

Participatory Governance Anxiety: The Perception of Kenyan Secondary School Principals on Student Participation in School Governance

Emily Nyabisi & Beth Mwelu

Abstract

Students' participation in school governance has been recommended as one of the solutions for the conflict often experienced in schools. However, much research on participatory governance has centered on students and teachers as the key respondents. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the perception of Kenyan secondary school principals on student participation in school governance. The study objectives were: to assess the perception of principals on the emphasis placed on student participation in school governance, to assess the perception of principals on the existing modes of student leadership in schools, and to assess the perception of principals on students' representation in school governance bodies. A mixed methods research design was adopted for the study and the target population was public secondary school principals and deputy principals from the Central Rift region of Kenya. The total sample size of 406 respondents was made up of 202 secondary school principals, 202 deputy principals, and 2 Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association (KSSHA) officials. Sampling was done using cluster, simple random and purposive sampling techniques; and data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics presented in the form of frequency tables and descriptive reports. The findings of the study showed that whereas majority of the school principals agreed that the emphasis placed on student participation in school governance was just right, the principals' approval of student representation in key governance bodies was low. The findings of this study will be useful to policy makers, development partners and capacity building agencies and institutions in education in coming up with policy directives and practices for effective student participation in school governance that will put into consideration the principals' perceptions.

Keywords: Student Participation, Principals' Perception, Participatory Governance, Representation, Student Leadership.

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