School Management and Students' Academic Performance: How Effective are Strategies being Employed by School Managers in Secondary Schools in Embu North District, Embu County, Kenya?

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Abstract

This study sought to analyze the strategies school managers apply to improve academic performance of students in schools under free day secondary school education in Embu District, Embu County, Kenya. The study was guided by the Capital School Effectiveness and Improvement Theory based on various interrelated variables such as outcomes, leverage, intellectual capital and social capital. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. A combination of purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were utilized to draw 54 members of the Board of Management (BoM), 45 heads of departments and 36 members of Parents Teachers Association (PTAs) yielding to a sample size of 135 subjects to participate in the study. Mixed methods were used to collect quantitative data from teachers using questionnaires and qualitative data from heads of departments and members of PTA using interviews. It was established that school managers used various strategies to improve students' academic performance. The strategies included: inconsistent monitoring of instructional processes and student assessment; subsidizing Government funding through free day secondary education using income generating activities; and uncoordinated guidance and counseling programmes. Despite these efforts, the expected improved students' academic performance was not realized due largely to the fact that most school managers had not undergone management skill training. Hence, since managers who are conversant with management practices would be more worthwhile partners of the Government of Kenya in the implementation of policy, it was recommended that school managers should undergo intensive leadership training on all aspects of school management for enhanced students' academic performance to be realized (253 words).

Keywords: Management strategies, improved academic performance, Secondary schools, Embu North District, Embu County, Kenya

Introduction

Background to the Study

There is a growing body of literature from researchers and educationists which have made an attempt to examine the relationship between education management and students academic performance (Orodho, 2014; UNESCO, 1999; United Nations, 2013; Waweru & Orodho, 2014). The results reveal rather spurious relationship (Waweru & Orodho, 2014).

However, what is clear is that educational management in secondary schools involves the application of management principles in designing, developing and effecting resources towards achievement of educational goals (Okumbe, 2001). This effectiveness according to UNESO (2009) is judged by the extent to which schools generally meet the expectations of the society within which they are established. Since independence, the Kenyan government has demonstrated commitment to the provision of quality secondary school education through allocation of financial resources, provision of trained teachers and establishment of quality assurance department (Republic of Kenya, 2012a.2012b). According to Ohba (2009), shortage of teachers, lack of basic facilities, community interferences, poor teaching methodology and administrative related factors such as poor management of school resources have been noted as some of these factors.

Embu North District has a total of 24 public secondary schools, 7 boarding and 17 day schools. The performance of schools under FDSE in Embu North District Embu County has been an average of D+ from 2007-2011 (KNEC, 2012). This is a failure because the graduates of this grade do not qualify in most careers for further education and training (Kenya National Examinations Council, 2014). It is apparent that various intertwined factors could be responsible for this poor performance in the district. This background prompted the undertaking of this study on management strategies applied to enhance students' academic performance in schools under FDSE in Embu North District, Embu County, Kenya.

State of Art Review

Literature related to school based strategies employed by school managers to improve students' academic performance has revealed mixed and contrasting range of results (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Zepeda, 2004; Fullan, 1991; Lamb, 2007 ; Waweru & orodho, 2014; World Bank, 2008). Croninger and Lee (2001) reported that the degree of teacher caring and interaction with students reported by both parents and teachers has a significant impact on performance. In a review of effective schools in the US, Croninger and Lee (2001) found evidence that schools with a common sense of purpose and strong communal organization involving collegial relationships among staff and positive adult student relationships are efficient in promoting a range of academic and social outcomes reflecting students' engagement and commitment.

There are factors that researchers and school systems point when describing quality schools and features of schools that have improved in effectiveness. According to Zepeda (2004) and Fullan (1991), such features include: Commitment to success for all; flexibility and responsiveness; Shared vision; climate of challenging and stimulating teaching; strong and fair disciplinary climate. According to Lamb (2007), the most effective programmes were: foster connectedness; increasing the trust placed in students; Provide tasks with immediate tangible benefits; Make spaces within schools and curricula for diverse student needs. Principals in schools achieving high retention rates and good performance, Socias, Dunn, Parrish, Muraki and Woods (2007) were clear that these implementations should not be ad hoc.

World Bank (2008) posits that much research has demonstrated that retention and the quality of education depends primarily on the way schools are managed, more than the abundance of available resources, the capacity of schools to improve teaching and learning is strongly influenced by the quality of the leadership provided by the headteacher. Concerted effort to improve school leadership is one of the most promising points of intervention to raise retention, the quality and efficiency of secondary education across Sub-Saharan Africa. In South Africa, leadership training for secondary school heads was to improve quality of Education. Senegal's Improvement Plans (SIP) created in 1996, encourage enterprenoual skills of headteachers to find funding for school projects that enhance educational quality. In Kenya, all headteachers are currently undergoing a management course at the Kenya Management Institute (KEMI) to improve on their management skills (Republic of Kenya, 2012a).

UNICEF (2000) in Latin America, a study that included 50,000 students in grades three and four found that children whose schools lacked classroom materials and had an inadequate library were significantly more likely to show lower test scores and higher grade repetition than those whose schools were well-equipped (Willms, 2000). Well managed schools contribute to educational quality and enhance retention (Graig & duParisis, 1998). According to the Education Bill 2012, the government of Kenya is committed to ensuring that children belonging to disadvantaged groups are not discriminated and prevented from pursuing and completing basic education (Republic of Kenya, 2012a.2012b). The school service environment can also contribute to learning in important ways.

Provision of health services and education can contribute to learning first by reducing absenteeism and inattention. Sick children cannot attend school, and evidence from China, Guinea, India and Mexico shows that children's illness is a primary cause for absenteeism and poor performance (Carron & Chau, 1996).

The highest quality teachers, those most capable of helping their students learn, have deep mastery of their subject matter and pedagogy (Darling-Hammond, 1997). A number of teachers in China, Guinea, India and Mexico observed to master neither the subject matter they taught nor the pedagogical skills required for good presentation of the material (Carron & Chau, 1996). This affects retention and educational quality since student achievement, especially beyond the basic skills, depends largely on teacher's command of subject matter and their ability to use that knowledge to help students learn (Mullens, Murnane & Willet, 1996).

Whether a teacher uses traditional or more current methods of instruction, efficient use of school time has significant impact on student learning. Teachers' presence in the classroom represents the starting point. Many teachers face transportation and housing obstacles that hinder them from getting to school on time and staying until school hours are over (Ohba, 2009). When teachers are present, learning occurs when teachers engage students in instructional activities, rather than attending to administrative or other non-instructional processes (Waweru & Orodho, 2014). Many international studies have shown the opportunity to learn and the time on task to be critical for educational quality. The quality of a school and the quality of teaching of the individual teacher is higher in schools that are able and willing to make efficient use of the available time of its teachers and pupils (Verwimp, 1999). According to Ngando (2011) in his study on time management behavior among secondary school personnel in Kinango District, Coast Province, majority of teachers and students do not report to school on the first day of opening, most teachers write their schemes of work when schools opened, went to class without lesson plans, assemblies took longer and consumed classroom time.

Professional development can help overcome shortcomings that may have been part of teachers' pre-service education and keep teachers abreast of new knowledge and practices in the field (UNICEF, 2000). This ongoing training for teachers can have a direct impact on student achievement. Dialogue and reflections with colleagues, peer and supervisor observations and keeping journals are all effective ways for teachers to advance their knowledge (UNICEF, 2000). A programme in Kenya, the Mombasa School Improvement Project, built on this approach to professional development showed that teachers supported with in-service as well as external workshop training improved significantly in their abilities to use child-centered teaching and learning behaviours (Andersen, 2000).

Good teachers are skilled not only in instructional methods, but also in evaluation and assessment practices that allow them to gauge individual student needs. Observations in Guinea and India found that teachers trained poorly in evaluation techniques and the reality is far from the continuous procedures recommended by official programmes (Carron & Chau, 1996). Many teachers and education systems continue to rely on almost exclusively on traditional paper-and-pencil tests of factual knowledge that tend to promote rote memorization rather than higher order thinking skills (Condy, 1998). Monitoring and evaluation of learning should be a continuous process to ensure schools meet their targets. Each district should have mechanisms for monitoring on a continuous basis the performance of both teachers and students for remedial action early when needed (Kimbui, 2012).

Research around the world has shown that low expectations for student achievement permeate educational systems. Rather than setting high standards and believing students can meet them, teachers and administrators in many developing countries expect up to half the students will drop or fail. Schools committed to student learning communicate expectations clearly, give frequent and challenging assignments, monitor performance regularly, and give students the chance to participate in and take responsibility for diverse school activities (Graig & duPlessis, 1998).

According to Mobegi, Ondigi and Oburu (2010), headteachers should take up their roles as quality assurance officers in their schools and ensure that there is adequate departmental supervision. They should introduce staff appraisal through locally designed forms to enhance standards and engage in evaluative class observation to ensure that a variety of teaching methods apart from class discussion is utilized. Headteachers should devise school income generating activities to alleviate current financial problems that result in student absenteeism, transfers, indiscipline and inadequate facilities. They should frequently invite quality assurance officers to advice on school affairs and community relations.

Head teachers should be in constant communication with the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) to ensure that the schools receive adequate staffing for the delivery of quality education. Headteachers should devise strategies such as the old students' associations and organize communal fundraisers to help equip schools for retention and delivery of quality education.

A study done by Achoka (2007) on the role of the principal, for change to take place in school, the present school principal should be an advisor to students, teachers and the community. He /she should be in a position to identify possible threats against retention rates and reverse the situation. He / she needs to act as a counselor to not only the students but also parents and teachers because this could assist all parties interested in the education life of the learner to appreciate the need to be educated. Achoka (2007) concurs with Waweru and Orodho (2014) that a secondary school principal should endeavor to provide the best school climate to entice students to complete schooling by making school free from violence, threats, intimidations, hatred, and witch-hunting and develop rich co-curriculum, remedial interventions for slow learners to avoid repetition, frustration and dropout. He / he should be a developer by putting more effort in developing academic and co-curriculum programmes that are attractive and competitive to occupy all students while at school.

With the introduction of the free secondary education, schools get some funding from the government while parents are required to meet various other costs such as school development projects and boarding fees (Republic of Kenya, 2005a,2005b). The issue of finance is crucial to retention and the provision of quality education since it determines the quality of physical facilities, teaching and learning materials, quality of teacher motivation and teachers employed in the time of shortage (Mobegi et al., 2010). School discipline is a system of arranging conditions for healthy learning (Okumbe, 2001). Headteachers should maintain discipline in their schools by helping their staff and students develop unique and individual personalities with a cultural background and group consciousness. The school administration therefore involves students to make choices in life reasonably and independently through guidance and counselling. Kiruma (2004) in her study of secondary school strikes explains that discipline in schools is a function of the school administration. It depends on the headteachers administrative, supervisory, and organizational, leadership abilities and styles since he bears the general responsibility of clarifying the school purpose and philosophy. The effects of schools in poor areas can often outweigh the impact of family background and practices (Orodho, 2014). Further, although many constraints exist, schools can play a role in helping parents to enhance the home curriculum and improve the quality of parental involvement in their children's education. Strategies include; for example, partnering with organizations such as public health providers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), asking parents to participate in assessment of their child's progress, offering clear, regular non-threatening communication, and including parents in decision making groups at the school (Redding, 2000; Waweru & Orodho, 2014).

According to a background paper prepared for EFA Global Monitoring Report (2011), there is some evidence that when teachers take a more proactive approach to a problem of poor performance and dropout, this is able to improve the situation (Ananga, 2010). CREATE work in Southern Ghana has revealed that a few teachers in some schools sensitive to the problem of dropout are able to encourage 'drop in'. They have achieved this by identifying children at risk of dropping out and attended to the factors that contribute to their chances of dropping out such as, providing writing material and food on condition that children attend school regularly.

Ipata (2011), in her study on cost saving measures on access, retention and performance in public secondary schools in KCSE examination in Teso District found that most schools were under staffed. This contributed to high expenditure due to employment of BoM teachers affecting the quality of teaching process, schools lacked quality buildings, science equipment, shortage of teachers, and IGAs which would help needy students by giving them bursaries to enhance retention and performance. Andaje (2012) in a pilot project of donating sanitary pads to schools in Narok, it was hoped the girls' truancy would be curbed, performance would improve, they would attend school uninterrupted and their hygiene would be guaranteed. Besides receiving the pads, they also received panties as a way of retaining them in school. Machocho (2011), in his study on home-grown school feeding programme (HGSFP) and its implications on access and performance in primary schools in Kathozweni District established that, HGSFP had a positive impact on the retention and performance of pupils in schools since the schools with HGSFP registered little or no dropout rates over the years. The pupils were able to perform well and complete the primary school cycle.

Statement of the Problem

Kenya has put different policies in place to make education accessible, improve transition, quality, completion and retention rates to all her citizens. Some of these policies included: school-feeding programme in the 80s for the primary school children to alleviate health and developmental consequences of childhood malnutrition, increase primary school enrolment and combat school pressures that limit educational opportunities for girls (Orodho, 2014). Despite this intervention, the problem of low performance persisted in schools because the school feeding programme impact on attendance appeared to weaken with age (Finan, 2010).Secondary School Bursary Fund (SEBF): in 1993 / 1994, a secondary school bursary fund was started to cushion students in the lower income groups from the high cost of secondary education (Republic of Kenya, 2005a, 2005b). However, this programme faced many challenges including undeserving students benefiting from the fund, very few beneficiaries, ghost students awarded and insignificant amounts awarded to the deserving students (Republic of Kenya, 2009).

Community Bursary Fund (CBF) was introduced to help secondary school students who were needy to continue with education and perform well in 2003 when the NARC government came to power (Republic of Kenya, 2004). Some needy students who were not in school were left out in this programme because it only catered for the students who had enrolled in form one locking out deserving students who could not afford joining levies and the ones who had dropped out (UN WOMEN, 2011). n the last seven years, the government had embarked on Education for All (EFA) initiatives by introducing Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and Free Secondary Education in 2008 (MoEST, 2004). However, despite all the above efforts by the government, performance of students enrolled in FDSE in Embu District has remained poor.

Purpose and Objectives of the paper

The purpose of this paper was to analyze school based strategies school managers employed to improve students' academic performance in Embu North District, Embu County, Kenya. The study set out to answer the question: *How effective are the strategies being employed to enhance students' academic performance in the study locale?*

Theoretical Framework

The study was based on Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement. Hargreaves (2001) developed a theory of school effectiveness and improvement based on: outcomes, both cognitive and moral; leverage: the relationship between teacher input and education output; intellectual capital: the sum of the school's knowledge and experience; and social capital: the networks of trust and collaboration. In this theory, Hargreaves (2001) argues that the conventional model of measuring school effectiveness and improvement is an adequate tool for the analysis of school success and failure. The concept of school 'ethos' helped to make sense of the correlation between a number of school processes but it did not allow one to test the model in detail, or to predict the performance of a school from any close analysis of identifiable factors. He proposes a new theoretical model of schools, which provides a working model, both of effectiveness and improvement. The theory has the following concepts:

i. Outcomes: cognitive and moral.
ii. Leverage: the relationship between teacher input and educational output, or changes in students' intellectual and moral state resulting from the teacher's effort. Hargreaves argues that instead of teachers employing too much effort and yielding little fruit, effective schools concentrate on effective strategies allowing a large impact to result from relatively low effort (working smarter, not harder). Outstanding schools use combinations of high leverage strategies.

Understanding school effectiveness involves exploring how high leverage works (Hargreaves, 2001).

ii. Intellectual capital: describes a combination of the creation of a school vision; identification of a school's underpinning values; the conceptualization and articulation of a school-wide pedagogy; insights about school improvement processes; and a student academic achievement across learning areas.
iv. Social capital: describes professional relationships of trust and respect; dynamics within parallel leadership and in student wellbeing. The underpinning concept is that of relationships. High levels of social capital strengthen its intellectual capital through sharing. Unlike financial capital, social and intellectual capital are increased rather than depleted by passing on to others (Hargreaves, 2001).

Hargreaves (2001) uses this model to present definitions of effective and improving schools stating that; an effective school mobilizes its intellectual capital (especially its capacity to create and transfer knowledge) and its social capital (especially its capacity to generate trust and sustained networks) to achieve the desired educational outcomes of intellectual and moral excellences, through the successful use of high leverage strategies grounded in evidence-informed and innovative professional practice. An improving school increases its intellectual capital especially its capacity to transfer knowledge to achieve the educational outcomes of intellectual and moral excellences, by learning to use higher leverage strategies based on evidence of 'what works' and innovative professional practice.

This study employed capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement to analyze the strategies school managers employ to enhance performance of students in schools under free day secondary schools in Embu North District, Embu County. The theory is applicable in this study because all the theoretical concepts: outcomes; leverage; intellectual capital; and social capital have a bearing on performance and quality of education. The FDSE policy desired outcomes are to improve performance and quality education to every Kenyan child graduating from secondary school regardless of gender, ethnic background, or socio-economic background. Using the theory, this study sought to analyze strategies school managers employ to enhance performance of students in schools under FDSE.

Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design is USED in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2012a). Borg and Gall (1989) note that descriptive survey research intended *to* produce statistical information about aspects of education that interest policy makers and educators.
Sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. Any statement made about the sample should also be true of the population (Orodho, 2009b, 2012). It is however agreed that the larger the sample the smaller the sampling error (Gay, 1992). He recommends that when the target population is small (less than 100 members), a minimum sample of 20% is adequate for educational research. Random sampling was used to select 9 schools and 9 deputy principals from 17 schools. Purposeful sampling was done to select 54 BoM members, 45 HoDs, and 36 PTA members. This formed 53% of the target population, which was in line with Gays' (1992) recommendation.

Questionnaires were used to obtain information from the BoM members, PTA members, the deputy principals and the HoDs while interview schedules were used to obtain information from the principals. Observation and document study confirmed information given by the school managers concerning availability of facilities like laboratories, classes, administration offices, libraries and sanitation among others.

After the data were collected, data cleaning was done to improve the quality of the responses. They were coded and entered in the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Qualitative data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis based on analysis, meanings and implications emanating from respondents' information and documented data. As observed by Gray (2004), qualitative data provide rich descriptions and Simple descriptive statistics analyzed quantitative data. The statistics used included frequency counts, means and percentages. As Martin and Acuna (2002) and Orodho (2009b)observe, SPSS version is able to handle large amounts of data, and given its wide spectrum of statistical procedures purposefully designed for social sciences, it is also quite efficient. The results of data analysis were presented using frequency distribution tables and bar graphs.

Findings and Discussions

Level of Preparedness of School Managers to Perform Management Responsibilities

Gender of respondents

Based on the information carried in Figure 1, it was established that the gender of principals and deputy principals was skewed in favour of males with 87.70% and 71.4 % of the principals deputy principals , respectively being males . In fact less than 15 percent and 30 % of the sampled principals and deputy principals, respectively, were females. It was also established that two thirds of the boards of governors were male and 33.30% were female in line with the constitutional expectations on the gender composition of elected officers. However, slightly over half of the parents were males.

It was also encouraging to note that there was equal representation of gender amongst the heads of departments at 50% each. However, it was evident that males dominated top school management positions.
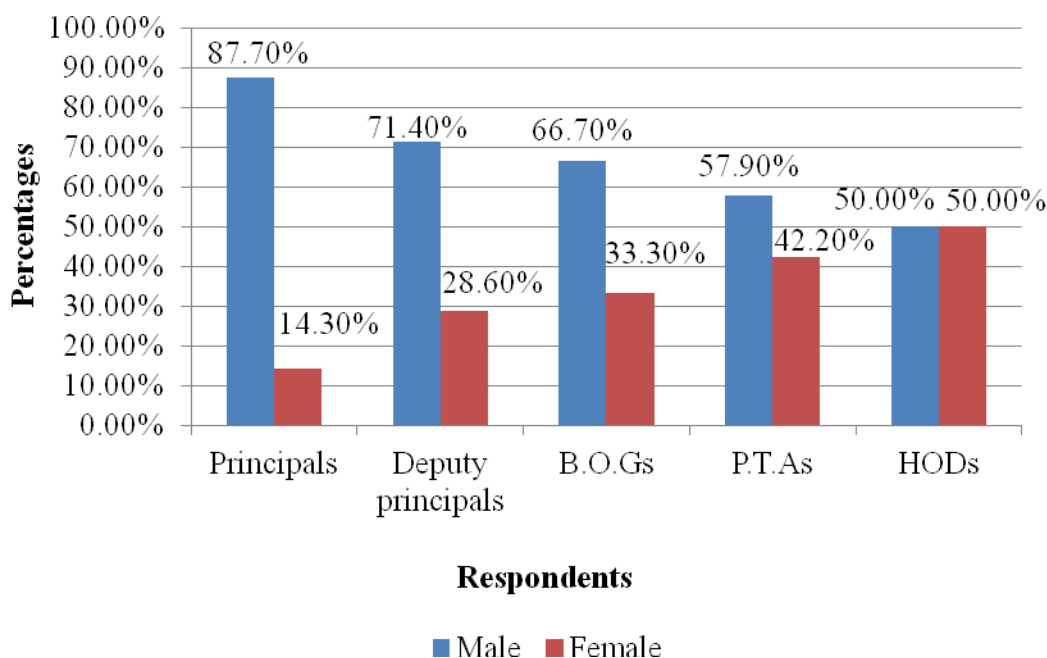
It was also discouraging to note that in half of the schools, the principals and deputy principals were of the same gender of either female or male. This is against the education policy which, according to MoEST (2007), in the management of day mixed secondary schools, the principal and the deputy principal must be of opposite gender to handle mixed gender issues of the students. This policy lapse could negatively affect the performance of the students in the mixed day secondary schools.

Level of Formal Education

The educational level of the respondents is portrayed in Table 1. Results in the Table revealed that majority of the principals, deputy principals and Heads of Departments constituting 84.5% 85.75, and 81.05, respectively, held university degrees. A small number of respondents, constituting 15.50%, 14.30%, 13.40%, 2.75% and 17.70% of principals, deputy principals, and members of the board, parent representatives and heads of departments, respectively held diplomas certificates. Majority of the board members had secondary education 73.30%, with the rest, constituting 13.30%, had primary level of formal education. The implication of the findings reported in this section is that all schools in the study locale are staffed with human resource of acceptable and relevant academic qualification. In addition, the members of the Board of management (BoM) similarly had relevant academic qualification of up to secondary school level as stipulated in the Education Act 2013 No.14 of 2013 (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

Table 1: Level of Education of School Managers

Respondents	Masters %	Bachelors %	Diploma %	Secondary %	Primary %
Principals		84.50	15.50		
Deputy principals		85.70	14.30		
BoM			13.40	73.30	13.30
FT As			2.75	10.00	87.25
HoDs	2.30	81.00	16.70		

The parents' representatives had the lowest academic qualifications with 87.25% holding primary education and 10% holding secondary education. However, this level was not very low to have a negative effect on the schooling of their children.

According to a study done by Demi et al., (2010), parents' educational attainment and income have an effect on children's educational attainment; hence the poor performance of students in schools under FDSE due to the low levels of education of the PTA members.

Management Training

Figure 2 carries information on the level of training on management by the school managers. Results from the figure indicates that 26.70%, 45.20%, 71.40% of the board members, heads of departments and deputy principals, respectively, had been trained in management. The information indicates that 73.30% of the board members, 54.80% of the heads of departments and 28.60% of the deputy principals had not been trained in management.
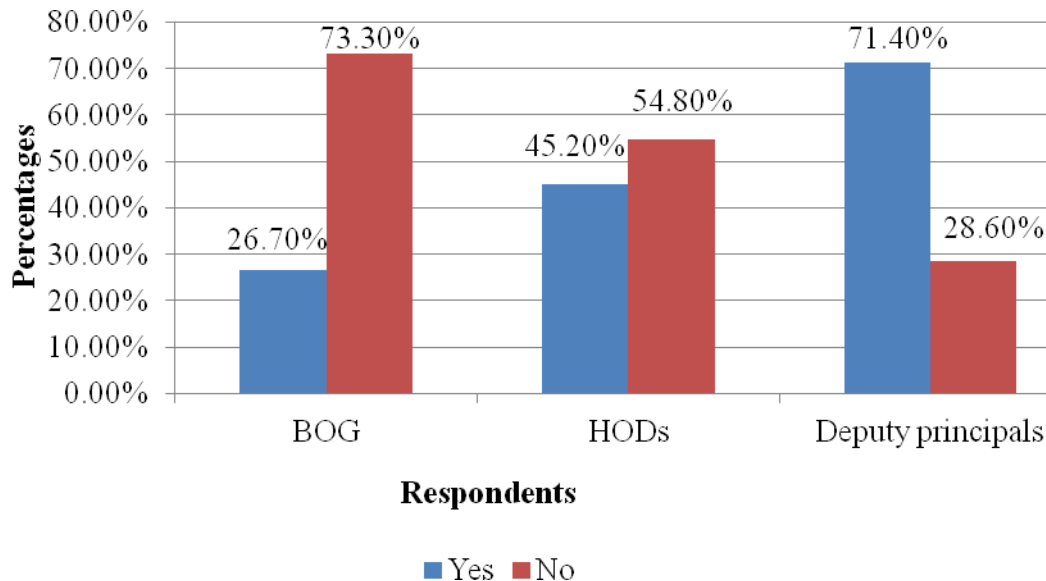

Figure 3: Training Levels   of School Managers

Most members of the Board of Managent did not have managerial skills probably because of their relatively low level of formal education or lack of exposure to such relevant training. Yet, the policy of the Government is to have these BoM members trained through the Kenya Educational Managent Institute (KEMI) .This could be a contributing factor to poor academic performance of students in schools under FDSE because for school managers to acquire management skills and implement them competently they need training in management (Robbin, 2003). However, a good number of deputy principals and heads of departments had trained in management which may not have been adequate and /or intensive. It is thus arguable that school managers who are conversant with management practices are more worthwhile partners of the Government in implementing policies that enhance students academic performance.

The management Strategies Employed to Enhance Performance

Management of Teaching and Learning

 Research studies have demonstrated that the type of teaching methods employed influence students academic performance. In this study, slightly over of the teachers in the study locale used lecture method, 26.20% used demonstration method and 16.70% used both methods. The teachers and principals concurred that teaching methods used in most of the sampled schools encouraged students to be passive. The teachers on their part reported that the principals hardly monitored the teaching and learning process in their respective schools. It was evident across the schools sampled that there was inconsistent instructional supervision and monitoring of student learning through consistent and more practical assessment procedures. This could have contributed to poor performance because student passivity does not enhance learning and active learning helps students to learn independently and perform well Macttemer & Crawford, (2007). According to a research done by Mobegi et al., (2010) in Gucha District, Kenya, principals should ensure that there is adequate departmental organization and supervision and engage in classroom supervision to ensure that a variety of teaching methods are used.

Internal School Assessment

To determine to what extent school managers were committed to success, the researcher sought information from the heads of departments. They were asked to give the number of examinations students sat each term. Of the heads of departments interviewed, 97.60% reported students sitting two and three examinations and this is a good way of evaluating students' performance by the teachers.

Combined results of mode of instruction and student assessment indicate that there were inconsistent instructional processes and student assessment strategies in most schools that participated in the study. As a result, it is arguable that this may not have assisted to improve students' academic performance. This finding is rather contrary to what other scholars had earlier established. For instance, according to Cunha & Heckman (2006), schools need to adopt multi-faceted approaches, no single strategy works alone to increase student engagement and performance. Similarly, observations in Guinea and India found that teachers trained poorly in evaluation techniques and in instructional methods, were not able to gauge individual student learning needs, hence could not produced the desired enhanced students academic performance (Carron & Chau, 1999; Orodho.2014). This may have been the case because this study revealed that many teachers continued to rely almost exclusively on traditional paper-and-pencil test of factual knowledge that tends to promote rote memorization rather than higher order thinking skills (Condy, 1999). It was also evident that monitoring of curriculum instruction by principals was erratic in most schools, yet monitoring and evaluation of learning should be a continuous process to ensure schools meet their targets.

Alternative Sources of Funds

Respondents were requested to indicate the types of alternative sources of income used to supplement government funding, and results displayed in Figure 3.
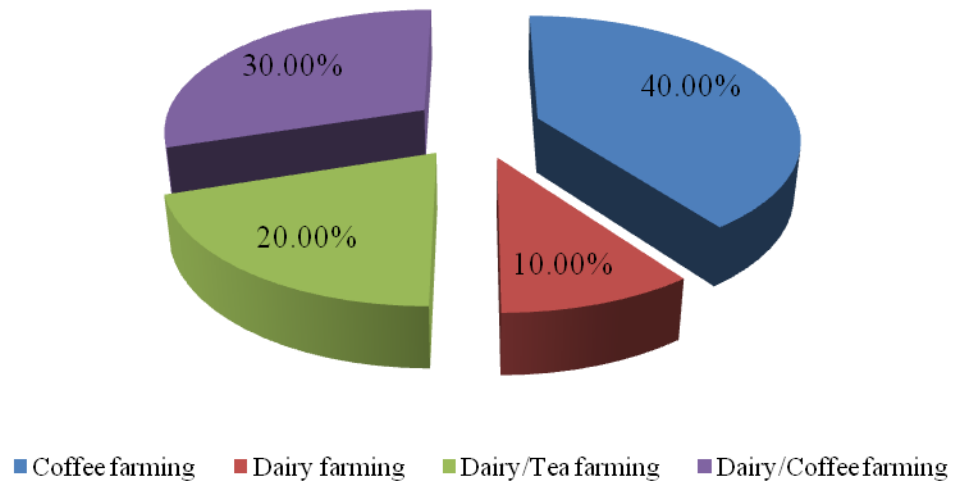

Figure 3: Types of Income-Generating Activities

According to the PTAs interviewed, 50% reported having-income generating activities in their schools and 50% reported not having them. Out of the sampled schools, 20% practised dairy and tea farming, 30% practised coffee and dairy farming, 10% practised dairy farming and 40% practised coffee farming as income- generating activities. The study revealed that only half of the schools had income-generating activities and that they were practised on small scale. Although schools under FDSE have embraced IGAs, the study reveals that the practice is on small scale and cannot subsidize the free learning funds enough to improve facilities and good performance of students hence the performance has remained poor. Finance is crucial to retention and performance of students since it determines the quality of physical facilities, teaching and learning materials, quality of teacher motivation and teachers employed in the time of shortage (Mobegi et al., 2010; Getange & Orodho,2014).

Information on presence of alumni in schools was sought, 21.40% of the board members interviewed reported presence of old students' organizations in their schools while 78.60% reported not having them.

The study revealed that few day secondary schools had alumni to help them raise funds to subsidize the free secondary education funds thus performance has remained poor. The issue of finance is crucial to retention and performance of students since it determines the quality of physical facilities, teaching and learning materials, quality of teacher motivation and teachers employed in the time of shortage (Mobegi et al., 2010).

Guidance and Counseling

Figure 4 carries information on the status of guidance and counseling in schools reached by the study. According to the deputy principals interviewed, 50% of the schools had guidance and counselling committees, 33.30% involved all the teachers and 16.70% invited guest speakers who are professionals in different fields. The study revealed that although guidance and counseling had been embraced in most of the day secondary schools, it was not effective because only half of the schools had guidance and counselling committees with the rest involving all the teachers in the school and inviting experts.

It was thus evident that the guidance and counseling strategies were not effective because students need constant guidance and this may have led to poor performance. Yet, guidance and counseling is a good way of maintaining discipline in schools because students make choices in life reasonably and independently.

Figure *4:* Guidance and Counseling
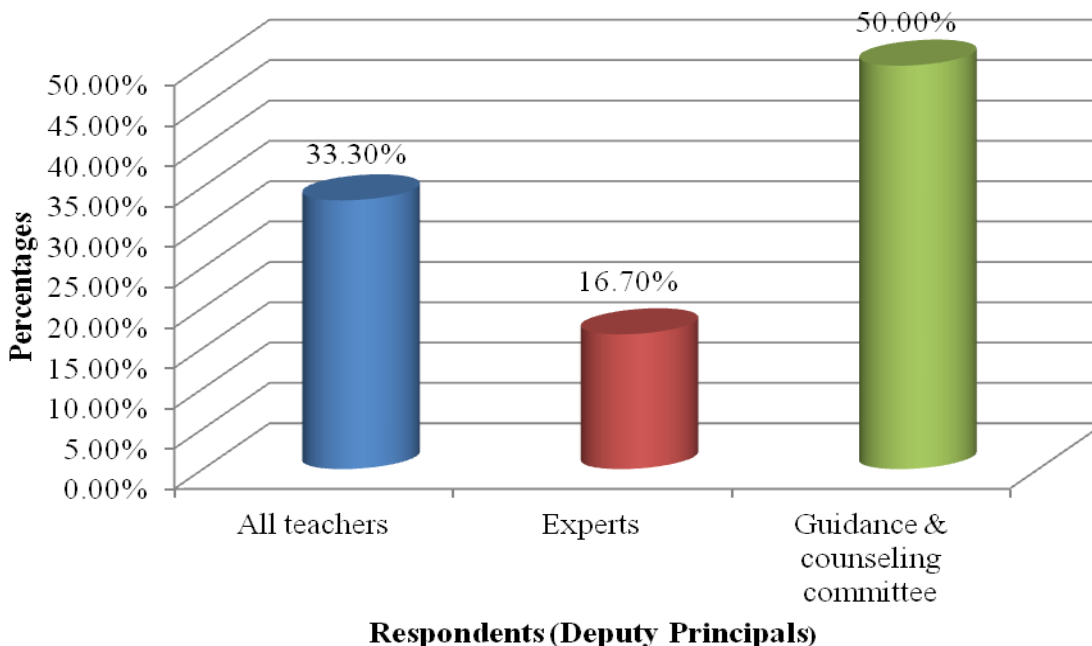
The finding implies that the guidance and counseling strategy, although touted as very important in molding learners' character and preparing them for improved academic attainment, was not effective. This was contrary to research findings that underscore the importance of G&C in the sense that students need constant guidance and this may have led to poor performance. Guidance and counseling is a good way of maintaining discipline in schools because students make choices in life reasonably and independently (Okumbe, 1986).

In the same vein, a study done on the implications of guidance and counseling by Achoka (2007) on the role of the principal indicated that , for change to take place in school, the present school principal should be an advisor to students, teachers and the community. He /she should be in a position to identify possible threats against retention rates and reverse the situation. He / she needs to act as a counselor to not only the students but also parents and teachers because this could assist all parties interested in the education life of the learner to appreciate the need to be educated. This line of argument is also consistent with Demi et al. (2010) who similarly counsel that a secondary school principal should endeavor to provide the best school climate to entice students to complete schooling by making school free from violence, threats, intimidations, hatred, and witch-hunting and develop rich co-curriculum, remedial interventions for slow learners to avoid repetition, frustration and dropout.

He / he should be a developer by putting more effort in developing academic and co-curriculum programmes that are attractive and competitive to occupy all students while at school.

Management of Health s of Students

On the availability of health facilities, 50% of the principals said the students visited public dispensaries, 33.30% reported stocking painkillers in their schools and 16.70% of parents took responsibility of their children's medical needs. It was evident that most day secondary schools lacked basic health facilities to cater for the students and other members of staff in the affected schools. The best they could do was to stock painkillers for emergency purposes before the students visited the local public dispensaries for treatment or their parents took them to other hospitals.

The school service environment can also contribute to learning in important ways. Provision of health services and education can contribute to learning first by reducing absenteeism and inattention. Sick children cannot attend school, and evidence from China, Guinea, India and Mexico shows that children's illness is a primary cause for absenteeism and poor performance (Carron & Chau, 1996). The consequence of the poor management of students' health in affected schools was that most students these institutions missed classes as they left school to seek medical attention and this may have led to their poor academic performance. This is because research studies have convincingly established that the health and academic performance of the learner is directly related. Health services contribute to learning by reducing absenteeism and inattention because sick students cannot attend school and cannot learn and this lowers their performance (Carron & Chau, 1996).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The thrust of this study was to reach a verdict on whether or not the management strategies being applied in Embu North were effective in enhancing students' academic performance. On the whole, the results of the findings reported in this paper have reached   verdict that these strategies are not effective. A short recapitulation is necessary to qualify the verdict reached. First, while most school principals and their deputies possessed the required academic qualifications and reported that they had undergone some management training in the past , the mastery of leadership and /or management skills were not being demonstrated on the ground. It was apparent that any teacher could be promoted to the position of principal or deputy principal purely on account of the academic qualifications as well as number of teaching experience.

Secondly, there were inconsistencies in instructional supervision by school principals and uncoordinated guidance and counseling practices in the sampled schools. As a result, lecture and demonstration methods were used to teach and in some schools, students sat for less than two or three internal examinations every term. These strategies were not effective in translating to enhanced students academic performance.

Third although some of the schools had started income generating activities, these were not very effective in supplementing the Government grants through free day secondary education initiatives in the country the school facilities in some schools remained un-conducive to effective learning.

 Fourth, although guidance and counseling was in place in most the schools, they were not well run due to lack of specialist teachers in the area of G&C. Each district should have mechanisms for monitoring on a continuous basis the performance of both teachers and students for remedial action early when needed (Kimbui, 2012).

Finally, it was noted that most schools lacked funds to provide health facilities for their students in school leading to absenteeism as they sought medical attention outside the school compound and this may have led to poor academic performance of students. Investing more in health, nutrition and educational programmes , especially health promotion and disease prevention , like vaccinations and good hygiene, is a smart strategy to empower the youth and improve educational attainment as well as stronger societies and economies(United Nations,2013; Orodho,2014). As a consequence, the healthy adults work longer and more regularly, earning higher and more regular wages, and therefore contribute to the socio-economic development not only of their areas but the country in general (United Nations, 2013; Orodho,2014).

This suggests that school managers lacked appropriate knowledge and skill that take advantage of the powerful synergy between psychosocial stimulation and nutrition suggests that integrated attention to the young child is critical and that early childhood is the most cost-effective period for investment in education. Later interventions with schoolchildren are useful remedial measures where children have suffered early insults and continue to suffer from malnutrition.

In a nutshell, we reach the verdict that the management strategies currently being used to enhance students' academic performance were not effective in the study locale of Embu North District, Embu County.

On the basis of the findings of this study it was recommended that:

First, training of school managers; it is strongly recommended that other than academic qualifications (such as bachelors or masters degree) and number of teaching experience, there was need for the inculcation of leadership skills through intensive skill training through KEMI. Similarly, members of the Board of Management should undergone relevant training on school management in order for them to effectively complement the work of principals and their deputies in school management.

Secondly, all day secondary schools to start income-generating activities and form organizations for old students to help raise funds to subsidize the government funding. In addition, the FDSE fund should be increased and be disbursed regularly and without much delay.

Finally, each school should put in place an operational guidance and counseling unit. The individual schools should work out modalities of training their teachers and allocating them less teaching responsibilities so that they can concentrate on the G&C duties. This cadre of teachers should be well remunerated in order to motivate and retain them in schools.

Acknowledgement

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