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Effective Communication and Financial Management in Secondary  
Schools in Meru County, Kenya



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## Effective Communication and Financial Management in Secondary Schools in Meru County, Kenya

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** To assess the influence of effective communication on financial management in secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

**Methodology:** The study adopted descriptive research design to collect data from 389 secondary schools in Meru County. The respondents were 389 principals and 389 senior teachers. Simple random sampling method was used after the sample size of the schools was obtained by determining 30% of the population. This resulted to 117 principals and 117 senior teachers in 117 secondary schools. The study collected quantitative data through use of questionnaires. The pilot testing was done in Isiolo county where 10% of the sample size was used to determine the pilot population. Reliability was tested through the use of Cronbach alpha while content, criterion and construct validities were determined as well. Descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages and mean were provided whereas Pearson correlation was used to test the hypothesis of the study. The presentation of the results was done through Tables and explicit explanations was provided.

**Results:** The results revealed that 181(95%) respondents on mean of 4.68 and 179(84%) respondents on mean of 4.42 that decisions made were stronger and improved productivity among staff due to effective communication respectively. However, 158(74%) respondents failed to ascertain that the school did not provide updated information to stakeholders. The Pearson correlation coefficient  $r=0.572^{**}$  at  $\alpha < 0.000$  and 99% significance level. This meant that there was a positive influence since the Pearson correlation value in both cases were less than 1 and significance level less than 0.05, hence rejected the null hypothesis by concluding that effective communication had significant influence on financial management in secondary schools.

**Unique contribution to theory, policy and practice:** There were weaknesses in the manner in which principals were communicating information to stakeholders, largely because of capabilities and inefficacies in some cases. Further, there was less communication to staff on various matters as it ought to be. This left room for staff to make false conclusions and spread the same to others as ostensibly coming from the management. It is the recommendation of the study that the principals should put measures to ensure systems are duly updated to foster efficiency. Further the management should come up with schedules of meetings on time so as to allocate effective timelines for communication purposes.

**Keywords:** *Effective Communication, Financial Management, Secondary Schools, Meru County, Kenya.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Effective Communication is a skill of ensuring that the actual intended message is conveyed in the right channel towards the recipients who then proceed to act in accordance to the instructions of the message (Ministry of Education-Ethiopia, 2020). Types of effective communication include robust decision making, increased productivity, fast problem resolution, stronger workflow and developed relations with stakeholders (Global Fund, 2017; MOE, 2019). Robust decision-making entails reliable process of coming to an agreement regarding various issues such as finances, academics, management and discipline (OECD, 2022).

Increased productivity entails ensuring that streams of income, job performance and general administration performance is improved (Public Policy Institute of California, 2022). Fast problem resolution is the process of increasing effectiveness of coming up with answers when encountered with an issue (Rand Corporation, 2019). Stronger workflow entails the ability of having reliable personnel that can deliver on the assigned tasks (UNESCO, 2019). Developed relations with stakeholders include the ability of the school to be connected with the society at large in terms of educational and other matters (US Department of Education (2021a). An effective communication proficiency from the principal should be open, transparent, concise and compassionate (Muyanga & Phiri, 2021; Rand Corporation, 2019).

Financial management is considered as the ability to control and developing clear expenditure systems that support the establishment of the organizations towards achieving its desire goals. In a secondary school, the relevance of management of funds is promoted to support the learning process. It is therefore desirable to enhance effective communication structures that provide information to the relevant stakeholders on the progress of financial management (Muyanga & Phiri, 2021). The concern for effective communication in a secondary school has been a topic of discussion particularly from a global, regional and local perspective.

According to Public Policy Institute of California (2022), poor communication systems are a major contributory factor towards failed financial information sharing in California schools. This has lengthened the decision-making process hampering the learning process. In Europe, Bushra et al. (2022) noted that there have been strained relationships due to inefficiencies caused by lack of feedback mechanism in a secondary school set-up. Furthermore, In India, increased miscommunication risks from the senior education officials have caused financial reporting errors leading to losses of public funds.

Regionally, the running of secondary schools in a nation such as South Africa, were reported by (Africa Union, 2021; Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2021) to be costly, attributed to lack of streamlined financial management processes. In Nigeria, poor communication structure has contributed to poor customer service, which has been a direct consequence of inefficient expectation management (Obiekwe et al., 2021).

Locally, Akala (2022) found out ineffective communication system had resulted to operational inefficiencies in dispensation of essential services to the secondary school stakeholders. Further,

overreliance of non-digitalized methods of communication increased relying of messages and obtaining feedback.

Effective Communication is a skill of ensuring that the actual intended message is conveyed in the right channel towards the recipients who then proceed to act in accordance to the instructions of the message (Ministry of Education-Ethiopia, 2020). Types of effective communication include robust decision making, increased productivity, fast problem resolution, stronger workflow and developed relations with stakeholders (All Africa, 2021). This study will assess the influence of effective communication on financial management in secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Equitable access to education requires funding from various sources to support the learning process. Notably, quality measures established to manage the finances is required for accountability and transparency reasons. Therefore, this means that senior management should have reliable sources of revenue and also manage efficiently the available funds for effective running of the secondary schools (Bagine et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, delayed release of funds from Ministry of Education on time has force radical financial management decision that involve re-direction of available funds to support urgent needs such as provision of food and recruitment of teachers (Omondi, 2021). Diverse secondary schools' operations are typically hampered by financial delays (Brooking, 2022). The school administrators therefore rely on their skills to manage financial reserves till funds are provided by the government and school fees.

Utilization of such skills by poorly trained administrators leads to inefficiencies on expenditure patterns resulting to difficulties in settling debt of food, stationery and other essential services from the suppliers (UNHCR, 2021).

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

To assess the influence of effective communication on financial management in secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

### **1.4 Hypothesis**

H<sub>01</sub>: Effective communication had no statistically significant influence on the financial management in secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

Two factor theory was proposed by Herzberg (1959). It states that certain distinguished factors can cause fulfillment while a few other factors can prompt disappointment in the places of work. A principal communicates effectively in all available mediums like exemplary customer service experience to reach out to the financiers and other stakeholders such as partnering with student's families and teachers (European Commission, 2022). Effectiveness in communication has

attributes that ensures that the principal offers and let the concerned people such as teaching and non-teaching staff to know the strategic solutions that could be applied when solving finances related issues, thereby motivating them to work hard. This partnership could lead to stronger relationships, increased productivity, stronger workflow and fast problem solving among the staff and other stakeholders in the school.

Therefore, principals are able to communicate effectively to the concerned parties as a way of enhancing trust and confidence among the various stakeholders interested in financial management systems (Gisore et al., 2022). For example, a principal could think of incorporating the use of QuickBooks in accounting which is communicated to various parties such as accountants, teachers and other interested parties. The principals then invest financial resources in acquiring the software and training staff to use the new innovation. When implemented in managing finances, it would be easier to get financial reports such as statement of affairs, cash flow, income statements, school fees balances, invoices, and creditors reports at request (International Growth Center 2020). This will eventually increase the confidence of the stakeholders that there were slim chances of cooking books of account to reflect the wishes of the management since there is double entry in every transaction.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

Globally, Saraih (2022) examined the communication patterns and channels that Malaysian secondary school implemented. Being a case study design, data was collected in form of interviews from 4 principals and 12 teachers from a total of four sampled high schools that had high performance. The study by Saraih (2022) made a revelation that most principals used digital communication methods such as use of social media and main stream media (television adverts) to communicate to stakeholders on important events such as upcoming fundraising events as a way of finding a fast solution to a financial need. Additionally, the school principals used emails to communicate on financial reports with donors and sponsors as a way of developing relations with them. However, Saraih (2022) did not include other high schools that were not high performers creating a gap to ascertain the methods that their principals were using that did not seem to yield results. In addition, Saraih (2022) did not explore on non-digital communication patterns.

In Bloomington- America, Barber (2020) conducted a study that assessed how urban middle school's administrators and teachers were communicating. The main issue was ascertaining what was communication, how it was done and its effectiveness. School principals and their deputies were interviewed while teachers answered the questionnaires. According to Barber (2020) the review figured out that the most widely recognized method for communication aspects used by principals included emails, newsletters, face to face, text messages and memos. Nevertheless, in relation to financial management which is the main concern of the study, the study complained that urban middle schools' administrators who were also referred to as principals hardly gave any formal feedback on issues raised on expenditure of finances. This left the stakeholders in the dark and developed lack of trust issues since their questions remained unanswered. Nevertheless, Barber (2020) did not include rural middle schools in the study.



Regionally in Nigeria, Owan et al. (2021) explored on how the communication from principals on management of funds related with the community in and out of the 271 public high schools in Cross River State. The study used an approach of structural model to emphasis on this relationship. Owan et al. (2021) utilized a sample of 1545 people (271 principals, 396 deputies, and 336 teaching staff, and 542 Parents ‘Teachers’ Association leaders) who answered the questionnaires, held group discussions and undertook various interviews. It was discovered that most principals communicated effectively with community leaders in their mother tongues, implemented their suggestions and setting meetings to discuss various issues affecting the school. However, the principals underutilized communicating various financial practices which kept the community in and out of the school at dark on what was happening. The financial practices that were not being communicated included usage of funds on projects, audit committee reports findings on school funds, and book keeping details. As a result, this strained the relationship between the community and the principals of high schools.

From the point of view of the principals, as long as they presented the financial statements on the expenditure, they did not owe community at large any further explanation. According to Owan et al. (2021), most of people who formed the community did not have any financial background to understand on how to interpret the financial reports hence raising suspicion of funds of the school. The study therefore recommended that more policies should be put into place to create a window of allowing the community to get a chance of the interpretation of the various financial reports when needed. But Owan et al. (2021) did their study in just one state which was Cross River State hence the need to expand the study to other states and probably even other nations such as Kenya.

In relation to financial management, Muyanga and Phiri (2021) found out that when the principals who were the source, communicated a message clearly on various budgeting needs, implementation and monitoring processes through formal meetings, emails and phone calls, the junior staff such as accountants who were receivers were able to make financial decisions quicker which improved productivity. In addition, when the principals communicated effectively on any financial concerns such as on late salaries, teachers were able to trust them since they feel that the management respects them to notify them on any upcoming short-comings. The study by Muyanga and Phiri (2021) used the same questionnaires to all respondents irrespective of their job rank. That is both the management and junior staff hence not giving the senior management a chance to give more information since they were more knowledgeable on the subject.

Locally, Gisore et al. (2022) evaluated on how student’s discipline had improved as a result of the principals’ skills in communication at government secondary schools that were not boarding in West Pokot. A total of five hundred and ninety-three teachers and students were sampled using simple random and purposive methods respectively. The study interviewed teachers and let the students answer questionnaires as well as analyzing various school documents. The study by Gisore et al. (2022) found out that most principals in West Pokot allowed open door policy between the management and the students in case they would wish to air out their concerns; teachers promoted positive communication structure on the benefits of good discipline; most principals

used media channels such as messages, phone calls and emails to communicate to teachers and other staff on discipline issues.

Other forms of communication channels reported included school assembly and notice boards. In relation to financial management, in addition, Gisore et al. (2022) insinuated that once discipline of the students had improved due to effective communication from the principals, the school wasted less resources such as unnecessary costs incurred from damages caused by indiscipline cases like strikes; and there was value for money since students were prompt in reporting any indiscipline student cases and teachers who have failed to attend classes yet they have been paid hence improved relations between the students and management. However, it was noted that Gisore et al. (2022) had not included principals and their deputies in the methodology but only five hundred and ninety-three teachers and students. Interestingly, the results from the principals and their deputies were presented by the study.

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design to collect data from 389 secondary schools in Meru County. The respondents were 389 principals and 389 senior teachers. Simple random sampling method was used after the sample size of the schools was obtained by determining 30% of the population. This resulted to 117 principals and 117 senior teachers in 117 secondary schools. The study collected quantitative data through use of questionnaires. The pilot testing was done in Isiolo county where 10% of the sample size was used to determine the pilot population. This resulted to 12 secondary schools where 12 principals and 12 senior teachers were included through simple random method. Reliability was tested through the use of Cronbach alpha while content, criterion and construct validities were determined as well. Descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages and mean were provided whereas Pearson correlation was used to test the hypothesis of the study. The presentation of the results was done through Tables and explicit explanation provided justifying through comparison with past results. Confidentiality was ensured by not allowing the respondents to provide their personal details or sign the questionnaires. This was to protect their identity and promote ethical research process.

## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 Reliability Statistics

A pilot test was done in 12 secondary schools where 12 principals and 12 senior teachers were issued with the questionnaires to ascertain its reliability. The Cronbach alpha coefficient value is underpinned in Table 1.

**Table 1:** *Reliability Results*

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
Questionnaire	.932	24

According to the results, the questionnaires attracted a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.932. This proved that it was more than 0.7 hence considered reliable. This was because Nikmard et al. (2023) noted that when the coefficient is less than 0.7, the questionnaire was considered unreliable and when above 0.7, it indicated that it was reliable.

#### 4.2 Response Rate

A total of 234 questionnaires were issued to the respondents in this study. Their responses are given in Table 2.

**Table 2:** *Response Rate*

	Sampled	Returned Questionnaires	Percentage
Principals	117	101	86.3%
Senior Teachers	117	112	95.7%
Total	234	213	91%

It is noted that there were 101(86.3%) principals and 112(95.7%) senior teachers that were able to return completely filled in questionnaires. This was a total of 213(91%) responses signifying the study was a success. This is because, Booker et al. (2021) pointed out that a response of more than 70% was considered excellent and adequate to represent the entire population.

#### 4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Financial Management

The financial management status of the secondary school was measured through considering rate of return, operating ratio and cash yield for the past 5 years (2019-2024). The results are in Table 3.

**Table 3:** *Descriptive Statistics of Financial Performance*

Financial Indicators	Mean
Rate of Return	4.33
Operating ratio	3.24
Cash yield	2.64

The results in Table 3 indicate that the rate of return had a mean of 4.33; operating ratio had a mean of 3.24, while cash yield had a mean of 2.64. This revealed that despite the overall increased rate of return, the cash yield from the operations of the secondary schools was low. This could have been caused by transition of curriculums and increased cost of living.



#### 4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Effective Communication

Effective Communication had indicators such as stronger decision making, increased productivity, fast problem solving, steadier workflow, and stronger relationships with stakeholders. The study gathered data through questionnaires whose results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** *Descriptive Statistics of Effective Communication-Principals and Bursars*

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
<b>N=213</b>						
There is stronger decision making especially since right financial information on school resources has been communicated effectively	0 (0%)	11 (5%)	0 (0%)	34 (16%)	168 (79%)	4.68
The staff are able to increase their productivity since they have a platform to speak out their frustrations to the right audience	0 (0%)	28 (13%)	6 (3%)	28 (13%)	151 (71%)	4.42
The time taken to solve a problem is faster due to easier channels of communication in case of consultation	6 (3%)	51 (24%)	0 (0%)	66 (31%)	90 (42%)	3.89
There is steadier workflow particularly in finance due to timely responses to raise work related queries	0 (0%)	23 (11%)	0 (0%)	100 (47%)	90 (42%)	4.21
The stakeholders believe so much in our school since they are able to access updated information through the school's official communication channels	96 (45%)	62 (29%)	0 (0%)	55 (26%)	0 (0%)	2.74
The management has created a leeway of two-way communication traffic to junior staff.	0 (0%)	17 (8%)	0 (0%)	134 (63%)	62 (29%)	4.16

The results presented in Table 4, indicate that 168(79%) strongly agreed and 34(16%) agreed on a mean of 4.68 that there was a stronger decision making especially since right financial information

on school resources had been communicated effectively. Additionally, 151(71%) strongly agreed and 28(13%) agreed on a mean of 4.42 that the staff were able to increase their productivity since they had a platform to speak out their frustrations to the right audience. The results meant that the school principals had been able to communicate the correct financial situation to concerned stakeholders such as teachers, BOM and also gave them a chance to air out any concern they had with the operations related to finances. Therefore, timely and accurate communication which was also open to criticism through feedback had increased staff productivity in the secondary schools. Similar observations had been made by Imaobong (2019) in Kenya. Imaobong ascertained that the ability of a principal to communicate resulted to higher job satisfaction. The only difference was that it was done in private secondary schools while the current study was done in both private and public secondary schools.

That notwithstanding, 96(45%) strongly disagreed and 62(29%) disagreed on a mean of 2.74 that, the stakeholders believed so much in their school since they were able to access updated information through the school's official communication channels. This meant that the principals' ability to communicate information to stakeholders such as parents, donors, sponsors, teachers and the community was still lagging. This was due to low access to digital devices by stakeholders such as parents; lack of updated contact lists such that the databases used could be sending messages to wrong phone number or emails; and poor connectivity to emails by stakeholders who could be in reserves, hence getting them late. The findings by Katua (2019) revealed that student's discipline was becoming a difficult task especially when the principals could not get in contact with their parents to report various imposed discipline measures such as suspensions due to lack of phone numbers or emails.

Therefore, the results are consistent with the two-factor theory whereby on the one hand, the principals' ability to take into consideration and offer quick solution to the complaints from the teaching staff enabled them get motivated to deliver even more. On the other hand, the shortcoming from the school whereby stakeholders were not reached with information on time caused a setback on the motivation of the junior staff. For example, the disappointment of a teacher not seeing even half of the parents, when they were expecting to see all student's parents during academic clinic days, all due to lack of updating parent's contact list in the database.

#### **4.4.1 Correlational Analysis of Effective Communication and Financial Management**

In testing the relationship between effective communication and financial management, the study had a null hypothesis that effective communication had no significant influence on the financial management in secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. Therefore, the study used Pearson correlational analysis to test the hypothesis as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Effective Communication and Financial Management**

*Pearson Correlation Analysis of Effective Communication and Financial Management*

			<b>Effective Communication</b>	<b>Financial management</b>
Effective Communication	Pearson Correlation	1		.572**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
	N	213	213	
Financial management	Pearson Correlation	.572**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	213	213	

The results presented in Table 5, revealed that the Pearson correlation coefficient was  $r=0.572^{**}$  at  $\alpha < 0.000$  and 99% significance level for. This meant that there was a positive influence since the Pearson correlation value of .572 was less than 1 and significance level less than 0.05. Therefore, the study rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that effective communication had significant influence on the financial management in secondary schools. The results meant that communication was an important element in the management of funds since principals were required through their job descriptions to work with others. Therefore, they needed to inform others on how funds were used and also raise concerns when they suspected misappropriation in the institution. A report by Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (2020) pointed on the relevance of communication between the school heads and the government when organizing and financing of the public schools. On the one hand, it was vital that the government communicates to the principals on things not allowed when managing finances such as misappropriation. On the other hand, it was important that the principals communicate to the government on arising needs in the school that required additional financing.

## **5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1 Summary of the findings**

The results provided revealed that 181(95%) respondents on mean of 4.68 and 179(84%) respondents on mean of 4.42 that decisions made were stronger and improved productivity among staff due to effective communication respectively. However, 158(74%) respondents failed to ascertain that the school did not provide updated information to stakeholders. The Pearson

correlation coefficient  $r=0.572^{**}$  at  $\alpha < 0.000$  and 99% significance level. This meant that there was a positive influence since the Pearson correlation value in both cases were less than 1 and significance level less than 0.05, hence rejected the null hypothesis by concluding that effective communication had significant influence on financial management in secondary schools.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that there were weaknesses in the manner in which principals were communicating information to stakeholders, largely because of capabilities and inefficiencies in some cases. Further, there was less communication to staff on various matters as it ought to be. This left room for staff to make false conclusions and spread the same to others as ostensibly coming from the management.

## 5.3 Recommendations and Contributions of the Study

It is the recommendation of the study that the principals should put measures to ensure systems are duly updated to foster efficiency. Further the management should come up with schedules of meetings on time so as to allocate effective timelines for communication purposes. If the people being communicated to are not reachable, the school should consider options such as sending letters through courier services at discounted rates. The principals should always communicate more often to reduce tension among staff.

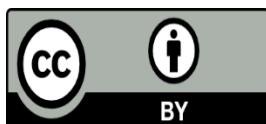
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