

# Contribution of Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth to the Development of Higher Education in Nyanza Region of Kenya, 1985-2021

Kamba Otsieno Reuben<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Barasa Samson Omachar<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Margaret Kosgey Kamara<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Education, University of Eldoret Box 1125-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

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\*Corresponding author: Kamba Otsieno Reuben

School of Education, University of Eldoret Box 1125-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

## Abstract

**Purpose:** The paper describes the contribution of Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth to the development of higher education in the Nyanza Region of Kenya. It also dealt with the nature of the Nyanza region before the development of Uzima University. **Methodology:** Being a historical study, the historical method of inquiry was used to enable a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Primary sources of data accessed included oral testimonies of actual participants' archival documents like personal materials and institutional information of written notes, photographs, minutes of meetings before the establishment of the institution, and publications. Secondary sources included books, journals, published and unpublished. The oral interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using qualitative methods. **Results:** The study findings demonstrated that Archbishop Okoth as an individual has contributed greatly not only to education but also to the medical sector in the Nyanza Region and Kenya. In addition, the study reveals that the Archdiocese of Kisumu together with the people of Nyanza region had an impact on the establishment of the institution and development. It can be concluded that Archbishop Zacchaeus played a vital role in the growth and development of higher education in Nyanza Region through the establishment of Uzima University. The institution has contributed a lot not only to the people of the Nyanza region but to Kenya at large. The impact has been felt a lot by the people of Kisumu and the Archdiocese of Kisumu, producing qualified doctors and nurses.

**Keywords:** Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth, higher education, Archdiocese of Kisumu.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The industrial revolution ushered in the era of discoveries. Europeans' industries started to struggle over the scarcity of raw materials. It was due to inventions and discoveries of items like maps, compasses, and ships that enabled the Europeans to flee to the other continents looking for surplus for their companies at the moment were running out of raw materials due to competition. The need for raw materials, labor, and a market for finished goods led to the invasion of Europeans in Africa, (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012). The arrival of Christian missionaries was first witnessed in the 1840's missionary named Dr. Ludwig Kraft arrived on the East African coast and later was joined by Johannes Rebman in 1846, Muturi, S. (2000). They moved from Mombasa to Rabai mpia where they set up a rehabilitation school to help freed slaves who at the moment were in the hands of harsh Muslims, Merimung, A. E. (2011).

When the railway started its construction from Mombasa 1895-1901 when it reached Kisumu, this paved the way enabling the movement of different European groups of missionaries into the interior, Ruchman, S. G. (2017). Before independence, independent schools like the Young Kikuyu Association which were a result of individual and private sectors that fought for the rights of African education in Kenya started. Kovar, M. H. (1970). After independence, the Kenyan government took over the control of education. Ominde Commission led to the development of school inclusion in private sectors and by 1970 number of enrolments in schools had increased, Muricho, W. P., & Chang'ach, J. K. (2013).

Much had been written in the line of education, the contribution of various societies being a major concern like missionaries' contribution to education by Bogonko 1977, Barasa 2013 which documents the role of church missionaries in the development of education in Abagusi by people of Siaya, Namatsi [2010] on the

friends African missionaries to the development of education to residents of Vihiga, Pentecostal Assembly of God in the involvement in the people of Ngangori by Shangohyla [1996] and Kiprotich [2018]. The role played by individuals in the development of education based on my knowledge none had been written on the individual more so about Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth. This study therefore contributes by filling the existing gap by giving insight into the role played by Archbishop Zacchaeus in the development of education in the Nyanza Region of Kenya, 1985-2001.

## 2. Theoretical framework

This study was guided by the Policy Historiography Theory by Trevor Gale [2001], which is historical and systematic. Being historical, it deals with the past information, and present and uses them in the prediction of the future. It is systematic since it follows a sequence of analysis to determine the cause of history and the regularities of social life. The study used a systematic trend of analysis, the role and development of Western education in Nyanza Region, the biography life of Archbishop Zacchaeus, and how Zacheus influenced the development of education in Nyanza Region. Information relevant was selected in documents, and recordings, and then the content was analyzed historically through internal and external criticism to determine the authenticity of the data then the data that was beneficial was picked and included in the study. The information helped in the realization of the importance and influence of Archbishop Zacchaeus to education making it easy to document the contribution of Archbishop Zacchaeus to the development of higher education in Nyanza Region of Kenya.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study used both primary and secondary sources where information from the participants through oral interviews and documents from archives. Secondary information included books and journals with information related to Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth. Primary data was collected using semi-structured oral interviews on the activities Archbishop Zacchaeus engaged in as a way of developing education. The interview guide was used which enabled the extraction of information about Archbishop Zacchaeus from the participants. The research was within the Nyanza Region of Kenya. A purposive sampling technique was employed and the researcher purposively selected a few of the elders to describe the inclusion of Archbishop Zacchaeus in Education while also selecting one of the prominent elders to describe the establishment and development of Uzima and its economic, political, and social contributions to the local community. The snowballing technique was used and participants identified other potential participants who had relevant related information. Among the elders, (O.I; John Olewe Obiero, 14/12/2022), one of them from the selected area helped the researcher in describing the history of

Archbishop Okoth and his relation with Uzima University. Participants included evangelist church leaders like Fr. Olal, Rev. Fr. Cosmas, a few selected students, the school Vice Chancellor and Non-Teaching Staff together with neighbors. Oral interviews through narration of stories were recorded and analyzed. The collected data was evaluated through a process of external and internal criticism to determine the authenticity of the data after verification of data. External criticism enabled understanding between the genuineness of the document and misrepresentation, while internal criticism was done to determine the validity and accuracy of the actual data, (Travers, 1973). Data was analyzed qualitatively and it was subjected to themes and historical periods, (Borg and Girl, 1983) which followed the line of objectives. Themes were put into sub-themes which were subjected to interpretation, thus helping in organizing information guided by objectives from which historical facts were established, (Sifuna, 1995). The outcome of the study was grouped and then presented descriptively as research findings of the study. Hence concluding and forming recommendations for further study.

## 4. Findings on the contribution of Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth to the development of Higher Education in the Nyanza Region of Kenya.

### Establishment and development of Uzima University

Higher education in Kenya came as a result of various social, historical, and political factors. The higher education is attributed to the colonial period, during which the British established missionary schools and colleges to serve in the development of literacy in Kenya. Muriungi, D. N. (2015). British schools provided primary and secondary education which laid grounds for higher education in the country. However, education at this time aimed at preparing individuals for administrative roles and clerical in the colonial administration. Independence time in 1963 marked a turning point in Kenya where the country experienced pressure on the need of skilled personnel to work and help the new government in the establishment of its education institutions more so higher education institutions. Eshiwani, G. S. (1990). In 1970 University of Nairobi was established which played a major role in the development of higher education in Kenya following other colleges like Royal Technical College and the Kenya Medical Training College.

For the past years, the Kenyan government together with non-government organizations has continued to invest in higher education, leading to the establishment of extra universities and colleges across the country. This expansion has been driven by the recognition of the importance of higher education in national development and the need to cater to the growing demand for skilled professionals. The efforts have not only from the government and non-government organizations but also from individuals who have pushed

for the extra energy for higher education across the country. Archbishop Okoth is a unique factor in consideration.

The government provides, funds, and establishes bodies to manage and control higher education. In the Nyanza region, several institutions are being governed by the government while others private sectors. However, Uzima University is unique being an institution that was established on the grounds of individual efforts and planning. Though there exist some contributions and help from church organizations i.e., the archdiocese of Kisumu archbishop Okoth stands out as an individual who facilitated its establishment.

After independence, the government set out goals and aims of education in the country. Challenges involved parents not having adequate knowledge of the importance of education while others were living under low standards and not able to raise capital to facilitate school fees for their children in schools. Nyanza region as a study area had its people enhance education but due to traditional cultural beliefs, many families failed to embrace education. Archbishop Okoth when he became a priest, focused not only on religious matters but also on education matters. In an interview by (O.I, Rev. Fr. Cosmas), expressed that as a good shepherd, you must look at your flocks. He anticipated that education was only the eradicate illiteracy and promote literacy and critical thinking among the people. The state of the Nyanza region at the moment was in a critical situation, with sickness among people like malaria due to the geographical location of the Nyanza region around the lake, lack of sufficient clean water, floods, and lack of health awareness which required agent attention. This hindered children from attending school. Despite of few attempts to solve the water problem by constructing boreholes, and malaria treatment by the few clinical officers who were around, still the situation was sufficiently controlled and this affected the education development in the region.

Having initiated the development of many primary like Ojolla primary which had been established as a mission school that paved the room for the construction of Archbishop Okoth Girls secondary, KN/LND/9/VOL.I/203, Min;246/80 declares that in Kisumu west Ojolla, land was acquired for the Ojolla primary school. The Kisumu district land registrar minutes of the land control board of 24<sup>th</sup> July 1980 indicate that Mr. John Lla Nyandaya sold his land of 0.7ha to the Diocese of Kisumu, Min;248/80 declares that the land was approved for Ojolla primary school to the Diocese of Kisumu, the year when Archbishop Zacchaeus was the Bishop of Kisumu Diocese and in charge of management and governance of the Diocese. Secondary schools like Bishop Okoth Mbaga which had been initiated by Rev. Stam catholic mission through the district commission, Central Kavirondo applied for a

piece of land 10 acres from Oloo Magamba, Othieno Adiro, Odera Radina, and Hamwala Inbadho, KN/DC/KSM/1/8/48. The school was later expanded by the efforts of Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth who bought land from Osuri (O.I, Raphael;03/01/2023). He focused on girls' school since the girls' interest was neglected as it was believed they were used by teachers to perform duties unrelated to the classes, (KN/MSS/15/9/20).

Archbishop Okoth finds It unrealistic due to the demanding forces among the graduates from secondary schools aiming for higher education. Being the archbishop, he thought of a solution to enhance education among the people. He first thought of controlling the challenges that people were facing that hindered the students from attending the schools and this was mostly health issues among people due to inadequate doctors and nurses who could not manage the people. Uzima University came as the priority that the archbishop thought in the fight to solve the prevailing challenges.

Uzima University was established in 2011 by archbishop Okoth through the Archdiocese of Kisumu to provide medical education to learners who were interested in studying medicine and those who were sponsored by the church. The university stands to be the only individual-established university in Nyanza region (O.I: Archbishop Okoth). The University development forces also came from the Association of Members Episcopal Conference Eastern Africa which required surplus and innovation in the field of health care training and research which aimed at suppressing the pressing issues in the society like diseases and lack of health awareness (O.I. Rev. Fr. Cosmas Rhagot K'oteno, PhD).

University started medical training in 2012 with more than 20 students who joined the Bachelor of Medical and Surgery and Bachelor of Science in Nursing. In 2018 the university managed to produce its first group of qualified medical officers in medicine and nursing, this was after a six-year course. University later increased the number of courses to attract many students into the I situation specifically in the areas of medical training. Courses that were introduced involved a Bachelor of Science in clinical medicine which is comprised of diploma courses in clinical medicine a course of 3 years, a Bachelor in clinical medicine four-year course, and Bachelor of Science in microbiology, and a Bachelor of Science in Community Health and Nutrition

The regulation required by the government for all Universities to register, Uzima University is accredited by the Commission for University Education in Kenya (CUE). The medical field is wide and therefore University is regulated by Kenya's medical practitioners and dentist board, the Council of Clinical Medicine, and the Nursing Council of Kenya. The university is

managed and managed by experts who are qualified and accredited Doctors and Professors both part-time and full-time lecturers. It has improved and modernized facilities like laboratories (anatomy laboratories) where learners attend training and studying bodies. University through the act of parliament allows the University to acquire bodies that are used for practical by learners. Archbishop Zacchaeus manages the University as chancellor and Rev. Fr. Cosmas Rhagot K'oteno as Vice-Chancellor.

University has produced many specialists in the field of medicine who are working in Kenyan hospitals and also foreign hospitals as Doctors and Nurses. The institution gives back to the community by employing locals to work in the University in different sections. Health facilities in Nyanza region particularly Kisumu are supplied by medical students from the University to assist in chores like health record keeping, and nursing mostly during practical training in the field and doctors. St. Monica Hospital Kisumu is one of the major hospitals that benefited a lot from the University. Other health centers like Lwak Mission Hospital and St. Joseph Nyabondo Hospital to mention a few. University through learners engage in community health awareness programs.

Innovation purpose in the field of health, Centre for Diseases Control and Kenya Medical Records Institute is working on collaboration with the University in managing the societal health crisis in the society (O.I. Rev. Fr. Cosmas Rhagot K'oteno) Vice-Chancellor.

According to Mykhailyshyn, H., Kondur, O., & Serman, L. (2018), Higher education plays a vital role in innovation. Due to the advancing society and changes in the world, a lot is needed for the betterment of society. Health issues are alarming as many unknown diseases are being discovered in people that need immediate attention from health workers. Uzima University does not only promote higher education but also promotes health in the country through the provision of doctors and nurses to serve in health organizations in the country. Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth promoted higher education in the Nyanza region and Uzima University as evidenced by the course in the study.

In summary, the emergence of higher education in Kenya is a result of historical, colonial, and post-independence developments that shaped the educational landscape in the country. The establishment of institutions like the University of Nairobi marked a crucial step towards building a vigorous higher education system to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society. Since then, there has been growth and development of tertiary education in Kenya being government-sponsored, non-government, and local setups being controlled by individuals. Uzima University is among the few individual-sponsored Universities in

Kenya. Its uniqueness is a result of the provision of medical services being accredited by Kenya's health sectors. It serves a great significance across the globe not only Kenya and Africa a large.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined the contribution of Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth mentioning Uzima University in Nyanza Region of Kenya. The study revealed that Archbishop Zacchaeus played a vital role in the growth and development of higher education in Nyanza Region. This was noticed through his efforts in the mentioned learning institution, its establishment, and its development. When he was ordained as a priest his love for education had been seen through his effort and hard work as a young man while he was working with Fr. Leo-Bartles and through his effort and perseverance to serve God in seminary school. He agreed to secure land for Bolo primary. Bolo Secondary was developed as his private school to encourage the villagers to bring their girls to school before it was changed to a public school. St. Gabriel's seminary was a result of his effort, having been in seminary school he thought of establishing a religious education Centre for nature priests who would also later be ambassadors to spread the importance of education as well as religious matters to the people. Uzima was established to solve the societal crisis at the moment which was hindering school children from attending school. The geographical location of Nyanza Region led to the development of different sicknesses mostly in children and this time fewer hospitals with fewer doctors which could not satisfy the needs of the people. Uzima was to solve challenges by providing an adequate number of doctors to cater to the sickling children to enable go to school. Having contributed to both primary and secondary schools, a Tertiary level was needed. However, matters to do health issues were pressing which affected education progress in the region. Archbishop sought to have a Medical College to train doctors to take care of the issues and allow children to attend schools. The institution is serving greatly to not only Nyanza Region but Kenya as a country and also our country, this calls for attention to researchers in accounting for the effort by Archbishop Zacchaeus which the paper has documented.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the recognition of the private sector and individuals' efforts in matters of education in society. These factors are important in the development of education and transformation of the society. The government should visit these institutions and organize meetings with the stakeholders to encourage the other private sectors to support education in society. Government and stakeholders should improvise ways of reaching out to the public, state, religious societies, non-government organizations, and other educational stakeholders on the importance of education in society and also encourage support from

individuals, society, government, and non-government bodies. This study recommends that Zacchaeus Okoth should be documented as an important aspect of the education sector being an important individual who contributed much in the establishment and development of education in Nyanza Region, Kenya. Despite government roles in Schools, there have been so many ways in which individual and private sectors can support education and also play a sponsorship role. This study reveals that society should be educated on the effects of some of the cultural beliefs that affect the educational development of the child. The government should employ professionals to teach the public about the effects of cultural activities on child education. Lastly, this study recommends government inclusion of willing individuals in private sectors in matters of educational change as it calls for diverse minds and support hence the development of education.

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