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Relationship between principals' involvement of stakeholders in strategic management practices and students' performance at KCSE in Murang'a County, Kenya

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Abstract
Globally, strategic management in educational institutions have focused largely on the formulation of strategic plans with little attention being directed towards the relationship between strategic management practices and learning outcomes, hence the need for this study. However, studies on the effects of strategic management practices on students' performance at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) are not exhaustive. Therefore, this study sought to determine the relationship between involvement of stakeholders in strategic management practices and students' performance at KCSE in Murang'a County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and by use of stratified proportionate sampling, a sample of 50 principals and 150 heads of departments from 250 public secondary schools in Murang'a County were obtained. Research instruments included questionnaires for principals and heads of departments of which the response rate was 100 per cent whereas observation schedule was used by the researcher with a response rate of 98.0%. Nominal data, frequencies and averages, were analyzed with the use of descriptive and inferential statistics which included means and percentages. The inferential statistics used in data analysis included Pearson correlation coefficient. The study established that principals' Stakeholders involvement in schools' strategic management practices in students' learning had a statistically significant relationship with students' academic performance at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. There was a statistically significant relationship between Stakeholders involvement and performance. The study suggested further research on relationship between other different education key Players strategic management practices and students' performance in other different education level. All these would contribute towards achieving the goals and objectives of strategic management practices.

Keywords: principal, stakeholders, strategic management plans, students' performance

Introduction

Brito and Sauan (2016), view management practices as sets of general practices or capabilities adopted by firms to achieve better results. No wonder governments in different parts of the world have instituted policies encouraging the adoption of strategic management in educational institutions (Ng'ang'a & Ombui, 2013) [18]. However, studies on strategic management in educational institutions have focused largely on the formulation of strategic plans with little attention being directed towards the relationship between Stakeholder involvement and learning outcomes, hence the need for this study.

Further, Harray's (2008) study examined management practices in three New Zealand secondary schools attributed the success of the schools to the strategic management practices that were at the core of the schools' culture. Additionally, a study by Chavez, Fynes, Gimenez, and Wiengarten (2012) among manufacturing companies in the Republic of Ireland, established that specific supply chain management practices impact on performance. This was further confirmed by a study conducted by Brito and Sauan (2016) among companies in emerging markets in Brazil.

Interestingly, adoption of strategic management in educational institutions has attracted the attention of educational researchers including Henderson and Mapp (2002) [9] who examined 31 studies in America that specifically addressed the relationship between students' achievement and various parent and community involvement activities. The study established that parents and community involvement in students' learning had a stronger relationship with learning outcomes than any other form of involvement considered in the study. It alluded that increased mother involvement, and teacher's perception of the positive attitude parents have toward their child's education, was way related to increased Students' academic performance measured by both a standardized achievement and classroom performance. These agree with the findings of a study by Miedel and Reynold (1999) [14] which involved 704 parents of children participating in the Chicago Longitudinal Study. The study established that higher frequencies of parents' participation in pre-schools and kindergartens resulted in higher reading achievements.

Yabs (2010) [27] defines strategic management as the art of mobilizing resources and the science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives. According to Dess, Lumpkin, Eisner, and McNamara (2014) [5], strategic management consists of the analysis, decisions, and actions the organization takes in order to create and strive advantage.

According to IGI global (2020) [10] management practices usually refers to the working methods and innovations that managers use to improve the effectiveness of work systems. Within that framework, management practices represent an

important factor that has an important impact on operations of and work in organizations, and consequently underpin the competitiveness of an organization (Sutherland & Canwell, 2004; Van Assen *et al*., 2009; Potočan & Dabić, 2012; Dabić *et al*., 2013; Nedelko & Potočan, 2013).

2. Relationship between principals' involvement of stakeholders in strategic management practices and students' performance

The secondary schools' stakeholders are many and diverse and that the stakeholders of interest to this study are the secondary schools' board of management. According to The Washington State School Directors' Association, USA (2015), school boards of management execute duties such as setting vision, establishing goals, developing policies, allocating resources and assuring accountability. In Kenya the board of management for a school refers to the board of management established under Education Act Cap 211 revised edition 2012 subsection 10 (2).

The functions of board of management for secondary schools are defined in the Education Act Cap 211 Revised (2012) and include promoting the best interests of the school and ensuring that there is development within the school, promoting quality education for all learners, ensuring adequate physical facilities within the school such as dormitories classrooms, co-curricular among others, advising the County Education Board on the staffing needs, hearing and determining cases of learners indiscipline and presenting such reports to county education board.

Nkundabanyanga, Tauringana, and Muhwezi (2015) [20] stated that the board of management role on performance, finance committee role performance, frequency of meetings, and finance expertise of governing boards had a significant effect on schools' performance. They also reported that the majority of schools' BoM did not participate in matters of discipline, promote a culture of dialogue and democratic governance, or undertake guidance and counseling.

Lamas (2015) [11] indicate that school performance is an issue that deeply concerns students, parents, teachers and authorities not only in our country, but also in many other Latin American countries and continents. The complexity of the academic performance starts from its conceptualization. However, stakeholders' involvement can be said to mean working with people and using the resources as they are and helping them to work together to realize agreed ends and goals (Bartle, 2007).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. This includes percentages, frequencies, means and also inferential statistics. Pearson correlational coefficient and multiple regression were used to analyze data.. According to Singh (2019), the basic limitation of correlational research is that correlation does not demonstrate causation. However, the study was alert to the possibility of spurious relationships, for correct interpretation of the findings. The study attempted to check whether participation in strategic management was correlated with students' academic performance. The main emphasis in a correlational study is to discover or establish the existence of a relationship, association, or interdependence between two or more aspects of a situation or phenomenon (Best & Khan, 2011).

3.2. Target Population

This study targeted 250 public secondary schools in Murang'a County that had presented candidates for KCSE in the five years before the period of the study according to the Ministry of Education. This decision was based on the understanding that it is only those schools that had presented candidates for KCSE for at least five years which could give data that would reasonably inform the relationship between strategic management practices and students' performance in secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya. It was assumed that for strategic management practices to meaningfully influence students' performance at KCSE the practices must have been used in the schools for some time and five years was deemed as adequate.

This study, therefore, targeted 250 secondary school principals and 750 heads of departments (that is, three heads of department from each school) drawn from public secondary schools in the study locale which had presented candidates for KCSE for the five years preceding the study. The rationale behind targeting three heads of department (HODs) from each school was supported by the fact that secondary schools in Murang'a County, like other parts of the republic, could be categorized into different stream-sizes such as; single stream, double stream, and three-streamed schools. These different stream-sizes results in schools having different Curriculum-Based Establishments (CBE) which guide staffing levels, including a number of HODs to serve in each school. It was assumed that each school regardless of size had at least three HODs either appointed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) or the school Boards of Management (BoMs). The reason behind the inclusion of HoDs as key participants in this study was based on the fact that HoDs are principals' technical assistants in the implementation of academic programs in the departments (Mwangi, 2012) [17].

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) [15] explains a formula that can be used to calculate a sample size of a population that is less than 1000 by using Fisher`s formula as illustrated below. A study by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) [15] quickly adds that a sample size of 10% to 30% of a population that is less than 1000 is good enough if well-chosen and the elements in the sample size are more than 30. This implies that the researcher is confident that a sample size of 50 principals and 150 sample size of HoDs represents the target population in a satisfying way. The author further mentioned some of the factors that need to be considered by a researcher while choosing the sample size. This includes the administrative concerns, acceptable levels of precision and confidence level. Since there were 250 public secondary schools in Murang'a County that had presented candidates for KCSE for at least five years during the period preceding this study, a sample size of 50 schools (20% of 250) was deemed plausible. Different approaches were employed to obtain a sample of 50 schools to be included in this study. First, all the schools that did KCSE during the period 2017-2018 were identified from the analyzed KCSE results of 2018. It is usually a norm in KCSE results analysis at school and higher levels to compare performance in a particular year with results attained in several previous years hence identification of schools that had done KCSE in the last five years was easily done Secondly, all the schools that had presented candidates

for KCSE in 2017-2018 were stratified into two strata with reference to the list ranking all secondary schools in Murang'a County on the basis of performance at KCSE in 2018. While stratifying the schools, the researcher carefully disregarded all schools that had not presented candidates for KCSE for five years before the study. The stratification process yielded two lists of schools that formed the two strata; highly performing and low performing schools. For purposes of this study, high performing schools included all those schools which posted mean standard scores (MSS) of 6.5 and above which translated to C+ which was the minimum university entry grade. The second stratum comprised low performing schools that posted MSS of 6.4 and below which did not meet the minimum university entry grade. Stratification of the schools was done on the basis of mean standard scores posted by each school in KCSE in 2018. Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education is a standardized examination done by students at the end of four years of secondary education in Kenya. The results attained in this examination are used to place students in institutions of higher learning including university placements (Kenya National Examinations Council, 2014). This examination is also used to measure the educational success of each secondary school in Kenya. Therefore, KCSE results are taken seriously by students, teachers, school administrators, and educational planners in Kenya hence the researcher's choice of these results as the basis of stratification in this study. Thirdly, simple random sampling was employed in selecting schools to be included in the sample from the two strata. In this process, the name of each school in the high performing category was written on a small piece of paper which was then folded and placed in a container. From this container, 25 folded papers were randomly drawn from the container. This way, the researcher obtained randomly selected 25 high performing secondary schools which formed the first part of the study sample. The same procedure was repeated for the low performing schools, giving another set of 25 randomly selected low performing schools which formed the second part of the study sample. The sample selection processes yielded a randomly selected representative sample of 50 secondary schools which were to participate in the study. The principal and three HODs in each of the sampled secondary schools participated in this study giving a sample size of 50 principals and 150 HODs.

3.4. Research Instruments

This study employed three instruments. These were the principals' questionnaire (PQ), HODs' questionnaires (HoDQ), and also the Observation Schedule (OS). The use of three instruments ensured that there was a triangulation of data and this ensured reliability of the study findings. Principals' questionnaires collected data relating to the school and principals' strategic management practices with a view of seeking to establish whether there was any relationship between the two variables. Heads of Departments' questionnaires collected data from the HoDs regarding their views on strategic management practices witnessed in their schools. Observation schedules collected data relating to availability, adequacy and maintenance of school facilities being part of the management functions of principals likely to impact on students' academic performance.

3.5. Instruments' Validity

Validity is defined as the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999) [15]. Expert opinions were sought to help to establish the validity of the instruments (Wilkinson, 1991). In this case, the researcher sought opinions of the study supervisors and two other experts in the area of the study with the aim of enhancing the validity of the instruments to be used. The supervisors are experts in Educational Management hence their views helped in the improvement of the instruments.

3.6. Reliability of the Instruments

Hamed, T. (2020), cited the work of Hinton *et al*. (2004) which suggests four cut-off points for reliability, as excellent reliability (0.90 and above), high reliability (0.70-0.90), moderate reliability (0.50-0.70) and low reliability (0.50 and below). Angell, K. (2015) asserts that Cronbach's alpha levels are generally considered acceptable if they exceed 0.7. A correlation coefficient of 0.7 and above made the instruments to be deemed reliable and hence acceptable for use in data collection. Consequently, the study conducted a pilot study provided the opportunity to confirm details in the observation schedule with quantitative measures from the questionnaires. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) [15] define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. The Split-half technique of reliability testing was employed during the pre-testing of the questionnaires. In this technique, questionnaires were divided into two equivalent halves and then a correlation coefficient for the two halves computed.

3.7. Data Collection Procedures

After approval of the research proposal and clearance from the university to proceed to the data collection stage, a research permit was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Information (NACOSTI). Thereafter, the researcher visited the office of the County Director of Education (CDE) in charge of Murang'a County for introduction and permission to conduct the study in the area. After this, the researcher visited the sampled schools for introduction and booking an appointment for data collection. On the agreed day for data collection in each school, the researcher had a brief session with the principal that entailed explaining to him or her about the HQ that the principal was to fill in and school facilities to be observed during the data collection process. The session also entailed the selection of the HODs to participate in the study. During this process, the principal identified all departments in the school with a HOD either appointed by TSC or the school BoM. If the total number of departments in a school was three, all the HODs were included in the study. In all schools that had more than three departments with HODs, simple random sampling was employed to select three HODs to participate in the study. In this scenario, the researcher wrote the name of the department on a small piece of paper. All the papers were then mixed up in a container provided by the school and three papers were then randomly drawn from the container. For each selected department, the HOD participated in the study. This way, the researcher obtained three HODs who participated in the study from the schools. Before filling in the questionnaires, the researcher explained the nature of the research to the

principals and the HODs. They were alerted that the information being solicited would be used for academic purposes only. It was stressed to them that they should not write their names on any part of the data collection instruments. These above steps were taken to assure respondents of the confidentiality of information given and also ensure that they gave honest responses that would inform the influence of principals' strategic management on students' academic performance in their schools. After the respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their identities and were sensitized on the nature of the research, they were then given an opportunity to fill in their respective questionnaires as the researcher observed the available school facilities. This procedure was followed in all the sampled schools. After observation of the school facilities, the researcher then picked the filled in questionnaires or made arrangements on when to collect the questionnaires in cases where respondents were not able to fill them in immediately due to other urgent engagements. In each school, the researcher did not leave the school without courteously informing the principal about the progress of data collection in that particular school, appreciating the principal, HODs and school staff for facilitating data collection and then agreeing on any further arrangements in cases where questionnaires were not ready by the time of exiting.

3.8. Data Analysis

Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) [15] assert that the purpose of descriptive statistics is to enable the researcher to meaningfully describe the distribution of scores or measurements using statistics such as frequencies and percentages. In a study by Owenga, John & Aloka, Peter & Raburu, Pamela. (2018) [21] to investigate the Relationship between Selected Personal Determinants and Examination Cheating among Kenyan Secondary School Students, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was computed, with overall scores from the two school determinants with 0.05 level of significance. Another study by Fekadu, Alemenh. (2019) on assessing the Impact of School Rules and Regulations on Students' Perception Toward Promoting Good Behavior instead opted to use Pearson's correlation coefficient to test reliability of questionnaires was measured with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

4. Findings and discussion

This study targeted 50 principals and 150 HoDs from 50 secondary schools sampled from a total of 250 secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya. All the principals and HoDs targeted in this study returned their questionnaires. Observations on school facilities were done in 49 out of the targeted 50 secondary schools. Therefore, this study realized a response rate of 100% for principals' and HoDs' questionnaires. The response rate for observation schedules was 98.0%.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Respondent	Female	Male	Total
HoD	62	88	150
Principal	23	27	50
Total	85	115	200

Analysis of principals' professional qualifications showed that all the principals were professionally qualified teachers with varying levels of academic credentials. These qualifications ranged from Masters's degrees to diplomas. These results agree with the findings of a study by Mwangi (2012) [17] which established that principals in the study sample had gained high levels of education necessary to identify and deal with the challenges facing school managers in the implementation of strategic management in schools. Vernez, Karam, and Marshall (2012) asserted that principals with higher levels of education may be better placed to make decisions and articulate and their preferences with greater force. The majority of the sampled principals are thus capable of making informed strategic decisions that enhance the competitiveness of their schools (Dess, Lumpkin, Eisner & McNamara, 2014) [5]. This study shows that 16.0% of the sampled principals stated that they had not attended any strategic management course, 32.0% had attended only one course and only 16.0 % had attended two courses. The principals who indicated that they had attended three courses were 12.0 %. However, 24.0% had attended more than three strategic management courses When the principals were asked if they had strategic plans for their schools, 80% of the principals stated that they had strategic management plans in their schools whereas 20.0% did not have those plans. In addition to the information given on the duration the strategic management plans had been used, principals were asked to indicate the extent to which they referred to their strategic plans when undertaking various administrative tasks in their schools. The results of this analysis pointed to the extent to which principals relied on strategic plans in their school management. Table 4.2 shows the results.

HoDs' Professional Qualifications

Information relating to HoDs' professional qualifications was collected from the HoDs. This information was necessary to corroborate the information collected from the principals. The strategy helped improve the reliability of the study. This information is summarized in Table 4.3.

Table 2: Professional Qualifications of HoDs

Highest professional qualifications	No. of HoDs	Percent
Masters of Education	15	10.0
Bachelor of Education (Science)	29	19.3
Bachelor of Education (Arts)	73	48.7
Diploma in Education (Science)	14	9.3
Diploma in Education (Arts)	9	6.0
Postgraduate Diploma	5	3.3
Others	5	3.3
Total	150	100.0

Stakeholders Involvement in SMP and Students' Performance at KCSE

Information relating to principals' involvement of stakeholders in the schools' strategic management practices was established by asking principals to state how often they carried out a set of eight activities relating to stakeholders. Using a Likert scale of 1–5 (1-Always, 2-Often, 3-Sometimes, 4- Rarely, 5 –Never), mean rating values were calculated on the eight items tested to find out the overall involvement of the stakeholders in school management. Table 4.3 summarizes the results.

Majority of the principals who participated in this study

(50.0%) stated that they always consulted parents in decision making. Only 2.0% indicated that they did not consult parents in the school decision making process. Further, another 38.0% of principals indicated that they always involved parents in school activities while 44.0% did so often. Only 24% of the principals indicated that stakeholders always provided funds and facilities in their schools. These results show that parents, as key educational stakeholders, were actively involved in the management of schools in the study region.

Table 3: Summary of Principals' Involvement of Stakeholders in School Management

Statement	A-5	O-4	S-3	R-2	N-1	Mean	Standard Deviation
elective subjects enable students make good choices	31 (62.0%)	11 (22.0%)	4 (8.0%)	2 (4.0%)	2 (4.0%)	1.66	1.06
Parents are often consulted in the school decision making process	25 (50.0%)	18 (36.0%)	6 (12.0%)	1 (2.0%)	-	1.66	0.77
Parents often participate	19 (38.0%)	22 (44.0%)	8 (16.0%)	1 (2%)	-	1.82	0.77
School stakeholders provide school funds and facilities	12 (24.0%)	15 (30.0%)	15 (30.0%)	7 (14.0%)	1 (2.0%)	2.40	1.06
stakeholders provide school needed personnel	15 (30.0%)	18 (36.0%)	15 (30.0%)	2 (4.0%)	-	2.08	0.88
School stakeholders provide for school welfare	5 (10.0%)	22 (44.0%)	15 (30.0%)	7 (14.0%)	1 (2.0%)	2.54	0.93
Community around the school is part school activities	3 (6.0%)	15 (30.0%)	20 (40.0%)	9 (18.0%)	3 (6.0%)	2.88	0.98
Parents are actively involved	23 (46.0%)	18 (36.0%)	6 (18.0%)	3 (6.0%0	-	1.78	0.89

A/5-Always, O/4-Often, S/3-Sometimes, R/2-Rarely, N/1-Never

Testing of the Relationship between Stakeholders' Involvement and Students' Performance at KCSE null hypothesis stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between principals' involvement of stakeholders in school management and students' performance at KCSE in Murang'a County. The relationship between stakeholders' involvement and students' performance was analyzed using Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The independent variable for this analysis was a mean calculated from all the items relating to stakeholders' involvement in school matters while the dependent variable was the schools' KCSE mean scores in 2017 and 2018.

Table 4: Pearson's Correlations

Pearson's Correlations				
Variable		KCSE2018	KCSE2017	Stakeholders Involvement
1. KCSE2018	Pearson's r	—		
	p-value	—		
2. KCSE2017	Pearson's r	0.957	—	
	p-value	<. 001	—	
3. Stakeholders Involvement	Pearson's r	0.700	0.715	—
	p-value	<. 001	<. 001	—

Pearson correlation coefficient analysis of principals' involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning in secondary schools and students' performance yielded a very strong and statistically significant relationship between the two variables (r=. 700; p<. 001 for KCSE 2018 and r=. 715; p< 0.001). Consequently, there was a very strong correlation between KCSE results of 2017 and that of 2018, giving the basis for a valid correlation test. On the basis of these results, Ho2 was rejected at p = 0.001 level of significance. This means that principals' involvement of stakeholders in the strategic management of schools was significantly related to students' performance at KCSE. This implies that schools whose principals frequently involved stakeholders in school management performed better than those whereby stakeholders were largely left out. These results may be explained by the fact that stakeholders may not only enlist support for school programs and activities to the benefit of students' academic success but they can also help in the acquisition of teaching and learning materials that directly impact students' performance. There are many stakeholders in a school set up. These stakeholders include parents, the neighboring community, religious leaders as well as members of school boards of management.

The findings of this study agree with the findings of a study by Henderson and Mapp (2002) [9] which found out that parents and community involvement is linked to student learning and achievement. The same views were shared by Miedel and Reynold (1999) [14] who investigated the relationship between parents' involvement in an early intervention program and school achievement. The findings of their study indicated that higher participation of parents in pre-schools and kindergartens resulted in higher reading achievements, lower rates of grade retention, and fewer years in special education among children. Miedel and Reynold concluded that parents' involvement in the learning of their children is crucial in helping to sustain the immediate positive effects of early educational interventions.

Further, Ichsan *et al* (2017) showed that academic achievement improves when parents get involved in their children's school activities. This view was supported by Lloyd (2000) [12] who found that direct parental involvement in school activities had a major impact on students' performance. Steinberg argued that community involvement drew parents into the schools physically and this was found to be very effective in improving academic achievement because it reinforced the view in the child's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life. These views are supported by Ahmadian (2018) [1] who concluded that community involvement in a school had a significant positive impact on students' achievement Furthermore one of the key factors affecting the success of strategic planning in schools is stakeholder participation. Mwangi (2012) [17] argues that the success of any strategic plan lies in the level of participation of all those charged with the responsibility of the strategic plan implementation process.

Mwangi notes that stakeholder participation brings considerable benefits in terms of building the conditions necessary for the smooth implementation of strategic plans. Participation generates awareness, capacity, consensus, and support which are critical for successful implementation.

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