

PURSUIT OF HARMONY BETWEEN CIRCUMCISION RITES AND SCHOOLING IN BUNGOMA COUNTY

KEY MESSAGES

1. Education is a key human development tool, which provides learners with the capabilities required to become economically productive. Investment in education has great potential in contributing to poverty reduction (World Bank, 2012).
2. The Constitution of Kenya recognizes culture as the foundation of the nation and as the cumulative civilization of the Kenyan people and nation (Kenya 2013).
3. Young boys' circumcision which usually takes place every even year and between the school terms is one of the main cultural ceremonies in Bungoma. The practice tends to disrupt schooling and places heavy economic burden on families and community in terms of funding the celebrations (Achoka et al., 2013).
4. Devising a way of celebrating culture as well as promoting education will harness benefits from both.



What should be done?

Since circumcision is a private good, policy makers of the county government of Bungoma can mainly be advisors and should consider:

1. Sensitizing Bungoma residents to harmoniously participate in circumcision rites and schooling for amelioration of the benefits and;
2. Provide advisory and platforms for parents and other stakeholders who wish to harmonize circumcision rites and schooling. Parents and other stakeholders should consider
3. Setting aside one week christened cultural week outside school time during which circumcision ceremonies should take place and;
4. Centralizing circumcision ceremonies at village or community level for all initiates to ensure harmony and reducing on expenses. Schools should consider:
5. Coordination of timing of circumcision ceremonies to avoid overlap into schooling time and regulate the initiates teachings to be in harmony with schooling in order to realize the full benefit of culture and the teachings thereof.

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Current Views of Bungoma Residents

Benefits of Schooling

Modern schooling ensures that young boys and girls learn among other things how to be:

- innovative and creative;
- responsible;
- inquisitive;
- disciplined;
- morally upright;
- time-conscious,
- respectful for self and others;
- adaptive; and
- flexible.

Benefits from circumcision rites

Circumcision rites:

- harden boys and trains them to be brave;
- teach pertinent values, norms, virtues and morals of the society;
- bring the community together which strengthens bonding;
- prepare initiates for marriage; and
- parenthood responsibilities.

Conflicting areas between circumcision rites and schooling

Majority of respondents (69.6%) agreed that traditional circumcision is expensive, it therefore competes for limited financial resources available to Bungoma residents with schooling.

Both compete for limited time of the young boys involved in schooling and circumcision rites. Respondents noted that participating in the traditional circumcision practice, the boys spend almost one month dancing with the bells while inviting relatives to the event. Practicing on how to use the bells starts as early as June, wasting precious time that would otherwise be usefully channeled to their education.

Both compete in shaping the focus of the boys involved, schooling focuses on education while circumcision rites focus on community living and family life.

Traditional circumcision teachings and experiences were noted to encourage drugs use and abuse and increase in sexual activities among boys and girls which in turn reduce their focus on schooling and education.

What is the Problem?

There is a conflict between schooling and circumcision rites. This conflict has been there since the introduction of formal schooling.

There is need to resolve the conflict since interference with schooling denies individuals, family and the country future educated workforce. On the other hand interfering with traditional circumcision denies the community of the benefits of their culture.

There is no clear consensus among residents on how to resolve the conflict so as to take advantage of benefits from both.

Schooling Status in Bungoma

