2018). Mutsotso, B.M. (2018) observed the systematic marginalization of the Pokot people by the colonial government of Kenya as a reason for decadal educational development in the region and the Pokot people served as loyal servants of the colonial regime and could easily be relocated from one place to another to create room for the white settlers, as in Trans-Nzoia County, against their wishes.

At the advent of independence in the early 1960s, the members of parliament from the Pokot community were voted in without knowledge of their significance. The problem of conflicts between the Pokot people and their neighboring communities were not addressed by the political leadership, hence rendering them insignificant (Shalom Center, 2021). There were two members of parliament, Ezekiel Kasachoon of Sigor and Jacob Pkorio Lorema of Kapenguria constituencies, respectively, whose influences or roles were not felt by virtue of not touching the lives of the community members. In 1969, Francis Loile Polis Lotodo and James Powon Korelach were elected members of parliament for the Kapenguria and Sigor constituencies, respectively. Francis Loile Lotodo's leadership was admired for his concern for the security matters of the Pokot people (Korir, E., 2021). This was when white settlers disposed of their land in Kenya, particularly the Trans-Nzoia region, and relocated to England following Kenya's independence in 1964 (Roller, S. 2021). The Pokot did not buy the white settlers' land because of a lack of leadership, leaving them to complain about being sidelined by other communities in the Trans-Nzoia region. Trans-Nzoia is a region Pokot still claim belonged to them prior to white settlers' habitation, and they hope to get it back (Lonyala et al., 2020).

As Mutsotso, B.M. (2018) observed, Human resource development was not a priority in West Pokot District, as it was in other parts of Kenya like Central Kenya, Nyanza and Eastern regions of Kenya due to prevalent marginalization. The political development was slow, and the election of constituency representatives was negotiated by the elders, who only offered a meal, mainly a bull slaughtered in a secluded place. The residents of the West Pokot district were ignorant of the political position in facilitating social, economic, and technological development.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Several organizations have been formed to oversee the performance of political offices in the county, following the realization of its significance in the development agenda. The tarmac roads constructed recently, such as Kapenguria to Lelan, Kapenguria to Alale, Chepareria to Sook and Kapenguria to Kwanza, were purely done on political influence following promises made by aspirants during the presidential campaigns of 2013. Other development activities witnessed in the County included the opening of rural access roads, schools, hospitals/dispensaries, dams and electricity power supply. Whereas political campaigns had existed since 1963, there had been not much attachment of the Pokot people to political leadership following ignorance of its role in terms of the community's survival. The community was self-independent following its assumption of roles that had existed prior to the colonial period, facilitated by a higher degree of conservatism inherent in the Pokot people. A Pokot community was a government in itself, sufficient to meet her needs. Hence, an influence from outside was interference that was resisted and condemned. The current acceptance of the political office and its influence in mobilizing the development of the social, economic and technological structures in the county is a change the study intends to establish its background.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing political development in West Pokot County, Kenya.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by four objectives:

- To determine the influence of schooling on political development in West Pokot County, Kenya.
- To investigate the influence of religion on political development in West Pokot County, Kenya.
- To examine the influence of population explosion on political development in West Pokot County, Kenya.
- To assess the influence of devolved government on political development in West Pokot County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Schooling and Education Development

Schooling is the process of training and acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities which have the capacity to influence behaviour (Abamecha, F., Sudhakar, M., Abebe, L., et al., 2021). The acquired behavior turns into a tool that can drive social, economic, political and technological structures of a society and beneficiaries of such behaviors become diehards, defending the brand or culture. Traditional societies that existed during the colonial period and earlier socialized their youths in their traditional schools stratified according to age sets in an attempt to provide differentiated skills that address societal needs at different levels. In an earlier scenario, Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim believed societies transit from one social structure to another in pursuit of survival and stability through training and acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and abilities (Wilterdink, N. and Form, W., 2023). The environment depicted by ancient sociologist, as observed from the findings of their studies, indicates the uniformity of social reconstruction across space and time, and Pokot social structures are no exception. The youths and adults were continually socialized on skills and abilities deemed useful in enabling society to achieve desired goals. New skills and abilities arising from discoveries and in tandem with the beliefs and aspirations of the community were welcome and transmitted in traditional schools. This indicates the existence of lifelong learning in traditional societies to assure their survival amidst threatening challenges and uncertainties, as observed by Baporika Neeta (2015) in the study "Impact of the Economic Crisis on Education and the Next-generation Workforce in Namibia". The Pokot people are conservative and reluctant to embrace new ideologies, a reason likely to have militated against secular school enrolment observed in many areas of the County today and a subsequent decimal political development (Chebitwey, D. H., 2013). Chebitwey (2013), in her research project, further observed that traditional or cultural schools have thrived silently in the name of 'rite of passage', such as in circumcision

and naming, among other ceremonies. It is believed that secular schools are appropriate in socializing the youths and adults alike to acquire civic education in addition to skills and abilities to address challenges brought about by population explosion and technology (Merecia A.M. Sirera, 2014).

Secular schools are taking centre stage in socializing youth today, while adults remain passive and tend to look for direction from school graduates, a situation of confusion and conflict. According to Proudman, C. (2022), adult members of the community are incapacitated in providing direction to the Youths when traditional schools are condemned as misleading and banned from operation, such as female circumcision and moralism (the act of cattle rustling that demonstrate heroism and economic development). In this scenario, the culture of the Pokot people clashes with the law, leading to uncertainty and mistrust. The inconsistency of who provides direction and guidance among the community members is likely to have greatly drugged political development in West Pokot County.

2.2. Religion and Education

Pokot people believe in African Traditional Religion (ATR), which is the concept of an invisible god known as a Tororot who watches over every activity a person does and rewards any observed performance accordingly (Wipper, A. 1980). The deity is believed to reside in mountains, rivers, valleys, sacred trees, caves and bodies, as depicted by Ngeiywa, K.T., Kasiera, E.M. and Wepukhulu, R.N. (2017) in a study of the "Effect of traditional Pokot worldview on the spread of Christianity among Pokot people". The concept of the deity suggests that no activity, overt or subtle, is hidden from the creator; hence, a person should always be responsible for his/her actions. Mediums are consulted for solutions in the face of challenges such as sicknesses, curses, drought, and impending attack by enemies (O'Dempsey, T., 1988). O'Dempsey, T. (1988) further confirmed that Pokot community members attend to their god through participation in cultural rites of passage and ceremonies directed by mediums. In the same breadth, the mediums communicate with the supernatural (Tororot) through prayers and sacrifices and likewise relay information back to the people as a confirmation of their acceptance or rejection. The community also believes in the existence of a devil known as Onyot, who exists in spirit form and thrives in causing calamities, droughts, sicknesses, curses and death with the intention of making life unbearable (Ngeiywa, K.T., Kasiera, E.M. and Wepukhulu, R.N., (2017). The power of the devil, Onyot, would always be defeated upon making sacrifices to god with a medium's directive. There are several kinds of mediums that serve different roles in society, and they are believed to be god's stewards equipped with knowledge, skills, and abilities that are god-given. They could be people of a specific lineage, an elder or a person with an acquired skill obtained through training. The significance of a medium is in his/her performance in addressing needs in the community and is identified through referrals. This situation made the Pokot people believe they were self-sufficient and needed no external interference, including political development (Nkonge, D.K., 2015). The advent of Christianity during the colonial period saw a number of converts who acquired ideologies that conflicted with those of ATR, resulting in the division of community members while interfering with structures important in maintaining order and security (Onuzulike, U. 2008). As observed by Onuzulike, U. (2008), the converts dissociate themselves from cultural rites of naming and circumcision and, as a consequence, embrace new ways of socialization while enrolling in secular schools to acquire new knowledge, skills and abilities. These products of secular schools are receptive to new ways of living, including the development of social infrastructure like schools and health units, which demand the services of secular government accessed through political leadership (Armada, D. D. R., 2001). The slow transition from traditional schools, approved by ATR, to secular schools explains the decimal political development in West Pokot County.

2.3. Changing Economic Structures and Education Development

West Pokot County has witnessed a population explosion following improved medical facilities during Kenya's independence period, which has minimized the infant mortality rate, coupled with popular polygamy practised in the region (Opesen, C.C. and Onyango, E.O., 2016). Demand for goods and services has witnessed the clearing of bushes to pave the way for farming activities, resulting in reduced grazing zones and livestock population (Bollig, M. & Anderson, D.M., 2016). Due to dwindling land for farming activities, the residents had to think outside the box to come up with diversified ways for income generation (Mukoya, L.L, 2019). Subdivisions of the former group ranches in the region into individual parcels, as observed by Nberg, G., Knutsson, P., Ostwald, M, et al. (2015), have led to small pieces of land unable to support livestock keeping, the popular livelihood of the Pokot people. As a consequence, the residents engaged in other sources of income such as improved dairy farming, horticulture, poultry keeping and bee-keeping, among others, as highlighted by the Agriculture, Livestock, Irrigation and Fisheries Department at West Pokot County (Gender Report, 2015). To perform in these new areas of income generating projects, it was required that the youths and adults alike undergo training to acquire relevant farming skills (FAO, 2016). Like traditional societies, small-scale farmers have experienced lifelong learning for knowledge and acquisition of skills to ensure the food security of their families, in addition to putting pressure on civic leaders to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) financially. Consequently, the Pokot people have become critical of who should be elected to an elective position to ensure the survival of their farming activities and SMEs through training and loans. The changing modes of livelihood of the Pokot people, from pastoralist way of life to many other forms, have led to political development in the region where the electorate demands that aspirants sign a performance contract with them prior to an election period.

2.4. Devolved Government and Education Development

The governing structures in Kenya had come a long way from being a colony of the British administered from England by the King or Queen from the late 19th century to 1963, when it became an independent state, with Mzee Jomo Kenyatta as the first president (Britannica, T., 2020). Mzee Jomo Kenyatta ruled Kenya under one-party state, Kenya African

National Union (KANU), from 12th December 1963 to 22nd August 1978 (Britannica, T., 2020). The main agenda of President Kenyatta was to enshrine peoples' aspirations in the Kenyan constitution and begin on the social, economic and political developments which were fragmented during the colonial period (Kunzler, D., 2020). Upon President Kenyatta's demise in 1978, his vice president, Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, took over power and strictly followed his predecessor's footsteps in the development agenda under the 'futa yayo' slogan and expanded social facilities in the country under one-party state (Gabrielle, L., 2008). Otieno, I.O. (2016) observed that Kenya attained independence in 1963 under a multi-party system of politics, which was reverted to a multi-party state later in 1992 after a long struggle with opposition leaders. Mwai Emilio Kibaki took the mantle of leadership in 2002 and paved the way for a review of Kenya's constitution, later translated as the 2010 constitution. The product of President Kibaki's request for a change, the 2010 constitution, brought about a devolved government system in Kenya, which led to the creation of 47 Counties, each headed by an elective governor (Kanyinga, K., 2016). Okebiro, G. (2014) believed that devolved government brought services closer to people while considering the diversity observed in the communities in addition to identifying areas in need of urgent infrastructural development that have touched lives.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Human Capital Theory propounded by Theodore W. Schultz in 1960, who believed education and training enable the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities, which increase human value. It means that the more of these intangible attributes a person has, the more productive he/she is in a community or an organization. According to human capital theory, human beings are useful to an organization when they are equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills needed to perform a specified duty in accordance with expectations. In order for an organization to leverage competitive advantage in its business, it has to make arrangements for refresher courses for training workers with new skills arising from changes in knowledge and technology. In the same manner, youths and adults alike have to be subjected to lifelong learning to remain relevant in a community and ensure its survival. The development of skills, whether innate or acquired, is paramount, given the changes in livelihood that have arisen from the increased human population, which has myriad demands and challenges.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of figure 1 presents the independent and dependent variables depicting government policies as the main intervening variable. Independent variables include schooling, where the youths are socialized at various stages of life, in addition to the acquisition of skills for economic and technological development in the region. As indicated in the figure, there is a provision to repeat a process for enjoyment and perfection in the art, given that rules and regulations apply. Religion is an important human requirement for spiritual development, complete with rules and regulations to guide the actions of each individual in a group and enable cordial interactions among people. The changing economic structure in the region has dispersed the youths from the traditional guarding of livestock and other traditional cores to engage themselves with training activities for knowledge and skills in various areas of interest. This situation is believed to allow the youths to venture and invent new ways/techniques for the purpose of wealth creation in the face of the scarcity of land arising from population explosion. The government policies of enforcing and facilitating schooling of Kenyan people irrespective of age, race, religion and background is a key boost to education development. Freedom of worship provided in Kenya's constitution has expanded the growth of denominations and sects in the region, which have varied influences on the residents of the County.

Finally, the devolved government has had an impetus in awakening the community to engage in alternative sources of income to assure human survival in the face of unemployment and poverty observed in the region. The youths and adults alike engage themselves with skills development through training to be relevant in the society.

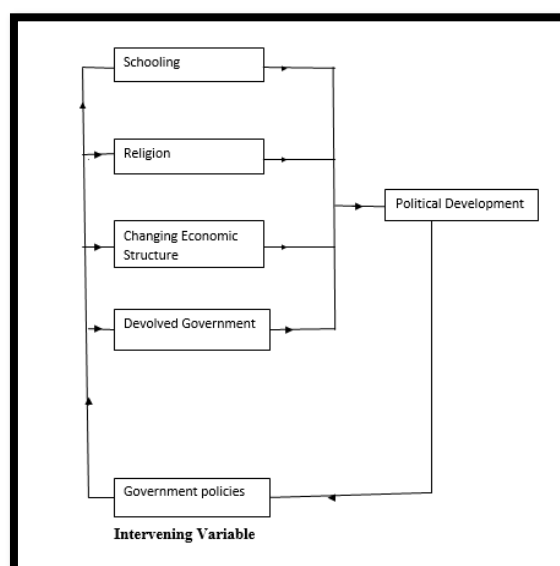


Figure 1

3. Data and Methodology

The study employed a survey research design to allow an understanding of the various kinds of schooling in traditional African societies. The design is appropriate for this study as it could enable the establishment of the curriculum, laying the foundation of aspirations and beliefs driving daily engagements of community members in the region. Further, the design could enable an analysis of changes taking place in the environment arising from unstable sources of income, which provide impetus to the choice of a livelihood from the traditional pastoralist way of life. The survey research design could likely allow for the observation of trends in aspiration and beliefs along with change agents over time. The target population is about 600,000 members of the Pokot community living in West Pokot County. Stratified and random sampling methods were used to conduct the data collection process to allow groups of individuals to be selected for interviews. Groups of individuals to be considered for interviews include parents, youths, farmers, business community and administrative organs. Twenty members would randomly be selected from each group, making a total of one hundred respondents. Interview schedules were used to collect the data from the respondents.

4. Study Findings

The demographic data established that a few respondents, both males and females, had little primary education level, with the majority having no education. The study also established that the respondents between the ages of 15 and 55 actively engage in their family cores. Data indicated that over 70% of respondents were ATR faithful with a strong inclination toward the Pokot culture. Findings observed "dini ya msambwa (mafuta pole Africa)" an exaggerated ATR established to counter development of Christianity in West Pokot County during colonial period. The study findings indicated that the role of ATR includes but is not limited to healing the sick, rainmaking, protecting against the enemy, and advising on future actions. Data indicated the reluctance of the adult population to change their religious belief in ATR to other beliefs such as Christianity, Islam, and dini ya samba, among others, as opposed to the youth. This scenario suggests that any envisaged change in a community should focus on the youth. Data found that a few parents send all their children to school, with the majority sending some children to school while leaving the rest to undertake traditional education at home. A few other parents do not send their children to secular schools at all. The study observed secular education influencing political development in the region by virtue of impressing diversity of thought and change as opposed to conservatism rooted in traditional education. As a consequence, the study observed a lack of knowledge on the significance of education amongst the majority of parents in the region and could hardly engage in its development at any level. The study noted the abundance of knowledge of what to become after schooling among school-going youths, a sign of the positive influence of school education.

The research found polygamy popular in the region, and families were large while both parents and their children engaged in mixed farming as a form of employment. Pastoralist and cultivation modes of farming are popular among the Pokot. The recent demarcation of land into individual parcels with population explosion arising from good medication and polygamous families has increased poverty levels in the region and forced both adults and youths to engage in SMEs to ensure their survival. The data found increased participation of civic leaders in creating an enabling environment through financing and training costs of adults and youths to engage effectively in income generation projects. The research established a rising need for secular schooling and a decreasing need for traditional schooling in the County, which has an effect on ATR belief among the Pokot people. The data indicated the rising involvement of both adults and youths in election processes to fill County government elective positions with individuals of desirable manifestos, a sign of political growth in the region. Research further established knowledge of the roles of the various elective positions amongst the youths as opposed to the adults in the region.

5. Conclusion

Traditional education among the Pokot community in the region is well structured to allow its acquisition and permanent internalization, which occurs without struggles by engaging in daily livelihood. Transmission of this kind of education is characterized by hands-off techniques where credit or blame for any success or failure does not arise but is usually accorded to fate. It is, therefore, a challenge to start teaching or training members of the community on new knowledge or skills because of a lack of acceptance and difficulty in penetrating the laid-down ideals and beliefs. This situation explains the reluctance of the community to embrace colonial plans for modern farming techniques, which included destocking to allow sufficient pasture during the colonial period. Schooling and medical services provided during the colonial period were also rejected on the same platform, which again explains the low enrollments observed in many schools today and the need for medical services from health units as the last option. Rising poverty levels aggravated by the population explosion have forced adults and youths alike to seek alternative methods of livelihood, including using modern farming methods and enrolling themselves in schools to acquire knowledge and skills for utility purposes. Civic education has received acceptance in the community, thus paving the way for political development in the region while minimizing the power of ATR to control lifestyle.

6. Recommendations

Political development in any community serves as a prerequisite for social, economic and technological development. In recognition of the critical significance of political development among Pokot people, the study makes the following recommendations:

- The county government should expand social facilities such as schools and health units in the region.
- The county government should abolish repugnant cultural practices such as Female Genitals Mutilation (FGM).

- The county government should provide credit facilities to the active population in the county for entrepreneurial activities.
- The government and non-governmental organizations should make provision for training selected groups of the community population in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises to boost wealth creation.

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Appendices

Data Collection Instrument

A. Parents' Interview Schedule

- i. What is your gender?
- ii. What is your age?
- iii. What is your level of education?
- iv. What is your religion?
- v. How many of your children go to school, and how many do not?
- vi. What do you think is the advantage of schooling?
- vii. Who built your school?

B. Youths' Interview Schedule

- i. What is your gender?
- ii. What is your age?
- iii. What is your religion?
- iv. Are you going to school or not?
- v. Why are you going/not going to school?
- vi. What do you want to become in the future?

C. Farmers' Interview Schedule

- i. What is your gender?
- ii. What is your age?
- iii. What is your religion?
- iv. What is your level of education?
- v. What is your livelihood?
- vi. What is the role and performance of your Member of County Assembly (MCA)?
- vii. What is the role and performance of your Governor?
- viii. What is the role and performance of your Member of Parliament (MP)?
- ix. What is the role and performance of your Senator?
- x. What is the role and performance of your Women Representative (WR)?