PRINCIPALS' EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION PRACTICES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON KENYA CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MANDERA WEST SUB-COUNTY, MANDERA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to assess the communication practices of principals in public secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-county, Mandera County, Kenya and their influence on KCSE performance.

Research methodology: The study used a concurrent triangulation research design, which involved collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The target population included 287 respondents, including eight administrators, 239 teachers, and 40 support staff. A sample of 340 respondents was drawn using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create four strata, one for each zone in Mandera West Sub-county. Purposive sampling was used to select one principal and one support staff from each zone.

Findings: The study found that principals in Mandera West Sub-county public secondary schools do not prioritize communication planning. Only a small proportion of respondents reported that "setting time for communication" is a factor that is usually considered. Participants are somewhat

neutral about the effectiveness of face-to-face communication and written communication in managing their secondary schools. There is still a significant percentage of schools that rely on just one type of communication feedback.

Recommendations: The study recommended that the schools administration should continue to prioritize and emphasize the importance of communication planning. The schools should consider exploring and adopting a wider range of communication channels and strategies that may be more effective in managing the schools. The schools should consider exploring alternative forms of written communication that may be more effective in managing the schools. The principal should explore alternative feedback mechanisms.

Keywords: *Principals' Effective, Communication Practices, Certificate, Secondary, Education Performance*

INTRODUCTION

The importance of communication in people's daily work and lives is so obvious that it is easy to forget how much it influences what and how people go about their work. The history of communication shows that a classic definition of communication includes the sender, message, channels, receiver, and feedback. (Alvesson, 2012) The traditional perspective, which is grounded in traditional organizational theories and is a positivistic transmission approach, was the dominant perspective in organizational communication before 1980. (Alvesson, 2012) However, the discipline has changed over the past 10 to 15 years as a result of inputs from various fields of study. New perspectives, such as interpretative, critical, postmodern, and feminist perspectives, have changed the language and meaning of organizational communication. For example, debates about how schools should be run and managed to achieve good results have always been ongoing. (Begley, 2013) In recent years, there has been a greater focus on quantifying and understanding what activities and actions lead to specific outcomes. (Sammons, 2013) Research has shown that schools, individual teachers, and principals all have an impact. (Sammons, 2013) However, as in other organizations, the work in schools is complex and interconnected, making it difficult to prioritize what is most important.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Communication enables understanding of responsibilities and roles, plans and conduct learning, coordination methods with students, informing teachers on learner progress and behaviors, and building healthy relationships with teachers, students, and various workers. However, in Mandera West Sub-county, many secondary schools continue to face administration and decision-making issues. After receiving grievances from interested parties like parents and quality assurance officers, the Ministry of Education issued warnings to public secondary schools for poor resource management. Cases of bad human resource interactions, waste money resources, poor facility upkeep, poor management of time and underutilization of the use of curriculum-related materials is increasing. Many secondary schools still lack managerial efficiency. Despite these findings, few empirical research has looked into how principals' communication practices affect management performance in public secondary schools. In other words, research has not yet clarified how procedures like planning, creating channels for communication, choosing the best channels for communication, and creating feedback for communication affect responsible KCSE achievement in public secondary schools.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study was based on the following research objectives:

i. To establish the influence of communication planning on Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-county.

ii. To assess the influence of designing channels of communication on Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-county.

iii. To establish the influence of selecting forms of communication on Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-county.

iv. To find out the influence of designing communication feedback on Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-county.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the influence of communication planning on Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-county?

ii.   How does designing channels of communication influence Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-county?

iii.   What is the influence of selecting forms of communication on Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-county?

iv.   How does designing communication feedback influence Kenya certificate of secondary education in public secondary schools in Mandera West Sub-county?

THEORITICAL REVIEW

The Communication Theory

The Anderson (1996) communication theory will serve as the basis for this investigation. The premise of this hypothesis is that, despite their varied communication methods, all living things on the globe communicate. One of the tenets of this theory is that all living things, includes, animals, plants and the humans, communicates with each another by using gestures, sounds, speeches, body language, visible change, or any various means necessary to letting the other person knowing about the feelings, joy and problems, or various information. According to Anderson (1996), communication theory offers a thorough grasp of the various factors that influence discussions of decision-making.

Different perspectives on this theory offer distinct but understandable ways of understanding and debating communication issues and practices. These methods challenge some widely held notions about communication while deriving from and appealing to others. According to Anderson (1996), communication encompasses transmitting information between the sender and recipient, who then decode it and responds appropriately. Communication theory fits into the framework of this study since principals must communicate with education stakeholders in order to effectively oversee school operations. This theory emphasized that the key social issues concern. Who and how do what social process which shape social order, human identities and the communication norms in schools participate? Every one of these theoretical ideas has a potential to be important on practices to effective school management, which is a reasonable working assumption, even if they have all been produced in different fields with divergent intellectual aims. To make this a reality, rigorous planning, appropriate communication routes and formats, school bureaucracy, and anticipated comments should all be noted.

Schools Management Theory

The Kuo (2009) proposed school management theory will also have an impact on the research. This idea looks at how administrators and managers interact with their companies in terms of comprehending their goal, putting those methods into practice, and inspiring people to provide their best effort. The main finding of this study shows that, while schools administrators in many areas of the world have been able to manage their organizations successfully without having a solid foundation in management theory, those administrators who have incorporated this theory into their daily operations have had a better chance of doing so by taking communication into account in order to ensuring responsible schools management. This theory was employed in this study because administrators need to know how to organize school management resources and effectively convey those resources to teachers, students, and other school staff in order to increase effective school management performance in public secondary schools.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

According to Bartlett (2014), the performances of the school administration depend on appraisal of new and ongoing capital investments projects. In perfect markets, value of school's maximization by selecting which initiatives have the greatest NPV. Additionally, planning and control have a positive effect on most schools' success. Most secondary schools in Kenya and Mandera West Sub-county are given increased freedom and autonomy in controlling their own operations and resources for school development in order to create an atmosphere that encourages continual improvement (Okumbe, 2016). Good management, a solid organization, and a clear objective are the foundation for effective communications. A group of variables known as communications dynamics direct school administrators through organizational evaluation, strategic planning, channels, forms, and feedback mechanisms. May and Mumby (2015) claim that school staff members get important information about their schools and the changes taking place there through the principals' communication dynamics.

Seashore (2016) concluded that communication is a dynamic and complex process in a study he did in the Netherlands. Understanding the world of scenarios, agents, variables, and relationships that the study of human communication exposes us to is crucial. Dolphin (2013) asserts that a strong, executable plan is essential for schools' communications success, but that even the savviest communicators must keep up with how quickly things are changing these days. Dolphin (2013)

adds that a current school communication plan enables principals to take advantage of the expanding set of resources accessible to the school communication. To support the claims, Goodman and Dean (2014) researched in San Francisco, and found that planning and resource allocation are more crucial than ever because of the variety of information available and the current ways for disseminating information about schools.
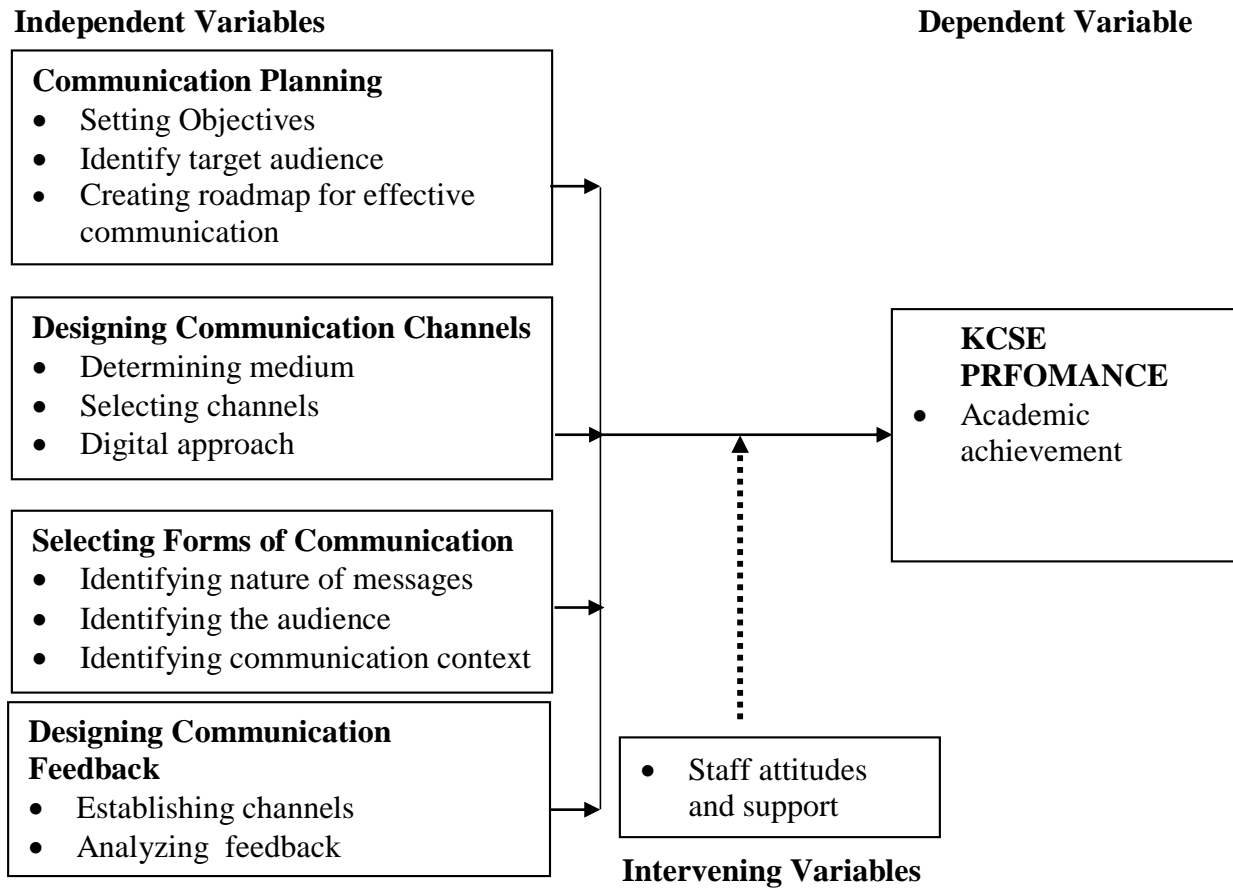
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Independent Variables   **Dependent Variable**

Communication Planning
- Setting Objectives
- Identify target audience
- Creating roadmap for effective communication

Designing Communication Channels
- Determining medium
- Selecting channels
- Digital approach

KCSE PRFOMANCE
- Academic achievement

Selecting Forms of Communication
- Identifying nature of messages
- Identifying the audience
- Identifying communication context

Designing Communication Feedback
- Establishing channels
- Analyzing feedback

- Staff attitudes and support

Intervening Variables

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The target population included 289 respondents, including 8 principals, 105 teachers, 40 support personnel, and 136 members of the school board of public secondary schools' management in Mandera West Sub-county. The sample size of the study was 168 respondents, consisting of 160 teachers, 4 principals, and 4 members of the support staff. The research instruments included questionnaires and interview guides. Statistical Package for Social Sciences

(SPSS Version 23) was used to analyze the quantitative data inferentially using ANOVA and descriptively using frequencies and percentages. Tables and charts were used to present the study's quantitative findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is worth noting that a small proportion of respondents (14%) reported that communication planning occurs "sometimes". This suggests that there may be some variability in the frequency and consistency of communication planning in secondary schools. Only a small proportion of respondents (16%) reported that "setting time for communication" is a factor that is usually considered. Participants do not strongly agree that their principal always identifies the source and recipients of information during communication. Participants do not strongly agree that the communication planning dynamics adopted by their principal have improved Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) performance. Participants are somewhat neutral about whether their principal sets time for communication to enhance KCSE performance. Participants somewhat agree that the content to be communicated is rarely set to ensure KCSE performance.

The findings indicate areas for improvement in communication planning practices within the context of school management. These include enhancing the identification of source and recipients of information, improving communication planning dynamics to enhance management performance, setting specific timeframes for communication, and emphasizing the setting of content to ensure effective communication. These findings provide insights into the current state of communication planning in secondary schools and highlight potential areas for intervention and improvement. Participants are somewhat neutral about the effectiveness of face-to-face communication in managing their secondary school. Participants are somewhat neutral about the effectiveness of broadcast media in communication by their principal. Participants somewhat agree that their secondary school has embraced social media as a communication tool. There is still a significant percentage of schools (28%) that rely on just one channel of communication. This could limit the effectiveness of their communications, as not everyone may be able to access or use that particular channel.

The findings indicate areas for improvement in the effectiveness of face-to-face communication and the use of broadcast media in school management. On the other hand, the adoption of social media as a communication medium shows a relatively higher level of effectiveness. These findings

provide insights into the current state of communication practices in secondary schools and highlight areas that may require attention and improvement for effective management. Participants are somewhat neutral about the effectiveness of written communication in managing their secondary schools. Participants somewhat agree that verbal communication, as used by their principal, has not been effective for school management. Participants somewhat agree that the use of non-verbal communication has not effectively enhanced management of their secondary school. It is important to note that there is still a significant percentage of schools (26%) that rely on just one form of communication. This could limit the effectiveness of their communications, as not everyone may be able to access or use that particular form of communication.

The findings indicate that while written, verbal, and non-verbal communication are commonly practiced in secondary schools, there are perceived limitations in their effectiveness for management purposes. This highlights the need for improving the efficacy of different forms of communication to enhance management practices in secondary schools. These findings provide insights into the current state of communication practices and their impact on management in secondary schools, suggesting areas for intervention and improvement. There is still a significant percentage of schools (25%) that rely on just one type of communication feedback. This could limit the effectiveness of their communication, as they may not receive adequate feedback to understand whether their message was received and understood. The data suggests that it is uncommon to use immediate feedback during conversation to enhance school management. The mean score is below the midpoint (3), which implies a low level of agreement with this statement.

The data shows that the principal's long-term feedback has not been effective in managing schools, as the mean score is above the midpoint (3). This implies a moderate level of agreement with this statement. The data indicates that the principal's long-term feedback has not been successful in using financial resources or fulfilling deadlines, as the mean score is well above the midpoint (3). This implies a high level of agreement with this statement. While immediate feedback during communication is practiced to some extent, there is room for improvement in both the effectiveness of long-term feedback provided by the principal in general and specifically in relation to meeting deadlines and using financial resources. These findings highlight potential areas for intervention and improvement in the communication feedback practices within the school management context.

CONCLUSIONS

Schools prioritize the identification of information sources and recipients and the development of effective communication content when planning for school communication. There may be opportunities to improve communication planning by placing a greater emphasis on scheduling communication activities in advance and soliciting feedback from stakeholders on their communication needs and preferences. Participants are somewhat neutral about the effectiveness of face-to-face and broadcast media channels of communication in managing their secondary schools. However, they somewhat agree that social media has been adopted as a medium of communication in their schools.

Participants are somewhat neutral about the effectiveness of written communication, but somewhat agree that verbal and non-verbal communication, as currently practiced, have not effectively enhanced the management of the schools. Most secondary schools recognize the importance of using multiple types of communication feedback to effectively communicate with their students, parents, and staff. However, based on the data, it appears that the current feedback mechanisms used by the principal in the management of the secondary schools are not effective in meeting deadlines and using financial resources. Immediate feedback during communication is also not commonly practiced, which may hinder the ability to quickly address issues as they arise.

The management of the secondary school is generally rated positively by the respondents. However, there is room for development in the following areas: human resource relations and financial resource management. It is recommended that the management focuses on improving these areas while maintaining their current strengths in curriculum support materials utilization and time management. By addressing these areas of improvement, the management can further improve the overall quality of the school and the educational experience for students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The school's administration should continue to prioritize and emphasize the importance of communication planning to ensure consistent and effective communication practices. Additionally, it may be helpful to solicit feedback from staff and students to identify any areas for improvement or to address any inconsistencies in communication planning. The schools should consider exploring and adopting a wider range of communication channels and strategies that may

be more effective in managing the schools. This could include exploring the use of online collaboration tools, developing effective email communication protocols, or setting up regular communication meetings that include a range of communication channels. Additionally, the schools could consider gathering feedback from staff and students on the effectiveness of current communication channels and strategies to identify areas for improvement.

The schools should consider exploring alternative forms of written communication that may be more effective in managing the schools, such as using digital platforms for communication. Additionally, the schools may want to consider exploring and adopting effective verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that align with management performance goals. This could include training staff on effective communication techniques, setting up regular communication meetings that incorporate a variety of communication channels, or gathering feedback from staff and students on areas where communication strategies can be improved. The principal should explore alternative feedback mechanisms, such as regular performance evaluations, staff surveys, and suggestion boxes. These mechanisms can provide an avenue for immediate and constructive feedback, which can improve management practices in the secondary schools. Additionally, there is a need to educate the staff on the importance of timely communication and feedback, which can improve the overall effectiveness of the management practices.

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