

# Influence of Strategic Leadership Management on Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish influence of strategic leadership management on students' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kathiani Sub-County of Machakos County. The study was guided by the following objective; to assess the influence of strategic leadership management on students' academic performance. Descriptive survey design was employed by this study. The study used questionnaires to collect data. The study targeted 1,240 students, 224 teachers, and 31 principals. Stratified and simple random sampling technique were used to select 11 Principals, 76 teachers and 422 students. Quantitative data was collected using the questionnaires and while qualitative data was collected through interview guides. The data was descriptively analyzed using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation test analysis with the help of SPSS Version 24 and presented using tables and charts. The coefficient of determination was conducted to measure how well the statistical model was likely to forecast future outcomes. Findings show that of the four independent variables contribute 34% of students' academic performance. This means that this study did not focus on other factor that contribute to 66% of the students' academic performance. The researcher further carried out a multiple regression analysis so as to identify the influence of the independent variables on students' academic performance. From the regression coefficient, strategic resource allocation ( $p=0.000$ ) and vision setting ( $p=0.000$ ) were found to have a significant relationship with the dependent variable (students' academic performance) as its  $p$ -value was below 0.05 while objective setting  $p=0.037$  and strategic leadership ( $p=0.079$ ) were found to have an insignificant relationship with the dependent variable as their  $p$ -values were above 0.05. Qualitative data from open ended questions was analyzed using thematic analysis while qualitative data from interview guides was presented in form of narratives. The findings of this study established insignificant relationship between strategic leadership management and students' academic performance ( $p$ -value=0.080). The study concluded that; the principal should work with the teachers and other stakeholders to ensure that the syllabus is covered in a timely manner so that the students are not disadvantaged. The study recommended principals should motivate teachers who perform well in their subjects through commending them for their good work and ministry of education should reinforce the implementation of strategic Plans in all public secondary schools with intensive monitoring and supervision.

**Keywords:** Strategic Leadership Management Public Secondary Schools Kenya

## INTRODUCTION

According Rigstray (2017), performance management (PM) is all activities aimed at ensuring that goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner. Cokins (2009) pointed out that PM is a framework that identifies opportunities for performance improvement through use of performance measures such as standards and indicators. It is the integration of performance measures, benchmarks, and goals in order to

achieve optimal results. Performance management can focus on the performance of an organization, a department, employee or even the processes to build a product or service as well as many other areas. In examining secondary school performance, the main cornerstone is based upon key challenges which face this sub sector namely; access, quality, completion, retention and relevance (KESSP, 2005).

The concept of strategic planning has become popular as a management's tool not only to steer a firm's survival but also improve performance. Strategic planning and thinking involves making choices and decisions about the long-term future of an organization (Pearce, 2009). Strategic planning includes various steps, including setting vision, mission, and environmental analysis and setting objectives among others. Strategic Planning is an important ingredient for organizational growth, development performance and change Management (Arasa&Obonyo, 2012). The public sector finds the concepts of strategy and strategic planning just as important as in commercial firms and hence public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-county are required to formulate strategic plans in tandem with the MoE's strategic plan in order to foster the government's agenda to provide every Kenyan child with the right to quality education and training (Birgen, 2007).

Kawinzi et al. (2024) conducted a study on Leadership Communication Strategies as an Institutional Determinant of Strategic Plan Implementation in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya. The study found out that based results from the multiple regression produced a positive coefficient of 0.4168 on school leadership with a p-value of 0.000 and is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that, school leadership has a statistically significant influence on strategic plan implementation in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

According to SCDE (2017) KCSE performance in Kathiani Sub-County was as follows; 2017 was 2.245, 2016 was 2.378, 2015 was 2.890, 2014 was 2.395 and 2013 was 2.256. According to the SCDE, results have indicated that for the years 2013, 2014 and 2016 and overall mean score for the Kathiani Sub-County has stagnated at mean grade of 2.256, 2.395 and 2.378 respectively. The county posted fair results in years 2014 and 2015 but since then, the academic performance has continued to decline. As a result, the research on the influence of strategic management on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County proved a viable topic of research.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to SCDE (2017) KCSE performance in Kathiani Sub-County was as follows; 2017 was 2.245, 2016 was 2.378, 2015 was 2.890, 2014 was 2.395 and 2013 was 2.256. According to the SCDE, results have indicated that for the years 2013, 2014 and 2016 and overall mean score for the Kathiani Sub-County has stagnated at mean grade of 2.256, 2.395 and 2.378 respectively. The county posted fair results in years 2014 and 2015 but since then, the academic performance has continued to decline. As a result, the research on the influence of strategic management on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County proved a viable topic of research. The poor performance in Kathiani Sub-County is of great concern to the parents, government, parents and other stakeholders who heavily invest in education.

### **Objective of the Study**

This study was guided by the following Objective:

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

### **Research Questions**

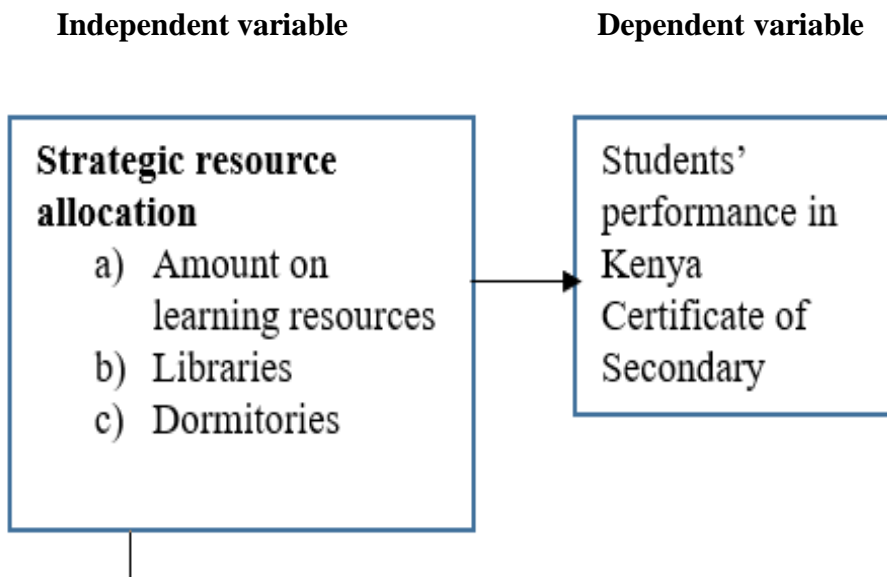
The study was guided by the following research questions.

What is the influence of strategic leadership management on students’ academic performance of Public Secondary Schools in Kathiani Sub-County?

**Theoretical Framework**

Dynamic capabilities on the other hand describe the firm’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments. Dynamic capabilities are typically the outcome of experience and learning within the institutions. Competent strategic management teams in learning institutions are able to make prudent and judgmental leadership decisions that are favorable to school growth.

**Conceptual Framework**



**METHODOLOGY**

The study used descriptive survey design. The study 31 principals, 224 teachers and 1,240 form three and four students of public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub-County. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used. The researcher sampled 34% of the target population.

Therefore, the study involved 422 form three and form four students, 76 Class teachers and 11 principals. 105 students were randomly selected from day schools and 317 from boarding schools. Similarly, 48 teachers from boarding schools and 28 from day schools while five principals were selected from day schools and six from boarding schools. 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. Descriptive statistics included percentages, frequencies and mean. Inferential statistics which included correlation and regression were used to determine the relationship between strategic leadership management as independent variables and students’ academic performance as dependent variable.

**RESULTS**

**Strategic Leadership Management and Students’ Academic Performance**

The research question 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.

Table 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 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 as shown in Figure 4.3. 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 2.

Table 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 2 show that correlation between strategic leadership and academic performance was insignificant as depicted by ( $r = 0.230$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.080$ ). The finding differs with Gakenia (2017) who revealed that strategic leadership is positively correlated to academic performance.

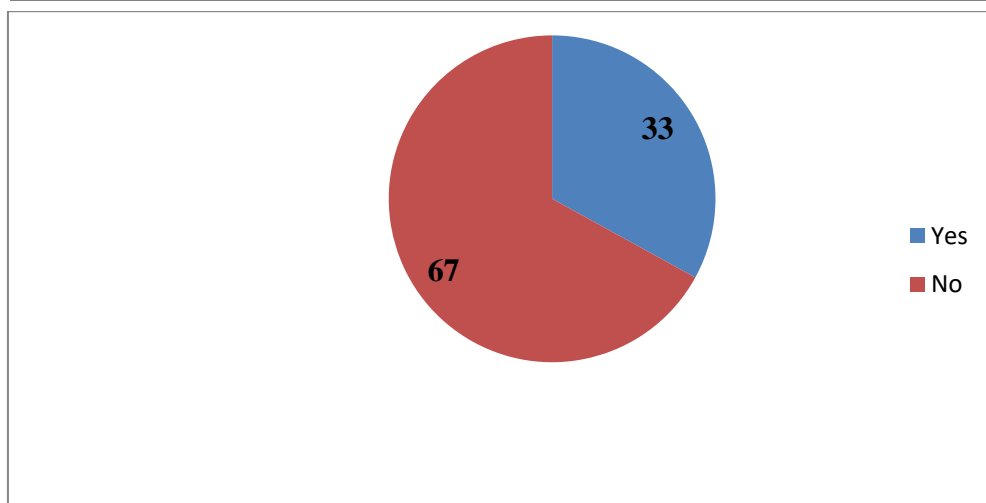


Figure 1: Students' response on Involvement in Decision Making

### Multiple Regression

The researcher further carried out a multiple regression analysis so as to identify influence of objective setting, strategic resource allocation, strategic leadership and vision setting on students' academic performance. The researcher used SPSS to enter and code response from the respondent to assist in computing the extent to which a unit changes in a given independent variable to dependent variable.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant/Y Intercept	1.123	0.541		2.076	0.043
Strategic leadership	0.136	0.076	0.220	1.793	0.079

Dependent variable: Students Academic Performance

As per the SPSS generated table 4.22, the equation

$(Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon)$  becomes:

$$Y = 1.123 + 0.215 X_1 + 0.574 X_2 + 0.136 X_3 + 1.113 X_4$$

The regression equation above has revealed that holding strategic leadership at constant zero, students' academic performance will be a unit change in strategic leadership will contribute to a 0.136 change in students' academic performance and a unit change in strategic vision setting will contribute to a 1.113 change in students' academic performance .

From the model, strategic leadership ( $p = 0.079$ ) were found to have an insignificant relationship with the dependent variable as their p-values were above 0.005.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers Service Commission should appoint principals who are experienced in instruction supervision. This will ensure adequate planning, organization and execution of strategic plans. The study also recommends that principals should motivate teachers who perform well in their subjects through commending them for their good work. Likewise, they should reprimand those who don't perform well in their subjects. This will enhance students' performance since motivation of teachers has a positive impact on students' academic performance.

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