Contemporary Roles of Elected Student Council on Management of Public Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Survey of Selected Secondary Schools in Nakuru East Sub-County

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study was to determine the contemporary strategic roles of elected student council on the management of public secondary schools. The study was based on a descriptive survey design. The target population was 135 student leaders and 12 deputy principals in public secondary schools in the Nakuru East Sub County. A sample size of 7 secondary schools was randomly selected through stratified sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select 7 deputy principals while stratified and simple random sampling was used to select a sample of 100 student leaders. Data was collected by the use of questionnaires and interview schedules. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used in data analysis. Descriptive statistics included mean, percentages and standard deviations while inferential statistics used included Pearson correlation analysis. The study concluded that there was positive relationship between leadership roles, communication channel, discipline roles and decision making and school management. Thus the study established leadership roles, communication roles, discipline roles and decision making roles were the contemporary roles of the student council in the school management in secondary schools in the Nakuru East Sub County. The study, recommends that the student council should be empowered, be allowed to participate more in decision-making on matters concerning students' welfare so as to help reduce problems faced in secondary schools in the Nakuru East Sub County and to participate in management meetings to represent the student body.

Keywords: Discipline, governance, management, public schools and student council

1. Introduction

The school administration is different from that of other enterprises due to its objectives and goals. However, like any other organization, the school needs means to run effectively. The means are mainly human resources, financial resources, legal and technological nature. School heads face a big challenge not only to know the different tools of management, but also to maintain the required professionalism and follow the relevant Education Acts to effectively handle the school activities (Wilson, 2001; World Bank, 2008). Meaningful student involvement is the process of engaging students as partners in every facet of school change for strengthening their commitment to education and democracy (Maitles & Deuchar, 2006). Students' involvement in governance and management should be concentrated within elected student representatives or council (David, 2011; Effrat & Schimmel, 2003).

The student council is a representative body of students elected by their peers to give voice to the opinions and desires of the students. Student council is a curricular or extracurricular activity for students within elementary and secondary schools around the world. Present in most public and private school systems across the United States, Canada, Australia and the Philippines, these bodies are alternatively entitled student council, student government, Associated Student Body, Student Activity Council, and Student Council Association (Wilson, 2001).

In many British and Commonwealth schools, student councils are usually students in their senior grade who have considerable power and effectively run the school outside the classroom. The student councils have some sort of authority over other students. The student councils in these schools have their duties, responsibilities, special rights in which they are allowed to punish students who behave contrary to the rules and regulations. However, they are sometimes restrained where a case is beyond their context. The roles of the student councils include being role models for other pupils, to promote the ethos of the school, maintain the standards of discipline, attend school events and student council meeting when required and to ensure all students adhere to full school rules and regulations. In essence, each school is unique and has its own rules and regulations, which the student councils uphold as they influence the other students to adhere to them.

Secondary schools in Africa have regularly experienced violent student disturbances. Harber and Dadey (1993) used evidence from Nigeria to argue that schools where students were not involved in decision-making or were never consulted whenever important decisions were being made, resorted to violence to vent their frustrations and disagreements. Harber and Dadey (1993) found out that the students' council enabled the problems to be discussed before they got out of hand. In Tanzania, the role of student councils in management and governance of schools seemed to be entrenched.

In some schools in Kenya, student councils are so efficient and effective that the role of teachers is limited to teaching and carrying out other academic duties (Wanjiru, 1999; Wango, 2009; Abwere, 2009). The student council works in partnership with the schools to achieve common goals of increased student engagement and student success. It is tasked with considering the long-term strategic direction of the institution. The aim of student engagement is to enhance students' experience through a well-developed relationship. Highly engaged students are known to have improved personal, vocational and academic outcomes. A significant component of student engagement is the inter-student relationships and communication that offers students a meaningful voice in the matrix of communication that delivers student engagement. In order to foster inter- student discussion and develop a sense of community an element of structure and organization is required within the student body. However, the student council is tasked with keeping abreast of issues, news and events that students have an interest in, and relaying information and considered opinion to students. Therefore, meaningful and purposeful student engagement is a strategic goal. Thus, there is need to involve them in management of the school.

Increasingly the role of management and governance is recognized as important for providing and delivering effective services at all levels of education. In view of the growing demand for more and better services at secondary education levels, Abwere (2009) has established that competencies of student councils should be addressed urgently. If management and governance structure is vague or is missing certain elements, it is very difficult for management to function well. If managers are not competent or trained, do not understand their roles, or work under conditions that do not enable them to carry out their responsibilities, no matter how well defined the governance structure is, it cannot function as intended. In practice, then, governance and management are intertwined, even at the local level.

School policies are far more likely to be successful where they are clearly understood and accepted by all partners within the school community (Republic of Kenya, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2008; Republic of Kenya, 2005). Much research has demonstrated that the quality of education depends primarily on the way schools are managed, more than on the abundance of available resources, and that the capacity of schools to improve teaching and learning is strongly influenced by the quality of the leadership provided by the principal, BOM and the student council. If governance is shared then students feel more positive towards institutional goals and objectives (Obondo, 2000). In the Nakuru Sub County, the involvement of student council in the Management and governance of the schools has not been clearly defined. This implies that students have not been adequately involved in planning, organizing, sourcing, leading or directing, and controlling the school activities. Yet it is a requirement that participation of learners in the school governance be enhanced (ROK, 2012; ROK, 2008; ROK, 2005; MOEST, 2005).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Over the years, many educators have neglected the idea that students can be partners in school governance and management. Only when educators are able to model participatory democracy in school management can students be prepared for life as informed and involved citizens. In Kenya, little research has been tackled contemporary roles of elected student councils in school management. Despite the benefits that administration of schools would get from student council, there exists low level influence of such council to the school management, which at a large picture contributes to good performance and responsible citizens in the society. A knowledge gap existed regarding the influence of the elected student council on the management of schools. Thus, this study sought to determine the contemporary roles of elected student council on management of secondary schools in the Nakuru Sub County.

1.2. General Objective

The general objective of the study was to establish the contemporary roles of the elected student council on management of public secondary schools in Kenya.

1.3. Specific Objectives

1) To analyze leadership roles of elected student council on management of schools in the Nakuru East Sub County.
2) To determine the influence of communication channel of elected student council on management of schools in the Nakuru East Sub County
3) To establish the influence of discipline role of the elected student council on management of schools in the Nakuru East Sub County.
4) To determine the effect of decision making by the elected student council on management of secondary schools in the Nakuru East Sub County.

1.4. Justification of the Study

The output of the study is expected to provide evidence for developing policies aimed at improving effectiveness of elected student council in secondary schools in Kenya. The study findings may act as a source of information for educators, school administrations, general public and the state at large on the importance of involving elected student council in the management of the school activities,

which would enhance democracy and cohesion. This can help to gear up the academic performance and responsible citizens, which may be important to the individuals involved (students), administrators and the ministry of education at a wider scope. Other researchers interested in this area may use the research outcomes for replication elsewhere. The findings of the study may also complement the existing literature on devolution and growth of student council at the county government level.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Social Systems Theory
The social systems theory provided the theoretical underpinning for the study. Social Systems Theory is a theory that attempts to describe, explain and predict organizational behavior. The general system theory is based on the work of Ludwig Von Bertalanify. According to the Social Systems Theory, all organizations are systems comprised of different units or parts, which are interrelated and interdependent in carrying out their activities and geared towards attainment of common goals. These different units are known as sub-systems.

Subsystems are the interdependent interacting elements of a system that need to function in a coordinated way so that the entire system functions properly, to achieve its goals. In the case of a school, the school gets students, teachers, resource materials and finances from the supra systems. The system transforms the inputs into finished products. For example, a school produces a changed person with skills, knowledge and values to enable him/her to contribute positively to self and society. All subsystems perform unique but complementary roles to attain the common goals of the system.

Thus, even if the principal occupies a higher position than student councils, the role of student councils is not inferior to that of the principal .They all perform various but interrelated tasks in an interdependent manner to achieve high levels of school discipline and the consequent educational goals. It is, therefore, important that school administrators appreciate and recognize the role played by student councils regardless of their position in the administrative hierarchy. The managerial subsystem of the principal plays the role of coordinator, planner, controller and facilitator of activities of the entire system to ensure efficiency.

The malfunctioning of an organ in a human body will negatively affect another organ or even the whole body. Since a system is a set of interdependent and interacting elements, a change at any one point will eventually trigger off a chain of events that will have an impact on the entire system. A change in the functioning of the student council system will have an effect on the stakeholders. That is why school unrests caused by ineffective student council systems may lead to destruction of school property, or even loss of human life.

The principal should define clearly the goals of the school and the role of each individual or group towards the attainment of this goal. Thus, principals put in place good communication systems in schools to ensure a smooth two-way flow of information to all student councils, students, and teachers and support staff. Macky and Johnson (2003) also discuss the importance of achieving 'horizontal fit', or 'horizontal integration', to ensure unity amongst the different elements that make up the organization's overall system. It is because of this reason that the Social Systems Theory is considered suitable for this study. This is because schools are social system with subsystems such as the student council, which requires proper coordination, training, role clarity and healthy relationship with the school administration and students to enable it to carry out its role effectively.

2.2. Transformational Leadership Theory
According to Bush (2003) transformational leadership is a form of leadership that assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organizational members. Higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity. Bush (2007) conceptualizes transformational leadership along eight dimensions of building an institutional vision, establishing goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, modeling best practices and important organizational values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a productive business culture and developing structures to foster participation in organization decisions.

Bush (2007) argue that transformational leadership is essential for autonomous businesses since transformational leaders succeed in gaining the commitment of followers to such a degree that higher levels of accomplishment become virtually a moral imperative. Leaders using this style create an environment where every person is empowered to fulfill his or her highest needs and becomes a member of a productive learning community. It is understood that delegating power and authority to other stakeholders, while developing their leadership capacity, may enhance the transformation of the school into a learning organization (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al, 1996). In view of this study a powerful capacity for transformational leadership is required for the successful transition to student council system in the management and governance of secondary schools.

The critique of this theory is that it can be abused. Transformational leadership's high effectiveness in leader's vision makes it undemocratic; the leader's purpose is largely unchanged, thus liable to be misused by the leader. It is also very complicated as an amalgamation of various leadership theories, making it unreasonable to be trained or taught. With the current environment characterized by uncertainty, global turbulence, and organizational instability, it calls for transformational leadership to prevail at all levels of the organization. The involved stakeholders demonstrate high levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. With such a devoted workforce, it will definitely be useful to consider making efforts towards developing ways of transforming organization through leadership.

2.3. Participative Leadership Theory

Participative leadership assumes that the decision-making processes of an institution ought to be the central focus of the group (Leithwood et al., 1999). This model is underpinned by three assumptions namely participation will increase institutional effectiveness, participation as justified by democratic principles and that in the context of school management and governance, leadership is potentially available to any legitimate stakeholder including student council (Bell, 2002). Patterson (1993) points out that institutional management is likely to succeed if the bonding of staff is facilitated. The burdens of leadership become less if leadership functions and roles are shared among the stakeholders.

Participatory citizenship demands every member of the community to participate in self governance which ultimately could lead to the building of a strong democracy (Barber, 1989 in McKenna, 2000). The development of informed citizens in a democracy is nurtured by the promotion of their participation in the socioeconomic and political spheres of society. As such, the conception of participation within any education system is important since it arms the learners with knowledge regarding the importance of participation in all government, businesses as well as playing a fundamental role in the development of their communities. Blunkett (2008) quoted in Kiwan (2008) indicates that it is crucial in every democracy for people to be informed so that they can actively participate in a given education system and at the same time understanding the importance of taking part in both civil and civic activities.

Criticism associated with participative leadership style is that a leader most of the time engages in discussions with subordinates instead of taking decisions promptly and engaging in the actual practice of leading. In addition, although time and development constraints can limit the extent of participation, over time leaders can develop the necessary knowledge and skills in student council and teachers to enable effective contribution (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design, which is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2004). It enabled the researcher capture quantitative data to provide in-depth information about the influence of the contemporary roles of elected student council on management in public secondary schools in Nakuru East Sub-County, Kenya. The researcher used stratified sampling in which the schools were subdivided first into four strata and then used simple random sampling to get 7 public secondary schools that were sampled, which represent 58.33%. The sample included 100 elected student council and 7 deputy principals.

3.2. Data Processing and Analysis

The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included the use of mean, standard deviation, percentages and frequencies. Tables were also used to present the data collected for ease of understanding and analysis. This helped to generate quantitative reports through tabulations, percentages, and measure of central tendency.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

4.1. Leadership Roles

The study sought to examine the leadership roles of student council in school management in Nakuru East Sub County. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the mean and standard deviations of the results as presented in Table 1

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Student council influences others to achieve agreed upon goals in the school	100	4.13	1.244
Members of the student council have the desire to excel in leadership and academic work	100	4.08	0.906
Student councils give directions to other students whom they are leading	100	4.65	0.893
Leaders are responsible for setting the pace of activities for other students on a daily basis in order to attain the set objectives	100	3.88	1.119
Student councils motivate and inspire other students to ensure good performance in all school activities.	100	4.60	0.938
Student council's main role is representation of the needs of the student body	100	4.23	1.060

Table 1: Leadership Roles of Student Council

The findings revealed that the respondents agreed that the student council influenced others to achieve agreed upon goals in the school, members of the student council had the desire to excel in leadership and academic work, respondents agreed that the student councils gave directions to other students whom they were leading, student council were also responsible for setting the pace of activities for other students on a daily basis in order to attain the set objectives, student councils motivated and inspired other students to ensure good performance in all school activities and that the respondents agreed that the student council's main role was to represent the needs of all the students as revealed by a mean of 4.13,3.80,3.53,3.78,3.63 and 4.58 and standard deviation of 0.88, 0.943, 1.004, 0.935, and 1.137 respectively. This concurs with Otieno (2001) who notes that student councils give directions to other students whom they are leading; they are responsible for setting the pace of activities for other students on a daily basis in order to

attain the set objectives. These findings also concur with Muli (2011) who reported that the roles of the student councils were to supervise duties in the school, monitor students and assist the administration in management of the school. Having Student council's main role being that of representation of the needs of the student body is both a strategic management tool recommended by Kisilugi (2013) who has reported that the student councils played a very important role in the controlling of students and upholding of students discipline in public secondary schools.

4.2. Communication Channel

The study sought to examine the communication channel as a role of the student council in school management in Nakuru East Sub County. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the mean and standard deviations of the results as presented in Table 2.

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Student council system serves as one of the communication channels between the students and the school administration	100	4.73	0.900
There is effective relay of information on all aspects of administration through the various levels up the hierarchy from students.	100	3.88	0.921
The student councils are used to enforce school rules and regulations among students	100	2.79	1.069
Communication from student council to other students is intended to inform and persuade them in order to produce results	100	4.33	1.144
Sometimes inability to disseminate information correctly causes misinformation, confusion and frustration in the school	100	3.53	1.050
Student councils are good listeners and receive information from teachers and students	100	4.08	0.894

Table 2: Communication Channel Roles

The respondents agreed that the student council system served as one of the communication channels between the students and the school, the relay of information was ineffective from the administration to various levels up the hierarchy , the respondents also seemed to disagree whether the student councils enforced school rules and regulations among students, the respondents agreed that communication from the student council to other students was intended to inform and persuade the students to produce results, respondents agreed that inability to disseminate information correctly by the student council caused misinformation, confusion and frustration, the respondents also agreed that the student councils were good listeners and received information from teachers and students as reflected by a mean value of 4.73, 3.88, 2.79, 4.33, 3.53 and 4.08 and standard deviation of 0.9, 0.92, 1.069, 1.144, 1,050 and 0.894 respectively. Ozigi (1995) has observed that the student council system, serves as one of the communication channels between the students and the school administration. He points out that the student council system is one of the most effective ways of involving students directly in school administration. The NYCI (2001) argues that communication is the essence of effective student council.

4.3. Discipline Role

The study sought to examine the discipline roles of the student council in school management. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the mean and standard deviations of the results. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Student council helps to shape the identity of students by insistence on certain modes of behavior expected to be adhered	100	4.13	0.882
The student council is close to the students and deal with discipline cases at the grassroots level	100	3.8	0.984
Student councils can thwart planned strikes	100	3.53	0.943
Student council takes collective action whenever they come across cases of indiscipline	100	3.78	1.004
Student council involved in school outings are responsible for the discipline of the students	100	3.63	0.935
Student council ensures that there is classroom discipline and students maintain silence while in class.	100	4.58	1.137

Table3: Discipline Roles

The student council helped to shape the identity of students by insistence on certain modes of behavior expected to be adhered, the respondents agreed that the student council was close to the students and therefore dealt with discipline cases at the grassroots level, they also agreed that the student council could thwart planned strikes, the student council took collective action whenever they came across cases of indiscipline, respondents seemed to agree that student council involved in school outings were responsible for the discipline of the students going out, the student council ensured that there was classroom discipline and students maintained silence while in class as revealed by a mean of 4.13,3.8, 3.53, 3.78, 3.63 and 4.58 and a standard deviation of 0.882, 0.984, 0.943, 1.004, 0.935, and 1.137 respectively. This is in agreement to with Muthamia (2000) who reported that student leaders can shape the identity of a student, often by example, at times by insistence on certain actions or expected modes of behavior and occasionally admonishing the student to reinforce the method. The finding is in line with Wango (2009) who observed that student councils can take collective

action whenever they came across cases of indiscipline. According to Wango (2009) all members of the student council should be responsible for the discipline of the students in and out of school.

4.4. Decision Making
The study sought to describe the decision making roles of student council in school management. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the mean and standard deviations and the results are presented in Table 4 below.

Statements	N	Mean	SD
The school involves the student council in decision making	100	3.48	1.013
Student council is recognized by seeking their views in decision making	100	3.78	0.956
Student council makes positive contribution to the improvement of educational programmes in the school	100	4.28	1.046
Involving student councils in decision-making on matters concerning students' welfare reduces problems faced in the school	100	3.00	1.042
Student council involvement in decision-making helps to develop their leadership skills and ability to plan	100	3.00	1.042
Involving student council in decision-making creates a sense of ownership to the students as the students feel that the school is part of them	100	2.64	0.306

Table 4: Decision Making

The findings revealed that schools involve student council in decision , it is also evident that the student council was recognized by seeking their views in decision making, in regard to whether student council made positive contribution to the improvement of educational programmes in the school revealed a general agreement, it is evident that the respondents were indifferent as to whether involving student councils in decision-making on matters concerning students' welfare reduced problems faced in the school , it is also evident that respondents were indifferent as to whether the student council involvement in decision-making helped to develop their leadership skills and ability to plan, the study also shows that the respondents were indifferent as to whether involving student council in decision-making created a sense of ownership in the students as shown by a mean response value of 3.48, 3.78, 4.28, 3.00, 3.00 and 2.64 and a standard deviation of 1.013, 0.956, 1.046, 1.042, 1.042 and 0.306 respectively.

4.5. Relationship between Roles of Student Council and Management of Schools
On the relationship between the contemporary roles of student council on school management (SM), the contemporary roles investigated were leadership roles (LR), communication channel roles (CCR), school discipline roles (SDR) and decision making roles (DMR). The relationship was established through Pearson correlation analysis and the results presented in Table 5.

	LR. Total Score	CCR Total Score	SDR Total Score	DMR Total Score	SM. Total Score
LR. Total Score Pearson Correlation	1	0.287**	0.391**	0.394**	0.348**
Sig. (2 tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
N	100	100	100	100	100
CCR Total Score Pearson Correlation	0.287**	1	0.566**	0.293**	0.487**
Sig. (2 tailed)	.000		.000	.012	.000
N	100	100	100	100	100
SDR Total Score Pearson Correlation	0.391**	0.566**	1	0.391**	0.491**
Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
N	100	100	100	100	100
DMR Total Score Pearson Correlation	0.394**	0.293**	0.391**	1	0.194**
Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.012	.000		.000
N	100	100	100	100	100
SM. Total Score Pearson Correlation	0.348**	0.487**	0.491**	0.194**	1
Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
N	100	100	100	100	100

Table 5: Correlation Analysis Test Results
*** σ=0.01 (Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

The findings on correlation analysis showed that there was a positive relationship between leadership roles and school management as indicated by r = 0.348, with p < 0.01). This suggests that the student council's leadership role had a positive influence on school management. The results also indicate that there was a positive relationship between communication channel roles and school management as shown by a coefficient of r = 0.487 and p< 0.01. Results show that there was a positive relationship between discipline roles of student council and school management with a relationship coefficient of r = 0.491 and a standard error, p < 0.01. The results also showed a positive relationship between decision making roles of student council and school management with a correlation coefficient of r = 0.194 and p < 0.01. Finally, the study established a positive significant relationship between leadership roles, communication roles, discipline roles and decision making roles and school management.

5. Conclusions

The leadership roles of the student council in secondary schools were influencing others to achieve agreed upon goals in the school, giving directions to other students whom they were leading and were also responsible for setting the pace of activities for other students on a daily basis in order to attain the set objectives and motivating and inspiring other students to ensure good performance in all school activities. The student council also represented the needs of all the students. It is also concluded that the communication roles of student council included serving as one of the communication channels between the students and the school administration, being good listeners and receiving information from teachers and students and informing and persuading the students to produce results. However, inability to disseminate information correctly by the student council caused misinformation, confusion and frustration.

It was also concluded that the discipline roles of the student council included helping to shape the identity of students by insistence on certain modes of behavior expected to be adhered to, being close to the students and therefore dealt with discipline cases at the grassroots level and thwarting any planned strikes. It was also concluded that the student council took collective action whenever they came across cases of indiscipline and were also responsible for the discipline of the students going out. The student council also ensured that there was classroom discipline and students maintained silence while in class.It was concluded that the student council were involved in decision making and were also recognized by seeking their views in decision making thus making a positive contribution to the improvement of educational programmes in the school.

The study also concluded that there was positive relationship between leadership roles, communication channel, discipline roles and decision making and school management as indicated by r = 0.348, 0.487, 0.491 and 0.194 with p < 0.01 respectively. Thus the study established leadership roles, communication roles, discipline roles and decision making roles were the contemporary roles of the student council in the school management in secondary schools in Nakuru East Sub County that are practiced by the student council.

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, several recommendations are made. It is recommended that the student council should enhance their desire to excel in leadership and academic work. It is also recommended that the teachers in charge of the student council should make sure that the relay of information was effective from the administration to various levels up the hierarchy. Also the student council should be able to disseminate information correctly in order to avoid misinformation, confusion and frustration. The student council should also be empowered with skill that will enable them to thwart any planned strikes. The school administration should also allow the student council to participate more in decision-making on matters concerning students' welfare so as to help reduce problems faced in secondary schools in Nakuru East Sub County. With the roles presented being in management structure, Student councils should be partisans in the meetings held in schools such as PTA and BOM so as to represent the student body when it comes to management issues that affect the students directly.

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