Level of Students Involvement in Decision Making and Organizational Effectiveness of Secondary School in Chepalungu Sub-County, Bomet

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Abstract
The purpose of the study was to evaluate the level of students' involvement in decision making and organizational effectiveness of secondary schools in Chepalungu sub-county, Bomet. The study employed a descriptive survey design targeting student leaders and school principals in the 64 registered secondary schools. Quantitative and qualitative approach using questionnaires for the student leaders and interview schedule for the principals were used to collect data. Targeted schools were stratified into school types (boys only, girls only and mixed schools) then randomly selected to form a sample of 22 schools. Twenty two principals and 220 student leaders from the 22 schools participated in the study. Data collected was coded and entered into an SPSS programme for analysis in which descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, percentages and analysis of variance (ANOVA) generated which was used to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variables of the study at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study established that students in girls school were more involved in decision making indicating a mean of 4 (agree) in a rating scale of 1 to 5 compared to boys and mixed schools with a mean of 3 (undecided) as per the principals response. Students' respondents are involved in classroom decisions making as indicated by 93.2%. Involvement of student council in decision making has improved school organizational effectiveness as indicated by 63.6% of the principals who were in agreement that it had improved retention and time management. The study recommended that there was need to expand participation of students' council in decision making to include administrative and curriculum issues and democratic elections be practiced to enable students feel part and parcel of the school.
Keywords: Involvement, Decision making and Effectiveness

1. Introduction
A study by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Education in Kenya (MOE) in 2006 revealed that students participation in the daily running of schools was directly linked to better academic performance and less strikes (Karanja, 2010). It is out of these benefits and pressures that the government through the policy on decentralization ought to involve students in school management. Students are not just the beneficiaries of the school programmes but they are co-interested parties in raising the quality of their academic programmes. Lack of appropriate structures has limited effective and meaningful students' participation in school management (Love and Miller, 2003).

This led to increased participation of students in decision making. Student councils in the USA operate in many forms. There are representative based and modeled loosely after USA congress or based on the executive branch of the United States with a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and reporter. Many secondary schools have one set of officers per grade level. Students' councils in the USA serve to engage students in learning about democracy and leadership. Most secondary schools in developed countries such as US, Britain and Germany offer students the opportunity to participate in some sort of student government. Participation in student government is done through student government course, in which students learn leadership and decision making skills (Miller, 2004).

The role of the student in the life of the school gives them the chance to undergo training which prepares them for future life. From administrative point of view, the students' participation in the life of the school also contributes greatly to the efficient and orderly operation of the institution. Students' participation will improve communication, lead to better understanding and co-operation and help to resolve many personal and social problems which can be disruptive. An open and democratic approach is the only way to successful and sustainable leadership in a modern school (Anzigare, 2007).

In Chepalungu Sub-County, most schools have adopted the students' council system where students' participation in decision making is embraced. However, the level of students' involvement in decision making

and organizational effectiveness has not been evaluated. Therefore the researcher would like to rate the level of students' involvement in decision making and organizational effectiveness of secondary schools under the new regulations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The transformation of students' leadership from the prefect to more representative body was a voice in their leadership while changing the role of prefect from being master to being a bridge of communication between the students and school administration (Indimuli, 2012).Most of the times, decisions that teachers impose on students are the same as those students themselves could gladly have owned if they were given an opportunity to participate in their deliberations. Calls for inclusion of students in school management structure in schools led to formation of Kenya secondary schools student council (KSSSC) in 2009. In this new arrangement, students would be part and parcel of the school management to ensure that their interests are adopted in the management of schools. The students' representative is supposed to consult with board of management (B.O.M) and even attend B.O.M meetings as stated in the Basic Education Act, 2013 article 56(g) as an *ex officio* member. Despite this laudable move, recurrent students' unrest is still witnessed often blamed on taking decision without involving the students. This begs the question; are the students involved in school management to the level of their satisfaction in Kenya? Whereas there is need for workable students' councils in secondary schools in Kenya today, who are directly voted in by students and endorsed by the administration, little has been done on its effect on secondary schools management. Student's involvement in schools management as a tool towards the enhancement of administrative effectiveness and efficiency in Kenyan secondary schools has not been wholly embraced by schools even with the formation of Kenya secondary school students' councils (KSSSC). It is expected that participatory management of schools will move schools further (Zahra, 2010)

1.1.1 Research Questions

The study was guided be the following research questions.
   i)   Are students involved in decision making in secondary schools?
   ii)   What are the effects of students' involvement in decision making on organizational effectiveness?

1.1.2 Justification of the Study.

Students' participation in decision making in secondary schools is often viewed as problematic to school administrators, parents and society at large. This is often due to the fact that students are viewed as minors, immature, giving unrealistic demands and lacking in expertise and technical knowledge that is needed in running of a school. However, in countries where students' council has taken root, positive results have been witnessed such as positive school atmosphere and a caring school environment. Student participation in decision making has resulted in improved discipline, good student staff relation and development of communication and leadership skills among students (Olengarum, 2014). Since its inception, many schools have not fully involved student councils in decision making. Though most schools have established student councils, not much has been achieved which begs the question as to what extent have the student councils been involved in school management. Cases of students' unrest, high cases of dropouts, attitude of students towards staff and relatively low academic performance often blamed on non-involvement of students in decision making are frequently witnessed (Jared and Thinguri, 2017). For example in Chepalungu Sub-County, cases of student unrest are usually reported as per the information obtained from the sub county director of education. It is anticipated that by involving students in decision making to the level of their satisfaction such challenges will be overcome and much more will be achieved. Students' participation in decision making can be identified as a likely area of change and an issue worthy of attention.

1.1.3 Significance of the Study

The output of the study is expected to provide evidence for developing policies aimed at improving effectiveness of student councils in secondary schools in Kenya. School administrators could benefit from the study in that they may gain a deeper understanding of the need to involve students in school management as a way of equipping them for leadership. In addition the students' views on participation in decision making are likely to help school administrators, teachers and other stakeholders to improve the student councils for more participatory management.

2.0 Literature Review

The Basic Education Act 2013, which is the fundamental law governing education in Kenya, mandates the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Science and Technology to delegate power to appointed Board of Management (BOM's) who have the responsibility to manage secondary schools. Over the years, this is the legal document that has empowered BOM's and the head teachers (who are the secretaries to BOM's) to make decisions in all aspects of school management. Due to the incompetence of the BOM's, they make at times very unpopular decisions, which may be contested by other stakeholders such as parents, students and teachers, often in form of demonstrations and strikes (Mulwa et al, 2011).

The United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC), which has been ratified by the government of Kenya, gives young people rights on a wide range of issues including "the right to education, the right to be free from violence, exploitation and abuse, the right to food and shelter, the right to play, and the right to have their voice heard on issues which affect them". Students' involvement in decision making is likely to lead to better decisions to strengthen a commitment to understanding to democracy and better students (IPAR, 2008) The interest in children and young people's position in society has increased over the last number of years, particularly with the publication by the United Nations of the Convention of the Rights of the child in 1989. The conventions was signed by Ireland in 1990 and ratified without reservation in 1992. Duer (2004) argues that the most powerful change brought by the convention is the way in which children have become visible. Politicians, media, NGOs and broader society feel a clear obligation to include children in their respective public domain.

Establishment of students' council and other student bodies.

Establishing a student's council is a big project and need a lot of time from the teacher who has been assigned the role of setting it up. The main challenges associated with establishing a council is to educate the whole school about what a student council is, recruiting interested students, clarifying the role of the council with new members and how it will function on a day-to-day basis. Student council is a representative structure for students, only through which they can become involved in the affairs of the school, working in partnership with school management, staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students. Student councils provide a way not only for young people to become actively responsible for their Education, but also away for them to voice their views. The education act of (1998) in Ireland was to ensure that education system is accountable to students, their parents and the state for education provided, respect diversity of values, beliefs, language and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership between schools, patron, students, parents and teachers. The Education Act 1998 Section 27(I) states that a school board shall establish and maintain procedures for the purposes of informing students in a school the activities of the school.

In many countries, the student councils feed into a bigger organization of either regional or national student councils or youth organizations. Although some countries have very good system in place, very few organizations believe their opinions are really listened to although mechanisms are in place for them to be heard. Often representation appears to be tokenistic. This seems to be a crucial question – what kinds of structures really facilitate students' power? Is it partnership? Is it equality of respect? Is it solely about power through numbers? Or is it about having realistic aims and strategic lobbying? Respondents from a large number of countries reported that effectiveness depends on the school Principals' willingness to listen. Also, quite a number of student councils include staff and parental representatives and quite a few countries have students on school boards of management.

Mode of students' participation in school management

Students' councils participate in school management as student representative bodies. There are three views that guide students' involvement in decision making. The first is that students must remain passive and receive instructions from parents and teachers (Musitwa, 2003). This view means that the student's received policies designed by adults and their work is to follow them to the latter. The second is that students participate but only to certain degree (Musitwa, 2003). In support of this view Musitwa(2003) suggests that there was a tendency among some teachers and school leaders to define the issues which affect student's only and which have no immediate relevance to other stakeholders for example play grounds, toilets, lockers.

Aggrawal (2004) adds that student's representation may not participate in matter relating to the conduit of examination and evaluation of students performance, appointment of teachers and support staff. Owing to frequent occurrence of students' unrests in secondary schools there have been increased calls for decision making in schools in Kenya. The reason for this is because decisions in a school affect students in many ways. The students are recipients of the final decision (Sushilla et al, 2006). The ministry of education helped in putting up structure for inclusion of students in decision making. This was evidenced through the formation of Kenya secondary schools students' council (KSSSC) in 2009 in order to make secondary school governance more participatory. In this kind of arrangement, students are part and parcel of decision making to ensure that their interests are adapted in the administration of schools.

They argue that one of the reasons for their success is that ⅓ of upper secondary school students are members of the organization. Legislation demands that they should be heard in all matters pertaining to the education in the institution. There is political strength in numbers, In Liechtenstein, the students council started an evaluation of the 'schools' quality, the learning atmosphere and the teachers performance. In some countries, students have also had input in the education system. In the United States, the National Association of Student Councils (NASC) has been supporting student councils since 1931. NASC support state association of student councils in 50 states and all Canadian Provinces. Some of the student councils concentrate on student activities

such as dances, rallies and assemblies; others have broader remits and are involved in school policy issues, curriculum, hiring and evaluation of teachers. One of the main difficulties for student councils according to NASC is staff attitudes to the councils (Devine, 1999).

3.0 Research Methodology
Research Design
The researcher adopted descriptive survey design which allowed collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economical way (Saunders *et al*, 2000).the research design is appropriate for the study because it is easy to use, give precise information, facilitates possible drawing of valid conclusions and it does not require long term cooperation with the respondents.

The quantitative data from student leaders was collected using questionnaires and qualitative data from principals collected by use of interview schedules

Location of the Study
This study was conducted in Chepalungu Sub-County, which had a total of 64 registered secondary schools as at January 2016 that comprised sixty public secondary schools and four private schools.

Target Population The target population for the study were student leaders and principals in all registered secondary schools in Chepalungu sub-county. These schools are categorized as extra-county, county, sub-county and private schools (Republic of Kenya, 2013) and further as boys, girls and mixed schools. Apparently all boys and girls schools are boarding. Mixed schools are either purely day schools or mixed day and boarding. The number of student leaders varies depending on the number of students in that particular school however has one principal. The targeted population was appropriate because it is a replication of various categories of schools in Kenya.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size
The size of the sample should be neither too large nor too small (Kothari, 2007). The sample size was determined according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) by selecting at least 30% of the total population.

Using stratified random sampling technique, the 64 schools were stratified into Boys only, girls only and mixed schools. This was to ensure that all the school categories had equal chance of being randomly selected for the study. In total 2 boys schools,3 girls schools and 17 mixed schools were selected as study samples. From each school 10 student leaders in form 3 and 4 took part in the study to give a total of 220 students. In addition the 22 principals serving in the sampled schools were interviewed.

Data collection Instruments
The researcher used two types of questionnaires, for data collection, one type for students' leaders and the other for the principals. In addition, the school principals were interviewed on the extent to which the administration facilitates the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) policy on implementation of students' council.

Questionnaires and interview schedule had both open and closed ended questions. The first sections for both the questionnaire and interview schedule were similar and mainly gathered background information of the school, category of the school, year of establishment, number of students and teachers. The respondents rated their response in a scale of 1-strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- undecided, 4- agree to 5-stronly agree.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The data from questionnaires was edited and coded before being entered into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means,   and percentages were generated to summarize them. Analysis of variance was carried out to compare results from different school type. The data from questionnaires were presented using frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs. Mean standard deviation and percentages were calculated from the tabulated results.

4.0 Data Analysis and Presentation
Students' involvement in decision making through students' councils
Table 1: Student involvement in decision making at different school type in Chepalungu

School type	N	Mean ±SD (Rate of students involvement in decision making)
Girls only	3	3.67±1.52
Boys only	2	3.5±0.7
Mixed	17	3.29±1.16
Total	**22**	**3.487±1.127**

The results showed that the girls' only and boys' only schools agreed that the students are involved on academic policies when setting academic targets, formulation and implementation of school programmes, participation in problem solving and disciplinary resolutions. This was not the case in mixed schools that were undecided. The findings imply that students from either boys or girls only schools were more involved in decision making than those from mixed schools. The findings concur with the study of Chemutai & Chumba (2014) in Kericho West Sub-County which concluded that student councils are involved in making decisions concerning extra curriculum activities and standards of cleanliness.

Principals response on involvement of students in decision making
Table 2: Students involvement in decision making at different school types.

Type of school	N	Mean ± SD (principals ratings on decision making)
Girls	3	3.67±0.57
Boys school	2	3±0.5
Mixed school	17	3.18±1.07
Total	**22**	**3.28±0.71**

The principals in girls schools agreed (4) that students are involved in decision making while boys and mixed schools remained undecided (3) however not significantly different between the school types (F=0.365, p > 0.05).

Table 3: Principals' response on whether students are allowed to meet to design short term programmes.

Principals' response	No. of principals.	% Total
Helps administration to understand students interests	3	13.6
Helps administration to weed indiscipline to ease management	18	81.8
No response	1	4.6
Total	**22**	**100**

Effects of Students' council on school organizational effectiveness
Importance of students' councils.
Effective school leaders play a key role to a large extent in the management of education institutions. The second objective aimed at establishing if the students' council affects organizational effectiveness of a school. The students were asked to rate the involvement of students' councils on organizational effectiveness on a scale of 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree to 5- strongly agree.

Table 4: importance of student councils on school management

Type of school	N	Mean±SD (importance of student councils)
Girls	3	4.67±0.42
Boys school	2	4.5±0.61
Mixed school	17	4.24±0.53
Total	**22**	**4.47±0.52**

It was established that all the schools agree that the student council benefited the school management. Girls' schools had a higher mean of 4.67 followed by boys only then mixed schools. ANOVA shows that there was no significant difference between different school type (F=0.542, p>0.05) and school principals response on importance of students council to school management.

Level of students' council involvement on school organizational effectiveness.
It was established that majority of the students are not represented in the election of students council. This was seen by just a few who agreed that they are represented compared to those who disagreed hence there is no effect of students' council on secondary school organizational effectiveness.

Majority 88.8% agreed that students' problems are represented by student council in classrooms compared to those who either disagreed (3%) or were undecided (8.2%).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusions
Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were made;
1. The study concluded schools in Chepalungu Sub-county involved students in classroom decisions indicated by 93.2% while 79.1% of students agreed that they are involved in decision concerning disciplinary issues. Principals in girls schools agreed (4) that students are involved in decision making while principals in   boys and mixed remained undecided (3). However, students feel that they have not been involved in key issues such as administration and curriculum issues. The excess bureaucracy in

management in secondary schools hindered the students' decision making as indicated by 76% of student respondents.

2. Existence of student council in secondary schools in Chepalungu sub-county has made the work of the school management easier because of the shared responsibility. Involvement of student council on organizational effectiveness has improved discipline in the schools and students were able to air their grievances.72.7% of principals indicated that with support of students' council they have had an easy time controlling students. Involvement of student councils in supervisory roles has enhanced closeness to their colleagues and promoted respect among the students which has resulted in improved academic performance and time management both indicated 68.2% and students' retention in school at 63.6%. ANOVA shows there was no significant difference between school types and principals agreement on the benefits of students' council on school management (F=0.542, P>0.05).

Recommendations

1. There is need to ensure that all the schools in Chepalungu sub-county involve students council in decision making to ensure they play an active role in improving dialogue between staff and the students.
2. To improve the efficiency of the student council body, the study recommends that the student council be trained on adequate skills necessary for conflict resolution. This will help them cope with the threats they faced with other students and deal with petty issues among the students.

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