CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background for the Study

1.1.1 Introduction

Decision-making can be defined as “a process of selection from a set of alternative courses of action which is thought to fulfill the objectives of the decision problem more satisfactory than others”.\(^1\) It could actually be defined as the selection of a course of action from among alternatives. It is a matter of planning organizational objectives and the steps that will be used to achieve them.

Traditionally decision making was centralized, was the mandate of the leaders, and they depended on authority, worked by creating fear among the subordinates and assigning tasks. However, with the emergence of democratic leadership, many countries have reformed their educational systems. This was also prompted by the repeated failure of centralized structures to inspire the school personnel, and the prerequisite attitudes, opinions and behaviors necessary for generating educational improvements.\(^2\) It is argued that “a school improvement impetus and authority emanating from outside the school does not produce the responsibility and commitment necessary to sustain consequential improvement”.\(^3\)

In order to ensure that many of the decisions are made and owned by the stakeholders within the school system, educationists have advocated for the
decentralization of education. Decentralization refers to devolution of the centralized control of power and decision making from government into private initiatives at state, provincial, local government and school level. The reasons for educational decentralization tend to be associated with four distinct objectives; democratization, regional or ethnic pressures, improved efficiency and enhanced quality of schooling.

It is further pointed out that “the transfer of decision making authority to the school level promotes democratization in education sector, and gives broad opportunities for educational stakeholders in schools to participate in the management of educational programs and to a great extent eases the central government burdens”.

In the **United Kingdom**, the policy and practice of decision making combines both decentralization of management decision making to schools and stronger centralization of control over curricular and the monitoring of educational standards.

In the **United States of America**, the approach to decision making about education has been more piecemeal and decentralized. This could be attributed to the fact that educational services delivery is placed under the local governments unlike in the UK where it is under the national governments. In **El Salvador** and **Nicaragua**, real decision making power has been decentralized to school councils with the aim of increasing the voices of educational clients. This has empowered parents, teachers, students and local communities to make important decisions for their schools. In **Argentina** and **Chile**, decision making authority has been transferred to sub-national governments, a policy which is usually part of a larger re-organization of governments.
In **Malaysia**, schools have “shifted from a traditional centralized system of education to a relatively decentralized system of decision making through self-managing or school-based management to develop school initiatives and meet changing needs since the early 1990’s”.\(^{10}\) In **Indonesia**, the idea of transfer of decision making authority to schools was introduced in 1974. However in practice, the mission of the transfer of decision making authority which has been introduced is merely a political rhetoric or as other people would call it, ‘decentralization centralism’ governance.\(^{11}\) In **Africa**, some countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa have devolved the school management decisions to regions, while in Tanzania and Uganda, decision making authority has been transferred to the local school councils.\(^{12}\)

In **Kenya**, there were reforms in educational management in the year 2005 and the policy of transfer of some decision making authority to the district education boards and the stakeholders at school level was adopted.\(^{13}\) The educational reforms were necessitated by several challenges which included the following:

**i) Political interference**

Educational programming has been a major challenge to the current system of education in Kenya. At independence in 1963, Kenya placed great value on education and this could be witnessed by the many scholarships that were facilitated by the government for secondary and even higher education. Today this is not the case as the political class seems to have lost interest in education. This has consequently led to
very inadequate funding. During the last decade, research and development activities have received only 0.6% of the GDP funding from the government.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{ii) Poor learning environment}

Children have no spare time to engage in the necessary practice of thinking for creation of knowledge, development of social skills and cognitive growth. In most schools, there is a widespread disrespect of teachers and the teaching profession, bullying and violence in the form of students’ strikes especially in secondary schools.

\textbf{iii) Weak early child development and education (ECDE) program}

Early childhood education is necessary for the acquisition of concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundation for lifelong learning. IPAR notes that “once a child fails to receive sufficient educational stimulation from those responsible for her or him in the vital early years, the lost ground is hard to recover”.\textsuperscript{15} In Kenya the ECDE level faces severe coordination and financing challenges. There is a likelihood that the learning difficulties, socialization and problem solving challenges facing a number of learners in the country results from gaps created in the formative years when important aspects in life such as concept formation and socialization should have been inculcated into them.

\textbf{iv) Inadequate coverage of the school formal curriculum.}

In some schools, colleges and even universities, the curriculum is not fully covered. Normal school programs are disrupted and learning time wasted due to
shortage of teachers and students riots. Inadequate teaching and lack of learning facilities makes the learners at times to be idle and bored, making them highly irritable and any little provocation of such students is likely to lead to violence. It has been observed that “whenever teachers are agitating for industrial action on issues affecting their welfare such as higher salaries students’ violence do occur”.

v) Lack of appropriate counseling and career programmes in schools.

There is no appropriate policy and no suitably experienced and qualified personnel for such hence these programs in schools are not effective. There are many challenges facing students in Kenya such as HIV and Aids, societal violence, rapid urbanization and family breakdown hence they will always require counseling to cope up with them.

vi) Poor employer motivation and poor administration.

This poor working environment has discouraged teachers from making efforts to improve performance and this affects students, who may vent their anger by destroying school property or even harming fellow students and teachers to attract the attention of the authorities.

vii) Poor school management practices.

Most members of the school management bodies especially boards of governors (BOGs) and parents teachers association (PTAs) are not able to adequately monitor the daily activities of the school. It has been argued that, “some of these
members do not have the basic skills to understand the dynamics of curriculum implementation, let alone school management. Some of the members especially in primary schools lack the basic literacy hence are not able to articulate management issues firmly. Further, political patronage, culture of absenteeism among school administrators and failure to recognize the role of parental and societal advice, has combined effect of immensely contributing to school growth.

viii) Mismanagement of school funds.

There is also the challenge of mismanagement of school funds, where students’ reaction to such cases, usually in disguise of poor food, poor accommodation, inadequate sporting facilities and others often result to violence. There are also cases where parents and other stakeholders have held demonstrations against their schools’ principals or the school management committees over mismanagement of funds.

ix) School environmental changes.

There are also challenges within the school system especially in secondary schools in Kenya. The context of school environment has changed so much such that management styles should change too. Changes are experienced in the kind of students who join secondary schools, who are more enlightened about their rights by the mass media, human rights bodies and the emergency of information technology. Teachers too are more knowledgeable and schools are staffed with more qualified staff than ever before.
As has been be noted, the challenges that have faced the education system over the years are either political, governance and management issues or economic in nature. The students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders’ reactions to these challenges have been strikes, unrests and demonstrations as a way of communicating their grievances to the authorities.

1.1.2 Schools’ Unrests

Violent strikes were a common phenomenon at the Kenya national universities in 1980s when students went on rampage for a wide range of reasons including power failures, poor catering services and political manipulation. Over the past decade, university strikes have reduced but the trend seems to have shifted to secondary schools. The most outstanding cases in the recent past as:

St. Kizito tragedy of July 13th 1991 where 19 girls died and 70 were raped, and Nyeri High School strike of May 24th 1999 where four prefects were locked in their cubicles and burnt to death. The worst calamity happened on 25th march 2001 at Kyanguli Mixed Secondary School in Machakos district, where 67 students were burnt to death and many injured when their dormitory was set on fire by two boys who petrol bombed the school. 18

A study on ‘why students disrupt school activities in Kenya’ found out that some disruptions were organized and carefully planned, the riots appeared to follow a specific pattern and the intention was to draw the attention of school administrators
and teachers to the perceived students’ grievances and to issues that the students cared about. Other disruptions appeared to have been incited by adult members of the community who included teachers and such were motivated by financial and power gains. Therefore it is imperative that unrests in Kenyan secondary schools are organized by either the students or members of the school community. The trend of school strikes seems to be firmly grounded in Kenyan secondary schools and has been a source of great worry to educational administrators, parents, teachers and even students.

Various reasons have been advanced as the root causes of unrest in Kenyan secondary schools. Such include peer pressure, poor student services, and pressure for excellent academic performance and abdication of parental responsibility. But exactly who is to blame for these strikes? It has been pointed that:

in some cases, the school administration has failed to address some genuine grievances that the students may have. The students and parents are exposed and knowledgeable. The parents discuss various issues with their children, which makes them know their rights. The rights movements have penetrated into schools today and talk of freedom and right hence the students are aware of human rights abuses, child abuses and so on. Indiscipline, peer pressure, excessive academic premium and drugs have played a part in many strikes.

In the year 2008, over 300 secondary schools in Kenya were closed following students unrest between July and September, which translated to the closure of an
average of 100 schools per month. As reported, during the year 2008, “Kenya registered the highest number of secondary school strikes which affected over 800 schools countrywide”. These strikes were characterized by the destruction of school property running into millions of shillings. In fact during this period, several secondary school dormitories, administration blocks and classrooms were set on fire. There was loss of study time and even death. Several reasons have been advanced by different stakeholders as the underlying root causes of school unrests. These include overloaded curriculum, drug and substance abuse, poor living conditions in schools, excessive use of corporal punishment, lack of an effective school guidance and counseling service, pressure for excellent academic performance, abdication of parental responsibility, incompetent boards of governors, and culture of impunity in the society, adolescence identity crisis, mass media campaigns and the prefect system. The strikes were also attributed to the post election violence that affected the country at the beginning of 2008.

Due to these unrests, running of secondary schools in Kenya by 2008 almost became impossible and short term remedial measures were taken. These included the ban of cell phone use in schools, removal of videos from school buses, expulsion of student culprits and a ban on extra tuition. A special committee instituted by the government to investigate the causes of school unrests blamed the school managers and administrators for what they said was a failure to give students, teachers and other stakeholders an avenue of expressing their grievances. This is an implication that
decision making process in secondary schools is an issue that has not been fully addressed. To some degree, it points to non-participatory governance in schools.

1.1.3 Need for the Study

Many countries, Kenya included have adopted the policy of participatory decision making in schools with a view of enhancing democracy and ownership of school programs by the stakeholders. Despite the reform of educational management in Kenya, and specifically the transfer of some decision making authority to the stakeholders at the school level, which was meant to address the challenges of management and governance, problems of school strikes and protests which are the students’ and other stakeholders’ reactions to these educational challenges, seem to be on the rise. As reported in the year 2008 more than 800 secondary schools went on strike, and property worth millions of shillings and lives were lost.23 The most fatal students’ strike in Kenya occurred at a school in Eastern Province, where 68 students were burned to death.24 The ever increasing school unrests and strikes in Kenya, and particularly in Eastern Province make one doubt whether the decision making practices are in harmony with the policy of participatory decision making. Furthermore, there is little evidence of studies on decision making process in secondary schools in Kenya, especially after the educational reforms. Therefore it was found necessary to carry out a study to analyze the decision making process in specific management tasks in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya. The study was done with a view of making recommendations for an effective and more participatory decision making in secondary schools.
1.2. Statement of the Problem

Analysis of decision making process in management tasks in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya.

1.3 Definition of Important Terms

**Analysis:** “a detailed examination or study”.\(^{25}\)

**In this study:**

Analysis means a study that includes ascertaining the status of decision making in secondary schools, identification of key decision makers in selected management tasks as perceived by teachers and students, their opinion on participatory decision making process and adequacy of their involvement in decision making process. It also includes the identification of structures used for teachers and students’ involvement in decision making process.

**Decision making:** This is “a process of selection from a set of alternative courses of action which is thought to fulfill the objectives of the decision problem more satisfactorily than others”.\(^{26}\)

**In this study:**

Decision making is the procedure and act of planning organizational objectives and choosing the most suitable set of alternatives (methods) to achieve them.
Management Tasks: These are “the various functions of any management, broken down into specific activities identified by those within the organization as the necessary means to accomplish the organizational goals”.  

In this study:
These are the daily operational activities which are carried out within the secondary school system. For this study, they include curriculum and instruction, teaching and non-teaching staff management, students’ management and welfare, school-community relations, financial and school plant management (physical infrastructure).

Secondary school: This is “a learning institution that is intermediate between primary schools and tertiary institutions, and whose primary responsibility is to educate students from grades nine to twelfth”.  

In this study:
A secondary School is a learning institution that at the time of the study had students at 9th to 12th standard.

1.4 Significance of the Study
The study will be significant to educational stakeholders in the following ways:

Teachers and Students: The study unravels the opinions and wishes of teachers and students on decision making in secondary schools during this era of democratization in Kenya. The study will identify the key decision makers across management tasks in
secondary schools as per teachers and students opinions, and the adequacy of their participation in decision making.

**School Administration:** The research is significant in that secondary schools in Eastern province would know the management task areas where teachers and students are deprived off in decision making and where necessary take remedial measures to correct it and reap the accompanying benefits of such a strategy fully.

**Theoretical Significance:** The theoretical significance of the study rests in the contributions that it will make to the general knowledge base about decision making process in secondary schools.

**1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were:

1) To ascertain the status of decision making in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya.

2) To identify the key decision makers in selected management tasks in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya as perceived by students and teachers.

3) To find out the opinion of students and teachers on their involvement in decision making in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya.

4) To find out the students’ and teachers’ perception on the adequacy of their involvement in decision making in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya.
5) To identify structures within the secondary school system which are used for students’ and teachers’ involvement in decision making process in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated in line with the objectives to guide the study.

1) What is the status of decision making in secondary schools of Eastern province, Kenya?

2) Who are the key decision makers in selected management tasks in secondary schools of Eastern province, Kenya as perceived by students and teachers?

3) What is the opinion of students and teachers on their involvement in decision making in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya?

4) What is the perception of students and teachers on the adequacy of their involvement in decision making in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya?

5) What are the structures within the secondary school system which are used for students’ and teachers’ involvement in decision making in secondary schools of Eastern Province, Kenya?

1.7 Assumptions of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made:
1. Students, teachers and other stakeholders can contribute constructive ideas that would go towards solving any problems within secondary schools.

2) Decision making process is a part of educational management.

3) Participation of teachers, students and other stakeholders in the decision making process helps to reduce school strikes, promotes democratization, and improves academic performance and to a great extent reduces principals’ administrative responsibilities.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study was confined to secondary school students and teachers in Eastern province, Kenya. It was also confined to the following management tasks; Curriculum and instruction, students’ management and welfare, teaching and non-teaching staff management, school-community relations, financial management and school plant (physical infrastructure) in secondary schools of Eastern province of Kenya. It was also confined to the analysis of legal and policy documents only.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The major limitations were that:

1) The attitude, motivation and interest of the respondents were beyond the control of the researcher.
2) The conclusions of the study were depended upon the responses of the respondents only.

**1.10 Delimitations of the Study**

1) The study was delimited to the analysis of the following legal and educational policy documents: Sessional Paper No. 1 on Education, Training and Research, the Public Procurement Manual for Schools and the Public Procurement and Disposal Act, 2005.

2) The study restricted itself to only four management tasks-curriculum and instructional program, students-welfare and management, school community relations and financial management.

3) The study was delimited to 12th standard (form four) students and teachers in the selected secondary schools in Eastern Province, Kenya.

4) The study was delimited to public secondary schools in Eastern province only.

**1.11 Theoretical Framework**

The research was based on the Wisdom of Crowds theory. According to the theory, “under the right circumstances, groups of people can be better than expert individuals at making the right decision”\(^\text{29}\). Collective intelligence can arrive at a good decision about a problem since every individual in the group has some piece of information about a solution as well as some misconception or incorrect assumptions.
When each individual’s misconceptions fall off, their unique perspectives combine to create the right answer which is the solution to the problem. Kenyan secondary school system has been characterized by strikes and demonstrations, inefficiency, misappropriation of school funds and apathy by the teachers. These problems may partly be attributed to misconceptions by the various stakeholders about each other. If the various groups within the schools were able to do away with the incorrect assumptions (misconceptions) about the others and also about the school as a whole, and participate in contributing ideas and making decisions in any of the management task areas, solutions to problems in schools would easily be found and students’ unrests and strikes would be minimized or even eliminated altogether. This is illustrated in figure 1.1:
Although the government has tried to address the challenges facing the education sector, they are still prevalent as witnessed by the ever increasing strikes in secondary schools. The decision making process in secondary schools in Kenya is suspected to be non-participatory, evidenced by frequent strikes and unrests. This is despite the fact the country embraced democratic governance about a decade ago. The possible causes of this problem may be as a result of conservatism amongst the school managers, misunderstanding of democratic governance among the stakeholders and
policy guidelines that do not conform to democratic governance. The possible interventions to this problem could be training school managers and all stakeholders on participatory school governance and harmonize the school policies with the national democratic principles. This was summarized as shown in figure 1.2 below.

**FIGURE 1.2 Conceptual Framework**
References


6) Samad

7) Ibid


9) Ibid

10) Samad, p.183


12) Gershberg and Winkler.


17) Institute of Policy Analysis and Research, p.4


21) Juma, p.1

22) Juma, p.1

23) Juma, p.1

24) Juma, p.1


26) Singh and Chhabra

