STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KATHIANI SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

Jeremiah Kawinzi Mulinge
M Ed Candidate, School Of Education, Department of Educational Management and Curriculum Studies, Machakos University, Kenya. Email: jerekawinzi@gmail.com

David Mulwa (Corresponding Author)
Senior Lecturer School of education, Department of Educational Management and Curriculum Studies, Machakos University, Kenya. Email: davimulwa@gmail.com

Jacinta Kinyili
Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Machakos University, Kenya. Email: jmunyiva001@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to investigate strategic management practices and their influence on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County, Kenya. The study was guided by the following objectives: to determine the influence of vision setting on students' academic performance and to assess the influence of strategic leadership management on students' academic performance. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The instruments of research used in this study were questionnaire and interview schedules. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 11 Principals, 76 teachers and 422 students from the 31 Principals, 224 teachers and 1,240 students in the public secondary in Kathiani Sub-county. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. The data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and presented using tables and charts. Findings show that there was an insignificant relationship between strategic leadership and students' academic performance (r= 0.230, p-value=0.080) while the correlation between vision setting and students' academic performance was significant as depicted by (r= 0.662, p-value=0.000)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Educational access, quality, completion, retention and relevance are the indicators of performance used by educational planners (Anyieni & Areri, 2016). Since the early 2000's, the ministry of Education has given a directive to schools to prepare and implement strategic plans in order to address the myriad of challenges facing the education sector. It is through the strategic plans that schools identify key strategies that are relevant for their existence (Okode, 2013). Among the strategies that are set by schools include the formulation of mission statements, vision settings, and strategic leadership. Others are continuous assessment, benchmarking, and syllabus coverage to enhance students' academic performance. Although many schools have developed strategic plans

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with a view to achieve their goals, the plans were either not followed as written or not implemented at all (Okode, 2013). It is not clear on the reasons why many schools rarely implemented the strategic plans or even follow the guidelines and timelines of their own strategic plans. Probably it may due to lack of commitment to implement the plans, lack of resources or even the belief that strategic plans are not beneficial at all to the schools

1.1 Statement of the problem.

The performance of secondary schools in Kathiani sub-County has been on the downward trend since 2013 against the expectations of key stakeholders such as students and parents. The following table shows the academic performance in Kathiani Sub-County since 2013-2019.

Table 1.1: Academic Performance in Kathiani Sub County since 2013-2019

Year	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Mean score	2.438	2.476	2.245	2.378	2.890	2.395	2.256

 Sources: The Sub-County Director of Education, Kathiani Sub-County.

Though schools in kathiani Sub-County have developed strategic plans with a view to improve their academic performance in national examinations, it is still low. Several studies have been carried out on the influence of strategic management practices on students' academic performance. Chimuka (2016) found a positive and significant influence of the school strategic vision setting on pupils' academic performance, Gakenia (2017) revealed that strategic leadership is positively correlated to academic performance of national schools and Okode (2013) established that setting targets for syllabus coverage enable early completion of syllabus. These studies were carried out in areas outside the area of study which is geographically and socially different hence the need to carry out the study in the public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County. The poor performance in Kathiani Sub-County is of great concern to the parents, government, parents and other stakeholders who heavily invest in education

1.2 Purpose of the study.
The purpose of this study was to determine the strategic management practices and their influence on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kathiani sub-county Machakos County, Kenya

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following Objectives:

i.   To assess the influence of strategic leadership management on students' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kathiani Sub-County

ii. To determine the influence of vision setting on students' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kathiani Sub-County

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review was done thematically in line with the objectives as follows:

2.1 Strategic Leadership and Students Performance

Sitthisomjin, Somprach and Phuseeorn (2017) examined the effect of strategic leadership on school effectiveness in Primary Educational centers Thailand. The designed research survey was employed. The sample comprised of 510 school administrators and teachers. The research instrument was a 5-point rating scale questionnaire. The results revealed that administrators showed a high level of strategic leadership behavior in their administration but the overall school effectiveness was at the moderate level. In addition, the findings also indicated that all the comparisons of either the strategic leadership of administrators or school effectiveness were significantly different according to school size. The different with the current study is that whereas strategic leadership was correlated with primary school effectiveness in Thailand, the current study is concerned with the relationship between strategic leadership and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County, Kenya.

Mukeshimana (2016) study sought to explore leadership practices in successful schools in South Africa. Nine school managers were sampled for the study. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis. Findings revealed that the most common leadership practices that brought successes in the schools were: daily extra classes including weekends and public holidays; having the right and committed staff who worked extra miles without expecting extra payment, ensuring quality tests, team leadership behaviours; effective planning and monitoring strategies to ensure curriculum coverage and democratic skills such as communication skills, performance management skills, analysis and judgment skills and ability to lead participative meetings. The difference with the current study is that it is concerned with

strategic leadership and how it relates to academic performance while the former focuses on general leadership.

Gakenia (2017) study sought to examine the influence of strategic leadership style on academic performance of National Schools in Kenya. The study used descriptive research design. The target populace was national secondary schools' deputies and department heads in 103 national schools in Kenya. The sample size of this study was 93 principals of national secondary schools that were drawn using census sampling. Findings revealed that strategic leadership strategic leadership is positively correlated to academic performance of national schools. There is a strong and positive correlation of 0.524 between the strategic leadership styles and academic performance of national schools.

Wafula (2016) investigated the influence of head teachers' strategic leadership on pupils' KCPE performance. The study made use of a descriptive survey research design. The target population was 50 primary schools head teachers and 538 teachers in the Nambale Sub-county of Busia County in Kenya. Questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis checklist were the main data collection instruments. Findings revealed that there was marked improvement in KCPE performance in schools that head teachers' motivated staff through rewards.

Muthoni and Awuor (2019) examined the role of strategic leadership in academic performance of secondary schools in Nakuru County. The descriptive research design was utilized. The targeted population for the secondary schools in Nakuru County was 338 schools while that of teachers was 8,400 teachers. A sample size of 99 respondents calculated using the Naissuma formula was used for the study. Data collection was undertaken using questionnaire. The study concluded that academic performance of secondary schools in Nakuru County can be predicted using head teachers' discipline levels management. The study also revealed that the role of strategic leadership is even more critical within the secondary schools' system in order to achieve and maintain sustainable academic performance.

2.2 Vision Setting and Students Performance

Mombourquette (2017) conducted a study on the role of vision in effective school leadership in Canada. The sample size was 27 high school principals from Alberta, Canada. Data was collected using interview guides. Student learning data were drawn from various standardized tests, surveys, and anecdotal sources. The schools categorized as high performing were all led by principals who clearly articulated vision, mission, and goals that emanated from personal beliefs about student learning and the role the school's programme played in helping students to learn.

Chimuka (2016) investigated the effects of secondary schools strategic planning on pupils' academic performance in selected schools of Lundazi District, Zambia. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The sample had 3 Head teachers, 15 head of departments, 30 teachers and 120 pupils. The research instruments used were mainly questionnaires and interview guide. The overall findings indicated that there was a positive and significant influence of the school strategic vision setting on pupils' academic performance. The study recommended that school vision and mission statement should be regularly communicated to all pupils in order for them to take ownership of the school improvement.

David and Steven (2014) conducted a study on vision setting and its effect on academic performance in secondary school students in Mukono District, Uganda. Proportional stratified sampling was used to sample 172 students. Data was collected using questionnaires and document analysis. Students score cards were reviewed. Findings revealed that having a good vision did not guarantee good exam scores although it motivated students to work hard.

Kariuki (2016) assessed the relationship between strategy implementation and performance in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county. Cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used. The target population of the study was 28 principals, 28 deputy principals, 28 senior teachers and 28 boards of management chairpersons in 28 public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county. The study had a sample size of 112 respondents and employed structured questionnaires as the instrument for data collection. The sampled schools were found to have their Mission vision, goals and values clearly written and displayed in visible areas in the schools. Top management support was also good and favorable for smooth implementation of strategic plans.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The target population of this study included 31 principals, 224 teachers and 1,240 forms three and four students of public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County. Using stratified and simple random sampling techniques 11 Principals, 76 teachers and 422 students were selected from the 31 public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-county. The instruments of research used in this study were questionnaire and interview schedules. The data was descriptively analyzed using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's product moment of correlation test analysis with the help of the SPSS software version 24.

4.0 RESULTS

The data analysis and findings were discussed as follows:

4.1 Strategic Leadership Management and Students' Academic Performance

The first objective was to determine the influence of strategic leadership management on students' academic performance in public secondary schools within Kathiani Sub-County. Teachers were asked to tick on their agreement level on influence of strategic leadership on students' academic performance. The data were analyzed in form of percentages and frequencies. Findings are presented in Table 1.1

Table 1.1: Teachers' Agreement Level of Influence of Strategic Leadership Management on Students' Academic performance.

Statements	Strongly disagree%	disagree%	Neutral%	Agree%	Strongly Agree%	Mean
The school management is accountable to the school resources	0	5.4	10.9	60.0	23.6	4.22
The BoM are competent enough to oversee school management	7.3	10.9	3.6	61.8	16.4	3.60
There is participatory decision making in the school	5.4	14.5	9.1	50.9	20.0	3.40
Students are involved in some key decision making processes	7.3	12.7	5.4	56.4	18.2	2.02
The principal does consultations in case of any issue	0	7.3	9.1	63.6	20.0	4.04

N=55

Findings in Table 1.1: indicate that: 60% (33) of the teachers agreed that the school management is accountable to the school resources; 61.8% (34) agreed that the BoM are competent enough to oversee school management; 50.9% (28) agreed that there is participatory decision making in the school; 56.4% (31) agreed with the statement that students are involved in some key decision making processes and 63.6% (35) agreed that the principal does consultations in case of any issue.

This finding was also supported by 67% of the students who indicated that they were not involved in decision making. The teachers also added that good leadership promotes smooth running of school, improves communication and helps to make key decisions. All the principals differed with this finding. They said that they involve all stakeholders (teachers, students and parents) through open forums in key decision making. They also added that good leadership helps to improve performance. This implies that the secondary schools have embraced strategic leadership practices aimed at improving students' academic performance. The finding concurs with Muthoni and

Awuor (2019) who point out that strategic leadership is more critical within the secondary schools' system in order to achieve and maintain sustainable academic performance.

The researcher did further analysis using Pearson Correlation of strategic leadership and academic performance as shown in the table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Correlation Analysis for Strategic Leadership and Performance

		Performance	Strategic leadership
Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Strategic leadership	Pearson Correlation	.230	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.080	

Findings in Table 1.2 show that correlation between strategic leadership and academic performance was insignificant as depicted by (r= 0.230, p-value=0.080). The finding differs with Gakenia (2017) who revealed that strategic leadership is positively correlated to academic performance.
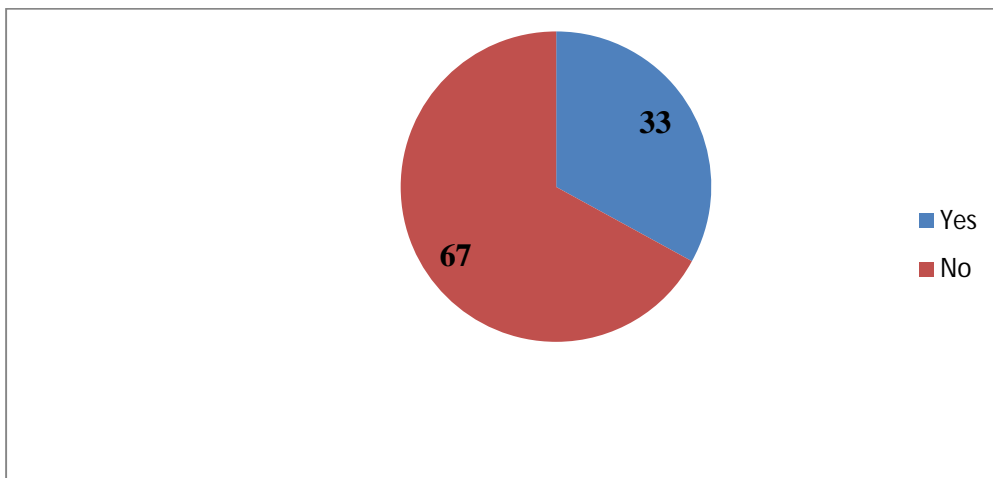

Figure 1.0: Students' response on Involvement in Decision Making

Figure 1.0 indicates that majority of the students do not perceive themselves to be involved in decision making. This implies that the students see the decisions made for them which may not favour them hence a possible source of resistance. The finding of an insignificant relationship between strategic leadership management and students' academic performance (p-value=0.079) could be due to the fact that the school administration did not involve all stakeholders especially the students while making key decisions that affect the teaching and learning process. Involving students in key decision making makes them feel that they are part of the institution and work hard to build a good reputation for the school. The finding concurs with Muthoni and Awuor (2019) that strategic leadership is more critical within the secondary schools' system in order to achieve and maintain sustainable academic performance

4.2 Strategic Vision Setting and Students' Academic Performance

The second objective sought to determine the influence of strategic vision setting on students' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools within Kathiani Sub-County. Teachers were asked to tick on their agreement level on influence of strategic vision setting on students' academic performance. The data were analyzed in form of percentages and frequencies. Findings are presented in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Teachers' Agreement Level on Influence of Strategic Vision Setting

Statements	Strongly disagree	disagree%	Neutral%	Agree%	Strongly Agree%	Mean
The principal has set a strategic vision	10.9	5.5	10.9	58.2	14.5	3.60
The school vision is clear and concise that everyone understands it	3.6	9.1	7.3	65.5	14.5	3.78
The principal communicates the vision to all educational stakeholders	5.5	3.6	9.1	18.2	63.6	4.31
Teachers recognize the potential of the vision and are committed to help it come to pass	0	14.5	1.8	9.1	74.5	4.44
The vision describes a sense of what makes the school special	7.3	65.5	3.6	10.9	12.7	2.54

N=55

Findings in Table 1.3 indicate that: 58.2% (32) of the teachers agreed that the principal has set a strategic vision, 65.5% (36) agreed that the school vision is clear and concise that everyone understands it, 63.6% (35) strongly agreed that the principal communicates the vision to all educational stakeholders, 74.5% (41) strongly agreed that teachers recognize the potential of the vision and are committed to help it come to pass and 65.5% (65) disagreed that the school vision describes a sense of what makes the school special. This finding was supported by a principal who said that, "the administration has set good strategic vision although we face challenges in communicating the vision to the students, teachers, parents and the surrounding community. Another principal said that, "strategic vision setting makes the teachers and students to work harder hence improving performance". This implies that the schools have a clear vision although the administration face challenges in communicating the vision to all stakeholders. The finding is in agreement with Mombourquette (2017) that schools led by principals who clearly articulate vision, mission and goals have higher chances of improving performance. In order to assess whether the students had an academic vision, the students were asked to indicate the mean score in the past end of term exams as well as the vision mean score. Table 1.4 presents the findings.

Table 1.4: Students Vision Goal in Academic

Year	Last exam class mean score		Vision mean score	
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**
B-	-	-	42	31.0
C+	-	-	60	44.1
C	2	1.4	20	14.7
C-	20	14.7	6	4.4
D+	32	23.5	8	5.8
D	64	47.1	-	-
D-	18	13.2	-	-

N=136

Findings in Table 1.4: show that none of the students managed to attain a B- or a C+ in the past exam and majority of the students had scored D+ and below. However, the students had a vision of attaining higher academic grades and improve schools mean scores in future.

The researcher further sought to find out the students' academic performance in the sub-county for the past five years. From the respondents it was found out that most school do not involve learners in the vision setting and that is the reason why vision setting in schools has not assisted in improving the mean score. However, the researcher found out that vision setting helps in improving the students' academic performance.

Further analysis was done using Pearson Correlation of vision setting and students' academic performance as shown in the table 1.5

Table 1.5: Correlation Analysis for Vision Setting and Performance

		Performance	Vision Setting
Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Vision Setting	Pearson Correlation	.662	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

Findings show that correlation between vision setting and academic performance was significant as depicted by (r= 0.662, p-value=0.000). The findings concur with Mombourquette (2017) that a clearly articulated vision mission, and goals helps students to learn.

5.0 Conclusions

The research concludes that the school administration practices strategic leadership. Most principals take decisions on important elements of the school such as choosing teaching / learning materials, setting school rules and regulations and budgeting with close consultation with stakeholders such as teachers and board members. The study also concludes that there is a positive relationship between vision setting and students' academic performance. The school administrations have set good strategic vision although they face challenges in communicating the vision to the students, teachers, parents and the surrounding community.

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