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Review

## Myths in African concept of reality

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**Myths are accounts of the origin of societies and institutions not subject to rationalization but often used by historians and philosophers in their quest to study African history; for it is only thus that we can comprehend the various aspects of the continent's history and culture. This paper examines the critical understanding of African worldview, the place of African philosophy and the significance of myths in the reflection of African experience.**

**Key words:** Myths, communalistic, african philosophy, earth and God.

### INTRODUCTION

Philosophy as a discipline is the reflection of mankind on the ideas and institutions guiding their existence. Philosophy as Staniland (1979:3) defines it is "the criticism of the ideas we live by"; it is the criticism of the ideas and material inventions that a particular society originates for administering itself.

It is important to emphasize that philosophy ideals with culture met in the descriptive sense but in the critical and prescriptive sense. Where the anthropologist celebrates culture, the philosopher improves it. It is this critical essence of philosophy in relation to culture that informs William James' conception of philosophy as the habit of searching for alternatives. The critical nature of philosophy in relation to culture can be explained more aptly with the clarification that Staniland gave. According to her, philosophy is a critical enterprise. She explains that by philosophy being critical, she does not mean the negative destruction of culture, she explains:

*By criticism I of course mean not negative appraisal; but rational, impartial and articulate appraisal, whether positive or negative. To be critical of received ideas is accordingly not the same thing as rejecting them; it consists rather in seriously asking oneself whether the idea in question should be reformed, modified or conserved, and in applying one's entire intellectual and imaginative intelligence to the search for an answer (Staniland, 1979:4).*

Philosophy is actually a personal reflection about all aspects of reality. It is an exercise in which one tries to give meaning to the world from his or her own standpoint given the prevailing circumstances and environmental influences. Philosophizing in the experience of the traditional African takes the character of critical reflection of the African understanding of reality and world view. Myths, folklores proverbs therefore become the major sources of African philosophy (Jaja, 1995:28). More so, myths encode the traditional settings of the African and their belief system.

However, ardent critics of myths have branded them pre-philosophic, irrational and devoid of authenticity. This paper shows that myths are constructs meant to interpret reality. They portray the African way of thinking and as vehicles for preserving and transmitting valued knowledge of philosophical and moral truths.

### Myth

Generally, a myth is a story which is believed to be true and has its origin in the far distant past history of a people. Alagoa (1978:9) argued that they are historical information transmitted orally by processes peculiar to each community. Myths are man-made stories that play explanatory functions in the African understanding of reality. The Encyclopedia Britannica defined myth as;

*... a story handed down in oral form from our forefathers*

*which explain reality, concepts and beliefs and further serve as explanations of nature events such as creations, origin of things, history of a race or a people (1133).*

This shows that myth is not just a product of human imagination but a direct expression of reality. Anyanwu (1987:241) citing Houndtonji says that "man cannot live without myths". The reason is quite obvious: man is a being that cannot bear to live with certain questions unanswered that is why he sits down to formulate myths to make those questions answerable. Thus man is a myth-making animal (Anyanwu, 1987:280). Some thinkers have rightly observed that myths are pre-philosophic in nature; that philosophy started where myths stopped, which presupposes that philosophy has its roots in myths (Jaja, 1994:125).

It is pertinent to point out that myths are results of the revelation of "thou" and are often founded upon an original experience that reaches beyond the sensorial and rational, but they are not illogical. They are mostly susceptible to rational analysis and logical interpretation. An analysis of many myths as shown here shows that actions of gods and heroes often presuppose a keen analysis of given circumstances and are based on rational decisions (Kirk, 1974:60). It can be argued that some myths represent complex logical systems which are different from those which are usually found in contemporary western societies. Nevertheless, according to a common view, there is a radical separation between mythos and logos, between myth and philosophy. Myth is associated with the mysterious and illogical, and philosophy with the rational and logical (Apostel, 1981). Myths are part of a way of life and state precedence and models for human actions, but they do not seek to explain them on a rational basis. Myths use images, philosophy, concepts. Philosophy asks generalized questions, relies on systematic reasoning, and rejects the supernatural explanations of the world, but mythological society; are unsystematic and deal with the sacred (Apostel, 1981).

Myth is a wholeness attained to the world as a whole because those who live in myth and are guided by it are engaged on many different planes with the whole of which the myth is an integral part. By teaching man and by regulating the way of his living in devotional engagement with the whole and by gradually disclosing many layers of its meaning, myth reveals the knowledge of the whole. But the knowledge of the whole is not merely theoretical. It is not merely a partial, intellectual knowledge, but it embraces the whole of life. Myth reveals the knowledge for which philosophy in a proper sense looks. But it does not disclose this knowledge without appropriate devotional engagement. Myth is completed already at the beginning, whereas philosophy seeks to be completed at the end. Mythical societies live in eternity rather than in historical time. The societies in

which philosophy or science plays an important part constantly seek their completion and are in a permanent dissatisfaction with the results of their findings. They live in history and are time oriented. Myth corresponds to eternity, philosophy to the discovery of history.

Myths are seen as vehicles conveying certain facts or truths about man's experiences in his encounter with the created order and its relation to the super-sensible world. For Abanuka (1994:45), myth tells of the super human experiences of the community. Myth exposes the fact that man's misfortunes on earth as well as his hardships are attributed to disobedience to the divine commands and moral codes of the deities as a point in his life.

Generally, myths contain three kinds of stories namely, stories of origin, explanatory stories and didactic stories. Each of these stories is meant to explain a particular phenomenon. Myth is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery but living chronicles in the minds of Africans. They contain and express the history, the culture and the inner experience of the African himself. Africans use myths to explain how things came to be through the efforts of a supernatural being. It is concrete and expresses life better than abstract thought can do. It is indeed surprising that up till this age (2011), some scholars still doubt the existence of African philosophy. The reason being that some philosophers having basically studied Western philosophy treated African philosophy from a typical western standpoint. It is necessary to remind this class of scholars that in traditional Africa there are individuals who are capable of critical coherent and independent thinking. This school of thought is the philosophic sagacity.

Philosophic sagacity retains the basic tenets of the professional school. However, unlike it, it is an exposition of the wisdoms and beliefs of the individuals who have not been schooled in the formal educational system. It consists of wisdoms and views of those who are professionally trained philosophers that is neither classroom – taught nor self taught. A sage can be a very formally educated and literate person (Oruka, 1995:177) philosophical sagacity is an expression of the view that amongst the various African communities, exists individuals who despite the fact that they have not had the benefit of having contact with the so-called Aquinas Russell all western philosophy (such as Plato) are nevertheless, critical independent thinkers who guide their thought and judgment by the power of reason and inborn insight rather than by the authority of communal consensus (Oruka, 1990:16).

The professional school had also produced professional philosophers with Eurocentric standpoint. Some of those scholarly works are as follows: Onyewuenyi I.C. (1986) African origin of Greek philosophy. Owerri-Nigeria. Black Academic Press Bodunrin P.O. (Ed) (1985) philosophy in Africa. The Ife-Nigeria: University of Ife press; Bodunrin P. (1981). The question of African philosophy,

in philosophy Vol. 56; Marrow, L. (1992), the idea of African philosophy: A critical study of the major orientations in contemporary African philosophy. Ibadan. Molecular publishers. Veren, P.D. (1980) philosophy and an African culture. Cambridge University Press. Apostel, L. (1981) African philosophy myth or reality? Gent: Story-Scienta and Eboh, M.

### What is African Philosophy?

Indeed, that African philosophy exists is manifestly obvious. There is however some confusion as to its nature; this has made the comprehension of African philosophy more problematic. To ease the problem Russell (1974:14) opined that "to understand an age or a nation, we must understand its philosophy"; conversely, he observes that the circumstances of men's lives do much to determine than philosophy.

We need to understand the history of the intellectual processes and ideas generated in Africa, the culture, history and experience of the people, to appreciate and connect to the African intellectual explanation and reality of existence.

African philosophy therefore is the reflection based on the experiences of ancestors. It is the intellectual development, the how and why they think in a particular way in a particular period. It is the socio-cultural and economic thoughts of the people.

African philosophy is the circumstances and environment that have shaped the lives and conditioned of the ideas of the Africans. No wonder, that Sogolo (1993:6) argued that "traditional African philosophy is communalistic... It is a body of thought attributed to the community rather than to individual".

It is taken to mean a world-view (Weltanschauung); a way of life, that is the fundamental beliefs of the African about life its origin and end, the universe and the entire reality. It is the identified way of life which is specific to the African.

*African philosophy is the reflective inquiry into the marvels and problematic that confront one in the African world, in producing systematic explanation and sustained responses to them (Iroegbu, 1994:16).*

Its subject matter is, African reality, African experience and how the African understand and interpret these experiences.

Momoh (1998:40) states that African philosophy is: *African doctrines or theories on reality (Being) and the Universe which is made up of things like God, gods, life, life after death, reincarnation, spirit, society, man, ancestors, heaven, hell, things, institutions, beliefs, conceptions, practices, etc.*

On his part Okolo (1990:10) opined that African philosophy is:

*A path to a systematic coherent discovery and discovery*

*and disclosure of the African as a being in the African world. Through this knowledge or disclosure of himself and his world by critical reflection, the African grasps reality that is to say attains the truth about man and the cosmos in its entirety.*

In other words African philosophy is essentially an activity, a systematic and coherent inquiry into African experience and how an African conceives and interprets the world, in the words of Etuk (1993:63).

*It is the application of the philosophical tools of analysis, criticism and logic to the problems of Africans in all aspects of life.*

These views of African philosophy to a large extent echo Oruka's (1990:13) claim that African philosophy is a way of thinking that is uniquely African and which radically avoids the European style of thought; it is communalistic.

Unfortunately however, researchers in the History of African philosophy will notice that while there exists a draught of literature on the history of African philosophy down the ages, same cannot be said of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Attempts made so far on writing aspects of the history of African philosophy have focused largely on the contemporary era. History of African philosophy is taught in the University of Ibadan, Department of History. The course begins with a brief introduction while covers philosophy in Traditional Africa (Jones, 2010). Amongst the African philosophical ideas are those of Ikwame Nknush, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Leopolel Senghor etc. An examination of the History of African philosophy encompasses other socio-political and economic thought of the people.

Furthermore, even published works on the history of African philosophy tend to also concentrate on the recent past. The point being made here is that a large chunk of the history of African philosophy has not been written. The vast pre-colonial era and the intellectual ferment of the period are yet to be given adequate attention by scholars. In fact the history of African philosophy in all its ramifications, even political philosophy, have received little or no attention but that does not in anyway imply that it is non-existent. Indeed it is this issue of existence that informed Makinwe's statement:

*So much debate had regard over the existence or non-existence of African philosophy that one may be tempted to think that perhaps what is known as African philosophy is nothing more than a controversy about whether or not there is indeed an African philosophy (Makinwe, 1989:89).*

The philosophy of Nyerere, the Uganma and all it stands for cannot be non-existent. Uyaama is a concept from the Swahili word meaning "family-hood or brotherhood. It is essentially a rural development policy/ philosophy on economy, politics and the involvement of the



citizenry and their reactions to the socialist programmes. It sought to restore the egalitarian and humanistic principles of traditional African to modern Tanzania. It was with the Arusha declaration of 1967 that the United Republic of Tanzania formally set out on the path of socialism and self-reliance (Gabriel and Jaja 2000). Nyerere described his Ujamaa (communities) as a group of families who will live together in a village and will work on a common farm for their common benefits. He hoped to create village settlement where individuals would live and work collectively.

Similarly, Leopold Sada Serghor's Negritude is an African philosophy that projects the Africaness in being black. It is a self affirmation of black people or the affirmation of the values of civilization of something defined as "the black world". It is a revolt against the historical situation of French colonialism and racism (Fanor, 1991); it was derived from Latin "Niger" meaning "black". Applied to a black person it has come to be charged with all the weight of racism to the point that the insult 'Sale Negree' (dirty regret) would be almost repugnant (Casaire, 2004).

Aime Cesaire Senghor's associate confessed how angry they were too by the word. He argued, "...I confess that I do not always like the word Negritude even if I am the one, with the complicity of a few others, who contributed to its invention and its launching" adding that, still, it corresponds to an evident reality and in any case to a need that appears to be a deep one" (Casaire, 2004).

On his part Senghor has insisted that negritude has a philosophical content, and "the sum total of "the values of civilization of the Black world", thus implying that it is an ontology, an aesthetic, an epistemology or a politics.

Having examined some major ideas in African philosophy, let us briefly examine the use of myths in African understanding of reality.

### **The use of myths in African understanding of reality**

Myths play a very important role in the African understanding of reality. African philosophy cannot operate in a vacuum; therefore myths provide the necessary analytic and conceptual framework for an authentic African philosophy. They provide the solid foundation on which African philosophy hinges (1994:119). One must note that they are the fertile ground for African philosophizing. They constitute expressions of the inner side of individuals and their relationship with others, nature and with the supernatural. It is the philosophical reflections of the people in past, preserved and handed down to society through myths; if indeed the past is unintelligible and conveys meaning only in the light of the present, then myths convey meaning only when they establish a coherent relationship between the past and the present.

The reason is quite simple. A people's world view cannot be studied in isolation of their past and the past is as

important as the present in deciding the future. Given this scenario, we can deduce that Myths bring to light the past experiences of the people and from there the present African philosophy sees an avenue for philosophizing.

Uduigwomen (1995:40) observed, in African epistemology, myths serve as a means of acquiring and transmitting knowledge, for knowledge has a prominent place in the African mind. It enables the African to recollect past activities of men and societies which make it possible for the individual or societies to orientate themselves aimed and bewildering currents of the society.

There have been disputes and disagreements as to the role and place of myths in African philosophy. Some have argued that myths cannot be regarded as philosophy because they obviously fall short of empirical verifiability and logical consistency, but Horton, (1987:100) debunked this and admitted myths and rituals into the general corpus of experience which is capable of exhibiting a logical and consistent structure.

Similarly, if African philosophy is a reflection on African experience and myths are stabilizing factors to African experience; it then follows that African philosophy is a critical reflection on myths as stabilizing factors. So the critical analysis and the awareness of the relevance of myths proverbs, folklores, etc. would go a long way in inculcating in Africans the habit of critical reflections on issues bordering on life (Jaja, 1995:29).

Myths are the essential and ready tools for thinking and communicating in African philosophy. Through their meaningful and communicative features, myths exhibit and enhance the coherence, stability and continuity of the society. They play the role of literature and fill the lacuna created by lack of literature on past history and supplement the oral culture of African experience (Jaja, 1995:28). Myths connect the past with the present. The vestiges of what truth is in African epistemology are traceable to mythological depositories and other conventional values. Hence myths serve as sources of truth. Some myths are authoritative and appear to have a compelling force of obedience on the people.

Myths also play an important role in the moral education of the society. Generally, beauty is regarded as a form of moral goodness. The value of beauty and goodness is mostly couched in myths. In conformity with this, African aesthetic value is circumscribed in moral beauty. This is epitomized in myths in African culture which focuses on values, virtues, attachments, loyalties, faithfulness, diligence and other social and religious virtues (Jaja, 2001:99). A few examples will suffice.

African vision of the universe is entrenched in various creation myths, which basically serve etiological purposes. They thus explain how and why the different natural phenomena came into existence, the forces behind their perfect working and the relationship that existed and still exists between man and the creator God and the universe. Articulations on African cosmology may

differ from one locality to another; they varyingly depict God as the Supreme Being and that He created what comprises the universe, and that after creating the universe God dwells in it and sustains its inhabitants.

This speaks of God's imminence. And for the African, that is reality incontestable.

According to Yoruba myth, God dwelt in the sky (heaven) which was quite low. Men originally went freely to Him to tender complaints and He responded spontaneously. However, it is related that, after sometime and due to the disobedience of man, God withdrew and separated from the world He created and was no longer bothered about it. Instead, He sent His ministers, the divinities endowing them with various responsibilities. This explains the concept of a transcendent or withdrawn God. God withdrew without informing his people. This is the idea of *Deus Absconditus* (or *Deus otiosus* or *Deus remotus*). Africans also see man as the center of the universe. Every other thing was created for his use. He is the being that exhibits the absoluteness of God".

We may now look closely at the cosmogony of some African societies to illustrate our point. Among the Igbo, the Supreme deity to whom all power of creation is credited is known as *Chukwu*, *Chiokike* or *Chineke*. According to Nwala, the cosmogony of the Igbo is based on a theogony which views *Chineke* as self-creating; that has always been, will always be. *Chukwu*, the everlasting deity, created the universe which includes the sky (*Eluigwe*), the heavenly bodies, the earth (*Elu-uwa*) and the spirits and earthly creatures.

The myth has it that *Chukwu* is symbolized by all or *anyamvii*, which is believed to be the source from which all other reforms of life radiated. The first man that was created was known as *Ife-nta*, meaning junior light. This name places man very close to *Chukwu* (i.e. Sun, the great light). Man is thus, "is" next to God in order of things in the universe. Furthermore, the first to be created was *obo-omananya*. Other creatures that God made are animals, plants and spirits. All these creatures enjoyed an initial harmony with God. It should be stated that certain events were responsible for the distortion of this original cosmogonic harmony. In the first place, the Supreme deity granted man too much freedom in terms of action, and man abused it and this led to quarrels, acrimony and confusion among the created beings. For instance, the myth has it that there was constant quarrel among women and the careless use of kitchen utensils, particularly the pestle which was constantly hitting at the sky, the original abode of God. *Chukwu* was annoyed and thus the sky eventually moved away from the earth.

From the myth, we can learn the following. In the first place, there is the acknowledgment of a supreme deity with power of creation and control over what he has created. Furthermore, man is very crucial in this creation. Man misused his initial freedom and restraint has to be imposed. It was on the basis of this that morality and the

act of appeasing the Creator emerged. Relation to this is the fact that it was man who distorted the original cosmic harmony and to correct this, he developed certain religious practices to placate his creator.

According to the Ibibio an ethnic group in *Akwa Ibom* State of Nigeria, the most dominant feature in human existence is the belief in the Supreme self-begotten being called *Abasi-Ibom*. *Abasi* in this context means "a divine being who always and will always be forever, while *Ibom* refers to the limitlessness and infinite nature of this being. It is further held that *Abasi Ibom* created two offsprings namely: *Abasi Enyong* (male) with dominion over the sky (*Enyong*) and whose offspring include the sun, thunder and lighting, the second offspring of *Abasi Ibom* is *Abasi-Isong* (female), with control over the earth (*Isong*) and whose offspring include *Nedem* in charge of the waters and *Ekpo* in charge of the bushes.

The Ibibio believe that this high God (*Abasi-Ibom*) created all things including *Indemo* to whom he also gives charge of the different aspects of human affairs. Thus, there is *Ndem Isong* (fertility deity) to look after land fertility; *Ndem Udua* (market deity) to protect the interest of traders; *Ndem Ikot* (*farmalan deity*) who is supposed to dwell in the farmland to look after the growth of the crops.

According to *Udoidem*, *Abasi Ibom* having created Himself, caused the sky (*enyong*) *Isong* (earth) and *Inyang Ibom* (the waters) by mere verbal command. At the time of creation the earth and the sky were separated entities that got struck together to satisfy their natural sexual desire. However, conflict later resulted between them and the sky moved away. It is reported that separation must have been caused by the earthy kids who normally rub their dirty oily hands on the face of the sky after eating and thus forced the sky to move upwards.

To effect the separation, *Abasi-Ibom* sent a giant with an axe to force away the sky from the earth. The Ibibio still hold that despite this separation, the conflict between the earth and the sky persists and this is manifested in the alternation of days and nights. Night reflects when the earth has overpowered the sky, while "day" reflects the reverse.

From the foregoing, we have shown that myths represent the African spirit and the African view of reality. Therefore for African philosophy to be authentically African, it must operate within the conceptual framework of myths which represent the African reality and they are authentically African in nature. The use of Eurocentric yardstick to judge African philosophy is unacceptable and immoral. The fact that African societies were pre-literate does not negate the existence of a truly African philosophy based on the environment, experience and culture of the people. It is worthy to remember that even in Greece, the emergence of philosophy was preceded by the rationalizing and systematizing of myths, such as

we find, for example, in Hesiod's *Theogony* (Kirk, 1974:60). The process by which myth gave way to philosophy is thus not straightforward, extending for centuries. Now, here are those who question. African philosophy takes into considerations the centuries of pre-literate isolation of African societies, in which African myth and philosophy have spread among African peoples but have not been documented in written form.

It is a great tragedy and disservice to intellectuals if such sort of views continues among intellectuals. This essay is not intended to provide easy answers to problems which are immense. Even if we do like to think about this we are probably all aware of our prudent human condition. As in the Greece of Xenophanes, Heraclitus and Plato there are still temples, but merely as something that reminds us of the past. Myths also remind us of the past, the past in its real existence. In the proper sense, philosophy is the love of wisdom, pursuit of the knowledge of the whole. But when it turns to be scientific and attempts to look at the world "objectively", that is as if it were an object, it arrives only at the partial knowledge of a part.

Myths tell us about the reality of the universe and all its components. African myths explain in the context of African cultures, great human concerns and realities such as death, creation, the evolution of living things, man's relationship with other living creatures etc. However, the purpose of a myth is far more than being explanatory. It has many values in the African societal setting. It acts as a socializing agent. It is used to nourish and to buttress the traditions of the ancestors. Myths are also educative in that they teach people especially the younger ones the meaning of the universe and man's place in it. They place the world before us as an object of indifferent investigation, a world to be known not just as an abstracted object but as a wholistic real entity. A universal knowledge arises from man's effective engagement with the world and myths helpful explain the great human concepts of his time.

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*Full Length Research Paper*

# **An investigation on the relationship between the school level of funding and performance at K.C.S.E. in Mumias District, Western Province, Kenya**

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The Kenyan government has been spending between 20% to 40% of its revenue on education with the aim to improving access and quality. Much of these resources have been devoted towards establishment and procurement of school inputs such as classrooms, teachers and textbooks. This study investigated the effects of funding on performance in Mumias District. Statistical proportionate and purposive sampling was used in identification of the sample. Piloting was conducted in two schools within the district. The study is based on the production function model which looks at the input – output relationship. Survey Questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study established that there was a significant correlation between students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E.) and school level of funding. Schools funded below 30% performed poorly in K.C.S.E. The study recommended that for performance to improve, day secondary schools which were the majority in the study need to be supported with learning resources. The findings of this study may be used by the stakeholders to improve on the quality of secondary education.

**Key words:** Performance, mean score, optimal resource utilization.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

School financing has remained a controversial issue of debate for many years. Taxpayers often believe that schools receive adequate funding and therefore do not want more of their taxes going towards education spending. Teachers and schools, on the other hand, often claim that current funds are in-sufficient to finance necessary school programme. Public education is a public good financed primarily by state and local governments. Economic theory views education as an important input to the production function. In fact many empirical studies have shown that education provides positive returns to society as more education leads to higher productivity and wages (Angrist and Krueger, 1991; Ashenfelter and Krueger, 1994; Card, 1995); thus because of these gains the Government invests billions of dollars each year in

education.

Prior to 1963, education in Kenya was largely funded by Christian missionaries and the colonial government. To the missionaries, the basic aim of education was evangelization, while to the colonial government, it was the production of cheap but literate manpower and the uplifting of the quality of life within the African reserves (Mutua and Namaswa, 1992). However, with the attainment of independence in 1963, the government recognized education as an important vehicle for human resource development and as an important instrument for national development.

Consequently, the Ominde Commission (1963) was appointed to address the educational needs of the country. The commission gave priority to secondary, technical and

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higher education arguing that the key posts which had been left by the colonists in the civil service required such preparation (Olel, 2000). As a result of this, secondary school enrolment has grown from 30,000 in 1963 to 848,000 in 2002 (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2003). During the same period, the government has been investing large financial resources in the sub – sector. For example, from 1966 to 1970, out of \$8,841,000 earmarked for education, \$5,127,000 or nearly 58 percent was spent on secondary education (Sifuna and Kiragu, 1988). Over the last five years, secondary school recurrent expenditure has grown from Kshs 667.31 million in 2001/2002 to Ksh 668.88 million in 2002/2003; Ksh 945.42 million in 2003/2004 to Ksh 948.79 million in 2004/2005. In the same period, development expenditure has grown from Ksh 52.24 million in 2003 to Ksh 154.9 million in 2004 to 205.5 million in 2005 (Republic of Kenya, 2006). Notwithstanding the large amount of resources devoted to secondary education, performance has been unsatisfactory with only 12% of students transiting from secondary to university (MOEST, 2003). Ayot and Briggs (1992) assert that the ever-growing demand for education, the resultant expansion of educational system have all led to massive increase in finance on education all over the world. Almost every nation in the world devoted an increasing share of its resources to education during 1960s and 1970s. By 1974, this had grown to 4.8 percent of GNP. For instance in Kenya, 35% of its Gross National Product went to education. Notwithstanding the commitments by many nations to increase funding towards education, the budgets could not continue rising for long. This scenario was captured by Psachoropolous and Whitehall (1985); when he states that “Today there is increasing evidence of financial constraints and in many developing countries the proportion of the government budget devoted to the educational sector has began to decline”.

In Mumias District, good performance has been witnessed in primary schools yet the same has not been replicated in secondary schools. Studies by Maruti (1998) showed that most primary schools in the district received financial support from Mumias Sugar Company in form of education facilities which could explain the good performance.

In Kenya, the government is the major source of funding for public education. The government’s effort is supplemented by local communities who pay in form of direct fees and “Harambee” contribution. Olembo (1986) investigated the methods by which schools are financed and found out that most of the finances come from the Ministry of Education. He also found out that the amount of money raised from parents and government was inadequate in running school programmes; and teachers indicated that increased funding was necessary. In fact educators have always argued that improvement in school and students’ performance will cost more. Although the statistical link between levels of spending and student outcome continues to be debated, few argue

that how money is spent has an effect on student learning (Hanusheck, 1997). Sherlock (2011) in his study on the effect of financial resources on test pass rate found out that changes in spending may have had a positive impact on fourth grade math pass rates. This is suggestive but inconclusive evidence that additional resources were more effective at increasing test scores and consequently pass rates in initially low spending schools that were earlier low achieving.

Olembo (1986) investigated the methods by which schools are financed and found out that the amount of money from parents and the government was inadequate in running school programs and teachers were asking for more funding. Sessional paper No. 1 of 1986 reiterates the government’s commitment to reduce the share of the ministry of education to 30%. The reduction is to be achieved through cost sharing between the government and the local communities. The 1988 Report of the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training (Republic of Kenya, 1988) indicated that gradual reduction in recurrent costs in education would be realized through cost sharing in the financing of education facilities and materials.

As noted earlier, education is the vehicle for national development and for this reason many developing countries have invested massive amount of resources in the sector. For instance, Kenya spends 40% of its national budget on financing education. Good returns are thus expected from such an investment. Good performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (K.C.P.E) has been witnessed in Mumias with top pupils in the province emerging from such schools as Booker Academy, Complex Primary School, Central Primary, St. Peter’s Boys and St. Annes among others, and the same has not been replicated in secondary schools. Studies by Maruti (1998) revealed that most Primary Schools in the District received support from Mumias Sugar Company in form of educational facilities such as well designed and equipped libraries, spacious and well lit classrooms, dormitories and dining halls in a bid to improve on performance. Many secondary schools in the area have such adequate facilities sourced from different agencies and initiatives. However, many of these schools have continued to perform poorly over the years. This study sought to investigate whether the level of funding had any effect on performance.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of funding in schools on students’ performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E.). The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between the school level of funding and performance at K.C.S.E.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was conducted in public secondary schools and the data are therefore limited to that category of schools. Correlation design was used in this study. Correlation studies may be broadly

**Table 1.** Respondents by gender according to school category.

School status	Gender	Number	Percentage	Total
Boys boarding	Males	60	100	60 (100)
Mixed day and boarding	Males	45	63.4	71 (100)
	Females	26	36.6	
Girls day and boarding	Females	15	100	15 (100)
Girls day	Females	60	100	60 (100)
Girls boarding	Females	57	100	57(100)
Mixed day	Males	224	54.9	408 (100)
	Females	184	45.1	
Boys day and boarding	Males	41	100	41 (100)
Totals	Males	370	52.0	712
	Females	342	48.0	

Source: Field Data (2009).

classified as either relational studies or as prediction studies (Gall et al., 2003; Kothari, 2004). This technique was the most suitable design for predicting the presence or absence of the relationship between the dependent variable (K.C.S.E. performance) and the four independent variables. The coefficient of correlation was measured using Pearson's product moment. This was because the independent and dependent variables were continuous in nature (Kerlinger, 2009).

The study population comprised the principals and teachers in charge of examinations, as well as from four students in the 44 secondary schools in Mumias District.

Mumias District has 44 secondary schools. A sample of 31 secondary schools was thus picked using stratified random sampling giving an estimate of 75%. The schools were picked on a proportional basis as follows: Boys 3, Girls 4, co-educational were 23 while one was a private school. The population was representative of the universe since all categories of schools were included in the study (Kothari, 2004). Location of schools with regard to urban and rural setting, day and boarding, private and public, provincial and District schools were also catered for. The respondents were spread as shown in Table 1. A questionnaire for the students and the teacher interview schedule for the Principal and a check list for K.C.P.E and K.C.S.E were used in data collection.

A pilot study was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument. Test- retest technique was used to test the reliability of the instruments and Pearson product moment correlation was computed and yielded a co-efficient of 0.7, that allowed the continuity of the exercise.

## RESULTS

### The effects of the levels of funding on the performance in K.C.S.E. in Mumias District

This section presents the findings of the effects of funding on K.C.S.E. performance in Mumias District. The findings were presented in five sections. Section one deals with background information on the respondents and the school characteristics. The other sections dealt with

school level of funding and its effect on performance at K.C.S.E

### Background information on sample units

A total of 712 form four students participated in the study. Three hundred and seventy were males while 342 were females. The males accounted for 52% while the females had 48% implying that more boys were represented in secondary education than girls in Mumias District.

The school characteristics were analyzed in terms of the number of streams and category of school. There were eleven one streamed schools and 31 two streamed schools. On the category of the school, 42.8% operated as mixed day and boarding, 28.6% operated as day while 28.6 operated as boarding. Majority of the schools (96.8%) operate as public institutions while only one school is private, an implication that the government is promoting access to secondary education in response to the ever increasing demand.

The research aimed at establishing the class size in the sampled schools. This information was obtained from the student's questionnaire and the teachers in charge of examinations. According to the respondents, the average class size was made up of 39 students.

It also became necessary to establish from the students whether they were learning in congested classrooms. The study also found out that 87.7% of the students were learning in congested classrooms while 22.3% learnt in well spacious classrooms. This information is shown in table 2.

As to whether congestion affected learning in classrooms the teachers in charge of examinations had the following responses; that congestion in classrooms negatively affected learning activities by as much as (73%)

**Table 2.** Congestion and effects on learning activities.

Mode	Frequency	Percentage
Congested	27	87.7
Uncongested	4	22.3

Source: Field data.

**Table 3.** Effect of congestion on learning activities.

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	22	73.0
No	9	27.0
Total	31	100

Source: Field data.

while only 27% of the teachers felt that congestion in classes had no effect on learning activities. This is shown in Table 3.

### Trends in K.C.S.E Performance (2003 – 2007)

Regarding the trend in performance in K.C.S.E by the sampled schools in the District, the results were as indicated in Table 4. The table shows frequency, percentage, and mean score for K.C.S.E performance for schools in Mumias district between 2003 and 2007. The mean score for each year ranged between 0.00 and 12.00. Findings in Table 4 reveal that most schools had a mean score between 0.00 and 6.00. It is only in one year 2007 where a school posted a mean score of 8.10 yet the score nationally was 10.5 (Daily Nation February 29<sup>th</sup> 2008). Drawing from this table therefore, it can be concluded that most schools in the study area performed poorly in K.C.S.E in the five years between 2003 and 2007. Further it is depicted from Table 4 that only about 7 schools in 2004 and 10 (32%) in 2005 performed above average in K.C.S.E. In 2006, 11 schools representing 36% performed above the mean score of 6 while in 2007, only 8 schools performed above the mean of 6, indicating a declining trend.

When these data presented graphically, the trend in Figure 1 emerges. Based on Figure 1 the graph is skewed to the left with most of the scores lying between 0 and 6.00. Given that 12 points is the highest score and 6.00 is the mean score. During the years between 2003 and 2007 the number of schools that had K.C.S.E means score of less than six were more than those that had K.C.S.E mean score of more than six. The figure also portrays fluctuations in the number of schools within certain mean score categories over the years where it is observed that during 2003 more schools had a mean score ranging between 0.0 – 4.0 as compared to the

years that followed. During 2003 few schools had a mean score of 4.1 – 5.0 as compared to the years that followed. The results show that performance was inconsistent and generally on the decline. Majority of the schools performed poorly with a score below the mean of 6.

### Relationship between school level of funding and Performance in K.C.S.E.

The research sought to determine whether there was any relationship between the school level of funding and performance. This was done by asking students how often they were sent away for fees. The percentage of fees payment in each school was established from the Principals' questionnaire. The percentage of fees payment was arranged against school performance which was converted to percentage to make it suitable for correlation analysis. The information was tabulated and analyzed and the results are as shown in Table 5.

Findings in Table 6 shows that majority (46%) students in Mumias District are often sent home for fees. 41% are rarely sent home for fees while only 13% of students are never sent home for fees. This means that majority of the students do not pay fees in good time as a result they are out of school most of the time, an implication that substantial amount of learning time is spent out of school which has a direct implication on K.C.S.E. performance.

### Rate of fees payment

Regarding fees payment information was coded and tabulated as shown in Table 7.

Information in Table 7 shows that majority of the schools have fees payment rate ranging between 50 and 75%. 29% of schools collect less than 50% of fees, implying that such schools have a serious funding problem. Only 6% of the schools collect over 75% of fees. This definitely affects performance since most of the school inputs can only be made available when there is adequate funding. A school with adequate finances will purchase Laboratory equipment, textbooks, hold academic excursions and make available other instructional resources which affect K.C.S.E. performance, as observed by Sherlock (2011) who confirms that funding has a positive impact on academic performance.

### School level of funding –district and provincial secondary schools

It became necessary to analyze data on the level of funding and the K.C.S.E. mean score based on the school category. Data on District and provincial schools were analyzed and tabulated as shown in Table 5.

This data in Table 5 were analyzed and a sample size  $N = 31$  and then subjected to Pearson correlation and the

**Table 4.** Trend in K.C.S.E performance from 2003 – 2007.

Mean Score	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
00 – 4.00	10	32	5	16	2	6	4	13	5	16
4.1 – 5.00	4	13	11	35	11	36	11	35	11	35
5.1 – 6.00	10	32	6	19.5	8	26	5	16	7	23
6.1 – 7.00	4	13	6	19.5	4	13	7	23	4	13
7.1 – 8.00	3	10	3	10	6	19	4	13	3	10
8.1 – 9.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Total	31	100	31	100	31	100	31	100	31	100

Source: Field data.

**Table 5.** Relationship between Levels of Funding and K.C.S.E. Performance –District and Provincial Secondary: District Schools.

School category	School	Percentage level of funding	Mean score
District	A	74	7.9
	B	72	7.62
	C	75	7.30
	D	65.	6.80
	E	65.	6.50
	F	60	6.28
	G	60	5.42
	H	65	4.52
Provincial	I	60	8.16
	J	70	6.90
	K	60	5.50
	L	60	5.46
	M	65	5.37
	N	55.	5.36
	O	45	5.30
	P	50	5.14
	Q	45	4.84
	R	38	4.74
	S	60	4.70
	T	52	4.59
	U	40	4.54
	V	55.	4.43
	W	40.	4.35
	X	45	4.19
	Y	41	4.20
Z	40	3.95	
A1	35	4.00	
A2	60	3.80	
A3	55	3.65	
A4	76	3.43	
A5	40	3.41	

results were as shown in Table 8 on the relationship between Level of Funding and K.C.S.E. Performance.

Results in Table 8 indicate that there was a positive correlation at 95% confidence level (0.05), between the



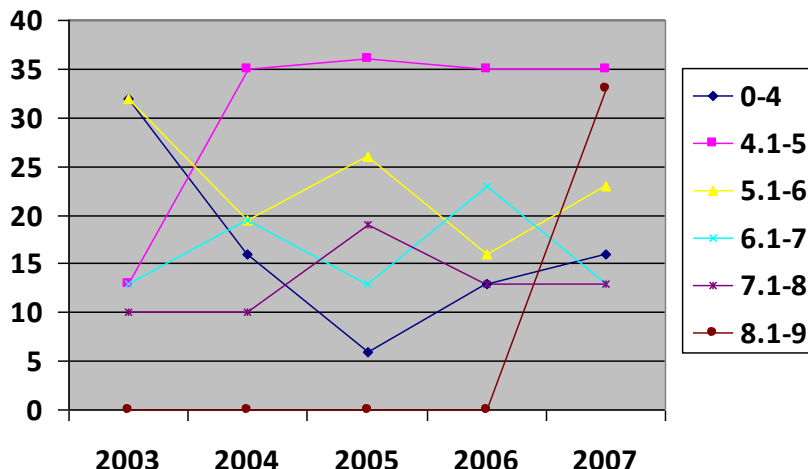


Figure 1. Line graph on K.C.S.E. performance between 2003 and 2007.

Table 6. Responses of students on how often they were sent home for fees.

Mode	Frequency	Percentage
Often	325	46
Rarely	293	41
Never	94	13

Source: Field data.

Table 7. Frequency, number and percentage indicating rate of fees payment in the schools.

Mode	Frequency	percentage	Degree
Below 50%	9	29	104
Above 50%	20	65	234
Over 75%	2	6	22
Total	31	100	360

Source: Field data.

school level of funding and performance in K.C.S.E. This implies that as the level of funding for the school increased performance in National examination also tended to be better.

**DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Sherlock (2011) confirms that funding has a positive impact on academic performance, thus the results of the data analyzed failed to accept the null hypothesis that: there is no significant relationship between school level of funding and performance was rejected. These results implied that for schools to do well in examinations, more funds should be made available in order to buy the necessary inputs such as text books and other instructional resources. Charles (2004) found out that for \$100

increase in revenue limit per student leads to a 0.04 point increase in the percentage of student scoring above the 50<sup>th</sup> Percentile in mathematics, a 0.22 to 0.026 increase from the cross sectional estimates. This also leads to a 0.01 point increase in the percent of student scoring above 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading, a 0.30 to 0.32 increase in the cross sectional estimates.

Abagi (1997) argued that while teachers were crucial for quality education, their contribution will be incomplete if there are no important inputs like textbooks. The textbooks can be purchased if there are funds in schools. The study also found out that parents were willing to pay more in schools which were performing better. For example, fees payment rate for school B, which is a private school, was over 75% yet this school charged more than the public schools. The same school also had a performance of over mean grade of 6 in K.C.S.E, which implies that parents were getting concerned about quality and were willing to pay higher fees. Responses from the head teachers reveal that low level of funding adversely affected learning since students were often sent away for fees. This is because funds were needed for the procurement of school facilities such as textbooks, laboratory equipment and workers salary, among others. Low funding thus interfered with the running of school programs. It was also noted that schools in urban setting had a higher rate of funding compared to rural day schools.

Performance in majority of the public secondary schools in Mumias District was inconsistent and generally on the decline. Majority of the schools performed poorly with a mean score of below 6. Table 5 reveals that most schools had a mean score between 1.00 and 6.00. It is only in one year 2007 where a school posted a mean score of 8.10 yet the best score nationally was 10.5 (Daily Nation February 29<sup>th</sup> 2008). Drawing from the findings, it can be concluded that most schools in the study area performed poorly in K.C.S.E. in the five years between 2003 and 2007. Further it is shown in Table 5

**Table 8.** Correlations between level of funding and K.C.S.E. performance.

		<b>Performance</b>
Level of Funding	Pearson correlation	0.604** (2-tailed sig. = 0.000)
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	2479.645
	Covariance	82.655

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

that only about 7 schools performed slightly above average while, the rest performed below the mean score of 5. In 2005, only 10 schools (32%) of the schools in the study performed above average in K.C.S.E. In 2006, 11 schools representing (36%) performed above the mean while in 2007, only 8 schools performed above the mean indicating a declining trend.

There was a significant positive correlative between school level of funding and performance in K.C.S.E. Results in Table 7 indicate that there was a positive correlation between the school level of funding and performance in K.C.S.E. ( $P < 0.05$ ). This means that as the level of funding for the schools increased performance in National examination also tended to be better. Thus the null hypothesis stating that no significant relationship existed between school level of funding and performance was rejected. These results imply that for schools to do well more funds should be made available in order to buy the necessary instructional resources. These results concur with Sherlock (2011) and Charles (2004), who found out that there existed a positive relationship between funding and performance. Vestegen and King (1998), after reviewing 36 years of production function research, concluded that "resource input can and do make a difference in student educational outcomes" while Charles (2004) found out that an estimated \$100 increase in the revenue limit per student leads to a 0.04 point increase in the percent of student scoring above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in math scores. Changes in the funding level were responsible for 35.6% of the changes in school mean scores.

It was also established that parents were willing to pay more in schools which were performing better. Changes in funding level were responsible for 35.6% of the changes in school mean score. There were significant variations between school categories; levels of funding and school mean score in K.C.S.E. with schools having less than 40% funding level having significant lower mean scores as compared to school with a funding level of over 60%. The study results imply that there is a significant correlation between school level of funding and performance at K.C.S.E.

The school level of funding strongly affected performance of students in K.C.S.E. in Mumias District. This is a revelation that funding level played an important role in effective teaching and learning. Schools funded below 30% performed poorly in K.C.S.E. Therefore it can be concluded that the school funding level was a cardinal

determinant of students' performance.

The study concludes that schools should be adequately funded. The Government should promptly release funds for free secondary education. The study found out that schools funded by less than 40% lead to significantly lower performance in K.C.S.E. According Jagero et al. (2011), lack of resources hinders access to and completion of secondary education. A study could also be conducted to determine the extent to which congestion affected learning in public schools.

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*Full Length Research Paper*

# **The impact of education on rural women's participation in political and economic activities**

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**This study endeavored to investigate the impact of education on rural women's participation in political and economic activities. Six hundred rural women and 12 gender Activists were selected for this study from three Zones of Amhara Region, Ethiopia using multi-stage random sampling technique and purposeful sampling techniques respectively. Questionnaire and interviews were used as instruments of data collection. The findings indicated that as rural women's level of education increases, their involvement in political and economic activities and the possible advantages secured from their participation increase. That is, rural women with primary and secondary school educational experience have claimed significantly higher participation in political and economic affairs and highly benefited from their participation compared to the illiterate rural women. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Ethiopian government has to introduce and expand integrated and functional adult literacy in the rural areas.**

**Key words:** Political, economic, rural women education.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Few studies conducted regarding women in Ethiopia portray that mostly women are involved in physical hardship throughout their lives. Such hardship involves carrying loads over long distances, grinding corn manually, working in the homestead, raising children, and cooking. Ethiopian women have little benefits compared to men regarding personal income, assets, healthcare, education, and employment. Over 85% of Ethiopian women are living in rural areas where peasant families participate primarily in subsistence agriculture. Rural women are integrated into the rural economy, which is basically labor intensive and which exerts a heavy physical charge on the majority of women and children (CSA, 2007).

By 1995 the rate of uneducated people in Ethiopia had decreased substantially to 64.5%. The national census conducted in the year 2003 reported that the rate of young uneducated people reached 61.3% (men, 56.1%; women 66.6%). (Ibid).

In Ethiopia, though women's struggle in organized form for their rights and equal participation on national affairs has began during the time of Emperor Haile Sellassie in 1942, their participation in development and good governance has been constitutionally recognized during the time of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Party government since 1994. As a result, currently, various changes are observed in women's involvement in social, political and economic affairs of the nation. This study sought to examine the impacts or changes education could bring about in women's participation in politics and economic affairs.

Barriers to women's political and economic participation exist throughout the world, and Ethiopia is no exception. Such barriers of women's participation could result from the prevailing social, economic and political systems. Many feminist scholars presume the confinement of women to the private arena, the home, as both means and reasons for preventing women's participation in public affairs

(Drage, 2001). There is a wide range of statistical evidence that shows women's lower political participation than that of men globally (Bum, 1991).

There is also literature which indicates women's area of participation in their stereotyped roles. For example, women are placed in the low ranks of the political structure where their impact on issues affecting their well-being is insignificant (Marshall, 2002).

On the other hand, Randal (1987) points to a tendency of women's interest to participating in community politics more than conventional political institutions. However, this tendency of women to participate in community politics is also socially constructed because community politics otherwise addresses women's immediate concerns (Ibid). Tinker, cited in Tigist (2011), presents a similar opinion when she talks of women in a community being charged with a civic responsibility of fellowship, that is, providing hospitality services to relatives and neighbors.

Chen (2005) argues that the family institution and women's mothering role within the community are cultural phenomena that reflect and reinforce the system of male dominance. Tinker, cited in Tigist (2011), supports this view stating that family relations are one of the three ways in which dominance over women is articulated by, for example, unremunerated labor and control of the wife's labor wages by the husband.

It is posited by UNFPA (1996) that women in politics and in decision-making bodies contribute to redefining of political programs by placing new items on the political agenda that reflect and address women's gender specific concerns, values and experiences thus providing new perspectives on mainstream political issues. According to the UN (1995), one way to ensure women's empowerment and improvement of their status is to establish mechanisms for women's equal participation and equitable representation at all levels of the political process.

The absence of women in political debates and decision-making processes distorts the appreciation of women's interests. Women's interests are not well defined because male representatives and women's associations do not possess adequate and appropriate knowledge (CENRWOR, 1994). However, women's participation in various decision-making levels is still low and needs to be considered to realize democratic ideals in the nation. Women must be included in the political decision-making process if their concerns are to be adequately reflected and democracy is to be truly participatory (McLendon and Eddings, 2002).

Without women in prominent positions such as national legislatures, local government and major economic activities, it is unlikely that the full range of gender issues will be addressed. And the literature has pronounced that women's education plays paramount importance to enhance their participation in politics and economic activities (Ibid).

In order to increase women's political participation,

ensuring gender equity and equality in education is of a priority agenda (Mulwa, 1999). Practical evidences have also proved this idea to be true. For instance, the study conducted to see the relationship between women's empowerment and other variables showed that four variables (education, family farm size, area under aquaculture and family annual income) had significant positive relationships with the women's extent of empowerment. Besides, a significant relationship was found between women's education and their empowerment and involvement in decision making. This implies that education enhances women's empowerment, both in family and societal affairs. Education also increases woman's understanding and awareness of the situation in which she lives, and her cognitive and psychological realm of empowerment. This is supported by a study conducted by Ahmed, cited in Hiwot (2011), that shows education gives women a voice against social and political injustice, and that they will have more freedom when they have more education and knowledge.

The significant and positive relationship between women's level of education, degree of participation in aquaculture and their extent of empowerment implies that the empowerment status of women can increase with their increased participation in agricultural activities as a function of education. As agriculture is a relatively profitable income generating activity, women participating in it gain more control of the economic and social returns from it. This makes them become self-reliant and enhances their empowerment status within the family as well as in the society in general. Various studies have signified that the involvement in agricultural activities is highly influenced by rural women's level of education (Hiwot, 2011; Tigist, 2011).

Similarly, the multiple regression analysis revealed that only three independent variables were significant predictors of women's participation in various associations and decision making. The variables were; education, extension media contact and training exposure. The results show that 30.4% of the variation in women's participation in decision making can be accounted for the combined effect of these three independent variables, with education constituting 14.9% of variation. Education increases one's understanding of innovations and influences the process of decision making; education and training exposures are the most important factors. For instance, a study conducted to assess the impact of women's education on their participation in credit programs highlighted strong relationship between the two variables (Tigist, 2011).

A study was conducted by analyzing the 1992 national level household sample survey data collected from the female recipients of collateral-free loans of three relatively large rural development agencies in Bangladesh. The study shows that the participation in income-generating projects by poor rural women had been

associated with their level of education, increased level of contraceptive use, decreased level of fertility, elevated level of desire for no more children, and enhanced level of empowerment (Mayoux, 2001).

Similarly, few studies have focused on the impacts of women's level of education on participation in micro-credit. For example, the studies conducted by Tigist (2011); Storey (2003) and Mayoux (2001) conclude that women's level of education affects their participation in micro-credit programs.

As a result, this study examines the nature and extent of changes education could bring about in women's participation in politics and economic affairs. More specifically, the following basic questions were formulated to be answered in the course of the study.

### **Basic research questions**

What are the impacts of education on women's participation in political activities?

Is there a significant mean difference among women with varied educational backgrounds in the benefits gained as a result of participation in leadership?

Is there a significant mean difference among women with different educational backgrounds in the level of advantages they obtain from participation in membership of associations?

Is there a statistically significant mean difference among women with different educational background in their perception of their contribution to ensure good governance?

What are the impacts of education on rural women's involvement in economic activities?

Is there a statistically significant mean difference among women with different educational backgrounds in their possession of resources?

Is there a statistically significant mean difference among women with different educational backgrounds in their participation in projects and benefits secured from this participation?

Is there a statistically significant mean difference among women with different educational backgrounds in their participation in microfinance and the challenges they encounter in credit money management?

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the impacts of education on women's political and economic activities. More specifically, this study aimed at comparing women with varied educational backgrounds on participation in leadership, women's associations and good governance and the benefits they secured as a result of their participation as part of political activity and possession of resources, participation in various projects and micro-

finance and benefits obtained as a result of participation.

### **Significance of the study**

In Ethiopia, there is massive expansion at all levels of formal education. However, little or no emphasis is given to functional adult literacy for the rural people that constitute 85% of the total population. Hence, the results of this study can remind the government that sustainable development in political, social, economic and technological spheres can be ensured or the development process can proceed faster with people having some level of education and training.

### **Delimitation of the study**

Political and economic activities are so wide concepts that constitute different activities. However, it is difficult to encompass all the variables in the two areas. As a result, this study is delimited only to women's participation in leadership, women's associations and good governance and the benefits they secured as a result of their participation as part of political activity. Besides, possession of resources, participation in various projects and micro-finance and benefits obtained as a result of participation were considered as part of economic activities. The challenges women face in managing loan money was also included in this study.

### **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

#### **Population and sampling**

The population of the study includes the rural women in Amhara Region. In Amhara Region, Ethiopia, there are 10 Administrative Zones. Multi stage random sampling technique was employed to select sample rural women. Out of 10 zones, three zones were selected randomly. From each of the three zones, two Worredas were selected using similar procedures. Again, from each Worreda, two Kebeles were selected using simple random sampling technique. Finally, 50 rural women were selected from each Kebele using systematic random sampling technique. Through this procedure a total of 600 rural women were selected for the study. In addition, 12 Gender Activists were purposefully selected for interview. Ten arbitrarily selected women were also interviewed. Gender activists are women in the Kebele who are organized to protect women's rights in the area.

#### **Data collection instruments**

In order to investigate the impacts of education on rural women's political and economic participations questionnaire and interview were used as data collection instruments. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part required personal information of the participants, while part two sought to gather information about the impact of education on rural women's participation in political and economic activities. The questionnaire items are related

**Table 1.** Biography of respondents.

<b>Level of education</b>	<b>Illiterate</b>	<b>Reading and writing</b>	<b>Primary school</b>	<b>Secondary school (9-12)</b>
Number of participants	218	180	104	64
leadership participation	11.61	12.74	13.89	14.44
Membership in association	10.24	10.46	11.35	11.30
Good governance	12.57	13.00	13.81	14.03
Participation in projects	17.24	17.46	18.45	18.33
possession of resource	15.27	15.47	23.98	25.77
Credit problem	28.13	26.33	24.80	25.74
Participation in Microfinance	16.00	16,67	16.43	21.68

**Table 2.** ANOVA: Level of education on leadership participation.

<b>Dependent variables</b>	<b>Df</b>			<b>Sum of square</b>			<b>Mean square</b>		<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>
	<b>bm</b>	<b>wm</b>	<b>tot</b>	<b>bm</b>	<b>wm</b>	<b>Tot</b>	<b>Bm</b>	<b>Wm</b>		
Leadership participation	3	563	566	2391.461	17907.69	20299.15	797.05	31.80	25.07	.000

to women's leadership participation (7), membership in various women's associations (5), participation in good governance (8), microfinance, projects (5), and possession of resources (4) and benefits from participation (9). The questionnaire was developed by the researcher and some procedures were followed to assure validity and reliability. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was given to one Associate Professor in English Language Department and another Associate Professor in Educational Psychology Department for validity test (language and item construction check up). The reliability of the items was examined using Chronbach alpha and found to be 0.79 which is acceptable. For illiterate women, women with reading and writing ability and primary school dropouts, the questionnaire was administered by trained M.A. students in the form of structured interview. However, rural women with secondary school background were made to fill the questionnaire by themselves. The second instrument was interview. Interview was employed to gather data from gender activists.

#### Data analysis techniques

To analyze the data obtained through the questionnaire, One Way ANOVA was employed. ANOVA was used to compare the means of rural women's (with varied educational backgrounds, such as, illiterate, reading and writing, primary school completes and secondary school completes) participation in political and economic activities and the benefits they secured as a result of their participation. The results of the interview were used to substantiate the results of the questionnaire. Out of 600 questionnaires, 34 of them were not properly filled and as a result, discarded from the analysis.

## RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Table 1 illustrates that 218 participants are rural women who did not get any access to education. One hundred eighty of them are those who can read and write through

adult literacy education. The remaining 104 and 64 are primary school and secondary school dropped outs respectively. The same table illustrates that except in few cases (credit problem and participation in microfinance), the mean of rural women in political and economic participation linearly varies in favor of rural women with higher educational status. To check whether these differences are statistically different Eight ANOVAs were employed.

Table 2 portrays that the mean differences among women with different educational backgrounds signify that such differences are statistically significant in their benefit from participation in leadership. That is, women benefit from participation in leadership when they have relatively higher educational background. A further look at the data portrays that participation in leadership has increased women's decision making capacity.

One Way ANOVA is run to determine if there are statistically significant differences among the means of women with different educational backgrounds in their level of advantages they obtained from participation in membership. The summary of the results of ANOVA is presented in Table 3. The results depict that women with relatively higher educational backgrounds have claimed that they have benefited from membership in various associations.

The interview result with one secondary school complete woman ascertained that participation in leadership and various committees has resulted to promote women's acceptance in the family and in the community. It also increased women's decision making role on child rearing practice, expenditure, and selling and purchasing of goods. Generally, rural women have indicated that when they are organized in women's associations, they:

**Table 3.** ANOVA: Level of education on membership in association.

Dependent variables	df			Sum of square			Mean square		F	Sig
	bm	wm	tot	bm	wm	Tot	Bm	Wm		
Membership in association	3	563	566	2391.46	24166.80	27044.55	797.05	42.92	18.57	.000

**Table 4.** ANOVA: Level of education on good governance.

Dependent variables	Df			Sum of square			Mean square		F	Sig
	bm	wm	tot	bm	wm	Tot	Bm	Wm		
Good governance	3	563	566	1165.108	6404.618	7569.726	388.36	11.37	34.13	.000

**Table 5.** ANOVA: Level of education on participation in projects.

Dependent variables	Df			Sum of square			Mean square		F	Sig
	bm	Wm	tot	bm	wm	Tot	bm	Wm		
Participation in projects	3	563	566	106.608	1658.371	1764.979	35.53	2.94	12.08	.000

1. were informed and even convinced to take loans,
2. have actively participated and engaged in making and weaving loom and *ikub* [an association in which women contribute money weekly or monthly which will be given to one of them until it reaches all of them in turns],
3. have participated in forestation activities.
4. were initiated to become beneficiaries from extension [agriculture, health] services, and
5. were organized so that they could participate in income generating activities.

Three ANOVAs were run to see the mean differences of rural women's political participation as a result of their educational backgrounds. To see whether there exists statistically significant mean differences among women with different educational background in their perception of contribution to ensure good governance, ANOVA is carried out. As can be seen from Table 4, the results depict that the mean differences are considerably significant at  $P < .001$ . That is, women with elementary and secondary educational background have scored greater mean scores. That is, women with better educational backgrounds have perceived that they have contributed to ensure good governance in the society.

In view with the Gender Activists has reported that rural women have organized to influence the local government, health and agricultural extension workers and the police to immediately respond to their needs in the locality. They said that the local government is sensitive to solve problems females encounter with regard to family life, violation of their rights and the rights of children. In line with this, the interviewed women have

also indicated that women's association and gender activists are creating pressure on local government to fight rape and abduction and early marriage.

In Tables 5-8, ANOVA was carried out on sub categories of economic participation. The results have indicated that in all cases significant mean differences were observed in favor of rural women with primary and secondary school experiences. The results in each category are similar with the total mean differences. To substantiate the quantitative results, the results of the interview were analyzed.

The results in Table 5 show that women with relatively higher education status have achieved greater mean score in items regarding their participation in various projects and benefits they secured from participation. The difference was found to be significant. Significant mean difference was obtained across education level for women's participation in various self-initiated projects and projects where by the initiatives are taken by other organizations. Women with primary and secondary education level have indicated that they have participated in self-initiated projects such as, local textile, tea cafes, horticulture and Non government organizations initiated projects such as, Water Conservation, Soil Conservation and Other Natural Resource Conservation compared to illiterate women.

Further, item by item analysis of the data has revealed that women with primary and secondary education have indicated that their annual income has increased, changed their family life style and traditional practices, and improved family health as a result of participation in various projects more than those with low level of



**Table 6.** ANOVA: Level of education on possession of resources.

Dependent variables	Df			Sum of square			Mean square		F	Sig
	bm	Wm	tot	bm	wm	Tot	bm	Wm		
possession of resource	3	563	566	75.051	945.313	1020.364	25.01	1.679	4.88	.000

**Table 7.** ANOVA: Level of education on credit problems.

Dependent variables	Df			Sum of square			Mean square		F	Sig
	bm	Wm	tot	bm	Wm	Tot	bm	Wm		
Credit problem	3	563	566	17.919	387.764	405.684	5.97	.689	9.66	.000

**Table 8.** ANOVA: level of education on participation in microfinance.

Dependent variables	Df			Sum of square			Mean square		F	Sig
	bm	Wm	tot	bm	wm	Tot	bm	Wm		
Participation in Microfinance	3	563	566	174.108	3843.717	4017.825	58.03	6.827	8.5	

education. The informal discussion made with one husband whose wife has completed primary education has supported this result. He said "The health of the children, cleanness of our house and cloth has been drastically changed due to my wife. She has totally changed our life"

The Gender Activists portrayed that women have highly benefited from participating in various projects. The responses of Gender Activists with regard to the impacts of women's participation in various projects are summarized as follows.

1. They participate in assemblies,
2. They have improved their living by breeding cattle for the loans they receive,
3. They are aware of their and others' rights,
4. They have mutual understanding and support
5. They educate their children, and
6. They have become entrepreneurs.

The analysis of one way ANOVA has revealed that the level of education affects women's ownership of land, domestic animals, house hold utensils, money and plants (Table 6).

The mean comparison of women across the level of education has indicated that women with primary and secondary education have obtained lower mean score with regard to problems they encountered as a result of no participation while husbands solicited credit than they did to those who are illiterate.

To measure the difference of mean scores between women who have participated while their husbands take

credit and those who have not participated on the nature and extent of problems they encountered and in managing the money obtained through credit, those who have participated have reported that they have encountered fewer problems compared to those who have not. The One Way ANOVA in Table 7 has revealed that the difference was statistically significant.

An interview with a primary school complete rural woman who had participated in taking the credit together with her husband has reported "We work hard, save the money, and discuss on expenditure." While an illiterate rural woman who had not participated stated "I heard that my husband has received credit from my neighbors and I do not know how he spends it."

The questionnaire that constitutes items regarding women's participation in microfinance or credit associations, returning the loan money and making profits out of the loan obtained was given to women with varied educational backgrounds. One Way ANOVA was carried out to compare the means. The results in Table 8 portrayed that women with primary and secondary education have significantly exceeded illiterate women in microfinance participation, returning the loan and making profits. Unreported Post-hoc analysis has clearly identified the differences. That is, in the majority of the variables, significant mean differences were obtained between rural women with primary and secondary school experiences and illiterate women. However, no difference was observed between illiterate women and women who only are able to read and write and between women with primary and secondary school experience and literate women.

This implies that the impact of education is higher as the level increases.

The interview result has pointed out that those who have secured loan and worked privately have benefited a lot. These women were able to pay for their children's education, purchase food stuffs in groups for reduced price and some of them, in addition to these, could buy sheep and cattle. They have also begun to save money in banks. Above all, they are organized to stand against anything that violates their freedom.

With regard to the changes observed in women's life as a result of taking credits, an interviewed woman said

"Yes, there is change. For instance, they wear clean clothes; they satisfy their children's needs and interests; and some of them assert that they take loans, buy chicken and sheep for the money and earn profits from selling them. They witnessed that they pay their loans and buy other chicken and sheep for the money they earned as profits. Others have bought Televisions."

They said that women's engagement in business and the women-centered safety-net program have brought the change. These changes are attributed to their economic independence from men. Especially the educated women are ready to accept every innovation forwarded from the government compared to the illiterate ones.

Sixty seven percent of the target Kebele Gender Activists have asserted that women were meeting weekly while making weaving loom and at *Ikub* [an association in which members contribute money weekly or monthly so that they can take it by lots until everyone of the members receive their money at last], share experiences and enhance their income. They help each other and also loan each other and together from other organizations to do various activities.

The interview made with rural women who were attending adult literacy program revealed that after they joined the program they started to save money and their labor by avoiding traditional practices such as early marriage and investing on religious festivals, started to discuss family planning, voluntary HIV test and about their children's fate with their husbands.

## DISCUSSION

This study investigates the changes that are observed in rural women as a result of their participation in political and economic activities as a function of education. The results of One Way ANOVA portrayed that rural women's level of education has positively affected their participation in leadership, membership of various women's associations and participation in ensuring good governance and benefits as a result of such participation. The interview results have supported the quantitative results.

That is, the Gender Activists have witnessed that changes are observed in women's courage to speak in public, expression of their views freely, and demand for their rights as their education level increases. The Gender Activists have further reported that membership in women's associations has encouraged women's participation in political decisions starting from participation in election up to becoming the member of the ruling party. Rural women expressed that they got financial advantages by virtue of being the member of women's associations and ruling party.

When women were asked to explain any advantages they have secured as a result of women's associations, they reported that they create influence on credit associations to increase women's participation in credit services, employ different social and legal mechanisms to protect women's rights and promote women's acceptance at home and in the community. It also increased women's decision making roles in child rearing practices, family expenditure, and selling and purchasing of goods. However, the majority of women have pointed out that those women with some level of education are by far better in coping up with the innovations introduced by the government and NGOs. The findings of this study ascertain a study conducted by Ahmed who concluded that education gives women 'a voice' against social and political injustice, and that they will have more freedom when they have more education and knowledge. In view of this, Tigist (2011) stated that education increase one's understanding of innovations and influences the process of decision making,

As three One Way ANOVAs have disclosed; rural women's level of education significantly influenced their participation in microfinance, projects, possession of resources and management of credit. Besides, education has significantly determined rural women's benefits as a result of their participation in microfinance and various projects. Both the quantitative and qualitative results have revealed that rural women with relatively better level of education have benefited more in participating in microfinance and self initiated and NGO sponsored projects. This result is in accord with the already established facts that education helps women to wisely and properly manage the money obtained from credit institutions, returning the money back and making profits out of the credit (Tigist, 2011).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the findings of this study, it possible to conclude that as rural women's level of education increases, their involvement in political and economic activities and the possible advantages secured from their participation increase. That is, rural women with primary and secondary school educational experience have claimed significantly

higher participation in political and economic affairs and highly benefited from their participation compared to the illiterate rural women. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Ethiopian government has to introduce and expand integrated and functional adult literacy in the rural areas.

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## Appendix

Dependent variables	Df			Sum of square			Mean square		F	Sig
	bm	Wm	tot	Bm	wm	Tot	bm	Wm		
possession of resource	3	563	566	75.051	945.313	1020.364	25.01	1.679	4.88	.000

Dependent variables	Df			Sum of square			Mean square		F	Sig
	bm	Wm	tot	Bm	wm	Tot	bm	Wm		
Credit problem	3	563	566	17.919	387.764	405.684	5.97	.689	9.66	.000

Dependent variables	Df			Sum of square			Mean square		F	Sig
	bm	Wm	tot	Bm	wm	Tot	bm	Wm		
Participation in Microfinance	3	563	566	174.108	3843.717	4017.825	58.03	6.827	8.5	

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