



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

## Principals' Management Strategies and Performance of Students in Secondary Schools in Mount Elgon Sub County, Kenya

**Maximilla Wakoli**

Sang'alo Institute of Science and Technology Kenya

### **Abstract:**

*The purpose of the study was to investigate Principals management strategies and impact on student performance in Mount Elgon Sub County Secondary schools. The study was guided by the Max Weber theory on division of labour. The study population comprised of 72 principals and 1,280 teachers serving 72 secondary schools within the Sub County. The sample size for the study comprised of 6 high performing schools (HPS), 6 average performing schools (APS) and 13 low performing schools (LPS), 25 principals were selected to form the sample size together with seven teachers from each school who were randomly sampled. The findings of the study showed that Principal management strategies influence performance of students in KCSE examinations. The performance of students in KCSE examinations has been below average for the past five years. The principals were found to use bureaucratic and autocracy management style in their schools and this prevented participation of teachers and stakeholders in management of schools, thus affecting negatively the performance of students' schools. The results of the study also showed that supervision and teachers appraisal was not conducted regularly in schools and this has influenced performance. The study established that inadequate number of teachers, low fees payments by students and inadequate teaching and learning facilities influenced management styles and this thereafter impacted on performance of students in KCSE. The study recommends that Principal should adopt democratic and participative management style to accommodate all stakeholders in decision making, teachers and Principal to go for in – service training courses and teachers to be appraised on the merit based on students' performance. All these strategies are deemed to improve performance of students in national examinations.*

**Keywords:** management strategies, performance, supervision and administration

### **1. Introduction**

Educating a nation remains the most vital strategy for the development of the society throughout the developing world (Grant, 2006). In the current world, secondary school effectiveness is now usually defined in terms of student outcomes (Creese and Earley, 1999). School improvement research has shown that leadership is important in producing good student outcomes (Harris, 2002). According to Millette (1988), principals as schools chief executives are charged with this taunting task of managing teachers among other schools resources. The quality of management makes the difference between the success and failure of a school. Ramsey (1999) contends that, in an organization like the school, students and staff tend to live up to the image of the head teacher; because no school is high performing without an effective and efficient head teacher; he is the gospel that his/her staff and pupils read, a model of behaviour and work attitude to be copied by all. It implies that the head teacher is therefore expected to accept responsibility for whatever pupils and staffs do and lead, both by word and action, creating a school climate that facilitates effective teaching and learning. There is broad international agreement and evidence that education reforms in many countries have resulted in substantial changes in the roles of Principals. In United Kingdom, Huber, Hunter and Beatriz (2007) reported that in England, school headship has been a key policy focus for the last decade. Kimmelman (2010) reports that in Bangladesh a managerial style of leadership, that uses power and authority to compel others to do what they are asked to do is practiced in many schools. In Southern Africa, Oyetunji (2008) quoting Dunklee (2000) indicate the differences in students' behaviour and academic outcomes are influenced internally by the head teacher in Botswana secondary schools. In Kenya, the performance of students in secondary schools is pegged on the leadership and administration practices of the school (Musungu and Nasongo, 2008; Eshiwani, 1998; Ayot and Briggs, 1992). The principal's role is to promote academic performance. Musungu and Nasongo (2008) argue that it is important that the performance of a school is appraised against the performance of the person who leads it. The Kenyan education system is examination oriented. The performance of a school is measured by the kind of results it records in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations. This performance comes because of the efficient role of the Principal, as a manager, using varied strategies. It is in line with this that

despite schools being endowed with various physical and natural resources, some schools still record very dismal performance in KCSE. This had been a point of concern, particularly in Mt. Elgon Sub County as reported by Mt. Elgon Sub County Examination Office (2009). Even though different stakeholders have advanced several reasons as the underlying root causes of poor results in Mt. Elgon Sub County, none have looked at how varied management strategies by principals impacted on student academic performance in schools. Based on the above background information what forms part of the Principals management component includes being proactive in the development of an effective behaviour policy, ensuring staff have appropriate professional development support, and resources to support the policy at all levels. This study investigated the contribution of Principal management strategies towards improvement of student performance in secondary schools in Mount Elgon, Sub County, Kenya.

## 2. Aims of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate principals' management strategies impact on student performance in Mount Elgon Sub County secondary schools. The study specifically looked at:

- Identifying principals administrative strategies impact on student performance
- Determining the principals internal supervision strategies and student performance
- Establishing principals appraisal strategies and student performance in Mount Elgon Sub County secondary schools
- Identification of challenges faced by principals when carrying out management strategies aimed at improving student performance

## 3. Study Rationale

Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education is doing everything it can through policy makers and educators, performance in Kenya certificate of secondary school education in Mount Elgon is still poor according to Sub County Education Officer Mount Elgon Sub County Examination Report (2009). The poor performance has persisted since the Sub County was carved out of Bungoma in 1991. This provided the basis for investigating the principals' management strategies impact on academic performance of students in Mt Elgon secondary schools.

## 4. Literature Review

David (2007) defines strategic management as a science of formulating, implementing and evaluating cross functions that enables an organization to achieve its objectives. Strategic management calls for competent leadership. Otula (2007), states that competent leadership is the desire of every institution. No institution puts people in management position just to fill the offices. This position authorizes competent professionals to take charge of the institution and drive them to achieve their mission and vision. According to Olembo *et al* (1992), Principals should enable the school to meet national needs. Two things are necessary when Principals are setting the school objectives; providing opportunities to learn more about the culture of the community and its demands upon the school, and providing opportunities to learn more about the growth and development of children and the youth.

According to Sushila (2004), the head-teacher is the leader in a school, the pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve, and the person in charge of every detail of the running of the school, be it academic or administrative. The head-teacher should be involved in making most of the decisions of the school. It is therefore important that the head-teacher is a leader, a thinker and a decision maker. A discreet head-teacher will employ teamwork as a working strategy. He will set up committees and smaller groups of members of staff to investigate ideas or strategies. The head teacher to be a good team player. It is important that the performance of a school is appraised against the performance of the person who leads it.

Darling-Hammond (2007) states that supervision has the purpose of influencing the process and promoting student learning. Supervision ensures that all staff respect appropriate rules, routines, procedures, and regulations to achieve set objectives (Dawo, 2011). In a school setting the overall supervisor is the principal (also referred to as Principal). Even though many scholars disagree with the assertion by Chitiavi (2002) that supervision accounts for only less than 1% in institutional performance, he agrees with Samoei (2009) and Musungu (2007) that every Principal's dream as a supervisor is to get his school ranked among the best in national examinations. Shiundu and Omulando (1992) reiterates that positive factors affecting quality of teachers have a role in improving quality of teaching and curriculum implementation by controlling unwanted absenteeism, negligence in lesson preparation and laxity in marking of books and feedback. They go on to assert that an effective supervisor should be a little more informed of modern methods of administration and those of teaching.

According to Poster and Poster (2003) teacher appraisal has the following benefits: For the individual staff member; giving them a greater sense of purpose through the provision of clear objectives, encouraging self-development and personal initiative, enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence, reducing alienation and resentment by providing the opportunity for free discussion, and providing opportunity for the dissemination of career advice. For the institution; enhancing the communication of organizational aims to all staff and facilitate the coordinating effort, providing the opportunity to initiate problem-solving and counselling interviews, contributing to institutional audit and review, and giving managers a greater control through the setting of objectives within a school development plan.

Otula (2007) observes that lack of management strategies is the greatest problem in many organizations. Human skills are required for efficient leadership. It is unfortunate that some people have wrong motives for seeking to lead institutions Otula (2007). To such people, ascending to leadership means acquiring instant riches. To them it signifies power, authority, honour and prestige. These are not the type of Principals we need for our schools and colleges. The growing violence in school is creating a challenge to

administrators (Oyetunji, 2008). Wichenje, Simatwa, Okuom and Kegode (2012) study on the human resource management: challenges for Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya, a case study of Kakamega East Sub County established that challenges for Principals were: incompetent selection panels, inadequate funds, lack of qualification, interference from sponsors, community and politicians, old age, inadequate investigation of allegations and ignorance in appraisal techniques. The study concluded that challenges for Principals were; remuneration, motivation and inadequate funds

## 5. Materials and Methods

This was descriptive survey in nature. The study focused on 72 secondary schools in Mt. Elgon Sub County with a population of 26,979 students, 72 head-teachers and 1280 teachers. The study included a sample of high performing schools above 7.00, average performing schools between 5.01 to 6.90, and those that performed poorly below 5.00 in Mt. Elgon Sub County. The study focused on Principal's management strategies impact on performance of students in secondary schools in Mt. Elgon Sub County. The head-teachers and teachers of the sample schools were the respondents. The study employed questionnaires to obtain data required for analysis. The study used structured questionnaires with both open and closed ended questions. First, the research instruments were subjected to a pilot study using a selected sample drawn from a three schools in Kapsokwony. Piloting assisted the researcher in identifying the items in the research instruments that were ambiguous in selecting relevant information. The data collected from questionnaires was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (Spearman correlation and chi square tests) with SPSS computer software.

## 6. Results and Discussions

It was found out that 9(40.9%) of schools that participated in the study were low performing schools (LPS), 7(31.8%) were higher performing schools (HPS) while 6(27.3%) were average performing schools (APS). The result show that most schools in Mt. Elgon Sub County record low performance. Teachers responses showed that The 66 (38.8%) of Principal use bureaucratic management style in their schools, 52 (30.6%) of respondents said that their Principal use autocratic style, 42 (24.7%) said that their Principal use democratic management style while 10 (5.9%) said that their Principal use laissez-faire management style. The result implies that poor performance of students in KCSE examinations is as a result of Principals not using inclusive management style (democratic) where all stakeholders in schools are involved in school management. Chi square results showed that there existed significant differences ( $\chi^2=67.435$ ,  $df=6$  and  $p=0.001$ ) between different categories of schools and management style being exhibited by Principals. The result is similar to Oyetunji (2006) findings on leadership style in Botswana secondary schools which indicated that five (71.4%) of these schools' Principals were not supportive of their staff members. School two representing 14.28% of the schools with a closed organisational climate in this group was slightly above average on supportive head teacher behaviour and school four was above average on supportive head teacher behaviour.

			Administrative strategies			Total
			Rarely	Occasional	Always	
School category	LPS	Count	2	4	3	9
		% within School category	22.2%	44.4%	33.3%	100.0%
	APS	Count	0	3	3	6
		% within School category	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	HPS	Count	0	2	5	7
		% within School category	.0%	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	2	9	11	22	
	% within School category	9.1%	40.9%	50.0%	100.0%	

Table 1: School type and extent of Principals application of various administrative strategies aimed at improving performance

The results shows that the application of various administrative strategies by Principals from high performing schools have improved their means scores as opposed to those from average and low performing schools. Further results revealed that for those Principals who rarely conducted administrative strategies in their schools, their students performance was low 2 (100%), for those who conducted their administrative strategies on occasional basis, their school performance was high for only 1 (11.1%) of schools and 63.6% of those who indicated that they always conducted their administrative strategies, their school performance was high. Spearman correlation results showed that that there exist significant ( $r=0.594$  and  $p=0.004$ ) between the Principals application of various administrative strategies on students performance in schools.

## 7. Principals Management Strategies and Academic Performance of Students

On the supervision practices the results show that 14(63.6%) of Principals in Mount Elgon secondary schools conducted supervision to improve performance while 8 (36.4%) do not regularly conduct supervision in their schools. The undesired performance could be because of Principals not conducting supervision in schools. Contrary to the results Musungu and Nasongo (2008) comparative study of the instructional roles that Principals do to improve performance in Vihiga Sub County secondary schools observed that over 80% of the head-teachers in high performing schools checked lesson books, schemes of work and registers of class attendance and school enrolment and clock in clock out records. A further analysis of Musungu and Nasongo (2008) research showed that 71.43% of them

checked records of work covered. On the contrary over 70.59% of the head-teachers in the average and low performing schools focused on checking registers and class attendance records while less than 60% of the head-teachers checked lesson plans, schemes of work, records of work covered and clock in clock out books. Internal supervision was seen as a way of ensuring that work in the school was done efficiently.

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.284	.205	1.323	.201 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.287	.207	1.339	.196 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		22			

Table 2: Symmetric measures on impact of supervisory strategies on performance of students

- Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
- Based on normal approximation.

The spearman correlation (r) shows that there exist low positive impact ( $r=0.287$ ) of supervisory strategies that Principals utilise have minimal impact on student performance in secondary schools and the relationship is not significant ( $p<0.05$ ). This shows that supervisory strategies have less impact on student performance in school although the correlations result suggest that Principals continual application of these strategies could improve on performance positively.

Appraisal role	Rarely		Occasionally		Always	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Set priorities	4	18.2	8	36.4	10	45.5
Inspect subordinates work	5	22.7	15	68.2	2	9.1
Accept other people's opinion			17	77.3	5	22.7
Appreciate peoples' work	4	18.2	8	36.4	10	45.5
Rewarding teachers work	5	22.7	10	45.5	7	31.8
Supervision of teachers work	5	22.7	10	45.5	7	31.8
Encouraging teamwork	3	13.6	7	31.8	12	54.5
Ensuring regular staff meetings	3	13.6	8	36.4	11	50.0
Constant briefings and consultation			12	54.5	10	45.5
Appreciating each other's contribution	1	4.5	15	68.2	6	27.3
Participation in decision making	6	27.3	8	36.4	8	36.4

Table 3: Principals' Appraisal Role of Teachers Impact on Student Performance

The findings show that appraisal roles are practiced in most schools within Mount Elgon Sub County. For example 10(45.5%) of respondents Principals acknowledged that they always set priorities with 4(18.2%) disagreeing with the statement. A notable finding on staff appraisal was that 8(36.4%) said that they involved other teachers in decision making process always while 15(68.2%) said that they appreciated each other's contribution occasionally. It is also evident from the result that rewarding is not common in schools as only 10(45.5%) said that they reward teachers work and occasionally while 5(22.7%) said they did not reward teachers who performed well in their work.

On comparing appraisal strategies and performance of students, results showed that for schools that had high level of appraisal strategies, students performance was high 7 (77.8%) and only 1 (9.1%) of those who had average level of appraisal strategies had average performance for students in their schools. It is also evident that that schools that had low level of appraisal strategies, their students' performance as low 1 (50%) and only 1 (50%) of them manage to have had average performance. This shows that the level of appraisal in school influence the performance of students. The spearman correlation result shows that there exist an average positive relationship ( $r=0.537$ ) between the level of appraisal strategies and students performance in schools. The results is also significant at 95% confidence interval ( $p<0.05$ ). This interprets that increase in head teacher application of appraisal techniques will automatically result to increase in student performance in examinations.

### 8. Challenges Experienced by Principal in Management of Schools on Improving Performance

Through open-ended questions, Principals were asked to state challenges that they experienced in managing schools that result to poor performance of students in KCSE examinations.



Challenges experienced by Principals	Freq	Percent
Inadequate teaching staff	6	27.3
School fees collection	5	22.7
Inadequate teaching and learning facilities	3	13.6
Lateness in reporting to school for duty	2	9.1
Absence of students from school	1	4.5
Low entry marks for KCPE candidates	1	4.5
Lack of commitment - some teachers do not meet deadlines	1	4.5
Mixed nature of school affects learning	1	4.5
Unexpected transfer of teachers	1	4.5
Delay in syllabus coverage in some subjects	1	4.5

Table 4 Challenges experienced by Principals

The major challenges faced by Principals in managing schools for improved performance were; inadequate teaching staff 6 (27.3%), lack of parental cooperation in fees collection 5 (22.7%), inadequate teaching and learning facilities 3 (13.6%) and teacher lateness in reporting to school for duty 2 (9.1%). The results indicate the main problem that Principals face in secondary schools are inadequate number of teaching staff and low parental co-operation in fees payment and lack of enough teaching and instructional materials. All these challenges have significant impact on performance and it is the duty of Principal to address these challenges. The results is similar to Wichenje, *et al.*, (2012) study on challenges faced by Principals in public secondary schools within Kakamega Sub County observed that the greatest challenge for Principals in recruitment and selection of staff was inadequate funds as this challenge had a Mean Rate of 3.80.

### 9. Conclusions and recommendations

The study findings showed that management strategies used by Principals predict the performance of student in secondary schools in the Sub County. Teachers reported that Principals used bureaucratic management style and autocratic management style in schools management. This has resulted to non-participation of teachers in key decision making in schools as some teachers reported that they are not involved in school management. Democratic management style was found to be applicable in HPS as opposed to APS or LPS. On average, results of the study showed that administrative strategies had positive impact on student performance in schools. Spearman correlation results showed a weak positive relationship ( $r=0.273$  and  $p>0.05$ ) between supervision and student academic performance in schools. Cross tabulation analysis showed that there existed significant differences ( $p<0.05$ ) between HPS, APS and LPS Principals application of appraisal strategies on performance of students in schools. Principals from HPS were more likely to appraise their teachers often as compared to teachers from APS and LPS. This showed that continuous application of appraisal strategies could raise the performance of students in academics in secondary schools. Principals acknowledged that they had a challenge of providing for an enabling environment for teachers to improve on their knowledge and capabilities and skills adaptable in dealing with these challenges and this explained the low use of appraisal techniques by Principals in improving teachers' motivational levels. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

- There is need for involvement of teachers and other stakeholders in decision making and policies formulation. Teachers complained that they were sidelined in school affairs and this was a reason to poor performance in secondary schools in the study area.
- On the supervision and inspection, the study suggests that there is need for continuous supervision of teachers and students work and also active involvement of teachers and educational inspectors in monitoring teachers performance against set goals and objectives at the departmental level to improve performance of students schools
- On Principals appraisal roles of teachers on KCSE, the study recommends that Principals should motivate teachers to perform well in their duties by giving them opportunities for in – service training and reward them on merit.
- Principals also ought to get obligatory continuous in – service training to equip them with managerial competencies for the development of teaching practices in secondary school

### 10. References

1. Ayot H. O., & Briggs, H (1992). Economics of Education. Nairobi: Educational Research and Publications.
2. Chitiavi, M. J. (2002). Guidance and Counselling Series – School Administration, Nairobi: Pavement Publishers.
3. Creese M & Earley, K. (1999). Improving schools and governing bodies: making a difference. London: Routledge.
4. David, T. G. (2007). Building Trust among Education Stakeholders through Participatory School Administration. Management in Education, 21.
5. Dawo, I. J. (2011). School-Based Teacher Supervision: A Vital Tool For Quality Education In Kenya. European Journal of Educational Studies 3(1).
6. Eshiwani, G.S. (1998). Education in Kenya since Independence. Nairobi: Government Printers.
7. Grant, C. (2006). Emerging Voices on Teacher Leadership. Education Management Administration South Africa.
8. Hammond, L. (2007). Educational Leadership: A Bridge to School Reform. A Paper presented at the Wallace Foundation Conference.

9. Harris, A. (2002) "Effective Leadership in Schools Facing Challenging Contexts," *School Leadership and Management*, 22 (1), 15-26.
10. Huber, S., Hunter, R. & Beatriz, P. M. (2007). *School leadership for systemic improvement in England: A case study report for the OECD activity Improving school leadership*. OECD.
11. Kimmelman, P. L. (2010). *The school leadership triangle: from compliance to innovation*. California: Corwin
12. Millette A (1988). *Tes / Kelle Lectures on Educational Leadership in the Millennium "Professionals, Pedagogy and Leadership"*. A lecture given on 3 June 1988\
13. Musungu, L. L. (2007). *Role of Head teacher in Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Vihiga District, Kenya*. Unpublished M Ed Thesis, Maseno University.
14. Musungu, L. L. & Nasongo, J. W. (2008). *The head-teacher's instructional role in academic achievement in secondary schools in Vihiga district, Kenya*. *Educational Research and Review*, Vol. 3 (10), 316-323.
15. Olembo, J. O; Wanga P,E & Karagu N,M (1992). *Educational Management*. Nairobi General Printers Limited.
16. Otula, A. P. (2007). *Mastery of Modern School Administration*. Nairobi Kenya. Heinemann Publications.
17. Oyetunji, C. O. (2008). *The Relationship between Leadership Style and School Climate in Botswana Secondary Schools*. Unpublished Doctorate Thesis. University of South Africa.
18. Poster, C. & Poster, L. (2000). *Teacher Appraisal Training and Implementation*. London: Routledge.
19. Ramsey, R. D. (1999). *Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way: How to be a more effective leader in today's schools*. California: Corwin Press Inc.
20. Samoei, T. R. (2009). *Impact of Head teacher Leadership Styles on Secondary School Students' Achievement in Nandi North District, Kenya*. Unpublished Med Thesis, Maseno University.
21. Shiundu, J. S. & Omulando, J. S. (1992). *Curriculum Theory and Practice in Kenya*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
22. Sushila B (2004). *Management and evaluation of schools*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, East African Ltd.
23. Wichenje, K.M., Simatwa, E.M.W., Okuom, H. A. & Kegode E.A. (2012). *Human resource management: challenges for head teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya, a case study of Kakamega East District*. *Educational Research*, 3(2), 159-171.