

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MASABA SUB-COUNTY, NYAMIRA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the strategies employed by school managers to enhance student academic performance in Masaba Sub County, Nyamira County, which has historically faced challenges with ineffective school management leading to subpar academic results. This was highlighted by the county's education officer during a 2018 educational symposium. The study aimed to explore the impact of school management on student outcomes in the public secondary schools of Masaba Sub-County. The study population included 150 Board of Management members, 120 heads of department, 120 members of the parent-teacher association, and 33 school principals. Employing a descriptive survey research design, a simple random sampling method was used to select a sample of 140 participants: 50 Board of Management members, 40 heads of department, 40 parent-teacher association members, and 10 principals. Data collection was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaires for quantitative data and interviews for qualitative insights from heads of departments and parent-teacher association members. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and coding were used to analyze the data, which was presented in tabular format. The research found that 50% of respondents acknowledged the positive impact of student participation in meetings on communication and academic performance. Additionally, 87.5% agreed that financial decisions, particularly educational budgeting, directly influence academic results. Furthermore, the results indicated that effective school management practices, including staff recognition and involving teachers in academic decision-making, significantly boost performance (mean = 4.46). The study made the following recommendations policymakers need to design initiatives that facilitate robust communication between members and administrators to enhance equal participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, it is crucial that any proposed changes involve education stakeholders, as their involvement will solidify the execution of targeted strategies aimed at boosting educational performance.

Keywords: *School Management, Communication, Decision Making, Academic Performance*

INTRODUCTION

Management is defined by Fayol (2016) as the capacity to forecast and plan, organize, coordinate, and oversee activities within an organization. Ravee (2015) adds to this by stating that management involves the strategic utilization of both physical and human resources, orchestrated through cooperative efforts. Expanding on these concepts, Okumbe (2017) details management as the process involved in designing and developing strategies that

effectively deploy organizational resources to achieve set goals. The importance of strong leadership and management is universally recognized as pivotal for the thriving of any organization. Specifically, in the context of educational institutions, effective leadership and management are considered critical determinants of educational quality and student academic outcomes (Wango, 2018).

School management has emerged as a central aspect of public-school administration globally. Educational systems around the world frequently oscillate between trends of centralization and decentralization in school management. This has led to significant reforms, notably the devolution of decision-making to the school level, which is viewed as a pivotal shift towards empowering local schools (Nyongesa, 2018). Such empowerment allows not only administrators but also educators, principals, teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders engaged in educational pursuits to play an active role in decision-making. This approach is increasingly recognized for its potential to improve school management and enhance academic performance, a connection that has been the subject of various studies (Orodho, 2014). Furthermore, the effectiveness of schools in meeting societal expectations post-independence is supported by the government's efforts in providing trained educators and establishing a quality assurance department to uphold educational standards (Republic of Kenya, 2018). International organizations acknowledge that these efforts are integral to understanding the social dynamics within which schools operate (UNESCO, 2019).

The challenges facing school management include a shortage of teachers, insufficient facilities, community interference, inadequate teaching methods, and poor management of school resources, which significantly impact educational quality (Ohba, 2016). Education is regarded as a vital investment for both individuals and society at large, with the government emphasizing its role at the forefront of the nation's human and economic development initiatives (Republic of Kenya, 2016). Similarly, education is identified as essential for socio-economic and political development, equipping students with necessary skills and knowledge for national roles (World Bank, 2016). Following the implementation of free primary education, secondary education has seen intensified competition and a substantial rise in enrollment. To address these challenges, the government has prioritized educational reform, demonstrated by numerous reviews from special commissioners and working groups (Republic of Kenya, 2017). Moreover, the government has dedicated efforts to developing sector policies and strategies to assure the delivery of relevant and high-quality education, training, and research, recognizing education as a key sector in imparting essential skills and knowledge to the population (UNESCO, 2019).

The implementation of Free Primary Education has led to a surge in student enrollment, necessitating the expansion of secondary schools to accommodate this influx. The Ministry of Education identified secondary education as a critical area for immediate action to handle the significant increase in primary school graduates (Republic of Kenya, 2017). In response, the government has developed strategies to ensure equal educational opportunities for all its citizens, reflecting the high societal value placed on the potential benefits of education (Republic of Kenya, 2018). The Ministry of Education is actively working to not only increase the number of educational opportunities but also to enhance access and improve the quality of education and training at all levels (Republic of Kenya, 2016). The commitment extends to developing human resources through comprehensive educational policies aimed at meeting the country's manpower needs, eradicating illiteracy, and raising living standards (Republic of Kenya, 2018). The education sector is pivotal in generating the necessary skills and competencies for economic participation, with ongoing efforts to address issues of access, quality, and efficiency within the education system (Republic of Kenya, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The persistent low academic performance in public secondary schools in Masaba Sub-County, Nyamira County, as evidenced by consistently poor results in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations, remains a critical concern. If this problem is not addressed, it is likely that the students in this region will continue to experience academic failure, which will severely limit their opportunities for higher education and reduce their potential for future employment. This cycle of underachievement can have broader socio-economic impacts, perpetuating poverty and limiting community development. Without effective intervention, the educational gap between students in Masaba Sub-County and those in better-performing regions will widen, exacerbating inequalities and hindering the overall progress of the community (Koech, 2019).

Efforts have been made by County education officials to identify the root causes of this underperformance. In 2018, during an education symposium, officials highlighted ineffective school management as a significant factor, citing issues such as poor communication, inadequate supervision, and flawed decision-making processes. Despite these observations, there has been limited progress in implementing effective solutions to address these management deficiencies. Previous research in educational administration globally underscores the critical role of school heads in ensuring school quality and effectiveness. For instance, the Ministry of Education (1994) emphasizes that effective curriculum implementation and school supervision are pivotal responsibilities of school managers. Kitavi (2017) also reiterates the importance of competent leadership in fostering academic success, noting that effective school management directly influences the quality of education provided.

While the importance of effective school management is well-documented, there is a significant gap in specific, actionable strategies tailored to the unique challenges faced by schools in Masaba Sub-County. Existing studies have not sufficiently explored the direct correlation between management practices and student performance in this specific context, nor have they provided a comprehensive framework for improvement based on empirical data from the region. Igunnu (2016) points out various instances of mismanagement in project execution, such as unfinished government buildings due to budget shortages, and new schools suffering from a lack of adequate resources like desks and teachers. These examples illustrate the critical impact of school management on the infrastructure and resource allocation necessary to support educational activities effectively.

This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a thorough investigation into the impact of school management practices on the academic performance of public secondary schools in Masaba Sub-County. By identifying the specific managerial deficiencies contributing to poor academic outcomes, the study seeks to propose targeted strategies for enhancing management effectiveness. These strategies will be designed to improve communication, supervision, and decision-making processes within schools, ultimately leading to better academic performance and more favorable long-term outcomes for students in the region. Effective project implementation in education primarily hinges on proficient management, organization, and the careful matching of project requirements with the available facilities at the local level (Waweru & Orodho, 2014). By addressing these issues, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how managerial deficiencies affect educational outcomes and to propose potential strategies for improvement that are both practical and sustainable.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To assess the influence of communication on academic performance in public secondary school in Masaba Sub-County.
- ii. To examine the influence of decision making on academic performance in public secondary schools in Masaba Sub-County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical literature Review

Communication by school management and academic performance

Management is a multifaceted process that involves planning, organizing, staffing, controlling, and problem-solving to achieve specific organizational goals. According to recent studies, management entails the systematic design, development, and implementation of strategies to effectively utilize organizational objectives and resources to meet these goals (Jackson, 2016). Effective management practices significantly influence stakeholder behavior by initiating programs, setting policies, acquiring necessary materials and resources, and providing motivation, all of which are crucial for achieving educational objectives (Smith, 2020).

School managers play a critical role in implementing changes that enhance the quality of instructional programs. Research on exemplary schools has highlighted that effective managers are both task-oriented and action-oriented, demonstrating strong organizational skills and proficiency in delegating tasks to achieve objectives (Johnson, 2018). Furthermore, Harris (2019) emphasized that high-performing schools are distinguished by setting high expectations, regularly monitoring student progress, maintaining a positive learning environment, and establishing clear goals and objectives. These elements collectively contribute to a structured and effective educational setting.

Ensuring high levels of academic success for students and instructors requires effective management at the highest levels of the hierarchy, particularly from the principal. Recent studies by Thompson (2017) have shown that the management methods of the principal are a significant factor contributing to performance disparities in schools. Successful academic institutions often share certain characteristics: a conducive school environment free of disciplinary issues, a strong emphasis on basic skills instruction for all students, clear instructional objectives for monitoring and assessing student performance, and a school principal who is a strong, pragmatic leader setting high standards, frequently observing classrooms, maintaining discipline, and creating incentives for learning (Miller, 2021).

In the United States, research by Roberts (2019) and Patel (2020) has demonstrated that effective leaders exert a direct but powerful influence on a school's capacity to implement reforms and improve student achievement. Principals in schools with high levels of academic achievement engage more in behaviors linked with cultural connection than principals in schools with lower levels of achievement (Baker, 2020). Additionally, the qualities of the school environment and organization significantly affect individual student accomplishment (Clark, 2019). According to Chen (2019), the quality of leadership in schools significantly influences teacher motivation and the quality of instruction they provide. Moreover, the academic performance of students improves with a higher degree of distributed leadership within the school community, particularly among teachers (Lewis, 2018). The duties and responsibilities assigned to school management significantly impact the functioning of specific schools.

Therefore, it is essential to develop policies that tangibly improve the academic environment of schools. Research by Williams (2021) has emphasized that school principals should be adequately trained to lead organizational changes aimed at addressing gaps in student academic performance. While extensive studies on the management practices of principals exist, recent research has begun to focus more on the broader scope of strategic leadership that could enhance academic outcomes (Adams, 2022).

Decision making and academic performance

Effective school management encompasses several key areas: curriculum and instruction management, materials and physical resources management, financial and business management, and human resources and student personnel management, including discipline.

These components are crucial for creating an organized, resourceful, and productive educational environment. Each element plays a vital role in shaping the learning experience, ensuring that schools are well-equipped and teachers are well-supported. Additionally, financial management ensures that funds are judiciously allocated and spent, which directly influences the quality of educational services provided. Managing human resources effectively also includes addressing student behavior and discipline, crucial for maintaining a conducive learning atmosphere (Smith, 2018).

The Ministry of Education has reported that performance in core subjects at the secondary education level is unsatisfactory, particularly due to a low ratio of textbooks, a challenge most prevalent in rural and urban slum areas. Additionally, there is a lack of adequate pedagogical skills required for effective curriculum delivery, especially in these core subjects (Ministry of Education, 2022). Adams (2017) emphasizes that a principal's primary responsibility is to ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum by utilizing all available resources—human, financial, and material. This includes not only resources found within the school but also those available in the surrounding community, thereby optimizing educational outcomes through comprehensive resource management.

While Green and Brown (2016) analyzed the difficulties associated with the administration of education in Nigeria, they argued for an educational field that is ostensibly egalitarian for all pupils. For this reason, the principal, in their capacity as an instructional leader, needs to be actively engaged in enhancing both teaching and learning by conducting responsible supervision actions. Additionally, public perception and authorities in Kenya evaluate the efficiency of an educational institution based on the number of students who advance to the next level of study or gain employment (Muchina, 2018). While many schools perform well on national tests, it is crucial to identify additional factors that may hinder academic success in certain schools within Masaba Sub-County.

According to White (2017), the motivation of the instructor and the connection they establish with students significantly impact academic achievement. This includes the creative approaches teachers use to compensate for limitations within the educational institution. White also noted that the efficacy of instructors depends largely on the material resources available to them and their creativity in improvising insufficient supplies. This is feasible when teachers receive professional training and participate in regular in-service training through workshops and seminars.

In defining the term "resources," Jones (2016) states that resources refer to anything present in the school or its surroundings that can assist in training and educating students. This includes individuals from various organizations, buildings, physical plant, and activities resulting from changes in any given activity. According to Martinez (2020), inadequate school environments that are not conducive to learning may result in poor academic performance. Lumuli (2019) asserts that suitable learning facilities, including equipment and human resources, enhance the quality and relevance of the skills transmitted to learners. The interaction of students with their surroundings is an essential component of the learning process. Classrooms, labs, libraries, playing fields, and textbooks are examples of teaching and learning materials. Indeed, the availability of physical resources significantly influences the development of an atmosphere conducive to efficient teaching and learning.

Juma (2021) establishes a connection between the status of teaching and learning resources in schools and students' performance on tests. He observes that children from low-income families perform poorly on tests because they often reside in areas where schools lack essential amenities. This leads to a sense of helplessness and a belief that attending school is a waste of time. The dearth of fundamental infrastructure, such as labs, makes teaching science subjects difficult. Teachers are forced to teach theoretically about subjects meant to

be taught practically, which ultimately lowers student performance and competitiveness (Mayama, 2022; Lumuli, 2019).

Adams (2017) states that managing material resources includes planning, acquiring, assigning, and distributing such materials, as well as regulating and maintaining them. Planning for material resources involves determining necessary resources, evaluating their quality in relation to requirements, setting standards, and considering how materials are used individually or collectively. Since many instructional programs and student services require certain physical facilities, school management must ensure that all physical facilities are available and well-maintained. These goals can be achieved if essential strategies are implemented efficiently and effectively (Johnson, 2016).

Kipkulei (2021) reports that schools with adequate physical facilities fare better on national examinations than those with poor facilities. Therefore, administrators of schools lacking such facilities must ensure their timely provision. According to the Ministry of Education (2022), the ratio of textbooks to pupils is often low, particularly in rural areas and urban slum schools. The government has pledged to provide secondary schools with necessary teaching materials and urged parents and the community to contribute to infrastructure and operational costs to improve academic performance.

Kamau (2020) notes that inadequate funding significantly impacts several administrative areas, including the provision of school supplies and physical amenities. This cumulative effect detrimentally affects academic achievement in schools. Financial management involves managing the flow of money into and out of the institution. According to Parker (2018), financial administration is crucial in determining how a school is administered and whether it can achieve its goals. Schools often obtain funds through various means, including fees, contributions, agricultural activities, and government grants.

Opondo (2019) and Inyiega (2018) observe that principals face budgetary restrictions, especially in maintaining cash records. There is a scarcity of accounting personnel, making it challenging for school managers to perform effective financial management. Adams (2017) emphasizes that school administrators must ensure effective budget management, particularly regarding expenditures. Principals should be accountable for financial accounting and auditing and ensure internal audits are conducted with the help of a bursar or accounts clerk.

Human resources in schools include pupils, instructors, and support staff. Staff members, as a factor of production, are influenced by adequacy and quality, determined by their training and motivation levels (Juma, 2021). Habison and Meyer (2018) state that examination grades are determined by teacher performance, indicated by training and teaching experience. Trained teachers possess the pedagogical skills needed to enhance student knowledge, motivate pupils, and promote academic success. Sifuna (2017) notes that the distribution of trained teachers within Kenya's education system significantly influences education quality and student achievement. Overworked teachers due to high student-teacher ratios result in poor student performance (Guru et al., 2018).

Conceptual framework

The depicted diagram illustrates the independent variables of communication and decision making, with academic performance as the dependent variable.

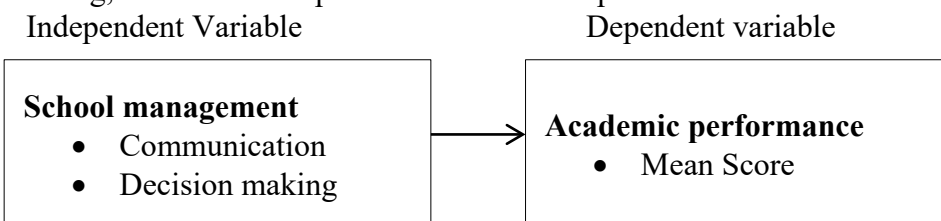


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2019)

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a mixed methodology approach was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. In this study, a concurrent triangulation design was utilized, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods simultaneously and with equal emphasis. The population consisted of 120 heads of department, 120 members of the parents-teacher association, and 33 school principals. In this study, simple random sampling was employed to select ten schools, representing 30% of the population.

The researcher utilized questionnaires and interview schedules to gather data from the participants. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics including percentages and frequencies were employed. Responses were coded and categorized according to the specific objectives of the study. Subsequently, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0 was utilized for data analysis. The findings were then presented through frequency distribution tables, percentages, and other relevant tables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Communication by school management and its effects on performance

Statements	rarely		sometimes		often		Nearly always		M/S
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
How often does communication by the management to staff affect their teaching morale?	0	0	47	33.6	41	29.3	52	37.1	3.04
How often are students addressed on area needing academic improvement?	0	0	52	37.1	52	37.1	36	25.7	2.89
How often do heads of departments hold meetings with teachers in the department to highlight needs of the department?	21	15.0	36	25.7	73	52.0	10	7.1	2.52
How often does management hold forums for teachers to air grievances?	16	11.4	57	40.7	36	25.7	36	25.7	2.59
How often does lack of proper communication to students result in low academic achievement?	21	15.0	47	33.6	36	25.7	36		2.63

Source: Field Data (2021)

The table shows that the response average for communication affecting the morale of staff is 3.04 indicating that often poor communication affects the morale of staff on average with the highest proportion 52 (37.1%) indicating that poor communication nearly always affects their morale while 47 (33.6%) and 41 (29.3%) indicate this occurs sometimes and often respectively. Communication to students with regard to academic areas needing improvement

was 2.89 indicating that on average students were less than often communicated to. The highest proportions were sometimes and often at 52 (37.1%) with 36 (25.7%) indicating that this happens nearly always.

The data shows that the heads of departments less than often held meetings to highlight needs of the departments as shown by a response average of 36 (2.52%) with 73 (52.0%) of the respondents indicating such meetings were often held. The table also shows that the managements less than often held forums for teachers to air their grievances the response average was 2.59 indicating that the forums were held sometimes on average with 57 (40.7%) of the respondents indicating they were held sometimes.

The results show that there is on average that less than often lack proper communication results in low academic achievement as depicted by the response average of 2.63 with the highest proportion of 47 (33.6%) feeling that this happens sometimes. The findings align with Bennett (1997), who asserts that human relations within a school environment are greatly influenced by the organizational context in which they occur. This underscores the significance of leadership styles, interpersonal and organizational communications, employee or student satisfaction, as well as group norms and cohesion. Bennett emphasizes the importance of people's participation in communication that impacts their professional or academic lives, advocating for mechanisms such as negotiating committees, representation in school boards, suggestion schemes, autonomous problem-solving groups, and joint consultation. Such participatory approaches ensure that individual, group, and institutional needs are considered, along with broader constituencies, leading to more effective outcomes. Wayne (2008) further emphasizes the importance of consultative communication, where stakeholders are involved in defining problems, evaluating alternative solutions, assessing implications, and structuring responses. Despite the crucial role of public schools in education and human development, they have not received adequate attention in ongoing democratic transitions.

Inferential statistics

Additional quantitative analysis was performed on the collected data, employing correlation and linear regression techniques.

The findings obtained were shown in the table below.

Table 2: Correlations for Communication by school management and its effects on performance

		Correlations				
		R01 Communication by managem ent may affect staff morale	R01 Students are well addresse d on areas that need improve ment	R01 HODs regularly hold meetings to monitor the academic needs of students	R01 Manage ment host forums for teachers and students to air grievance s	R01 Improper communi cation results to indiscipli ne and low academic performa nce
R01 Communication by management may affect staff	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2- tailed)	1	.015	.300**	-.385**	.150
			.857	.000	.000	.076

morale	N	140	140	140	140	140
R01 Students are well addressed on areas that need improvement	Pearson Correlation	.015	1	-.506**	-.144	.326**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.857		.000	.090	.000
R01 HODs regularly hold meetings to monitor the academic needs of students	N	140	140	140	140	140
	Pearson Correlation	.300**	-.506**	1	-.264**	.172*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.002	.042
R01 Management host forums for teachers and students to air grievances	N	140	140	140	140	140
	Pearson Correlation	-.385**	-.144	-.264**	1	-.510**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.090	.002		.000
R01 Improper communication results to indiscipline and low academic performance	N	140	140	140	140	140
	Pearson Correlation	.150	.326**	.172*	-.510**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.076	.000	.042	.000	
	N	140	140	140	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Data (2021)

The correlation analysis reveals several significant relationships among the variables studied. Firstly, there is a positive correlation between the perception that communication by management may affect staff morale and the regularity of HODs holding meetings to monitor academic needs, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.300, significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that better communication by management is associated with more frequent academic monitoring meetings by HODs.

Conversely, the relationship between management communication and the hosting of forums for teachers and students to air grievances is negatively correlated, with a Pearson coefficient of -0.385, also significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that when management communication is perceived to be effective, the need for grievance forums decreases, possibly because issues are resolved through better communication channels.

There is a strong negative correlation (-0.506) between students being well addressed on areas that need improvement and the frequency of HODs' meetings, significant at the 0.01 level. This may imply that when students are effectively communicated with regarding their improvement areas, there might be less need for frequent HOD meetings, or vice versa.

Interestingly, the correlation between the perception that students are well addressed on areas that need improvement and improper communication leading to indiscipline and low academic performance is positive (0.326), significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that addressing students' improvement areas effectively is linked with better discipline and academic performance, highlighting the importance of clear and constructive communication.

The analysis also shows a significant negative relationship (-0.510) between the management hosting forums for grievances and improper communication resulting in indiscipline and low

academic performance. This negative correlation, significant at the 0.01 level, suggests that better communication can reduce the need for grievance forums and simultaneously lower indiscipline and poor academic performance.

Overall, the correlations indicate that effective communication by management plays a crucial role in maintaining staff morale, addressing students' needs, and reducing indiscipline and academic issues. Frequent academic needs monitoring by HODs and hosting grievance forums also appear to be influenced by how communication is handled within the institution.

Linear Regression

The findings obtained were shown in the table below.

Table 3: Linear regression for communication by school management and its effects on performance

Model		Coefficients				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.994	.493		6.070	.000
	R01 Communication by management may affect staff morale	-.281	.063	-.374	-4.433	.000
	R01 Students are well addressed on areas that need improvement	.166	.082	.205	2.033	.044
	R01 HODs regularly hold meetings to monitor the academic needs of students	-.092	.060	-.157	-1.545	.125
	R01 Management host forums for teachers and students to air grievances	-.220	.072	-.289	-3.068	.003
	R01 Improper communication results to indiscipline and low academic performance	-.075	.078	-.092	-.966	.336

a. Dependent Variable: Academic performance DV

Source: Field Data (2021)

The regression analysis provides insights into the impact of various communication-related factors on academic performance. The constant term indicates the baseline level of academic performance when all other variables are held constant.

One of the key findings is that communication by management significantly affects academic performance. The negative coefficient suggests that better communication by management is associated with improved academic performance. This is reinforced by the t-value and the p-value, which indicate a highly significant effect.

Another important factor is how well students are addressed on areas that need improvement. The positive coefficient here implies that effective communication in addressing students' improvement areas positively impacts academic performance. This relationship is statistically significant, indicating the importance of constructive feedback and guidance for students.

Interestingly, the frequency of HODs holding meetings to monitor academic needs does not show a significant impact on academic performance in this model. The negative coefficient suggests a potential negative relationship, but the lack of statistical significance indicates that this factor alone may not be a strong predictor of academic outcomes.

The hosting of forums for teachers and students to air grievances shows a significant negative impact on academic performance. This finding suggests that the need for such forums might be indicative of underlying communication issues that, if unresolved, can adversely affect academic performance.

Lastly, improper communication leading to indiscipline and low academic performance does not appear to have a significant direct impact in this model. The negative coefficient hints at a potential negative relationship, but the lack of statistical significance suggests that other factors might be at play in influencing academic outcomes related to communication.

Overall, the regression analysis highlights the critical role of effective communication by management and addressing students' needs in enhancing academic performance. It also suggests that while grievance forums are important, their necessity might point to broader communication challenges that need to be addressed to improve academic outcomes.

Qualitative responses from interviews

One of the interviewees stated the following:

“Any institution that aspires to grow to greater heights, communication is key. In a learning center, communication between management and teachers, teacher and students and management and students must be straight forward and articulate. More so, the school management must focus the efforts to ensure there is clear rapport between teachers and students. Management must be clear on the objectives to wish to accomplish and should consult the teachers to come with a plan that involves their actualization. This way, as teachers engage the students, they will be able to plan the teaching efforts and loop in students in the achievement of the set school objectives.”

Decision making by School Management

This study was guided by the following question: What are the challenges facing decision making by the school management in relation to academic performance in Masaba Sub-County? The responses on Challenges facing decision making by School Management, the result is as shown in table 4 below.

Descriptive statistics

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for challenges facing decision making by School Management

Statements	rarely		sometimes		often		Nearly always		M/S
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
To what extent does school management engage teachers in decision-making regarding academic achievement?	0	0	26	18.6	73	52.1	41	29.3	3.11
To what degree does school management acknowledge and incentivize staff to enhance academic performance?	21	15	57	40.7	36	25.7	26	18.6	2.48

To what extent are heads of departments empowered to influence decisions pertaining to their respective departments?	5	3.6	31	22.1	83	59.3	21	15.0	2.85
To what degree does the performance of schools in KCSE reflect the decisions made by heads of departments and school principals?	5	3.6	27	19.3	54	38.6	54	38.6	3.12
How frequently do teachers within the department struggle to take ownership of the challenges affecting academic achievements?	16	11.4	26	18.6	52	37.1	47	33.6	2.93

Source: Field Data (2021)

The data shows that school managements more than often involve the teachers in decision making concerning academic achievement as depicted by a response average of 3.11 depicting overall agreement that more than often teachers are involved in this decision making. The highest proportion 73 (52.1%) indicates that teacher's involvement is often necessary.

The table shows that staff motivation for performing better academically has a response average of 2.48 indicating that less than often staffs are motivated to perform better academically. This is further depicted by the highest proportion of respondents 57 (40.7%) indicating that the motivation to perform better academically only happens sometimes. The data portrays that on average less than often heads of departments have the ability to influence decisions before them concerning their departments this is shown by the response average of 2.85. 83 (59.3%) of the respondents indicate that often the heads of departments can influence decisions concerning their departments.

The table shows that more than often decisions made by heads of department and the principal influenced performance in KCSE as depicted by the response average of 3.12 with the highest proportions of respondents 54 (38.6%) indicating that this happens sometimes and nearly always. The data further showed that less than often teachers in the departments find it hard to own challenges facing academic achievements, response average of 2.93, with the highest proportion of respondents 52 (37.1%) indicating that this happens often. However, local governments were envisioned as holistic entities, encompassing multiple sectors and possessing legal status (Kimacia, 2007). Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate that the government does not prioritize these issues in participatory decision-making processes.

Consultation assumes that people operate in organized groups to make decisions that guide the course of their institutions. Understanding the social systems in which processes occur is crucial as consultative procedures attempt to modify the culture within the community to exercise the self-discipline and objectivity required to participate in consultation (Crum & Sherman, 2008). Even though decisions by management boards are always through consensus mechanisms, various student constituencies of the community have not been

evolved. The number of participating students is too low to adequately represent the numbers in the student body. Consultative decision-making evokes a sense of partnership, community participation, and working together for the common good (Kythreotis, Pashiardis, & Kyriakides, 2010).

Government decisions have a significant impact on matters affecting organizational objectives. Therefore, it is vital for the government to make wise decisions to meet the objectives of an organization. This finding suggests that economic decisions, if well-made, can lead to the promotion of the desired achievement of academic performance in Kenya. This is true given that without financial support, school management may not meet its objectives.

This finding indicates that decision-making in school management is mostly achieved through the staff meeting method.

Inferential statistics

Additional quantitative analysis was performed, employing correlation and linear regression techniques. The findings obtained were shown in the table below.

Table 5: Correlation for Challenges facing decision making by School Management

		Correlations				
		R02 School management involves teachers in decision making	R02 School management motivates their staff to achieve excellence	R02 HODs are able to influence decisions that concern their department	R02 Decisions made by HODs and principals have an effect on KCSE performance	R02 Teachers own up the mistakes affecting their department
R02 School management involves teachers in decision making	Pearson Correlation	1	-.457**	-.418**	.583**	-.519**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	140	140	140	140	140
R02 School management motivates their staff to achieve excellence	Pearson Correlation	-.457**	1	.334**	-.512**	.354**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	140	140	140	140	140
R02 HODs are able to influence decisions that concern their department	Pearson Correlation	-.418**	.334**	1	-.554**	.685**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	140	140	140	140	140
R02 Decisions made by HODs and principals have an effect on KCSE performance	Pearson Correlation	.583**	-.512**	-.554**	1	-.519**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	140	140	140	140	140

R02 Teachers own up the mistakes affecting their department	Pearson Correlation	-.519**	.354**	.685**	-.519**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	140	140	140	140	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Data (2021)

The correlation analysis examines the relationships between various aspects of school management practices and their impacts on teachers and academic performance. A key observation is the relationship between involving teachers in decision-making and other variables. There is a significant positive correlation between involving teachers in decision-making and the effect of decisions made by HODs and principals on KCSE performance. This suggests that when teachers are involved in decision-making processes, the decisions made at the higher levels are more likely to positively impact academic performance.

However, involving teachers in decision-making negatively correlates with both the motivation of staff to achieve excellence and the ability of HODs to influence decisions concerning their departments. These negative correlations imply potential conflicts or issues that arise when trying to balance inclusive decision-making with maintaining high motivation and effective departmental influence by HODs.

The motivation of staff to achieve excellence is positively correlated with the ability of HODs to influence decisions concerning their department and teachers owning up to mistakes affecting their department. This indicates that motivated staff are more likely to operate in environments where HODs have a say in decision-making and where accountability for mistakes is present.

Conversely, staff motivation is negatively correlated with the impact of decisions by HODs and principals on KCSE performance. This negative relationship suggests that while motivated staff is essential, there might be complexities in how their motivation translates directly to academic performance outcomes.

The influence of HODs on departmental decisions shows a strong positive correlation with teachers owning up to mistakes affecting their department. This relationship suggests that HODs who have significant influence in decision-making can foster a culture of accountability among teachers.

Finally, the impact of decisions by HODs and principals on KCSE performance negatively correlates with teachers owning up to mistakes. This might indicate that in environments where the decisions of HODs and principals are critical for academic performance, there could be challenges in fostering a culture of accountability among teachers.

Overall, these correlations highlight the intricate dynamics between decision-making processes, staff motivation, influence within departments, and academic performance outcomes. Effective school management involves balancing these factors to create a conducive environment for both staff and students.

Linear Regression

The findings obtained were shown in the table below.

Table 6: Linear regression for Challenges facing decision making by School Management

		Coefficients				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.657	.636		2.607	.010

R02 School management involves teachers in decision making	.085	.103	.090	.822	.412
R02 School management motivates their staff to achieve excellence	-.079	.081	-.097	-.980	.329
R02 HODs are able to influence decisions that concern their department	-.250	.107	-.281	-2.349	.002
R02 Decisions made by HODs and principals have an effect on KCSE performance	.018	.073	.029	.244	.808
R02 Teachers own up the mistakes affecting their department	.164	.109	.183	1.506	.134

a. Dependent Variable: Academic performance DV

Source: Field Data (2021)

The regression analysis results provide insight into how different aspects of school management practices influence academic performance. The constant term indicates the baseline level of academic performance when all other variables are held constant, showing a significant positive value.

One of the variables analyzed is the involvement of teachers in decision-making by school management. The positive but not statistically significant coefficient suggests that while there might be a slight positive impact on academic performance when teachers are involved in decision-making, this relationship is not strong enough to be considered significant within this model.

The variable measuring the motivation of staff to achieve excellence has a negative coefficient, indicating a slight negative relationship with academic performance. However, this relationship is also not statistically significant, implying that staff motivation alone may not be a strong predictor of academic performance in this context.

The influence of HODs on decisions concerning their department shows a significant negative impact on academic performance. This significant relationship, with a negative coefficient, suggests that when HODs have greater influence in decision-making, it might not always translate into better academic performance. This could be due to various reasons such as potential conflicts or inefficiencies in decision-making processes at the departmental level.

Decisions made by HODs and principals and their effect on KCSE performance show a positive but not statistically significant relationship with academic performance. This indicates that while these decisions might have some impact, their direct influence on academic performance is not strong enough to be considered significant within this model.

Finally, the variable indicating whether teachers own up to mistakes affecting their department has a positive coefficient, suggesting a potential positive impact on academic performance. However, this relationship is not statistically significant, indicating that accountability among teachers, while important, may not be a decisive factor in academic performance outcomes in this model.

Overall, the regression analysis highlights the complex interplay between different aspects of school management and academic performance. It suggests that while certain management practices like HOD influence and teacher accountability show some relationship with academic performance, their direct impact may not always be straightforward or significant. Effective academic performance seems to require a balanced approach involving multiple facets of school management.

Qualitative responses from interviews

One of the interviewees stated the following:

“Teachers are an entity that directly interacts with the major stakeholders in a learning institution that is the students. Teachers are able to understand the problems that affect students which means that they should be involved in any decisions that involve these students. Heads of departments must always look for their teachers. They should always listen to their juniors and present their needs to the management since they are the advocates of the students.”

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The health of a society is intrinsically linked to the efficacy and orientation of its educational system. This study highlights the critical role of school management in fostering a participatory approach to decision-making, which is essential for enhancing student performance.

However, the findings indicate a lack of collaboration between teachers and students, primarily due to management's failure to facilitate effective coordination. This lack of synergy prevents the school from achieving its goals effectively. The evidence suggests that school management often excludes students, teachers, and the community from participating in decisions that impact the school's success, which in turn means that these stakeholders are not involved in shaping academic policies or their own academic paths. As a result, the educational system may fail to foster the intellectual growth necessary to address socio-economic challenges effectively.

Moreover, the study suggests that if the government does not update and improve the pedagogical approaches used in schools to ensure they lead to positive outcomes, progress in meeting societal challenges will be hampered. An educational system restructured to include a modern pedagogy would not only enhance the management of education but also provide substantial benefits to students, teachers, and the community at large by promoting an inclusive and effective educational environment.

Recommendations for practice

Policymakers need to design initiatives that facilitate robust communication between members and administrators to enhance equal participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, it is crucial that any proposed changes involve education stakeholders, as their involvement will solidify the execution of targeted strategies aimed at boosting educational performance.

School administrators should hold meetings to facilitate interaction with students and staff, fostering a culture of participatory decision-making. Additionally, it's important for school management to discourage students from engaging in violence or making unrealistic demands by promoting a representative decision-making approach that encourages constructive participation.

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