

Awareness of School Management Committee Members on their Contributions on Improving Students' Academic Performance in Primary Schools in Rorya District

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Abstract: *The study focus was to find out the awareness of the SMCs members on their contributions, to determine the effectiveness of the Schools Management Committee's in fulfilling their contributions in primary schools in Rorya district. A case study research design and qualitative research approach was used in the current study. The targeted population for this study include head teachers, Schools Management Committee's chairpersons, academic teachers, teachers and parents who form different Schools Management Committee in Rorya district. Sample size for this study was 65 respondents. Simple random techniques and purposive sampling techniques was used in selection of respondents. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used in data collection. The collected data were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The study's findings emphasize the selection of SMC members through democratic voting during parents' meetings and their role in addressing challenges that hinder school performance. It underscores the importance of better training and capacity-building for SMC members and highlights their reliance on policy guidelines for decision-making. Recommendations include providing training, increasing awareness, and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of responsibilities and government policies to enhance SMCs' contributions to education.*

Keywords: School Management Committee, Students Academic Performance, and Primary Schools

1. Introduction

The provision of quality education is a complex undertaking, necessitating efficient resource management to achieve educational goals (Adeolu, 2013). In recent years, many developing countries have shifted towards school self-determination, empowering elected or appointed school governing bodies like school councils, management committees, and governing boards (Winkler & Yeo, 2007). This decentralization mirrors global trends in public service delivery reforms (Faguet, 2014) and enables local communities to have a direct influence on education outcomes.

In Nigeria, active School Management Committees (SMCs) have been found to be crucial in creating positive school environments that enhance student attendance, motivation, and participation in academic and extracurricular activities (Sokoto State Government, 2017). In Ghana, SMCs contribute to a conducive learning environment, effective resource management, and improved school-community relations (Abreh, 2017). In Kenya, SMCs serve as vital channels for communication among teachers, parents, and school administration, fostering collaboration and collective action (Njeri, 2013).

In Uganda, SMCs play a pivotal role in engaging stakeholders to improve teaching and learning resources, bridging the gap between educational institutions and the community (Tabu, 2020). In Tanzania, SMCs are trustees under educational laws, shaping the educational trajectory, promoting ownership among local stakeholders, and enhancing accountability and adaptability (Longino, 2019).

These committees are meticulously composed and organized into sub-committees for efficient school administration.

SMC members actively contribute to decisions on budget allocation, resource acquisition, infrastructure, and discipline, asserting their influence over the institutional trajectory (Masue, 2016). Effective communication and engagement with stakeholders are essential for SMC success (URT, 2018). Additionally, SMCs' impact on students' academic performance is tangible, reflected in external examination results (Hakielimu, 2017a).

In Rorya District, Tanzania, challenges persistently hinder students' academic performance in primary schools, prompting an investigation into the contributions of SMCs (Chuha, 2018). The study aims to find out the awareness of SMCs members on their contributions on improving students' academic performance in primary schools in Rorya district.

2. Research Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology that guided the study. A case study research design and qualitative research approach was used in the current study. The targeted population for this study include head teachers, Schools Management Committee's chairpersons, academic teachers, teachers and parents who form different Schools Management Committee in Rorya district. Sample size for this study was 65 respondents. Simple random techniques and purposive sampling techniques was used in selection of respondents. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used in data collection. The collected data were analyzed by using thematic analysis.

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3. Research Findings and Discussions

The qualitative data which were collected through interview on objective one were coded thematically. Findings of this study are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Thematic Analysis

Verbatim Quote	Theme	Code
<i>At the parents' meeting, we employed the practice of voting to elect committee members who would effectively stand for the interests of others within the SMCs, and after the voting process, only a trio of members were ultimately singled out for selection(CH6)</i>	Selection of SMC Members	SSM
<i>...the aim of formulation of SMCs was to identify different schools' challenges that hindered better school performance and find out solutions ...(HS1)</i>	Goal of Formulating SMCs	GFS
<i>Our SMCs is comprised of smaller subcommittees that collaborate cohesively to enhance the academic achievements of the school by addressing issues pertaining to finances, student discipline, and facilities (HS3)</i>	School Activities Towards Better Performance	SABP
<i>Our team of SMCs is required to carry out their tasks in accordance with established guidelines, which explicitly outline the scope of their responsibilities. This ensures that they operate within predefined limits and fulfill their duties accordingly (CH1)</i>	Working as per Stipulated Guidelines	WSG
<i>By referring to the education policy we, as SMCs, analyze the diverse roles played by education stakeholders. This help us in providing awareness to different stakeholders on their roles towards improving the performance of students in our schools (CH8)</i>	Policy Guidelines and Decision Making	PGDM

Source: Research Data (2023)

In finding out the awareness of SMCs in their contributions, the study focused in finding out whether SMC members knew their contributions and how they use their contributions in influencing academic performance. The study has revealed different awareness as discussed here under.

3.1 Selection of SMC members

One of the awareness of SMC members revealed by the study was how SMC members are obtained. During an interview a respondent said:

At the parents' meeting, we employed the practice of voting to elect committee members who would effectively stand for the interests of others within the SMCs, and after the voting process, only a trio of members were ultimately singled out for selection(CH6)

The results indicate that in primary schools, committee members for SMCs are selected through a voting process during parents' meetings, with these members representing the interests of the SMCs. This approach promotes a democratic and inclusive decision-making structure, allowing parents to participate in school governance. However, the findings reveal that only a limited number of committee members are ultimately chosen, suggesting a deliberate effort to maintain a small committee size for efficient decision-making.

This aligns with a study by Adong (2018) in Uganda, which found that SMCs' awareness of their roles led to improved academic performance. In contrast, research by Bhattacharya and Sahoo (2015) in India highlighted a lack of awareness among SMC members about the importance of School Development Plans, posing a significant challenge to educational governance. A study in Ghana also echoed this lack of awareness, indicating a global pattern of hindered SMC involvement due to limited knowledge about their roles.

3.2 Goal of formulating SMC

Another awareness revealed by SMC members was their understanding on the government goals of formulating SMCs in primary schools. Some interviewed respondents explained how they use to organize other stakeholders so as to reach high performance in their schools. During an interview a respondent revealed that:

... the aim of formulation of SMCs was to identify different schools' challenges that hindered better school performance and find out solutions ... (HS1)

The findings underscore the crucial role of SMCs in educational institutions, emphasizing their purpose in identifying and addressing challenges that impede school performance. SMCs are instrumental in pinpointing a wide range of issues, from administrative to curriculum-related concerns, and they are not only responsible for recognizing these challenges but also for devising effective solutions.

These findings align with Kumar's (2015) study on SMCs in government middle schools in Kullu, India, which highlighted challenges such as the failure to ensure quality education, limited capacity of SMC members, and their non-participation in school development planning. Addressing these challenges could potentially lead to improved academic performance in primary schools.

3.3 School Activities for Better Performance

Another SMCs awareness revealed by the study was their awareness on the different activities performed in schools for better performance of students and schools in general. To allocate other school resources available in their schools, participating in creating conducive school environment for learning, participating in selection of proper assessment of tools, strict control of school discipline, encouraging food availability in schools as well as ensuring guidance and counseling sessions in schools. During interview a respondent responded:

SMCs is comprised of smaller subcommittees that collaborate cohesively to enhance the academic achievements of the school by addressing issues pertaining to finances, student discipline, and facilities (HS3)

The findings emphasize the organizational structure of SMCs, which are divided into smaller committees working collectively to enhance the school's academic performance. These subcommittees address specific challenges related to finance, discipline, and facilities, aiming to improve the overall learning environment systematically. This approach involves each subcommittee focusing on distinct concerns but collaborating as a cohesive unit to achieve the broader goal of elevating academic standards.

This cooperative effort aligns with Onger (2015) study on boards of management in Kenya, which found that some committees were not effectively involved in financial management and curriculum matters, and Michaiel, Rotich, and Kiprop (2014) study, which observed limited understanding of educational matters beyond budgeting among SMC members. These studies collectively suggest that SMCs, despite their intent to improve educational outcomes, often struggle due to their limited awareness of their comprehensive responsibilities.

3.4 Working as Per Stipulated Guidelines

Another revealed SMC awareness were their understanding in preparing and effectively use of school legal documents such as school by-laws and financial documents. The collected data shows that, most SMC understood the importance of having formal documents which give direction on how schools activities should be performed as well as mentioning the responsible person. During interview, a respondent reported that:

Our team of SMCs is required to carry out their tasks in accordance with established guidelines, which explicitly outline the scope of their responsibilities. This ensures that they operate within predefined limits and fulfill their duties accordingly (CH1)

These findings emphasize the necessity for a group of Subject Matter Coordinators to adhere to specified guidelines that dictate the manner in which they should execute their tasks. These guidelines not only provide direction for their actions but also define the extent of their duties. This framework ensures that the SMCs' activities remain within predetermined boundaries, guaranteeing the proper fulfillment of their obligations within the defined scope.

These findings concur with the study by Shemahonge (2012) in Shinyanga district on contributions of SMCs on improving quality education which revealed that awareness, training and fully involvement of the SMCs members in decision making, in monitoring rules and regulations and implementation of quality education can improve high quality outcome in primary education. Despite such effort by SMC, the Village Executive Council does not take action. Hence these schools' academic performance becomes very

low. The findings concur with the Act number 1 of 2018 which clearly stipulated the guidelines to be strictly observed by all SMCs. Hence, the effective use of legal documents controlled cases of indiscipline in schools, increased accountability of all stakeholders.

3.5 Policy Guidelines and Decision Making

Another awareness revealed from SMC was their respect in using policy guidelines when making decisions. They acknowledged the policies to give them directions on how to identify, select and plan for school matters. The study revealed two active policies commonly used in primary schools.

During an interview a respondent stated that:

By referring to the education policy we, as SMCs, analyze the diverse roles played by education stakeholders. This help us in providing awareness to different stakeholders on their roles towards improving the performance of students in our schools (CH8)

The findings suggest that SMCs are utilizing education policies and circulars from 2014 to gain insights into the roles of education stakeholders. By examining these documents, SMCs aim to understand the various contributions of stakeholders in the education system, which helps them raise awareness among these stakeholders about their responsibilities in improving students' academic achievements.

This approach empowers SMCs to foster collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders, aligning with Dickens (2022) study, which emphasizes the central role of SMCs in effective planning, coordination, organizing, and communication of school strategies to enhance quality education. Policy guidelines ensure SMCs' accountability, ultimately improving school performance when followed diligently.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study findings reveal important aspects of SMCs and the awareness of their roles. SMC members are selected through democratic voting during parents' meetings. However, most of the times, the selected members are standard seven leavers who often have negative attitude towards school administration. As such, collaboration with teachers becomes a challenge as they discharge their duties.

School Management Committees (SMCs) play a pivotal role in identifying and addressing challenges that hinder school performance, emphasizing the need for better training and capacity-building for members. Additionally, SMCs rely on policy guidelines for decision-making and stakeholder engagement, highlighting the importance of equipping them with knowledge about government policies. To enhance SMCs' contributions to academic performance in primary schools, it is recommended that training of these members should be provided in order to increase awareness, and ensure that members have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities and Government's guidelines. The policy

makers should review article number 1 of 2018 by revealing demarcation of powers between SMC members and teachers to avoid collision of interests and the concerned authorities should oversee whether the SMCs are selected as per laid down criteria for the aim of improving students' academic performance.

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