



Influence of the Principals' Decision Making Skills on Students' Academic Outcome in Public Teacher Training Colleges in Nyanza Region, Kenya

Yambo, John M. Onyango

Department of Educational Administration Planning and Economics

Kisii University Kenya

Email: yambojm@kisiiversity.ac.ke

Abstract: *Teacher training college principals' administrative skills involves authority and responsibility in terms of deciding the way ahead and being held responsible for the success or failure of achieving the set objectives. The success or failure of principals can be judged on their leadership qualities. In a constantly changing social, economic, and technological environment, leadership is a more important attribute of management today than before. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of the Principals decision making skills on students' academic outcome in public teachers training colleges in Nyanza Region, Kenya. The researcher used purposive sampling to select principals and BOM chairpersons while 30 Percent to select tutors and student leaders. Validity was done by using suggestions from supervisors before setting out to collect data. Reliability was done by using test re- test methods which yielded alpha of 0.67. Researcher used Questionnaires and interview schedules for data collection. Data was analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistical and inferential techniques using the Statistical packages of social sciences (SPSS) version 21. The researcher adhered to regulations and ethical considerations. The study found out that the principal decision making skill contributed to 63 percent of students' academic performance in public teachers training colleges in Nyanza Region. The study recommends that all principals must be well trained on decision making skill. The study recommended that all principals should periodically attend more decision making seminars in the region.*

Keywords: *Principals, decision, skills, academic, outcome, teachers colleges, Kenya*

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1. Introduction

Generally, principals are responsible for supporting the school or college vision to be achieved and sustain high level of student achievement. In order to realize this, the Elementary School Academic Assistant Principal (2013) pointed out that the academic assistant principal will collaborate with the school principal in the development, implementation and evaluation of instructional best practices. The assistant principal will focus specifically on providing provide teachers with targeted, content specific

feedback and resources and provide instructional capacity to support whole school transformation efforts. The team work between the principal, assistant and other teachers normally influence students' academic performance considerably. Studies done in England by Taffinder (2016) observed that the Education Act defines a manager as any person or body of persons responsible for the management of a college. Indeed, the Act presumes that principals are knowledgeable in educational management. The term management can be defined as the art of getting people together to accomplish desired goals through planning, organizing, sourcing, leading or directing, and

controlling for the purpose of accomplishing a goal (Allan, 2003). While the work of Taffinder (2016) used focus group discussion to collect data, the current study used questionnaire to collect data to fill the research gap.

The issue of time is very crucial in academic performance and college principals are particular about it. According to Burrus, Teresa, Holtzman, Richard and Mandigo (2013), existing time management interventions which include training in skills such as goal-setting, scheduling, prioritizing tasks, self-monitoring, problem-solving techniques, delegating, and negotiating, as well as conflict resolution are indispensable for college principals' success in academics. The work of Neupane (2017) also observed that appointments of principals is done on the assumption that the pre-service professional training that they underwent to prepare them for teaching, coupled with the experience that they get as practicing teachers are enough to enable them discharge their roles effectively. It is assumed that when the newly appointed heads assume office they will learn on the job and that they will attend in-service training to equip them with emerging managerial challenges. However from the principals own experiences and in view of how they have been discharging their roles, it raises questions about their preparedness in this respect. In this regard, Smith, Brooks-Gunn and Klebanov (2017) agreed that training improves workers' effectiveness in discharging their functions. It is therefore important that training needs for college heads are addressed immediately one is appointed. This would render them effective in discharging their managerial duties such as implementing educational policies.

Principals training, on job support from colleagues and experience has been found to be pivotal to academic performance. As explained by Burrus et al. (2013) and Goldman (2006) there have been few investigations into the changing nature of the role of principals focusing on their preparedness for management and leadership of tertiary institutions. When they considered themselves to be well prepared, they generally attributed this to experience combination with training and experience. The type of support, which the majority would prefer when taking up the post is mentoring by an experienced principal from a similar type of tertiary college. This has proved to be quite healthy for their progress at work. Studies Collins (2013), Muzenda (2013); Moller and Pankate (2006) stated that perceived unique challenges related to the increasingly complex and diverse nature of the teacher student population and behaviour in tertiary colleges calls for greater knowledge, understanding and awareness of relevant legislation. This includes understanding of the role, structure and function of service providers, demonstrating skills in people management including adolescents, and in curriculum planning and management. Undivided attention of college sponsors and political good will also contribute (Anelli, 2006). While Muzenda (2013) dealt with lecturers' Competences, the current study dealt with Contributions of the Principals

decision making skills on students' academic performance in public teachers training colleges to fill the research gap.

In Kenya, the situation is not very different. According to Yambo (2014) and Koech (2004) principals are appointed under the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), and run the day-to-day administrative operations of the colleges they are in charge of. The commission monitors the teachers and college heads through quality assurance officers who conduct regular inspections in colleges and report to the ministry through the established reporting process and avenues. The TSC seems to have adopted a highly decentralized model where the field officers supervise principals in exercising their duties but adopts a 'hands off' approach when it comes to actual administrative style of individual heads. This means that such issues as discipline of staff and students are left entirely to the discretion of each principal and the college boards (Koech 2004). The Ministry of Education (2003) plays such roles as policymaking, resource mobilization, quality assurance, auditing how resources are used, field implementation, and capacity building. Teacher training colleges like all organizations are advancing in complexity with an increasing number of factors that impact on college management and academic performance. Consequently, they raise challenges for leadership styles that call for principals as leaders in these colleges to create attractive and enabling working environment in order to motivate and retain effective teachers and non-teaching staff (Ndinza 2015).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, the problem of academic achievement in public training colleges in national examinations has been a concern of all stakeholders. In the Nyanza region, the situation has been worse due to the continuous students' poor academic performance every year as compared to other colleges in the country. Very few students pass with distinctions in all subjects in national examinations. Educators and members of public acknowledge that different colleges achieve different degrees of success even with similar learning facilities. There is great competition today among colleges all trying to produce better results in national examinations. Some have maintained better results while others have dropped possibly due to different principals' leadership skills in the colleges. Success in producing good results in national examinations is largely determined by the principals' leadership skills. These principals are well trained, remunerated, are supported and are experienced yet their colleges still post dismal achievement in national examinations. This study therefore endeavors to determine the influence of the principals' decision making skills on students' academic achievement in public teachers training colleges in Nyanza Region, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

Contributions of the Principals decision making skills on students' academic performance in public teachers training colleges

Decision making skills, directly influence academic achievement in institutions of learning. This involves teams working together as McCabe, Gillingham, Kerry, Atkinson and Beattie (2013:9) opined that the concept of 'leadership team' which include the governing body, the senior management team and key committees of the institution. The centre of the institution's decision making process, for most institutions, is the senior management team, which may also be referred to as the 'academy leadership team' or 'college leadership team'. The principal should play a key role within these leadership teams. The overarching long term need to match financial resources to the academy's purposes and policies, within constraints of affordability, taken with the responsibility to the local community and taxpayers for financial stewardship, means that the principal must contribute actively to cross-organizational issues and to corporate decision making. According to Hansraj (2007) colleges must be rigorous in their decision making, be explicit about the reasons for their decisions and record the supporting information and expected impact. This requires the CFO to be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions whenever and wherever they are taken. Providing accurate and timely information to enable effective budgetary control, decision making and sound strategic planning. Research of McCabe et al. (2013) looked into the role of Chief Financial Officer in Academics whereas the current work was about principals' decision making skills on students' academic achievement in public teachers training colleges to fill the research gap.

Leaders operate through meetings where decisions are made, Ogundele et al. (2015) prescribed that college administration involves managing, administering the curriculum and teaching, pastoral care, discipline, assessment evaluation and examinations, resource allocation, costing and forward planning, staff appraisal relationship with the community, use of the practical skills necessary for surviving the policies of organization such as decision-making, negotiation, bargaining, communication, conflict handling, running meetings and so on. Similarly, in their study, Lydiah and Nasongo (2009); Yambo, Odhiambo and Odera (2014) who worked with the head teachers asked them to indicate how they fostered team building in their schools. Their responses was an evident that over 70 percent of the principals in the high performing schools encouraged teamwork in schools by having a get together to celebrate and review any achievement, ensuring regular staff meetings and constant

briefings and consultation, appreciating each other's contribution and participation in decision making.

Team work and regular meetings contribute to healthy decision making in colleges. According to Norviewu-Mortty (2012) leadership was found collegial in many respects and characterized mainly by sharing responsibility with teachers. He established his collegial style of leadership through a participatory decision making process in the form of regular staff meetings to discuss disciplinary issues, and plan teaching and learning activities. It was equally demonstrated through consultations with implementation committees and Heads of Departments. These consultations which also involved a dialogue with students were meant to reinforce a rapport between the Principal and the students. Leaders' collegial leadership was also demonstrated through their classroom teaching and sharing of personal resources with teachers as well as through their speedy, respectful arbitration of misunderstandings and conflicts. The Principal initiated and encouraged a participatory decision making process through regular staff meetings, consultation with implementation committees and heads of department and a dialogue with students. Moreover, MacNeil and Maclin (2005) explained that leaders of successful schools help to develop, with and among their collaborators, teachers, students and parents, a set of values and norms that help bind the people around them together. It is through collective decision making, infusion of shared ideas, beliefs, theories and values that the successful school leader facilitates the process of developing school culture and a learning environment that supports improved student achievement. According to Akomolafe (2005) these intellectuals, school leaders who work together with their collaborators and favor collegiality achieve a collective purpose that gives direction and shapes beliefs, values and attitudes of the school community in promoting better learning outcomes. It has been important that Gray and Laidlow (2004) noted that it is through intense social communicative processes that organizational capabilities are developed and enacted. Communication is therefore of great importance in the schools' socialization decision making, change management and problem solving processes. In a school set up, there has to be communication for it to be effective and efficient in achieving the school set goals. Communication builds up relationships in schools among the principals and the school community.

In Kenya, studies conducted by Sunda, Yambo and Odera (2018); Ocham (2010) on the other hand, pointed out that the greater involvement of teachers in school decision making improve teacher motivation and commitment hence improves school performance. He argued that as managers, head teachers and principals should work to maintain an environment that supports teachers' efforts in the classroom and minimize outside factors that can disrupt the learning process. Management involves employees in decision making, but retains power to implement decisions. Additionally a study by Yambo and

Tuitoek (2014) who were concerned with improving poor performance and maintaining excellent achievement as the major task of an institutional leader, the principal have to employ and manifest characteristic which will help them achieve their intended objectives. The type of leadership style used matters immensely because it has an influence on the kind of decisions made. More findings by Kindiki (2009) and Ojera & Yambo (2014) revealed that most principals who were involved in active decision making processes had most of their contributions controlled by the sponsors. This eventually interfered with academic achievements due to conflict of interests. It was therefore recommended that the principals should be more empowered in decision making so as to assist the BOG and sponsors effectively. This has been because examinations results are used in decision making and determining who is going to which grade (Yambo 2014). Age and experience has also been mentioned as another challenge considered alongside academic qualifications that face members of the BOGs in decision making (Wachira & Kigotho 2007; Kindiki 2009). While Sunda et al. (2018) dealt with Leadership Skills Employed By Principal on Students' Academic Performance in Public Teachers Training Colleges the current study dealt with principals' decision making skills on students' academic achievement in public teachers training colleges to fill the research gap.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design because it is a useful method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) it assesses the nature of prevailing conditions. Since it also involves the collection of data in order to answer research question on the effect of Principals decision making skills on students' academic outcome in public teachers training colleges in Nyanza Region

3.2 Target Population

The work of Best and Khan (2006) defined target Population comprise of the entire group of individuals' events or objects having common observable characteristics which the researcher need to generate the results of the study. In this case, the target population was all the 4 principals, 60 student leaders, 4 Board of Management chair persons and 52 HODs in public teachers training colleges in Nyanza region were considered.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The study sample was therefore drawn from the target population as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Respondents	Population	Technique	Sample
BOM chairpersons	4	Purposive	4
Student Leaders	60	Purposive	60
Principals	4	Purposive	4
HoDs	52	Purposive	52
Total	120		120

The sampling technique applied here was purposive or convenient sampling for they are few hence all were considered 100 percent because this fact is supported by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) who also advocated for reasonably larger samples.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

The study used questionnaire and interview schedule. According to Omari (2011) a questionnaire is a set of questions or respondent on the study. In order to collect data that precisely meets the objectives of the study, both open-ended and closed-ended questions are included in the questionnaire. The open-ended questions gave respondents room to give more information and express themselves to their satisfaction while the close-ended questions produced the kind of answers expected by the researcher. In addition, close-ended questions enable a researcher to form an opinion and make a valuable

conclusion. Furthermore, Amin (2004) contend that structured or close-ended questions are easier to analyze, administer and are more economical in terms of time and finances. On the other hand, unstructured questions are simple to formulate, they encourage in-depth response and they permit the respondents to respond in their own words.

3.5 Validity of the Research Instruments

The work of Best and Khan (2006) explained validity as the degree to which a test uses to measures what it purports to measure. It is in other words, the degree to which results from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under investigation. Validity is also the degree to which an empirical measure or several measures of a concept accurately represent that topic (Orodho, 2009). The issue of control invalidity is concerned with errors that may occur in the research

process. It is concerned with systematic error biases rather than random errors. The researcher established content and criterion related validity. Validity was established by giving the instruments to the three experts in the department of education administrative administration of Kisii University. They read and examined it for content and criterion validity and gave their feedback which was incorporated.

3.6 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability is the measure of the degree of which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trial (Amin (2004). Before the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted among the respondents who were not included in the final study population. This was done from the 2 colleges in Kericho County, where all 2 Principals, 20 student leaders and 2 Board of Management chairpersons and 80 college tutors were considered. These were the minimum number of cases required for conducting statistical analysis as recommended by (Orodho, 2009). The purpose of this was to enable the researcher to ascertain the reliability of the instruments, and also to be familiar with the administration of the questionnaires. Split-Half technique was employed for the test. Pilot questionnaires were divided into two equivalent halves and their correlation co-efficient for the two halves computed using the Spearman Brown prophecy formula, describing the internal consistency of the test then if it showed that the instrument is reliable, correlation coefficient minimum of 0.65 was accepted as reliable because this fact is supported by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) who deemed it reliable.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), this is the collection of information to prove some facts. The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Dean of Faculty of Education and then proceeded for a research permit from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) for the on-going research to enable the researcher to collect data from the colleges. The researcher visited individual colleges to conduct the

research on the actual dates of the study by administering the questionnaires and interview schedules while collecting them accordingly.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing of data to obtain answers to research questions. After the data collection, the researcher subjected data to editing before starting completion and coding of data. According to Orodho (2009) editing improves the quality of data for coding. The coded data was examined critically by making inferences (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics by means, percentages and frequency distribution tables. Obtained data was also analyzed, synthesized and presented using statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) version 23.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher is fully aware that it is a voluntary activity for the respondents to participate in research. They were therefore assured of confidentiality of information since each respondent gave his/her own response/opinion from the questionnaire. The researcher consequently ensured that research questions do not invade personal lives of the respondents. Anonymity of respondents was ensured. The researcher endeavored to guard against plagiarism and also gave credit and acknowledged all the information which was referred to (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The contributions of the Principals decision making skills on teacher trainee academic performance

The study sought to establish the response on the contributions of the Principals decision making skills on teacher trainee academic performance through Recruits well-educated staff. The responses were as in

Table 2: Recruits well-educated staff

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	40	67
No	20	33
TOTAL	60	100

The respondents were requested to indicate the response on the contributions of the Principals decision making skills on teacher trainee academic performance, Recruits well-educated staff and from table 2, 40 (66 %) of the respondents indicated that the contributions of the Principals decision making skills on teacher trainee

academic performance, Recruits well-educated staff and 20(34 %) of the respondents indicated that the principal does not Recruits well-educated staff. Decision making skills, directly influences academic achievement in institutions of learning. According to Hansraj (2007); Nyanda, Yambo and Getange (2018) colleges must be

rigorous in their decision making, be explicit about the reasons for their decisions and record the supporting information and expected impact. This requires the CFO to be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions whenever and wherever they are taken. Providing accurate and timely information to enable effective budgetary control, decision making and sound strategic planning.

4.2 Participates in proper Motivation of staff

The study sought to establish whether the principal Participates in proper Motivation of staff. Table 3 indicates the response obtained from the field.

Table 3: Does Principal Participate in proper Motivation of staff?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	51	85
No	9	15
Total	60	100

Table 3 indicates that majority of student leaders, 86% of them observed that the principal participates in proper motivation of staff while 14% of them indicated that the principal does not participate in proper motivation of staff. This finding was in line with the sentiments of Yambo (2022) which alluded well motivated staff work with minimal supervision.

4.3 Performance contracting adherence for staff

The study sought to establish whether the principal adheres to the performance contracting for staff. Table 4 indicates the response obtained from the field.

Table 4: Principal Adhere to performance contracting

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	32	53
No	28	47
Total	60	100

Table 4 indicates that majority 32(53%) of the respondents observed that the principal adheres to performance contracting for staff while 28(47%) of them indicated that the principal adheres to performance contracting for staff. Nyanda et al. (2018) point out that in an organization, such as a school, the importance of leadership is reflected in every aspect of the school like instructional practices,

academic achievement, students discipline and school climate to mention but a few. Principals play a vital and multifaceted role in setting direction for schools that are positive and productive work places for teachers and vibrant learning environment for students.

The study sought to know how often the BOM meets. The responses are as in table 5.

Table 5 the Frequency of the B.O.M Decision making meetings

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly	2	50
Quarterly	2	50
Never	0	0
Total	4	100

From table 5, 2 (50%) of the respondents indicated that board of management meet monthly and quarterly indicated by 2 (50%) of the respondents. The work of

Grissom, Loeb and Mitani (2014) posited that time is a scarce resource, and college principals must make decisions about how to allocate their time among these competing demands like diverse set of school functions with which principals engage on a daily basis, spanning

instruction, personnel, budgeting, student services, external relations, and a host of other areas. Poor time usage or management would mean spending more of it in certain issues at the expense of more crucial ones.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study found out that the principal decision making skill contributed to students' academic performance in public teachers training colleges in Lake Region. Decision making skills, directly influence academic achievement in institutions of learning. According to Hansraj (2007) college leaders must be rigorous in their decision making, be explicit about the reasons for their decisions and record the supporting information and expected impact.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended that college principals should be given all the necessary support including more in-service and financial empowerment. This would enable them to make meaningful negotiations and decision-making.

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