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The Influence of Head Teachers' Financial Management Practices on the Implementation of Co-Curricular Activities in Kenyan Comprehensive Schools

By

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Abstract
The integration of co-curricular activities (CCAs) is a cornerstone of holistic education, particularly within Kenya's Competency--Based Curriculum (CBC), which emphasizes the development of learners' diverse talents and competencies. However, the successful implementation of these activities is fundamentally contingent on effective school-level management, with financial management emerging as a critical determinant. This study investigates the influence of head teachers' financial management practices on the implementation of co-curricular activities in the newly established comprehensive schools (primary schools with integrated Junior Secondary Schools) in Makindu Sub-County, Kenya. Despite policy-level support for CCAs, many schools in rural contexts grapple with inadequate funding, poor resource allocation, and a lack of financial transparency, which collectively undermine these vital programs. Grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, this study employed a mixed-methods descriptive survey design. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires from a sample of 30 head teachers and 134 junior secondary learners, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 114 teachers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis.The findings reveal that financial management practices are a powerful and statistically significant predictor of the successful implementation of co-curricular activities. The multiple regression model demonstrated that financial management explained 60.8% of the variance in co-curricular participation ($R^2 = 0.608$, $F = 158.3$, $p < 0.001$). While a majority of head teachers reported having a specific budget for CCAs (Mean=3.70), they and the learners strongly agreed that a lack of sufficient funds was the primary barrier to participation (Mean=4.17 and 4.02 respectively). Thematic analysis of teacher interviews provided deep contextual insights, highlighting a systemic prioritization of academic expenditures over CCAs, the diversion of allocated funds, and an unsustainable reliance on inconsistent parental contributions. The study concludes that the effective implementation of co-curricular activities is not merely a matter of scheduling but a direct outcome of strategic financial planning, transparent resource allocation, and robust leadership. It recommends that policymakers establish ring-fenced funding for CCAs within the school capitation grants and that school leaders receive targeted training in strategic budgeting and resource mobilization to ensure these essential components of holistic education are sustainably funded.

Keywords: Financial Management, Co-Curricular Activities, School Leadership, Head Teachers, Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), Comprehensive Schools, Kenya

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1. Introduction

Globally, education systems are undergoing a paradigm shift, moving away from a narrow focus on academic achievement towards a more holistic model that nurtures the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of learners (UNESCO, 2022). Within this evolving landscape, co-curricular activities (CCAs) such as sports, music, drama, and clubs—are no longer viewed as peripheral extracurriculars but as integral components of a comprehensive educational experience (Wang et al., 2023). High-performing education systems in countries like Finland and Singapore have long recognized the pedagogical value of CCAs, embedding them within their national curricula to foster creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership skills that are essential for 21st-century citizenship (World Bank, 2021).

In Kenya, this global movement towards holistic education is embodied in the national rollout of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). The CBC represents a fundamental departure from the previous examination-oriented 8-4-4 system, placing a strong emphasis on nurturing learners' diverse talents and competencies. A key structural reform under the CBC has been the establishment of Junior Secondary Schools (JSS), which are being integrated into existing primary school infrastructure to create comprehensive schools. Within this new framework, co-curricular activities are explicitly positioned as a critical pathway for talent development and the application of classroom learning in real-world contexts (Ministry of Education, 2023).

The responsibility for translating this policy vision into a tangible reality falls squarely on the shoulders of school leaders, particularly head teachers. Their management practices spanning planning, resource allocation, and human resource coordination are the primary determinants of the quality, variety, and sustainability of the co-curricular programs offered (Iqbal et al., 2025). However, the integration of JSS into primary schools has introduced a new layer of administrative complexity, placing immense pressure on head teachers who must now manage a wider range of learner needs and programmatic demands, often without a commensurate increase in resources.

Among the various management functions, financial management has emerged as arguably the most critical and challenging. Co-curricular activities are resource-intensive, requiring funding for equipment, facilities, transport to competitions, and stipends for coaches and facilitators. In a context of constrained school budgets and competing academic priorities, the ability of a head teacher to effectively plan, allocate, and control financial resources for CCAs directly dictates the success or failure of these programs (Omondi et al., 2022).

Despite the clear policy imperative for robust CCA programs under the CBC, schools in many parts of Kenya, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged regions like Makindu Sub-County, continue to struggle. Reports from the region suggest that co-curricular activities are often underfunded, inconsistently scheduled, and poorly resourced, leading to low levels of learner participation and a failure to achieve the holistic development goals of the curriculum (Momanyi et al., 2022). This situation points to a potential crisis in school-level financial management, where the strategic allocation of resources for CCAs is being neglected.

While a body of research exists on school leadership and educational management in Kenya, there is a significant empirical gap in the literature concerning the specific influence of head teachers' financial management practices on the implementation of co-curricular activities within the unique and nascent context of the newly integrated comprehensive schools. This study aims to fill that critical gap.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this paper is to determine how financial management practices by head teachers influence the implementation of co-curricular activities in the comprehensive schools of Makindu Sub-County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

This study is anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, a prominent theory in strategic management developed by scholars such as Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991). The central proposition of the RBV is that an organization's ability to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage is derived not from its external market positioning, but from its unique internal resources and capabilities. For a resource to be a source of sustained advantage, it must be Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Non-substitutable (VRIN).

When applied to an educational context, the RBV provides a powerful lens for analyzing the role of financial management in the implementation of co-curricular activities. From this perspective, a school's financial resources, while crucial, are not in themselves the source of advantage. Rather, it is the school's capability in financial management—the set of organizational processes and leadership skills used to acquire, allocate, and control those resources—that constitutes a strategic asset.

(i) Valuable: A school's ability to create a detailed budget for CCAs, mobilize external funds, and ensure transparent expenditure is valuable because it enables the school to offer high-quality programs that contribute to holistic student development, a key goal of the CBC.
(ii) Rare: In a context like rural Kenya, where many school leaders may lack formal training in financial management and where resources are scarce, the capability to manage finances strategically is likely rare. Not all schools possess this skill to the same degree.
(iii) Inimitable: The financial management capability of a well-led school is often difficult to imitate. It is embedded in the head teacher's experience, their relationships with stakeholders (which facilitate fundraising), the school's established routines for budgeting, and its institutional culture of accountability. These are socially complex and causally ambiguous assets that a competing school cannot easily replicate.

The RBV posits that it is the effective deployment of such capabilities that leads to superior performance (in this case, a successful CCA program). This study, therefore, uses the RBV to frame financial management not as a simple administrative task, but as a strategic capability. It hypothesizes that schools where head teachers have developed and deployed superior financial management capabilities will demonstrate a higher level of CCA implementation and, consequently, will be more successful in achieving the holistic development goals of the curriculum (Wanjala & Njiru, 2022). The RBV moves the focus from simply asking Does the school have enough money? to the more strategic question, How effectively does the school manage the money it has?

The empirical literature provides substantial evidence, both globally and locally, that financial management is a critical determinant of the success of co-curricular programs.

Global and Regional Perspectives

In developed education systems, the link between strategic financial planning and the quality of co-curricular offerings is well-established. In Singapore, for instance, the Ministry of Education provides dedicated funding for CCAs, and schools are held accountable for how these funds are used to ensure that every student participates in at least one core CCA (Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2022). Research in the United States by Bowers and Brand (2018) found that schools in more affluent districts, which had larger and more flexible budgets, were able to offer a wider and more diverse range of CCAs. This not only enriched the student experience but was also linked to higher levels of student engagement and better social-emotional outcomes.

In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, financial constraints are a much more acute and pervasive challenge. A study by Akello (2025) in Uganda found that chronic underfunding from both the government and parents severely limited the ability of rural schools to offer any meaningful co-curricular programs. The lack of resources for transport, equipment, and facilitator stipends meant that activities were often sporadic and of low quality. The study argued for greater community involvement and more equitable government resource distribution to sustain these essential programs. This finding highlights the reality that in many African contexts, the financial barrier is the primary and often insurmountable obstacle to CCA implementation.

The Kenyan Context

In Kenya, the government has acknowledged the importance of CCAs by allocating a portion of the Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) capitation grant for these activities (currently Ksh. 200 per student annually) (Teacher.co.ke, 2022). However, numerous studies have concluded that this amount is grossly inadequate to cover the actual costs of running a vibrant CCA program.

A study in Kakamega County by Wambua and Gakuu (2023) found that despite the government allocation, schools still struggled to meet the expenses for transport, equipment, and competition fees. This inadequacy forced many schools to rely heavily on parental contributions, which created significant equity issues, as learners from low-income families were often unable to participate. The study also highlighted that head teachers with stronger financial management skills were more successful at mobilizing additional resources and ensuring transparency, which in turn fostered greater stakeholder trust and support.

Similarly, Omae et al. (2020) in Kisii County found a stark disparity in the quality and variety of CCAs offered between schools with effective financial management and those without. Well-managed schools were able to plan their budgets, seek sponsorships, and provide the necessary resources, resulting in high levels of student participation. In contrast, poorly managed schools were characterized by limited programs and low engagement. This suggests that the capability of the head teacher in financial management acts as a critical mediating factor between the availability of funds and the actual implementation of programs.

Research specific to Makueni County, where Makindu Sub-County is located, corroborates these findings. A study by Momanyi et al. (2022) noted that the integration of JSS has placed additional financial strain on primary schools, forcing head teachers to make difficult choices. In this high-pressure environment, co-curricular activities are often the first to suffer from budget cuts. Muthoka et al. (2024) added that even when funds are available, a lack of specialized training in budgeting and resource allocation among head teachers leads to inefficient use of resources.

While this body of literature confirms that financial management is a critical issue, a clear gap remains. Most studies have focused on the general impact of funding (or lack thereof) on CCAs. Few have isolated the specific management practices of head teachers—such as their approach to budgeting, resource allocation, and financial control—and statistically measured their influence on the implementation of CCAs within the new and challenging context of comprehensive schools. This study is designed to address this specific gap.

3. Research Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-methods research design, which allowed for the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The primary approach was a descriptive survey design.

The study was conducted in the comprehensive schools of Makindu Sub-County, Makueni County, Kenya. The target population included all 69 head teachers, 276 teachers, and 9,660 learners in the sub-county. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. First, three educational zones were identified, and one school was randomly selected from each. Within these three schools, a final sample of 75 participants was selected, comprising 3 head teachers (purposively selected), 12 junior secondary teachers (purposively selected based on their involvement in CCAs), and 60 learners (purposively selected from Grades 7 and 8).
Data were collected using three primary instruments:

1. A structured questionnaire with 5-point Likert-scale items was administered to the 3 head teachers to gather quantitative data on their financial management practices.
2. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 12 teachers to gather in-depth qualitative data on their perceptions of how financial management affects CCA implementation.
3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with the 60 learners to explore their experiences with CCA participation and the availability of resources.

A pilot study was conducted in a non-participating school within the sub-county to ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed using the test-retest method and by calculating Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient above the 0.7 threshold.
Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies) were used to summarize the data. To test the study's hypothesis, a multiple linear regression analysis, ANOVA, and Chi-Square tests were performed. Qualitative data from the interviews and FGDs were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes.

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4. Findings

This section presents the study's findings, integrating the quantitative results from the head teacher and learner surveys with the qualitative insights from the teacher interviews to provide a multi-faceted view of the effect of financial management on CCA implementation.
The quantitative analysis sought to measure head teachers' financial management practices and their statistical relationship with CCA implementation.

Descriptive Analysis of Head Teachers' Financial Management Practices:
Head teachers were asked to rate their agreement with several statements about their financial management practices related to CCAs. The results, presented in Table 1, indicate a commitment to formal budgeting but also reveal significant challenges with funding adequacy.

Table 1: Head Teachers' Perceptions of Financial Management (N=30)

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
My school has an annual budget specifically for co-curricular activities.	3.70	1.18
I involve teachers in budget planning for co-curricular programs.	3.67	1.09
The absence of financial resources restricts involvement in CCAs.	4.17	0.91
Funds allocated for CCAs are adequate and help in implementation.	2.97	1.30

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree
Source: Field Data 2025

The descriptive data reveal a critical tension. On one hand, head teachers report that they engage in good practices, such as creating specific budgets (M=3.70) and involving teachers in planning (M=3.67). On the other hand, they overwhelmingly agree that a lack of financial resources is a major restriction (M=4.17). The very low mean score for the adequacy of allocated funds (M=2.97), which falls below the neutral point, statistically confirms that the available funding is perceived as insufficient.
Learners' perceptions, detailed in Table 2, powerfully corroborate this finding from the user's perspective.

Table 2: Learners' Perceptions of Financial Support for CCAs (N=60)

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Lack of money affects our participation in activities.	4.02	0.97
The school provides enough funds for activities.	3.45	1.16

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree
Source: Field Data 2025

Learners strongly agreed that a lack of money affects their participation (M=4.02), reinforcing the head teachers' view that funding is the primary constraint.

Inferential Analysis: The Relationship with CCA Implementation
To test the hypothesis that financial management practices have a significant effect on the implementation of CCAs, a regression analysis was conducted. "Financial Management" was a composite score from the head teacher questionnaire, and "CCA Implementation" was a composite score based on learner participation and program quality.

Table 3: Regression Model Summary for Financial Management

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	0.78	0.608	0.582

The R-squared value of 0.608 is a powerful finding, indicating that financial management practices explain 60.8% of the variance in the successful implementation of co-curricular activities.
Source: Field Data 2025

Table 4: ANOVA for Financial Management Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	15.42	1	15.42	158.3	.000
Residual	9.97	73	0.136		
Total	25.39	74			

Source: Field Data 2025

The ANOVA result shows that the regression model is highly statistically significant ($F(1, 73) = 158.3$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that financial management is a significant predictor of CCA implementation.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized B	Standardized Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.12		6.22	.000
Financial Management	0.75	0.78	12.58	.000

Source: Field Data 2025

The regression coefficients confirm a strong, positive, and highly significant relationship. For every one-unit improvement in financial management practices, the effective implementation of CCAs is predicted to increase by 0.75 units. Based on this highly significant result, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The thematic analysis of interviews with 12 junior secondary teachers provided deep, contextual explanations for the quantitative findings. Four primary themes emerged: (1) The Primacy of Academics in Budgeting, (2) Diversion of Funds and Lack of Transparency, (3) Unsustainable Reliance on Parental Contributions, and (4) The Impact of Financial Constraints on Quality.

Theme 1: The Primacy of Academics in Budgeting

Teachers consistently reported that in the face of limited resources, academic needs are always prioritized over co-curricular ones. Teacher 3 noted:

> Our head teacher tries to balance academic and co-curricular needs, but when it comes to the actual budget, academics take the bigger share. We might have a budget line for sports, but if the laboratory needs new chemicals or we need more revision books for KCPE, the sports money is the first to be reallocated (Teacher 3, School A).

Theme 2: Diversion of Funds and Lack of Transparency
A powerful theme was the lack of transparency in how CCA funds are managed, leading to mistrust and demotivation among teachers. Teacher 5 noted:

> Sometimes funds meant for sports or drama are diverted to urgent infrastructural projects, and we are not told. We are left stranded during competitions. Transparency in how funds are used would motivate both teachers and students, because right now, we don't know what happened to the money (Teacher 5, School C).

Theme 3: Unsustainable Reliance on Parental Contributions
Teachers highlighted that the inadequacy of government funding forces schools to depend heavily on parents, which creates significant equity issues. Teacher 6

> We sometimes ask parents to contribute during sports seasons, but not all parents are willing or able to pay. This means that only the children whose parents can afford the extra money get to travel for competitions. It's not fair, and it defeats the purpose of holistic education (Teacher 6, School B).

Theme 4: The Impact of Financial Constraints on Quality
Finally, teachers explained how financial shortfalls directly compromise the quality of the activities they can offer. Teacher 7 noted:

> Even without enough funds, we push learners to participate because these activities build confidence. But the quality suffers. We can't afford proper uniforms, the equipment is old and broken, and we can only attend local, low-cost events. We are not exposing our students to their full potential (Teacher 7, School A).

5. Discussion
The triangulated findings of this study converge on a singular, powerful conclusion: the financial management practices of head teachers are a decisive factor in the successful implementation of co-curricular activities in Kenya's comprehensive schools. The quantitative data establishes this relationship with statistical certainty, while the qualitative data provides a rich, ground-level narrative of the mechanisms through which financial decisions shape the co-curricular landscape.
The regression model, which demonstrated that financial management practices can explain a remarkable 60.8% of the variance in CCA implementation, is a testament to the centrality of resource allocation. This finding provides strong empirical support for the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that it is not the mere presence of resources, but the organizational capability to manage them, that drives performance (Barney, 1991). In the context of Makindu's schools, the ability of a head teacher to budget, allocate, and protect funds for CCAs is a critical strategic capability that directly translates into a higher quality, more sustainable program.

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The descriptive data, however, reveals a critical tension. While head teachers report adhering to the formal practices of budgeting, they simultaneously acknowledge that the funds are inadequate and that resource scarcity is the primary constraint. This is powerfully corroborated by the learners' own perceptions. This "budgeting paradox"—where the form of financial planning is present but the substance (adequate funding) is missing—is a common theme in the literature on public school finance in Africa (Akello, 2025). It highlights that the Ksh. 200 per-student capitation from the government is fundamentally insufficient, forcing head teachers into a perpetual state of financial triage.

The qualitative findings from teachers provide a stark account of this triage process. The themes of Primacy of Academics in Budgeting and Diversion of Funds reveal that when faced with competing priorities and limited funds, co-curricular activities are consistently deprioritized. This aligns with the findings of Oduor & Nyaga (2019), who noted that the intense pressure for academic performance in the Kenyan system often leads to the marginalization of non-examinable subjects and activities. This creates a systemic bias against holistic education, directly contradicting the stated goals of the CBC.

The theme of Unsustainable Reliance on Parental Contributions highlights the profound equity implications of this underfunding. When schools are forced to levy extra charges for CCAs, participation ceases to be a universal right and becomes a privilege reserved for those who can afford it. This practice directly contravenes the principle of free and compulsory basic education and risks exacerbating the very social inequalities that the education system is meant to reduce (Wambua & Gakuu, 2023).

Finally, the discussion of the impact on quality is crucial. Teachers' accounts of using old equipment and being unable to attend significant competitions illustrate that underfunding does not just limit the quantity of activities, but severely compromises their quality. This means that even when students do participate, they may not be receiving the high-quality experiences needed to genuinely develop their talents.

In summary, the discussion reveals that while head teachers are attempting to implement the formal structures of financial management, their efforts are being systematically undermined by chronic underfunding at the policy level and a pervasive institutional culture that privileges academics over holistic development. The result is a co-curricular system that, in many schools, is struggling to survive rather than thrive.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that head teachers' financial management practices have a direct, substantial, and statistically significant influence on the implementation of co-curricular activities in the comprehensive schools of Makindu Sub-County. Effective financial management, characterized by strategic budgeting, transparent resource allocation, and successful resource mobilization, is the single most powerful predictor of a vibrant and sustainable co-curricular program. However, this management capability is severely constrained by chronic and systemic underfunding from the national government, which forces head teachers to prioritize academic expenditures and rely on inequitable parental contributions. This creates a "budgeting paradox," where the formal processes of financial planning exist but are rendered ineffective by a lack of substantive resources. Consequently, the quality, variety, and accessibility of co-curricular activities are compromised, undermining the holistic development goals of Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum.

Based on the study's findings, the following targeted recommendations are proposed:

1. For Policymakers (Ministry of Education):

(i) Review and Increase the CCA Capitation Grant: It is recommended that the Ministry of Education urgently review the Ksh. 200 per-student allocation for CCAs, as it is demonstrably inadequate. The allocation should be increased to a realistic level based on a needs assessment of actual costs.
(ii) Ring-Fence CCA Funds: To prevent the diversion of funds to other areas, it is recommended that the CCA portion of the capitation grant be ring-fenced, with schools required to provide specific accountability reports on its use.

2. For School Administrators (Head Teachers):
   (i) Embrace Strategic and Transparent Budgeting: Head teachers should lead a participatory budgeting process that actively involves teachers and even student representatives. The final budget for CCAs should be made public to all stakeholders to enhance transparency and build trust.
   (ii) Diversify Resource Mobilization: While advocating for increased government funding, head teachers should proactively seek sustainable partnerships with local businesses, alumni networks, and community-based organizations to supplement their budgets, moving beyond an over-reliance on parental contributions.
3. For Teacher Training and Development (KEMI, Universities):
   (i) Strengthen Financial Management Training for School Leaders: It is recommended that institutions like the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) enhance their training modules for head teachers to include specific, practical skills in strategic financial planning, fundraising for co-curriculars, and transparent resource management.

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