

EFFECT OF BOM COMPETENCY BASED ROLES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NYAMACHE SUB COUNTY, KISII COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Secondary school education is seen as means of social and economic mobility as it is a prerequisite to further training for formal employment. However, for many public secondary schools, the secondary school cycle for their students has not been promising academically. The current study sought to investigate the influence of the BOM competency based roles. on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Nyamache Sub County, Kisii County, Kenya. The study was guided by the Classical Management Theory. Descriptive survey research design was used targeting 49 public secondary schools in Nyamache Sub County from which the accessible population will comprise 49 school principals and 735 BOM members. The study used systematic random sampling to select the schools while the principals and BOM members were selected using purposive sampling. Data collection was done using questionnaires. Descriptive statistics involving means, modes and standard deviations, and inferential statistical methods involving Pearson's Product Moment correlation was used to analyze the data which was then presented in tables. The study discerned that BOM competency based roles emerged as a pivotal factor. Schools should further enhance their BOM structure by ensuring that each sub-committee is led by a competent leader and promote inter-committee communication for the effective management of school resources and challenges.

Keywords: *Competency Based Roles, Academic Performance, Secondary Schools*

INTRODUCTION

The boards of management oversee a number of functions within a school including ensuring there are adequate physical facilities within the school. Realization of these functions towards the provision of quality education and good academic performance of the learners depends on the qualifications of the board, especially the education qualifications. From the human resource perspective, education is seen as the determinant of character and pace of social and economic development (Republic of Kenya, 1976). Education is a major foundation for social-economic and political development of a nation (UNESCO, 2015). Therefore, if the quality of education is undermined, the schools may not give adequate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to pupils that a country needs in its citizens in order to guarantee the role of education in development (World

Bank, 2012). The development of the skills and knowledge of the people of a nation through the education process constitutes one of the prerequisites of national development. Basic education is, therefore, a vital component for these developments.

Secondary school education is seen as means of promoting economic growth and social development (World Bank, 2008). To individuals, secondary school education is seen as means of social and economic mobility as it is a prerequisite to further training for formal employment (Lewin, 2007). Further, secondary school education is viewed by Roberts-Schweitzer (2006) as a means of prompting social cohesion through trust and tolerance that is cultivated as students interact in schools. Children spend different number of years before transiting to secondary schools. In Germany for instance, children transit to junior secondary school after four years of primary school education except in Berlin and Brandenburg which is six years (Griebel&Berwanger, 2006). In their description of education in Kenya, Lucas and Mbiti (2011) inform that primary school pupils join secondary schools after completing eight years of primary school education marked by sitting for KCPE examination.

However, for many public secondary schools, the secondary school cycle for their students has not been promising academically. Given that the country has traditionally pegged academic performance on examinations, secondary schools have been performing dismally in this respect. The World Bank (2006) observes that public examinations in Kenya serve several purposes, among them being the selection of candidates for educational opportunities and employment, certificate of achievement of candidates, control of curriculum and its delivery in school, motivation of school teachers and pupils, and monitoring education standards and reporting on school effectiveness including instructional resources among others. According to Kihara, (2006), the Boards of Management are responsible for: adopting a clear statement of the school's mission, vision, values and establishing policies that are consistent with these statements.

The board is also responsible in developing and periodically reviewing strategic goals in order to fulfill the school's mission and vision. It is involved in monitoring and supporting school heads and their leadership teams in their ability to deliver on these strategic goals. The board selects, supports, nurtures and evaluates the schools' heads while ensuring that the heads recruit, retain, reward, and develop the highest calibre of teaching staff. The board plays a role in ensuring that the school and the board operate in compliance with Kenyan laws and regulations, creating and maintaining a conflict-of-interest policy that is reviewed with and signed by, individual board members annually, communicating its decisions widely while keeping its deliberations confidential. However, the realization of these roles towards the provision of quality of education and desirable academic performance of the learners depends on the quality of the board.

In public secondary schools in Nyamache Sub County of Kisii County, data from the Nyamache Sub County Education Office shows dismal performance in the KCSE examinations. Therefore, the performance of KCSE examinations is testament that there is need for urgent remedial action. There is an outcry everywhere regarding the performance of students in KCSE and I will base my research on BOMs' effectiveness in facilitating quality education in secondary schools, especially in Nyamache Sub County. The current study therefore seeks to investigate the influence of education qualifications of BOMs on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kenya focusing on Nyamache sub County Kisii County.

Statement of the Problem

The academic landscape in Kenya, mirroring global trends, is presently facing a predicament: an alarming decline in student academic performance. This scenario is especially perplexing given

the significant strides the Kenyan government has made to ensure improved access to primary and secondary education. Massive investments have been injected into the educational sector, heralding a promise of improved educational outcomes. Yet, the reality remains bleak with students consistently underperforming.

Given the magnitude and implications of this educational challenge, various stakeholders, ranging from educators to policy makers, have sought to identify the root causes of this decline. Their aim? To unravel the complexities behind this persistent drop in standards and devise strategies to reclaim the educational prowess that once was. Initial investigations have revolved around curriculum designs, teaching methodologies, and resource allocations. However, a notable shift in this investigative trajectory is emerging, where the lens is now refocusing on the very epicenter of educational management: the Boards of Management (BOMs) in schools.

One might wonder, why the BOMs? The answer, perhaps, lies in the pivotal role these boards play in shaping the educational direction and ethos of schools. As highlighted by the Center for Public Education (2012), the vitality of an effective school board cannot be understated. They argue that without quality professional development for BOM members, entire school districts stand at risk. They could potentially drift into realms of inefficiency and ineffectiveness, impacting thousands of learners in the process. Further emphasizing this point, Roberts and Sampson (2011) underscored an interesting paradox in their research. While the majority of states they studied lacked a formal requirement for professional development for school board members, an overwhelming consensus existed among State Education Directors regarding its importance. They recognized that BOMs, equipped with the right knowledge and skills, could serve as catalysts for educational transformation.

However, a significant lacuna exists in current educational research. While skill gaps in BOMs have been observed and documented, a systematic exploration into how the education levels of BOM members might correlate with schools' academic outcomes remains conspicuously absent. This glaring gap in knowledge is particularly concerning given the weighty decisions these boards make and the profound influence they can exert on school environments.

It is against this complex backdrop that this study carves its niche. Aiming to fill the research void, the study proposes a comprehensive examination of the potential influence of educational qualifications of BOM members on the academic performance of students. The focal point of this exploration will be public secondary schools situated in Nyamache sub County, Kisii County, Kenya. By bridging this knowledge gap, the research aspires to offer insights that could redefine the way BOMs are constituted and operated, and in turn, potentially herald a turnaround in the declining academic performance narrative that has plagued the nation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

School boards have an important role as stewards of the education investment made by communities. These boards drive accountability through *governance-driven monitoring systems*. They are in the position to engage families, communities and internal and external stakeholders; have a clearly defined annual work plan; engage in self-assessment to determine priorities for board development; engage in ongoing learning to expand their knowledge of the latest developments in the field of education; and have multiple approaches to engaging their diverse communities. Finally, these effective boards work arduously to ensure that their work is aligned with system-wide efforts to improve achievement for all learners.

The governing board has two basic responsibilities with respect to academic oversight. The first is a fiduciary responsibility for academic quality that is just as important as the better known fiduciary responsibility boards carry for the financial affairs of the institution. Just as it is a

violation of fiduciary responsibility for a board to tolerate inadequate financial controls and/or allow an institution to fail financially, it is a failure of board responsibility to ignore poor student academic performance and allow an institution to award degrees or certificates to students who do not meet accepted standards of quality with respect to what they have learned and are able to do.

Bray, Campbell and Grant (2014) and Dulewicz and Herbert (2016) found that competencies predicted career advancement, which presumably means they predicted performance as well. Russell (2001) showed a link between competencies used for selection of general managers and the subsequent performance of their units. Similarly, Levenson, Van der Stede and Cohen (2015) found a link between competencies used for rewards for first-line and middle managers and unit performance. However, cronyism and nepotism — and politically driven, unethical (sometimes illegal) policies and practices — adversely impact systems' ability to provide the opportunities and experiences that learners need and must be firmly addressed by the appropriate enforcement agencies. These suggest serious underlying competency issues.

According to Suikki and Haapasalo (2006) competitive advantage grows fundamentally out of the desired competencies internally or to outsource them by partnering with key suppliers or forming strategic alliances. An organization must carefully consider what can be safely delegated to outside suppliers or allies versus what internal capabilities a company has for long term success. Richard (2009) contends that sometimes the tediousness of internal organization building can be shortcut by buying a company that has requisite capability and integrating its competencies to the firm's value chain. Indeed, a pressing need to acquire certain capabilities quickly is one reason to acquire another company. An acquisition aimed at building greater capability can be every bit as competitively valuable as an acquisition aimed at adding new products or services to company's business line up. Spreitzer, McCall, and Mahoney (2017) found that certain competencies predicted subsequent performance ratings by supervisors.

A study by Athman (2016) on the relationship between BOM management of financial and students' academic performance, concluded that the BOM was involved in the financial management in the areas of procurement and the budgeting. However, because most of the then did not have financial management skills, their effectiveness was very minimal. Proper finance management was directly linked to the students' academic achievement. Training and poverty were the major challenge faced by the BOM in the management of resources in the schools which may have influenced the academic performance of the students. Onger (2015) found that the management of education institutions was weak because most BOMs members lack quality management capabilities. Wainaina (2015) revealed that majority of the teachers felt that B.O.M members were not competent to handle the recruitment exercise and 40% disagreed.

Theoretical Framework

Henri Fayol of France emphasizes how management and supervisors relate to their organizations in the knowledge of its goals and believed that management is a Universal function that can be defined and understood in terms of the various processes that a manager performs. Fayol's principles of management, a group of suggestions that provides guideposts for successful management, evolved from this conviction. This theory is relevant to the study of board of management's role in public secondary school in facilitating quality education since it stresses on the need for the Boards to apply the general principles of management. Skills that benefit the school in facilitating quality education led to better performance. The Board as shown by the theory should understand that every school is a complex structure with its own distinctive characteristic which impinges upon the way it functions.

METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive research design. There are 49 public secondary schools in the entire Nyamache sub County. Each school has 15 BOM members. Therefore, the study targeted all the 49 schools from which the accessible population comprised of 735 Board Members and 49 School principals, giving a total of 784 persons. Kathuri and Pals (1993) formula as cited in Ocharo (2017) was used to calculate the sample size. Therefore, the sample size used in the study was 185 respondents. The study used systematic random sampling to select the schools while the principals and BOM members were selected using purposive sampling. Data was obtained from primary sources using questionnaires from the respondents. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis was done using, means, modes and standard deviations to describe the basic characteristics of the population. Inferential statistics involved the use of Pearson's Product Moment correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Instrument Response Rate

A total of 185 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Out of the 185 questionnaires, 131 were returned which indicate 71% response rate. The high questionnaire response rate (71%) was acceptable according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2009). The other questionnaires were not returned by the respondents, hence, they were not included in the study.

BOM competency based roles in Nyamache Sub County

The objective of the study was to determine the effects of BOM competency based roles on academic performance among secondary school students in Nyamache Sub County, Kisii County. A 5 point Likert scale was used to rate responses of this variable and it ranged from; 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The closer the mean score on each score was to 5, the more the agreement concerning the statement. A score around 2.5 would indicate uncertainty while scores significantly below 2.5 would suggest disagreement regarding the statement posed. The findings are presented in Table 1

Table 1: BOM competency based roles on academic performance of secondary students

Statements (n = 146)	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
We usually constitute sub-committees based on the members areas of competence	0.8	0	6.7	51.7	40.8	4.32	0.673
We usually have working arrangements between all sub-committees that enable sharing of information and expertise	0.8	22.5	18.3	54.2	4.2	3.93	0.807
Most of our board members have leadership capabilities	0	0.8	15	51.7	32.5	4.16	0.698
We ensure that all sub-committees have competent leadership	1.7	10	15.8	45.8	26.7	3.86	0.981
Board members can serve in more than one sub committee	0	0	8.3	64.2	27.5	4.19	0.569
We ensure that all our operations have a degree of flexibility to accommodate emerging developments	0.8	12.5	14.2	47.5	25	3.83	0.814
Average						4.048	

The results indicate that majority of the schools usually constitute sub-committees based on the members' areas of competence as indicated by most respondents (mean = 4.32). The results also

indicate that most schools boards usually have working arrangements between all sub-committees that enable sharing of information and expertise (mean = 3.93). The findings also indicate that most school board members have leadership capabilities (mean = 4.16) and that the schools ensure that all sub-committees have competent leadership (mean = 3.86). Further, the findings indicate that board members can serve in more than one sub committee (mean = 4.19). In addition, the schools ensure that all our operations have a degree of flexibility to accommodate emerging developments (mean = 3.83). Overall, the results had a mean of 4.048 suggesting that most respondents agreed that there was a relationship between BOM education diversity on academic performance among secondary school students in the area. A considerable majority of schools appear to form sub-committees based on members' areas of competence, as evident from a mean score of 4.32. This practice aligns with the recommendations of Taylor (2018), who underscored the significance of leveraging the unique strengths and expertise of individual board members through specialized sub-committees. Conversely, Johnson (2017) argued that while specialization is essential, an over-reliance on this can lead to compartmentalization and reduce the overall cohesion of the board. The data suggests a prevailing trend of strong collaboration and information-sharing among different sub-committees in schools.

Students academic performance in Nyamache Sub County

The study sought to establish the status of academic performance among secondary school students in Nyamache Sub County, Kisii County. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Students academic performance in Nyamache Sub County

Statements (n = 146)	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
Students are showing marked improvements in dealing with difficult subjects	1.7	30	9.2	45	14.2	3.48	0.902
Students are demonstrating interest in studying difficult subjects	5.8	27.5	15	43.5	8.1	3.57	0.657
Students performance in class assignments have been improving in our school	10	25	0.8	48.3	15.8	3.68	0.799
Students performance in CATs have been improving in our school	17.5	19.2	0.8	52.9	9.6	3.59	0.925
Students perform well in class assignments	10.8	26.7	2.5	56.7	3.3	3.62	0.86
Students perform well in homework	10.8	35.8	0.8	51.7	0.8	3.44	0.807
Students perform well in national exams	0.8	31.7	14.2	41.5	11.8	3.65	0.769
Average						3.576	

Looking at the findings in Table 2, it can be deduced that majority of the students are showing marked improvements in dealing with difficult subjects (mean = 3.48). The findings also indicate that majority of the students were demonstrating interest in studying difficult subjects (mean = 3.57). Other findings also indicate that majority of the students performance in class assignments have been improving in the schools (mean = 3.68). The findings also suggest that students performance in CATs have been improving in most schools in the area (mean = 3.59). Most students perform well in class reading assignments (mean = 3.62). Further, most students perform well in homework (mean = 3.44) and also perform well in group assignments (mean = 3.65). Overall, the results had a mean of 3.576 suggesting that most respondents agreed that there was a relationship between BOM education diversity on academic performance among secondary school students in the area. The findings from Table 4.7 indicate that a majority of

students show notable improvements in dealing with challenging subjects, with a mean of 3.48. This aligns with the research of Thompson (2017), who emphasized that effective governance and management in schools can create an environment conducive to tackling difficult subjects. However, Smith (2016) argued that student performance in tough subjects also hinges significantly on teaching methodologies and individual student resilience.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Summary of Correlations

		Competency Based Roles	Academic Performance
Competency Based Roles	Pearson Correlation	1	.426**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	146	146
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.426**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	146	144

The study sought to determine whether BOM competency based roles significantly influenced academic performance among secondary school students in Nyamache Sub County, Kisii County. The correlation analysis in Table 4.8 indicates that there was indeed a significant relationship ($r = 0.426$, $p \leq 0.05$) between the variables. This finding suggests that the relationship between the variables was moderate implying that improving organizational factors would necessarily translate to significant improvements in academic performance among secondary school students in the area.

Conclusions

The competence-based roles of the BOM in the schools of Nyamache Sub County, Kisii County, are significantly linked to the academic achievements of the students. The structured approach, which includes forming sub-committees based on members' areas of expertise, ensures efficient communication, knowledge sharing, and more effective school governance.

Recommendations

Schools should further enhance their BOM structure by ensuring that each sub-committee is led by a competent leader and promote inter-committee communication for the effective management of school resources and challenges.

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