

## Students' Councils and Academic Achievement in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Teso South Sub-County, Kenya

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### Abstract

Participation of student councils in school management enables the students to give input in the day to day running of the school activities. In secondary schools, prefects act as a bridge between the administration and students. This bridge facilitates a conducive environment for learning as well as assisting the administration to ensure rules and regulations are followed to promote effective learning. This study investigated the students' councils and academic achievement in KCSE in Teso South Sub County in Busia County, Kenya. The study focused on Teso South Sub County due to down ward trend in the academic achievement in KCSE over the last five years. The study endeavored to: investigate the effect of students' councils involvement in supervision of lesson attendance on academic achievement in KCSE, determine the students councils involvement in coordinating discussion groups on academic achievement in KCSE, establish the relationship between students councils involvement in maintaining class order and discipline and achievement in KCSE and determine the student councils involvement in academic guidance and counseling on academic achievement in KCSE in Teso South Sub County. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study employed questionnaire to collect data. In this research a total of fifteen schools were studied and the target population of two hundred and fifteen respondents. The researcher carried out this by use of random distribution of questionnaire to the respondents. This method was selected because it is convenient of covering a large sample at a shorter time. The researcher used the methods of purposive sampling and simple random sampling where by the respondents were picked randomly and each respondent had an equal chance. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency distribution tables. The analyzed data was presented using tables. The study findings show students' council are greatly involved in the supervision of lesson attendance which has a bearing to students' academic achievement but inadequately involved in daily marking of class registers ( $M=1.835$ ) a responsibility that squarely lies for the role of teachers in schools. The relationship between co-ordinating discussion groups and students' academic achievement was positive and statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$  significance level. Additionally, the relationship between maintaining class order and discipline and academic achievement in KCSE revealed strongly positive and statistically significant ( $r = 0.881$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) at 0.01 significance level. Finally, results show that students council involvement academic guidance and counseling by inducting new students in school academic culture. However, holding consultative meetings on academics received lower responses at  $M=1.68$ . It is anticipated that the findings of the current study have practical implication on academic achievement in secondary schools. The study gives a pointer to the success of students' participation in schools decision making process and its influence on the overall grades of learners' in secondary school education.

**Keywords:** Students' Councils, Academic Achievement, Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, Teso South Sub-County, Kenya.

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### I. Introduction

The prefectural system operated in many English schools in various ways: even at the primary level, the practice of having class or school monitors prepared the way for its operation at the secondary level. Prefects were appointed by the head teacher from among the senior students of the school, generally on the recommendation of the teachers (Jaiswal, 2011). The prefects duties generally included the policing of school premises and activities in various ways; thus relieving teachers of every day minor supervisory chores. Prefect's powers included awarding of minor punishments such as extra assignments, detention after school hours and recommendation for more serious punishment, as means of determining bad behavior and promoting responsibility for better academic performance.

In the USA, student participation in school management was used by principals in to improve the academic performance of secondary level students because the students were not making adequate reading progress to meet the requirement of the No Child Left behind (NCLB) by 2013-2014 (Hall & Kennedy, 2006). This approach of students' participation changed the system of thinking among the students. It empowered them to make important decisions and had a coherent instructional program which led to students' literacy success. In contrast to excessive numbers of unrelated, un sustained improvement initiatives in a school, instructional coherence contributes to learning by connecting to students' experiences and building on them over time (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004).

A study done by Harber & Dadey (1993) stated that schools in Africa have regularly experienced violent student disturbances. they used evidence from Nigeria to argue that schools where students were not involved in decision making or were never consulted whenever important decisions were being made, resorted to violence to vent their frustrations and disagreements and this contributes to poor academic performance of the schools in a study done by Harber & Dadey (2003) it was found out that the student council enabled the problems to be discussed before they got out of hand and this helps students to settle very fast and remain focused in their academic work.

Studies reviewed indicate that the Student council not only supports the educational development and progress of students but also contributes to a better learning environment for students in schools by setting up study groups for students. They also monitor programmes, by helping new students to settle and integrate into the school community. However, in Teso South Sub-County, cases of students' poor performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations have been more rampant than in the other 4 sub-counties in the larger Busia County (Busia County Director of Education report 2019). As a matter of fact, there have been more schools recording poor performance in national examination, strikes and unrests in the past three years unlike in other sub-counties despite them having student councils. For example, among the 7 schools that performed poorly in the county, 4 came from Teso South Sub County representing 57%. Therefore this study sought to critically look at the students' councils and academic achievement in KCSE in Teso South Sub County since one of the reasons advanced by stakeholders and policy makers in the education sector in Kenya for setting up students' councils was to assist students better their governance and academic performance.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of the study will be to investigate the effect of student council involvement in supervision of lesson attendance on academic achievement in KCSE in Teso South Sub County, Kenya.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on the Social Systems Theory. A system theory is the interdisciplinary study of systems in general, with the goal of elucidating principles that can be applied to all types of the systems at all levels in all fields of research (En.wikipedia.org/systems theory). School system is a living and a dynamic organization. A school is made up of several smaller social institutions like departments, committees and students' council which are constantly interacting and inter-dependent. Everything in a school is a complete system on its own. But it is a unit or sub-system of yet a larger system (supra system) and all are interdependent. From the supra system(environment) ,the school gets students, teachers, resource materials, finances , constraints such as requirements of the law and policy and expectations of parents, values and goals, and existing knowledge in the society. Schools are essentially living systems and that without people they are nothing but concrete and paper (Schmuck, 1977).

The system transforms the inputs in to finished products. Systems mean 'complexes of elements standing in interaction' (Bertalanffy, 1971). An example is that a school produces a changed person with skills, knowledge, values, and competences to enable him/her contribute positively to self and society. Subsystems have distinct properties both in specialization and scope of responsibilities but there is no single sub-system that is superior or inferior to others. All sub-systems perform unique and complementary roles to attain the common goals of the system. Thus, even if the principal occupies a higher position than the students' council who are in the lowest rank of the administrative hierarchy, the role of the SC is not inferior.

The Systems Theory was found appropriate for this study because a school being a social system has sub-systems such as students' council sub-system, which requires proper coordination, role clarity, training and healthy relationship with the school management, administration, school teaching and non- teaching staff and students to enable it carry out its role effectively.

### **Literature Review**

This study had a lot in common with previous studies undertaken by Onginjo (2014) on influence of students' participation in school management on academic performance in public secondary schools, Lucy Muthoni, Murage (2014) on influence of students councils on management of discipline in secondary schools, Kilonzo Dominic Kyalo (2017) on influence of student councils' in school governance on students discipline in

public secondary schools, Harriet Mukiri (2014) on the role of prefects in enhancing discipline among students in public secondary schools and Mutua Titus Mukiti (2014) on the role of students council in secondary schools management. their studies mainly focused on the following objectives; to determine how students' involvement in discipline management influences academic performance in public secondary schools, to investigate the extent to which students involvement in academic management influences academic performance in public secondary schools, to determine how students' involvement in school business management influences academic performance in public secondary schools, to establish the extent to which students' involvement in co-curricular management influences academic performance in public secondary schools, to determine perceptions of students towards methods of establishing students council in secondary schools, to establish the role played by students councils in management of discipline in secondary schools, to find out some of the measures put in place by students councils in managing discipline in secondary schools, to establish challenges facing students councils in management of discipline in secondary schools, to examine the influence of students councils involvement in decision making on students discipline in public secondary schools, to establish the influence of students councils involvement in implementation of school rules and policies among students on their discipline in public secondary schools, to establish the influence of students councils involvement as a link of communication between students and administration on students discipline in public secondary schools, to establish the influence of students council involvement in student welfare activities on their discipline in public secondary schools, to establish the duties of prefects in enhancement of students discipline in public secondary schools, to establish the extent to which involvement of prefects in dealing with students indiscipline and enhance discipline in public secondary schools, To establish how training enables prefect in enhancing students discipline issues in public secondary schools, To establish ways of improving prefects performance in dealing with students discipline in public secondary schools, Find out supervisory roles played by students council in management support, Establish the representational roles played by students council in management support, examine disciplinary roles played by students council in management support and examine challenges faced by student council in public secondary schools. However their studies did not consider the role played by student council in improving KCSE achievement and the role played by students' council in supervision of lesson attendance, maintaining class order and discipline, coordinating discussion groups and academic guidance and counseling. Therefore appointment of student council should be consciously done so as to ensure that the right cadres of student council are appointed for effective administration and positive academic achievements. Furthermore, from the literature review it showed that no research has been done on influence of students' council on academic achievement in KCSE in Teso South Sub County. The research gap therefore motivated the researcher to carry out an investigation on the students' council and academic achievement in KCSE in Teso South Sub County.

## **II. Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Descriptive research survey design was employed in this study because it gave opportunity to integrate data which comprised both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This method involves collecting information by interviewing and administering questionnaires to sampled individuals. Secondly the descriptive research is important because it acts as a pre-cursor to quantitative research designs and the general overview gave some valuable pointers as to what variables are worth testing quantitatively. It is a classical method of gathering information using primary methods such as surveys on the current status of phenomena under considerations (Kothari, 2004). According to Kothari (2004) survey design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.

### **Sampling**

In this research, the sample size consisted of Principals, deputy Principals, D.O.S and students. The researcher sampled 15 Principles who were selected one each from boarding boys and girls, mixed day and boarding and day girls only while 11 were selected from mixed day secondary schools which was also similar to 15 deputy Principles and 15 DOS. Moreover, 205 students were sampled randomly out of the population of 500. This formed a sample population of 250 respondents in the study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda, (1999) in a descriptive study, at least 10% of the target population is adequate.

### **Instruments of Data Collection**

The researcher used questionnaire as a tool or instruments for collecting data. The selection of the instrument was guided by the nature of data collected and objectives of the study.

**Data Analysis**

After data collection process, information was checked, coded, arranged per each research construct and then processed using descriptive methods. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 aided analysis for subsequent objectives and themes. Correlation analysis which involved examining relationships between two sets of intervals or ratio level variables was used to test the significance of variables (Lind, Marchal, & Wathen, 2008). The study further used the chi-square model to analyze the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This method was used because was flexible and forecasted dependent variable from a set of predictors that may be discrete (Fabowales, 1995). Thus each variable was analyzed individually at significance level of 0.05.

**Study Findings**

The study results were in line with the objective of the study which investigated the effect of student council involvement in supervision of lesson attendance on academic achievement in KCSE in Teso South Sub County.

**Supervision Lesson Attendance**

The study investigated the effect of students' council involvement in supervision of lesson attendance on academic achievement in KCSE in Teso South Sub County. To answer the study questions, both students and administration were asked various questions on a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree and analysis done using descriptive statistics and referential statistics. To obtain the descriptive data, the minimum value was added to maximum value and divided by two (M=2.5). Any value above this mean signified the level of agreement with question asked. For the first objective, descriptive findings are illustrated in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 Descriptive Statistics on Supervision of Lesson Attendance by Students**

Supervising Lesson Attendance by Students' Council		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev
1.	Taking roll call for absent students in the school	200	1.00	4.00	3.29	.74070
2.	Take roll call for Teachers who miss lessons	200	1.00	4.00	3.29	.78035
3.	Involved in marking Lesson attendance forms	200	1.00	4.00	3.31	.75946
4.	Keep records for lessons recovered by teachers	200	1.00	4.00	3.24	.76507
5.	Daily marking of class registers	200	1.00	4.00	1.84	.88413
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>		<b>200</b>				

*Source: Researcher's Data (2020)*

The findings in Table 4.5 revealed that students' council are greatly involved in the supervision of lesson attendance which has a bearing to students' academic achievement. The first four questions recorded a mean rating of >3.0 implying that respondents agreed with the role students' council in supervision of lesson attendance. However, students' council are less involved in daily marking of class registers (M=1.835), a responsibility that squarely lies to the role of teachers in schools. In most cases, students' council involvement in supervision of lesson attendance, those absent students are usually warned, disciplined and guided on the importance of being present throughout in school. This improves their percentage attendance to school work and helps the students to perform well in academics.

The study further examined significant influence of variables to condense the dimensionality of the data set given on supervising lesson attendance by students' council. This present study employed Principal Component Analysis to determine the cumulative proportion of values in the given data set on supervising lesson attendance. Table 1.2 highlights findings.

**Table 1.2 Principal Component Analysis on Supervision of Lesson Attendance by Students**

Component	Total Variance Explained			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.378	87.556	87.556	4.378	87.556	87.556
2	.511	10.228	97.784			
3	.060	1.209	98.993			
4	.042	.849	99.842			

5	.008	.158	100.000
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*Researcher's own data, (2020)*

Students' response from Principal Component Analysis in Table 1.2 reveals that taking roll call for absent students in the school contributed the highest variability to the data with regard to supervising lesson attendance by 87.556% variance. On the other hand, marking lesson attendance forms, keeping records for lessons recovered by teachers and daily marking of class registers reveal that there is very little variation at 1.209%, .849% and .158% respectively; hence they detect near-constant linear relationships among the original variables. This implies that the effect of students' council in taking roll call for absent students significantly improves the status of students' improvement in both classroom and field activity in the school. This helps teachers to identify the welfare of their students when taking their duties of marking class registers daily, helps to ascertain individual needs thus improvement in attaining top quality grades.

The study further analyzed the academic achievement of students using chi-square test; Therefore the Principals, Deputy Principals and DOS responses on students' council supervision of lesson attendance in relation to students' academic achievement were analyzed using Chi-Square to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Table 1.3 shows their findings of this study.

**Table 1.3 Chi-Square Test on Supervision of Lesson Attendance and Student Academic Achievement**

	Roll call for absent students	Roll call for missing teachers	Marking Lesson attendance	Keep records for lessons recovered	Daily marking of class registers
Chi-Square	7.049 <sup>a</sup>	.024 <sup>a</sup>	.220 <sup>a</sup>	.610 <sup>a</sup>	.024 <sup>a</sup>
Df	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.008	.876	.639	.435	.876

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 20.5 As indicated in Table 1.3, results indicate similar opinion given by Principals, deputy Principals and DOS to that of students' council. The results show that there was a significant association between students' council involvement in taking roll call for absent students and performance in academic scores. This implies that class prefects closely monitor the lesson attendance of students and report those who are absent from lessons/school. This is an avenue of making sure that students at least have the required minimum lesson for them to be allowed to sit for CATs and exams. Students' attendance becomes the precursor towards academic performance because a student who has 100% attendance is likely to do better than one who attends lesson averagely. Similarly, an academically challenged student who consistently attends lessons will definitely improve in academic scores and will realize S-shaped curve over time period. However, there was little evidence to suggest statistically significant association between the other four components (roll call for missing teachers, marking of lesson attendance, keeping records for lessons recovered and daily marking of class registers) in relation to students' academic performance since the p-values obtained were greater than the chosen significance level (p=0.005). From the study results, it can therefore be concluded that students' council involvement in supervision of lesson attendance does not necessarily be taking of roll call for teachers who miss lessons, keeping records for lessons recovered by teachers and daily marking of class registers. These roles are purely for teachers, deputy Principals and Principals. The study proposes that taking roll call for absent students is the key role of students' council leadership in secondary schools that contribute immensely to learners' academic performance.

### III. Study Discussion

The findings suggest that students' council are greatly involved in the supervision of lesson attendance which has a bearing to students' academic achievement but inadequately involved in daily marking of class registers (M=1.835) a responsibility that squarely lies for the role of teachers in schools. This is because the students' council is highly involved taking roll call for absent students in the school by 87.5% responses. However, there was little evidence to suggest statistically significant association between the other four components and academic achievement by Principals, deputy Principals and DOS since the p-values obtained were greater than the chosen significance level (p =0.005) in Chi-Square results. The findings concurs with earlier findings by Kyalo, Kanori and Njagi (2017) which established that students' councils had diverse roles in managing learning activities like early morning and late evening preps. This is also supported by Kouzer and Posner (2013) who draws the attention of school students' council on direct link between the school administration and the whole student community in giving account of every student in the school.

Recent research (Kibet et'al, 2012) found that the majority of school administration use students' council leadership support to effective discipline practices in schools. Nyabisi (2012) proposes that students have greater sense of ownership once the school administration involves students' leadership in management

decision making. This makes the student community happy, and more discipline as the council is able to tackle and address their issues of welfare (Ghanem, 2012).

In education talk with Timothy Kambilima in Zambia, he said that students' council consists of prefects who have important roles that they play in schools and especially in secondary schools. Prefects are selected in third term and confirmed in first term of the following year. He said students councils are recommended by teachers and open interviews are conducted so that they can be selected on merit. In short students' council is by teachers on the basis of their leadership skills. Students' council has numerous roles that they execute at school such as acting as a bridge between school authority and students. Students' council is also tasked with responsibility of organizing activities in collaboration with teachers and maintaining order in class and school at large. This goes a long way in helping to create a better learning environment at school. Other roles include keeping vigilance on other students when they are in and outside the school compound. It is also the role students council to check the dress code of students, for example checking whether the student is using the correct school uniform or not. (www. Daily- mail. Co. zm)

Furthermore, students' council is expected to be role models to their fellow students. They are supposed to lead by example in many ways. One of such ways is that they should be dressed appropriately at all times, observe school rules and maintain an excellent attendance record at school. Students' council is equally expected to be punctual for lessons and duties. Students' council is supposed to be cooperative, helpful, well-mannered, trustworthy and responsible for them to be respected by fellow students and this is very important in their duties. They should not mete out punishment to offenders but should also have a bigger role to play in the maintenance of friendly atmosphere, cooperation, peace and unity in the school compound and hence creating order in the school.

#### **IV. Recommendation**

The study recommends that the school administration should greatly involve the student council in the supervision of lesson attendance as it enhances students' academic achievement. This can be done by structuring and stream lining the duties of the student council in realization of educational goals and objectives.

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