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Influence of Financial Stewardship on Effective Management of Public Secondary Schools in Msambweni Sub-County, Kwale County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Performance contracting in the teaching profession is a new concept which was introduced in January 2016 to Principals and Head teachers in all public schools in Kenya. Therefore, there was need to examine if the performance contracting to the Principals and Head teachers has or is achieving its objectives. The aim of this research was determining the influence of Principals' performance contracting practices on financial management in public secondary schools in Msambweni Sub-County. The research employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, involving a total of 470 participants from 18 public secondary schools in Msambweni Sub-County. A combination of stratified, purposive, and random sampling methods were used to select the sample. Data was collected using questionnaires for teachers, oral interviews with Principals and the Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, and document analysis for heads of departments. The research instruments were pre-tested in two schools in Lunga Lunga Sub-County, Kwale County, and found to be reliable and valid. The study found that the implementation of performance contracts by Principals significantly influenced the effective management of public secondary schools in Msambweni Sub-County, Kwale County, Kenya. This was through financial stewardship as it enhanced school management through the performance contracting practices having led to development of school service delivery charter. The findings of this study may help the Ministry of Education to adopt the sensitization and in-training of the principals on the upholding of financial stewardship in management of public secondary schools as enshrined in the Basic Education Act 2013.*

Keywords: *Contracting Practices, Effective management, Financial Stewardship, Performance Contracting, Principals.*

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1. Introduction

Performance Contracting is an effective process that is used to improve planning budgets, performance reports and change the management, which improves efficiency in service delivery (Grelling, 2006). In learning institutions, performance contracting is a way of upgrading the performance of an institution by evolving individual performance goals as well as those of departments, according to TSC Corporate Communications Division. This would enable the Principals of institutions and teachers to participate in improving the success of their schools (TSC, 2016). In other institutions, this would mean that every effort for individual employees is brought on board including the support staff. It is easier to achieve a common goal when individual employees take responsibilities for their particular tasks. This also enhances the working conditions for the supervisory team which is led by the principals in the public secondary schools in Kenya.

The perception of performance contracting is embraced by various governments worldwide as a device for achieving the goals as well as objectives of organizations. Performance contract (PC) system of management was first introduced in France and were known as 'Programme de Contracts'. A committee which was convened by the government authorities was entrusted to investigate the relationship between public enterprise and Ministers, then make the appropriate recommendations and guidelines. The committee reported in 1967 and proposed that the programme contracts be drawn for growth in the operational autonomy in the public sectors and make restrictions on the role of the state in fixing such rules. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1997), it was well developed in Korea, Pakistan and later in India. The theory of performance contracting usually varies from one country to another (Robert and Peter, 2011). The scope at which performance contracting has been embraced has significantly varied between the public sectors and institutions within those countries.

In Eastern Europe and Asian countries, the OECD developed guidelines to address the key elements in performance contracting through preparations, negotiations and implementation. They included the performance indicators, its targets and tools for evaluation and monitoring to enforce the contracts. The performance contract tool was developed for use by counties in Kenya but could potentially be applicable to other countries in the world. This would be the point of contention on whether the programmes are working. The public, and specifically the public-school Principals and Head teachers, have been lamenting on the burden put against them in signing and complying to the set targets in the performance contracts. This means that the reports on the reactions from other public schools in other countries can play an important role in determining the attitudes of the principals towards the execution of performance contracting programmes.

In most African countries, the incidents of low performance in the public service informed the need for new strategies aimed at reforming the sector so as to address those myriad challenges. Countries such as Nigeria and Ghana started performance contracting to manage the public sector delivery of services (Kobia & Mohammed, 2006).The course of the performance contracting has seen significant change in the public sector in the two countries where the public service boards have been enacted for enhancing services to the general public. The countries have reported timely services that streams from the top management to the bottom staff members with each individual contributing to service delivery. The performance contracting calls for each individual to take charge and responsibilities for the tasks they are mandated to carry out. This has also brought about greater accountability of the employees.

According to Ndung'u (2009) the East African Community(EAC) performance contract of 2008/2009 highlighted various mandates of the member countries Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya with obligation for same accomplishment as well as implementing the Strategic Plan of 2007-2012 of ensuring appropriate work plans were developed based on the performance targets.

The adoption of performance contracting system of management is aimed at putting stringent measures in public secondary schools so as to mitigate on increased wastage of resources, financial mismanagement, ineffective service delivery and declining academic performance (Pearce and Robinson, 2011). Lack of effective performance contracting practices leads to poor management of resources and low outcomes (Ngetich, 2013; Trivedi 2000). While there is a focus on realizing educational outcomes spelt out in a number of publications in Kenya, including Vision 2030, the management of the educational institutions remains a key concern. Management challenges, including mismanagement of resources, financial constraints, procurement pitfalls, lack of stakeholder's goodwill and restrictive policies have dominated the mismanagement of these institutions (Ghosh and Sammy, 2014). Apparently, this has not spared public secondary schools in the larger Kwale County. For the schools, the effects are depicted in the various gaps in curriculum implementation, application of pedagogical skills, providing teaching and learning resources and meeting teacher performance thresholds. With a keen interest to address these management issues, the Teachers Service Commission introduced the performance contracting in all public secondary schools in the country. The main stakeholder focusses points to the school principals who are the chief instructional leaders (Omboi and Mucai, 2011). As the leader, the principal is seen as the key person who highly influences student achievements, teacher instruction and efficiency in school functioning (Wagana, 2015). Therefore, there is every need to ascertain the successes or failures of performance contracting practices in the learning institutions in the country. Hence, the intention of this study was to answer the research question; How does financial stewardship influence effective management of public secondary schools in Msambweni sub-county?

2. Literature Review

A number of studies exist to the role of accounting practices on effective management in various institutions, both in developed and developing nations. A survey in the United States showed that monetary allocations to educational institutions were the key players in determining the achievement of the vision and mission set by the individual institutions (Hansraj, 2017). With the same objective, the researcher extends his survey to South Durban in South Africa where he reports positive association between provision of sufficient funds and effectiveness in the management of the schools. In a different study on centralism of schools' physical facilities in Nigeria, (Bell, 2017) found delocalization that entailed monetary terms played a key role in managing structure of the teaching and learning as it bore transparency among the school stakeholders and especially the heads of the schools. However, both Chech and Muathe (2014) and Bell (2017) failed to ascertain the direct impact of specific accounting aspects in financial stewardship that affect the management of the schools in the respective geographical regions of the studies.

According to Gakure, Eliud, and Karanja (2018), schools often grapple with a severe shortage of financial resources. Many principals in developing countries encounter significant challenges in managing their finances. Heskett (2016) notes that managing finances, especially in times when countries are experiencing a shortage of resources, poses a significant problem for schools. A study conducted by Haque (2016) aimed at exploring the challenges faced by principals in Africa revealed that most of them lack sufficient funding for their schools.

Principals of secondary schools encounter various difficulties, including a lack of financial support or delayed funding from the government to finance initiatives like the Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) capitation for day secondary schools and subsidized fees for secondary boarding schools. These challenges can result in delayed payment of secondary school fees (Kiilu, 2018). Consequently, there are delays in the disbursement of funds by the Ministry of Education, along with issues related to depositing funds into incorrect bank accounts (Kiilu, 2018).

Regarding the utilization of allocated funds, it was the responsibility of the principal to create a school budget and secure approval from the Board of Management (BOM) prior to receiving and disbursing the funds. The budget statement acts as a reference document for the funds received and spent during the academic year in use. After receiving the funds and embarking on spending, the Principal is expected to maintain updated books of accounts with the relevant documents available as required, such as invoices, local service orders (LSO), cheque counterfoils, delivery notes, local purchase orders (LPO), acknowledgement notes, receipts, payment vouchers, commitment registers, school staff monthly payrolls, list of debtors, list of creditors amongst others (Republic of Kenya, 2016).

The principal was expected to abide by the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act (2015). This ensured that any procurements and supplies to the school from external suppliers was within the provisions of the law as per the Act amended in 2015. In addition, any provisions to sell or dispose any property in form of assets of the school should also be within this law. Principals are required to provide and adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Public Procurement Manual for Schools and Colleges (2009). In reading and conceptualizing the contents of these Acts and Manuals, the Principals ensured that there was prudent management of funds from the government in form of capitation as well as funds in form of fees paid by parents, guardians, private and public sponsors, other stakeholders and financiers. Regarding compliance with audit requirements, the principal was responsible for maintaining accurate and up-to-date financial records at all times. Additionally, they were required to prepare and submit end-of-year financial statements. The principal should avail the report on implementation of audit requirements of the previous audits done to be discussed and adopted by the full Board of Management (BOM) of the school.

On Pending Bills, the Principal had an obligation to settle all the financial calls of the school by ensuring prompt payment of existing bills which have been legally incurred so as to avoid unnecessary accumulation of debts to the jeopardy of the school. The principal should ensure that the outstanding and unpaid bills remain under 1% of the schools' approved budget. Under this objective, the principal was also responsible for ensuring that statutory deductions, including National Social Security Fund (NSSF), National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF), Pay as You Earn (PAYE), Sacco deductions, and others, were promptly and correctly transferred to the various listed organizations for the support staff as required and applicable.

Additionally, teachers are considered an essential asset in the process of teaching and learning, as highlighted by Ayllón, Alsina and Colomer (2019). This reflects a widely held belief that well-trained teachers play a vital role in the effective management of educational institutions. Training as an approach to making the teaching and learning process effective can be harnessed by countries to ascertain the level of education of their population. The professionalism of the teachers is passed down to the learners in all aspects. The graduates of different levels tend to portray the professionalism of the teachers both socially and physically. The dressing modes, the manner of undertaking and understanding social matters are pegged on the role of the teachers in the classroom and the school as a whole.

Kwamboka (2000) claims that Secondary school administration is currently facing acute teacher shortages following the introduction of free and compulsory day secondary education for all public secondary school students. The country's recommended teacher-to-student ratio is 1 to 45 (1:45), but many teachers handle classes of up to 60 students. As a result, academic standards in schools have deteriorated (Mongkol, 2011). In Kenyan secondary schools, there is not only a shortage of qualified teachers, but teachers also leave the profession to take up non-teaching job opportunities and self-employment (Mutahaba, 2011). A significant number of qualified graduate teachers leave the profession shortly after entry (Ogbiji, 2014). Due to this shortage of teachers, Principals would be expected to employ more teachers under Boards of management (BOM) terms to teach the increased number of students. This creates a big stretch on the available funds for the schools and as well affects the effective financial management of the institutions. The departure of qualified teachers from these schools has resulted in poor academic performance and disciplinary issues among students. The insufficient funding and subsequent lack of proper physical facilities pose significant challenges for Principals in managing their schools. It is evident that there is a strong connection between the availability of adequate physical facilities and student achievement. The availability and adequacy of the physical facilities in schools usually affect the growth and determination of the students in different ways. For instance, students require several playgrounds and recreation places for relaxation after studies. This gives them a motivation to start afresh and revamp to studying. Other facilities required in the schools as well includes the classrooms, lockers and chairs, the libraries with adequate reading and reference materials, science laboratories with chemicals and equipment, the dormitories with adequate accommodation items.

Muriu (2014) pointed out that research conducted in Ghana and Uganda demonstrated a positive correlation between the lack of physical facilities and teaching materials and poor student performance. Additionally, Akaranga's (2008) study on political involvement in post-independence education in Kenya highlighted that policy decisions regarding school management funds in the country's education sector had a detrimental impact on public institutions. The study also revealed that some politicians, driven by personal interests in certain schools, interfered with the financial management of these institutions, thereby creating significant challenges for both the school Boards of Management (BOM) and Principals, as well as exerting influence on the school community. Similarly, they easily engage the school management, parents and students as a way of showing off to the school community of their support. Unfortunately, such undertakings unfold to undesired ends with others erupting unrests due to animosity created between the school principals and the school community or even the students' body.

3. Methodology

The research employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, involving a total of 470 participants from 18 public secondary schools in Msambweni Sub-County. The participants were divided into three categories: 5 Principals, 27 heads of departments, 108 teachers, and 1 Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample size

Category	Population	Sample	Percentage Sample of Population
Principals	18	5	27%
Heads of Departments	90	27	30%
Teachers	360	108	30%
Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SCQASO)	2	1	50%
Total	**470**	**141**	**30%**

To select participants, the researchers used a combination of stratified, purposive, and random sampling methods. Data was collected using questionnaires for teachers, oral interviews with Principals and the Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, and document analysis for heads of departments. The research instruments were pre-tested in two schools in Lunga Lunga Sub-County, Kwale County, and found to be reliable and valid. The collected data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively using SPSS version 24, with results presented in tables, percentages, graphs, and themes.

4. Results and Discussion

The questionnaire respondents were required to rate their level of agreement with the identified statements related to financial stewardship in their schools. The collected data was analysed descriptively and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Influence of financial stewardship on effective management of public secondary schools

		strongly agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	Total
Performance contracting practices has improved financial management in secondary schools.	f	15	59	26	2	2	104
	%	14.4	56.7	25	1.9	1.9	100
Principals prepare and use approved budget	f	33	48	21	2	0	104
	%	31.7	46.2	20.2	1.9	0	100
Principals Comply with Audit requirements by maintaining updated books of accounts	f	30	55	18	1	0	104
	%	28.8	52.9	17.3	1	0	100
Performance contracting practices has led to compliance to financial obligations	f	21	55	24	4	0	104
	%	20.2	52.9	23.1	3.8	0	100
Performance contracting has ensured that pending debts do not exceed 1% of the total approved school budget.	f	11	28	48	11	6	104
	%	10.6	26.9	46.2	10.6	5.8	100

Table 2 shows that more than half of the respondents, that is 56.9%, agreed with the statement that "Performance contracting practices have improved financial management in secondary schools". While a quarter, that is 25%, of the respondents were neutral with it, and about 14.4% strongly agreed with it. This implied that performance contracting was effective in school management in public secondary schools in Msambweni sub-county, Kwale County. This shows the basis that the theory of performance contracting usually varies from one country to another (Robert and Peter, 2011).

The table showed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that Principals prepare and use approved budgets. This is a key component in effective school management, which implied that the schools in the sub county enjoyed the effective administration not only in budgeting but also adhering to the provisions of the budget during implementation of activities in the schools.

The majority of the teachers, that is 52.9%, agreed that the principals complied with Audit requirements by maintaining updated books of accounts. This was necessary in effective school management as opined in the requirements of the Public Procurement Manual for Schools and Colleges (2009). A similar proportion of teachers agreed that performance contracting practices has led to compliance to financial obligations. Compliance as a concept in accounting spells out the accountability of the funds of the organization. This implies that by the principals complying, the school management, in terms of finances would be effective. This is the emphasis of the audit requirements by the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act (2015). This also describes how the principal was expected to maintain updated books of accounts at all times and also prepare and avail the end of year financial statements.

However, table 2 above shows that the rating of the statement "Performance contracting has ensured that pending debts do not exceed 1% of the total approved school budget" was highly on neutral, which implied less observation of this aspect of financial stewardship by principals in public secondary schools in Msambweni Sub County.

For triangulation purposes, the interview respondents were asked whether the signing of Performance Contracts created standards in public secondary schools in Msambweni Sub County. They pointed out that the PC signing was essential to a number of observations such as improved infrastructure facilities and operations in the school.

In one interview, the respondents posted:

> *Principals' performance contracting practices were noted and seen through the*

> *erecting a barbed wire fence around the school perimeter compound (KII/15-3); and there was creation of a safe and friendly environment for teachers, learners and safety of school properties (KII/15-03); The Doors and windows that open to the outside (KII/15-3).*

Others mentioned a number of areas of improvement in the school infrastructure that meant effective school management attributed to financial stewardship.
They posted:

> *Doors in the dorms open outward (KII/18-3); There are emergency doors put in place as well as ensuring easy entry and exit of students from the classrooms through the doors or windows in case of emergencies. There was also erecting ramps for the physically challenged clients (KII/14-3).*

Other respondents noted:

> *Changes in infrastructure related to financial stewardship were fencing of the school compound (KII/5-04), installation of fire extinguishers in the school buildings(KII/10-3), good spacing of beds, most dorms the doors and windows are opening from outside, fire extinguishers have been installed and fire assembly points have been identified (KII/23-3).*

The study found that there were no grill windows in classes, labs and dorms but there was provision of an entry/exit that is manned day and night. The putting up structures that have doors and windows that facilitate easy evacuation in case of fire, ramps put in place for persons with disability as well as training on fire drills and windows and doors open outside were noted (KII/13-3).
This implies that various concerns are in place for ensuring safety. For instance, fire escape routes: Creating designated pathways or escape routes within the structures, which are clearly marked and easily accessible during emergencies. There were emergency exits: Installing clearly marked emergency exit doors that open outward and are easily operable without the need for special tools or keys. For exit lighting: Installing emergency lighting above or near exit doors and along escape routes to ensure visibility in low-light or smoky conditions.

Fire-resistant doors and windows: Using fire-resistant materials for doors and windows to prevent the rapid spread of fire and smoke. Similarly, panic bars: Installing panic bars or push bars on exit doors for quick and easy egress without the need to turn doorknobs. Fire alarms and detectors: Implementing a fire alarm system with smoke detectors and heat sensors to provide early warning in case of fire. The fire extinguishers: Providing accessible fire extinguishers at key locations within the structure. Lastly, there were emergency evacuation plans: Developing and regularly practicing emergency evacuation plans with building occupants to ensure everyone knows what to do in case of a fire.

The findings reflect the posting of Kwamboka, (2000) who claims that secondary school administration is facing acute teacher shortages following the introduction of free and compulsory day secondary education for all public secondary schools in the country. There was a consistency that a large number of qualified graduate teachers leave the profession shortly after entry (Ogbiji, 2014). Due to this shortage of teachers, Principals would be expected to employ more teachers under Boards of management terms to teach the increased number of students. For Akaranga (2008), policy and decision-making and the management of funds in Kenya's education sector had adversely affected institutions which was seen in the current study.

Policy and decision-making, as well as the management of funds, play crucial roles in influencing the performance of organizations, whether they are government agencies, businesses, or non-profit entities. There are also factors can affect performance through contracting:

The case of resource allocation: Effective management of funds is essential for allocating resources to various programs, projects, or initiatives. Policies and decisions related to budgeting and resource allocation directly impact an organization's ability to carry out its mission. Misallocation or inadequate funding can hinder performance. Then there is strategic planning where policies and decisions guide an organization's strategic planning process. Well-informed decisions based on sound policies are more likely to lead to effective strategic plans that align with the organization's goals. Conversely, poor policy decisions can result in misguided strategies that fail to improve performance.

In same vein, performance contracting involves accountability and Transparency where policies related to financial management and decision-making processes should promote accountability and transparency. Transparent financial reporting and decision-making build trust among stakeholders and enhance an organization's credibility, which can positively influence its performance.

For risk management, policies and decisions should address risk management strategies, including financial risk. Organizations that effectively manage financial risks are better prepared to withstand economic downturns or unexpected challenges that could negatively impact performance. In terms of performance metrics, policies and decisions regarding performance metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are critical. These metrics define what success looks like and guide organizations in monitoring and improving their performance. Poorly chosen metrics can lead to misguided efforts and ineffective resource allocation. In summary, policy and decision-making, along with financial management, are intertwined and have a profound impact on an organization's performance. Effective policies and decisions that prioritize transparency, accountability, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement can lead to improved overall performance and sustainability. Conversely, poor policies and decisions can hinder an organization's ability to achieve its goals and fulfill its mission.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5. 1 Conclusion

The study concluded that the principals' performance contracting practices influenced the effective management of public secondary schools in Msambweni Sub-County, Kwale County, Kenya. This was through financial stewardship, effective service delivery, supervision of curriculum implementation and handling of crosscutting issues in Public secondary schools. Financial stewardship enhanced school management through the performance contracting practices having led to development of school service delivery charter.

5.2 Recommendation

From the study findings, the following recommendations were made.

The Ministry of Education should adopt the sensitization and in-trainings of the principals on the upholding of financial stewardship practices in management of public secondary schools as enshrined in the Basic Education Act. (2013)

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