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An Assessment of the Influence of Children's Representation on School Boards in the Promotion of Children's Government in Public Primary Schools in Central Division, Turkana Central Sub – County, Turkana County, Kenya

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Abstract:

The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of children's representation on promotion of children's government in public primary schools Central Division in Turkana Central Sub- County, Turkana County, Kenya. The study was informed by the following objective: to assess the influence of children's representation on school boards in the promotion of children's government in public primary schools in Central Division. The study was guided by socio-cultural theory. The study used mixed research methodology. To achieve this, the researcher adopted concurrent triangulation research design. The target population was 400 respondents. A sample population of 120 was used, comprising of 8 head teachers, 22 learners, 15 board of management, and 75 learners. Stratified, systematic and purposive sampling techniques were applied in this study. Questionnaire and interview schedules were administered to the head teachers, teachers, board of management and learners. A pilot study of three schools from Loima Sub County was used to test and retest the reliability and validity of the survey instruments. Qualitative data was analyzed according to themes and in narrative form. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using descriptive and thematic statistics. Presentation of data was done by the use tables and figures. Findings of the study indicated that children representation did not promote children government in schools. The study recommends to policy makers to come up with ways of influencing children representation on school board of management in the promotion of Children's Government.

Keywords: school, representation, Children, Turkana, county, Kenya

1. Introduction

Governance in schools in the entire world has become a challenging issue and has rendered most people vulnerable specifically women and children (Basel, 2008). This has been initiated by, for example, serious and grotesque human rights violations in countries such as Sierra Leone since 1991, Shah, (2011), Burundi, Sudan, South Sudan and Kosovo. Many people, women and children have been killed in big numbers, for example 50,000 people that have been killed in Sierra Leone and over a million people having been displaced.

There are many critical issues affecting children globally, which render them vulnerable, Nyambura, (2009-2014): UNICEF; Kenya Country Programme. These issues include: laws and policies, poverty, child-survival, malnutrition, malaria, safe water and sanitation, HIV and AIDS, education, child protection and emergency. Among the critical issues affecting children is education. Education is basic human right as prescribed by Kipsang of MOEST (2013). The Kenyan law provides that every child has a right to free and compulsory education as contained in Basic Education Act of 2013. Just like other basic rights, education in article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is everyone's right and passport to human development as education opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms such as democracy; representation on school boards, reinforcing timelines and streamlining discipline in school.

The United Nations Convention on Child Rights has acknowledged that child's participation right has been ignored and forsaken by many nations although they are obliged to make the rights contained in the UNCRC widely known to adults and children in Article 42 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This clearly indicates that children have a right to obtain information and express their own views, though there are cases where they violate the rights of others (Article 13).

Even though the government provides free and compulsory education, there are 1.2 million children of school-going age children not attending school, Nyambura, (2009). But for the case of those who are in school, they need to continue schooling till they finish. To do this the school management embraces some changes that will improve its management efficiency and effectiveness through adoption of Children's Government, Karuga, (2014).

Children's Government is a government of the children, by the children and for the children, Nyambura, (2014). This government is composed of the 10 democratically elected children: president, deputy president, speaker, deputy speaker, cabinet secretary education, cabinet secretary environment, cabinet Secretary ICT and foreign affairs, cabinet secretary health, water and sanitation, cabinet secretary justice, peace and special need group, and cabinet secretary sports and culture.

Though Children's Government sounds good, there are issues that have not been put into consideration, and if put into consideration, emphasis is not taken care of by the responsible bodies such as school administration, Mbiti (2007). They include issues such as absence of induction, elections not carried out at the stipulated time, lack of orientation and lack of transition. Save the children further reinforces this when it implemented a project aimed at strengthening children structures, independence, and effectiveness in increasing child participation which of course worked in creating awareness in some areas where children government seems not to exist.

Much has always been done by the adults, leaving out children on their own, where they have no role to play in the community. This emphasizes on the total integration of quality education and training which stresses so much on the need for early interventions for all learners to enhance improved accessibility, equality relevance and quality. Nyambura (2014) argues that authorities are expected to deal with vices such as cultural practices, poverty, and corporal punishment, intimidation either at home or school so that enabling learning environment is provided for to the child.

The above stated vices have rendered most schools in central division and unfriendly to the children ,leading to drop out, absenteeism, trauma due to frequently raids etc to help curb or reduce the above vices, Karuga, (2014) motto :to promote effective management for conducive learning whose themes are inclusive classrooms, safety and protection ,equity and equality, health and nutrition and finally community partnerships and linkages. It has ten clearly spelled out objectives. KEPSHA has brought learners to the drawing board to practice leadership and democracy at their tender age so that they are not just rendered tabula rasa. It has been established that children can participate in voting for leaders of their choice to exercise their democratic rights. It has also established that children can reinforce management of institutions and be agents of change.

According to Karuga, (2014), as per the first National Children's government, there are ten elective positions which include; president and deputy president, speaker and deputy speaker and six cabinet secretaries. Nyambura, (2014), insight what can children do to make their schools child-friendly? This implies that children can make a tangible contribution to making schools child-friendly, hence have a role to play in the board of management (B.O.M) meetings as ex-officio and the entire institutions as cabinet secretaries or the executive to the Children's Government (C.G)which are meant to boost management of schools as observed by Wango, (2010).

2. Assess the Influence of Children's Representation on School Boards in the Promotion of Children's Government

According to Hornby and Witte, (2006) a child is any human being below the age of 18 years and directly depend on parents and caregivers. The Children Act of Kenya of 2010 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of 2011 stipulate that both the parents and the government owe the child the responsibility of being protected as regards to his/her rights, which one of them is education. Children participation in the process of decision making is a human right and children absolutely have divine right to participate in matters affecting them as contained in the Education Act of 2013, The Kenyan Constitution of 2010, and The Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Children of 2011.

Kipsang, (2013) indicates that the Children Act stipulates and recognizes education as one of the rights that every child must enjoy at all costs and indicates that children have a right to obtain information and express their own views, unless this would violate the rights of others in Article 13 of the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of children of 2011. They should not mainly be left to listen a lot but they should be given opportunities to give their opinions at various forums in Article 42 of 2011. Article 4 of the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of children of 2011, clearly indicates that best interests of the child are paramount, where everything is decided in favor of the child which the Basic Education Act of 2013 clearly supports through incorporation of board of management for every institution offering basic education in Kenya. Section 56(1) (a) of Kenyan Education Act of 2013 stipulates that the board shall consist of six persons elected to represent parents of children in the school or local community. The Act also spells out that there shall be a representative of students' council (government) who shall be an ex-officio member during all board of management meetings in any educational institution in Kenya.

Migosi and Nanok, (2016) assert that learners in pastoralist communities have the right to education through intervention measures formulated to reduce chances of unfriendliness in schools such as Children's Government as advocated for in the UNICEF and KEPSHA report of 2014 that advocate for children inclusion in the board of management as one of the approaches established to promote child-friendly schools in Kenya. This approach has attracted attention from well-wishers and donors to fund children activities such as Kenya's First ever Annual National Children's Government Conference on 16th June 2014 in Nairobi that was by UNICEF through KEPSHA.

Nyambura, (2015) argues that children were really counted on the day of African Child, where they were heard articulating real issues, practiced democracy when they elected their national leaders, putting words into actions as evidenced by way the 13-year-old Danny Kinaro (president) aired out that it was time that their voices were heard and make change, which clearly sent signals that children have potentials that need to be tapped the earliest time possible as indicated by former South African president Nelson Mandela when he said that there can be no keener revelation on society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. Children need to be involved in matters affecting their lives. They need to be within the decision making circles. They need to be consulted when decisions are made and need to have a voice in the school community, an opportunity to make their own contribution! Children need to play a participatory role rather than just being spectators.

There are multiple steps and projects in any given organization, which often present complex, dynamic, messy, and scary results as argued by Kotter (2010). He came up with 8-step process for leading change: creating sense of urgency, building guiding coalition,

forming strategic vision/initiatives, enlisting volunteer army, enabling action by removing barriers, generating short term wins, sustaining acceleration, and instituting change. He asserts that more than 70% of all major transformation efforts fail because organizations do not take a consistent, holistic approach to changing themselves, nor do they engage their workforces effectively. This implies that it is very important to monitor progress and to see to what extent objectives are being achieved or met. Having pupils' representatives in the board of management, therefore, gives pupils opportunity to see by themselves the complexity of issues discussed.

The Basic Education Act - Kenya of 2010 clarifies that parents and government are obliged, provide education to children. The Act also provides the child with the right to free and compulsory education as contained in the Basic education Act of 2013, but according to Lewis, (2006), not all school going age children attend schooling owing to a number of factors such as: harsh weather, frequent raids, lack of food, inadequate teachers, unbalanced curriculum, poor administration, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate instructional materials, practice of coaching, pregnancies, repetition, and worldly attractions such as cultural practices and geographical conditions.

The relevance and quality of education in African countries, Wairimu and Kimonoti, (2007), Kenya being one of them, has occupied people's minds. There are evident claims that the education system on African countries is irrelevant and its quality is overwhelmingly poor. They state that all factors rendering schools unfriendly can be classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Karuga and Nyambura, (2014) have adapted five Child-friendly schools (CFS) themes: inclusive child-friendly schools, safe and protective school, equity and equality promoting school and enhancing school community linkages and partnerships. KEPSHA's motto is to promote child-friendly environment that is conducive for learning through effective management. It aims at promoting professionalism among teachers, leading to good management practices and effective implementation of curriculum for success in primary schools education in Kenya and East and Central Africa.

Nyambura, Karuga and Serem, (2014), with support from Canadian government work in consultation with all agents of change in the improvement of academic standards and enhancement of quality in line with Education for all (EFA) and Universal Primary Education Charter. Nyambura, (2014), states that authorities are expected to deal with such vices as cultural practices, poverty, corporal punishment, and intimidation among others.

Wango (2010), observes that their ways in which the government can help to alleviate underlying issues in schools so that learning institutions are rendered child-friendly. He clearly indicated that Malawi, for example, has school program that have been tried out, where important policies regarding boarding facilities that allow learners to remain in school, particularly poor and most vulnerable learners. This provides equal chances to all children regardless of their economic status, where diversity of children's experiences-abilities, identities and culture is acknowledged and reducing inequalities is promoted throughout as a means of improving outcomes and achieving greater social inclusion.

A part from school meals program by World Food Programme (WFP), there are other interventional measures that would enhance and sustain child-friendly schools environments that is, the children's government, Karuga and Kipsang, (2014), which have recognized and acknowledged child- centered approaches advocating for children developmental and age-appropriate needs that change over time, and that children are sometimes vulnerable and largely dependent on adults for their needs and care.

Conceptual Frame work

The conceptual framework consists of independent and dependent variable. Dependent variable is the Children's Government and the independent variable is representation with sub variables such as representation and timeliness as shown in figure 1. The moderating variables include role model, perception and attitude.

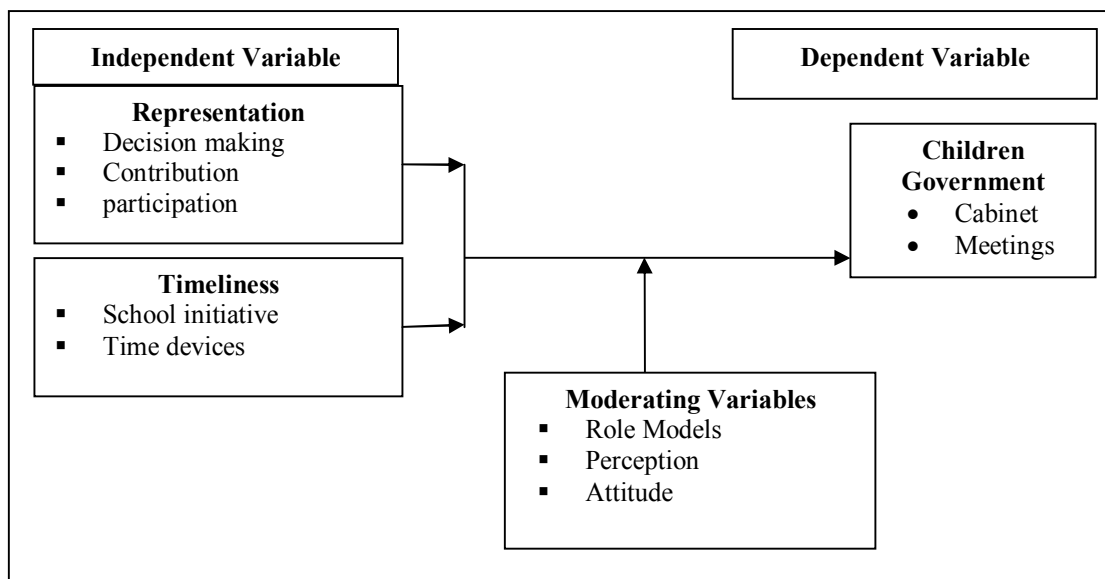


Figure 1: Conceptual Frame work
Source: Author, 2016.

3. Research Methodology

Research methodology adopted in this study was mixed methods which were both qualitative and quantitative. The main instrument of data collection was a questionnaire and interview guide. The targeted population was 400 which will include 25 head teachers, 75 teachers, 50 board of management and 250 learners in public primary schools in central division. This population comprised of 1 head teacher, 10 learners who are members of the children's government, 3 teachers and 2 board of management from each of the 25 public primary schools in the sub county. Sample size selected for the study was 120 respondents.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Gender of Respondents

The results on the gender of respondents are presented in table 1. 60% of the proportion represented the male population while 40% represented the female. Therefore, majority of respondents were males.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	72	60
Female	48	40
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 1: Gender of respondents

Source: Author, 2016

4.2. Position of the Respondents

On the positions held by the respondents the results are shown in Table 2. The result shows that 37.5% represented adults: head teachers, teachers and board members while 62.5% represented the learners. This can be interpreted to mean that learners were well represented.

Positions	Frequency	Percent
Head teacher	8	6.7
Teachers	22	18.3
BOM	15	12.5
Learners	75	62.5
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 2: Position of the respondents

Source: Author, 2016

4.3. Level of Education of Respondents

The results on the respondents' educational levels and their findings are presented in table 3. The majority of respondents were below class eight who accounted for 41.7 % followed by KCPE holders who accounted for 20.8%. These findings mean that majority of the respondents had not attained secondary education and above and were those still learning

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Masters	5	4.2
Degree	17	14.2
Diploma	9	7.5
Certificate	3	2.5
KCSE	11	9.1
KCPE	25	20.8
Below Class 8	50	41.7
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 3: Level of education of respondents

Source: Author, 2016

4.4. Marital Status of Respondents

The results on the marital status of the respondents are shown in Table 4. The results indicates that 37.5% of the respondents were adults who were married, single, and divorced, 62.5% of the respondents were learners.

Status	Frequency	Percent
Married	21	17.5
Single	23	19
None	75	62.5
Divorced	1	1
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 4: Marital status of respondents

Source: Author, 2016

4.5. Age group of Respondents

The results of the age group of respondents are shown in Table 5. Most respondents were learners who stood at 62.5% (age group 1 – 20 years) and the rest of the respondents (age group 21 – 50 years) were adults. These indicate that the majority of the respondents were in the age group below 20 years.

Age groups	Frequency	Percent
1-10 Years	25	20.8
11-20 Years	50	41.7
21-30 Years	23	19.2
31-40 Years	13	10.8
41-50 Years	9	7.5
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 5: Age group of respondents
Source: Author, 2016

4.6. Assess the Influence of Children's Representation on School Boards in the Promotion of Children's Government

This section outlines sub-variables that influenced children's representation on promotion of children's government in public primary schools in Central Division.

Degree of agreement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	45	37.5
Disagree	19	15.8
Undecided	3	2.5
Agree	32	26.7
Strongly Agree	21	17.5
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 6: The number of learners represented on school boards
Source: Author, 2016

The results in table 6 indicate that the proportion of the respondents who were not for the opinion that the number of learners represented on school boards was adequate was 53.3%, while 44.2% were for the opinion that the number of learners represented on school boards was adequate. On the other hand, only 2.5% were undecided on the opinion. These findings imply that the learners were not represented well on school board in terms of numbers.

Right of Learners	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	42	35.0
Disagree	44	36.7
Undecided	22	18.3
Agree	8	6.7
Strongly Agree	4	3.3
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 7: Right of learners to be represented on school board
Source: Author, 2016

In table7, 71.7% of the respondents negated the idea that learners had the right to be represented on school boards and 10% were for the idea that learners had a right to be represented on school boards, while 18.3% were undecided. This shows that majority of respondents were not for the idea that learners had a right to be represented on school boards.

Learners participation	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	12	10.0
Disagree	20	16.7
Undecided	10	8.3
Agree	44	36.7
Strongly Agree	34	28.3
TOTAL	120	100

Table 8: Learners participation in decision making on school boards
Source: Author, 2016

The findings in table 8 indicates that 26.7% of the respondents were not for the idea that learners participated in decision making on school boards, 8.3% were undecided, whereas 65.0% were for the opinion that learners participated in decision making on school boards. This finding shows that learners participated well in decision making on school boards.

Representation	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	47	39.1
Disagree	41	34.2
Undecided	4	3.3
Agree	8	6.7
Strongly Agree	20	16.7
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 9: Representation on school board is sensitive to special needs
Source: Author, 2016

In table 9 the findings indicates that 73.3% of the respondents were not for the opinion that learners representation on school board was sensitive to special needs, 23.4% were for the opinion that learners representation on school board was sensitive to special needs, while on the other hand 3.3% of the respondents were undecided on the same idea. This means that representation on school board was not sensitive to special needs.

Viable Avenue	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	50	41.7
Disagree	53	44.2
Undecided	4	3.3
Agree	10	8.3
Strongly Agree	3	2.5
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 10: Viable avenue for children representation on school board
Source: Author, 2016

In table 10 the result indicates that 85.9% of the respondents strongly agree that there was no viable avenue for children representation on school board, 11.3% were of the view that there was a viable avenue for children representation on school board while 3.3% were undecided. This finding shows that there wasn't a viable avenue for children's representation on school boards.

Acknowledgement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	38	31.7
Disagree	37	30.3
Undecided	9	7.5
Agree	29	24.2
Strongly Agree	7	7.0
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 11: Members acknowledging children representatives on school boards
Source: Author, 2016

The findings on table 11 were that 62.0 % of the respondents were not of the view that other board members positively acknowledged children representatives on school boards, 31.2% were of the view that board members positively acknowledge children representatives on school boards while 7% were undecided. This means that other board members did not acknowledge children representatives on school boards.

Gender sensitive	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly Disagree	35	29.2
Disagree	47	39.2
Undecided	3	2.5
Agree	11	9.1
Strongly Agree	24	20.0
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 12: Children's representation is gender Sensitive constitutionally
Source: Author, 2016

The result as shown in table 12 the proportion of the respondents were not of the view that children's representation on school boards was a gender sensitive constitutionally were 68.4%, while 29.1% were for the idea that children's representation on school boards was a gender sensitive. Those that were undecided were 2.5%. These results indicate that children's representation on school boards was not gender sensitive constitutionally.

Always	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	41	34.1
Disagree	33	27.5
Undecided	18	15.0
Agree	14	11.7
Strongly Agree	14	11.7
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 13: Learners are always in board meetings from the start to the end
Source: Author, 2016

The findings in table 13 shows that 61.6% of the respondents were not of the idea that learners were always in board meetings from the start to the end, 15.0% were undecided, whereas, 23.4% said that learners were always in board meetings from the start to the end. This result shows that learners were not always in board meeting from the start to the end.

Degree of agreement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	62	51.7
Disagree	21	17.5
Undecided	4	3.3
Agree	28	23.3
Strongly Agree	5	4.2
TOTAL	120	100

Table 14: Learners form part of the school management in public schools
Source: Author, 2016

Results in table 14 highlighted that 69.2% of respondents were not for the opinion that learners formed part of the school management in public primary schools, 3.3% were undecided, and 27.5% indicated that learners formed part of school management in public primary schools. These findings indicate that learners do not form part of the school management in Public Primary Schools.

Learners representation	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly Disagree	37	30.8
Disagree	42	35
Undecided	4	3.3
Agree	12	10.0
Strongly Agree	25	20.9
TOTAL	120	100.0

Table 15: Learners representatives are always consulted on matters affecting them
Source: Author, 2016

The findings in table 15 indicated that 65.8% of the respondents said that learners' representatives were not always consulted on matters affecting them, 30.9% were also for the opinion that learners were always consulted on matters affecting them, but 3.3% of the respondents were undecided. This mean that learners' representatives were not always consulted on matters affecting them.

5. Discussions of Results

The major opinions towards children representation on school board was not taken seriously. This was evident when an average of 63.9% of the respondents affirmed that children's government was not well represented, whereas 27.5% were for the idea that children's government was well represented on school boards. These results did not concur with the provision of the Education Act of 2013 that advocates for inclusion of learners on school boards to represent others and more so guarantees the right of representation. The findings on involving learners in decision making (65%) concur with what the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of Children provides regarding the best interest of the child being of paramount importance and this agrees with Wango, (2010) who made observation that there were ways which the government could use in alleviating underlying issues that render schools child – unfriendly such as insecurity. Involving learners in decision making is one of the avenues of rendering schools child-friendly as argued by Nyambura, Karuga and Serem, (2014) who highly embrace an idea of agents of change to improving academic standards and enhancement of quality in line with Education for All and Universal Primary Education Charter where children are factored as agents of change. This agrees with Kotter, (2010) who argued that children representatives should be given opportunities to see by

themselves the complexity of issues discussed during board meetings, where learners form part of the school management in public schools and there is need to also involve them in making decision so that they feel part and parcel of the board even though they are ex-officio provided for by the Education Act of 2013.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of the study indicate that children are represented on school boards as shown by 54.3% of the respondents; however, the right of learners to be represented on school boards was not received well by the respondents as indicated by 71.7%. This is due to the fact that learners did not have a viable avenue for children representation. The findings further indicated that members never acknowledged children representation on school boards. Finally, the learners did not form part of the school management in public schools. The results show that learners played little or no role in reinforcing timelines in public primary schools in central division. This was evident by majority at 64.3% noted that there was lack of working children forums. The other findings showed that 85.3% of learners strongly disagreed and disagreed that learners were mandated to be watchdogs of time in schools and learners were not allowed to participate in reinforcing time in schools.

7. Recommendations

- Children should be provided with a viable avenue for representation, a part from the board meetings.
- A lot of sensitization should be made on all school boards, to create awareness on having children representatives on school boards.
- The study further recommends that children with special needs should also be considered to be represented on school boards.
- The researcher recommends that the Non-Governmental Organizations to support the government in the implementation of issues regarding the children, who now seem not considered in terms of promoting of children's government and so implies that the implementing bodies do not perform their duties as expected.
- The study recommends that the government through the ministry of education should ensure that the schools have proper guidelines on children representation in Schools. As well, the rules and regulation should be standard across all the schools.
- The study finally recommends that the government should setup a committee to survey the children representation, especially when enacting laws that affect the children. All stakeholders should be involved.

The researcher recommends that further research be carried out on the wider Turkana County instead of just concentrating on a Sub County to get vast knowledge on the influence of children's representation on promotion of children's government. There is need for future researchers to incorporate private primary schools in this field of study so that the findings broadly capture all the children.

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