

**School Governance and Sustainable
Quality Education in Public Schools in
Kenya**

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Abstract

School governance plays a critical role in shaping the sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya. Governance at the school level involves decision-making processes, policy formulation and implementation, and prudent utilization of resources. A well-structured governance in schools leads to the achievement of infrastructural development as well as improvement in learners' learning outcomes. However, the sustainable quality education has fluctuated over time under various levels of leadership in the education sector, including school management. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of school governance on the sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya. The objectives of the study included: determining the influence of transparency, accountability, stakeholders' engagement, and inclusivity on sustainable quality education in public schools. The study was anchored on the systems theory. Document analysis and qualitative methods were adopted. Qualitative analysis involved thematic analysis of recurring issues relating to school governance and sustainable quality education. The study revealed that public

schools had significantly experienced challenges relating to school governance practices, which included transparency, accountability, stakeholders' engagement, and inclusivity, in the management of schools, thereby affecting sustainable quality education. The study also showed that governance principles needed to be integrated into their school management practice to address sustainable quality education in public schools. The study recommended capacity-building for school leaders to strengthen good governance practices in public schools in Kenya.

KEY WORDS: School Governance, Transparency, Accountability, Stakeholders' Engagement, Inclusivity, Learning Outcomes, Sustainable Quality Education

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

School governance plays a critical role in shaping the sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya. School Governance that are expected to be upheld by school leaders in the management of schools includes; transparency in school operations, accountability in resource utilization, stakeholders' engagement in decision making processes as well as embracing inclusivity in the provision of sustainable quality education. Effective governance practices guarantee prudent

utilization of resources, efficient policy formulation and implementation, and proper engagement of stakeholders in decision making process, leading to the achievement of schools' goals (Arszulowicz, 2025). Despite the efforts put by the government in provision of both financial and human resources as well as issuing directives that guide the operations of the schools, schools continue to face governance challenges that hinder progress in sustainable quality education. The challenges that relate to governance issues include; conflict of interests, leadership inefficiencies, and policy inconsistencies (Kiprop, 2017 & Wainaina, 2021).

The public schools strive to achieve sustainable quality education, which is indicated by a consistent achievement of school performance in terms of learning outcomes. School performance is shaped by the application of principles of good governance by the school leaders. School leaders work for the achievement of learning outcomes through governance structures and processes in achieving sustainable quality education in public schools (Ministry of Education, 2023). The government has introduced deliberate initiatives include, guidelines and policy directives that are issued to school leaders to comply with principles of good governance practices in their execution of their duties and responsibilities. The proper application of these principles of

good governance are intended to enhance infrastructural development and improved learning outcomes. Consistent improvement of infrastructural development and learning outcomes contribute to desirable sustainable quality education. The achievement of sustainable quality education by public schools in a consistent manner through the application good governance by school leaders is considered to be the best practice by management of schools. These initiatives aim at promoting prudent and efficient utilization of school resources, thus integrating sustainability in all concepts school management (Rieckmann, M., & Muñoz, R., 2024). Despite these efforts, challenges such as teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient funding continue to hinder institutions' progress. These challenges have a direct bearing on lack of best practices of good governance such as transparency, accountability, public participation and inclusivity in the provision of education. Research indicates that addressing these challenges requires increased investment in capacity building of school leaders on governance, increased capitation, as well as prompt disbursement of funds to institutions of learning (Muthoka, E., & Waswa, F.,2021).

The school leadership is committed to providing free and compulsory quality basic education is directed by the Ministry of Education in Kenya. The government

has partnered with various education stakeholders, including international education development partners and private entities to finance access and sustainable quality education. These stakeholders demand accountability, as well as the fostering of learners' competencies, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy, which are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is from this end that the government demands good governance practices in the management of government and donor funding. However, studies have highlighted governance inefficiencies in school management as key obstacles to achieving these objectives (Mwangi, 2023).

Strengthening governance structures is essential in overcoming these challenges. Transparency practices, accountability mechanisms, and stakeholder participation are required to ensure sustainable and quality education. The sustainable quality education in public schools can be achieved through improved learners' learning outcomes and improved infrastructural development that ensure a conducive learning environment. Research suggests that well-governed schools demonstrate better learners' performance in terms of safe and conducive infrastructure as well as improved learning outcomes (Likoko, S., Wafula, M., & Amadi, K., 2023). By addressing governance-related challenges,

school management is committed to enhancing and ensuring a sustainable quality education in learning environments.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite significant investments by the government and education development partners, as well as the issuance of policies that guide the management of schools, governance issues continue to be a challenge in improving sustainable quality education. The key governance issues hindering the achievement of learning outcomes and improved infrastructure for learning include: transparency, accountability, and stakeholders' participation. Although the government has increased education spending, reaching 19% of the total government budget in 2020, these funds often fall short of proper utilization (Wario, 2022). The lack of accountability impacts negatively on the efficiency in the use of available resources, thus accelerating disparities in education quality in marginalized communities.

The school management's lack of capacity to address governance issues in schools affects the learning outcomes and infrastructure improvement. The situation is further worsened by a lack of adequate infrastructure, such as classrooms and sanitation facilities, that facilitate a conducive environment. Additionally, governance challenges in schools,

including transparency, accountability and public engagement, undermine efforts to improve sustainable quality education. Weak transparency, accountability mechanisms, lack of stakeholders' engagement, and inclusivity in schools have been identified as significant obstacles to achieving sustainable educational quality. Therefore, this study sought to explore the influence of school governance practices on the sustainable quality of education in public schools in Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

- i) To investigate the influence of transparency in the attainment of sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya.
- ii) To determine the influence of accountability on the achievement of sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya.
- iii) To assess how stakeholders' public participation influences the attainment of sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya.
- iv) To examine the influence of inclusivity in the attainment of sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guide the research;

- i. How does transparency influence the attainment of sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya?
- ii. How does accountability influence the achievement of sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya?
- iii. How does stakeholders' public participation influence the attainment of sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya?
- iv. How does inclusivity influence the attainment of sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on System theory whose proponent was Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968). The theory was relevant to the study since the school management systems operate under governance structures involving all stakeholders on matters relating to governance, policies, leadership and resources management (Nikiforova, 2023). The stakeholders therefore through the governance structures and principles of good governance, ensure that those in

management work coherently with the governance principles. It is assumed that poor governance disrupts the system's efficiency, affecting education quality and sustainability. Proper school governance ensures proper coordination, accountability, and resource management, ultimately lead to better learning outcomes.

2.2 Empirical Studies

2.2.1 Transparency and Sustainable Quality Education in Public Schools

Transparency in school governance is a key determinant of sustainability of quality education delivery. Institutions of learning that embrace transparency are more likely to ensure effective policy implementation, efficient resource utilization, and equitable service delivery (Ministry of Education, 2021). The absence of transparency practices often results in corruption, mismanagement, and ultimately poor learning outcomes (Otengo, E, Oluoch, O., & Mogwambo, V., 2023). Empirical studies show that schools that have adopted transparency practices report higher levels of learner performance and community trust in the education system (Mustoip, Tabroni, Sulaiman, & Marliani, 2023). Principles of good governance have been identified as a key enabler of efficiency in the management of schools, access to real-time data, financial accountability, and informed decision-

making in public schools (Chukwuemeka-Nworu, Chukwuji, & Thompson, 2024).

2.2.2 Accountability and Sustainable Quality Education in Public Schools

School accountability frameworks significantly influence the quality of education and its long-term sustainability. Functional governance in terms of accountability fosters mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, which are critical for sustaining improvements in quality service delivery by the Boards of Management (Ministry of Education, 2023). Poor accountability has been associated with ineffective resource allocation, infrastructure decay, and demotivated staff, which will then hinder learning outcomes (Baffoe Opoku, 2023). In marginalised and Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) regions, inadequate management oversight has exacerbated governance challenges, leading to unequal educational opportunities (Amenya, 2024). Strengthening accountability through increased funding, digital tools, and school leadership capacity-building can contribute to improved school management and academic outcomes (Njenga, 2024; Solomon et al., 2022).

2.2.3 Stakeholders' engagement and Sustainable Quality Education

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) stipulated that public participation is instrumental in the execution of matters

affecting the public. The law states that any state organ or public office shall facilitate public participation on matters that relate to formulation of policies, budgeting and financial management, and decision-making processes. Public participation, therefore, involves stakeholder engagement which plays a pivotal role in sustaining quality education in public schools. Teachers, learners, parents, local communities, and other formal governance bodies such as Boards of Management (BoM) and Parents Associations (PAs) are essential actors in shaping school policies and management practices (Rijal, 2023). Legal provisions on public participation emphasize the need for inclusive decision-making, which enhances both transparency and accountability (Murugi & Mugwe, 2023). However, empirical studies' findings highlight a lack of structured and effective stakeholder participation in many schools, leading to governance inefficiencies and stakeholder dissatisfaction (Murugi & Mugwe, 2023). Establishing collaborative decision-making mechanisms can mitigate conflicts, improve school performance, and support sustainable quality education.

2.2.4 Inclusivity and Sustainable Quality Education

Inclusivity in education refers to the deliberate efforts by the government and development agencies to provide equitable access and learning opportunities to all

learners regardless of their socio-cultural-economic status, gender, disability, or geographic location. Sustainable quality education cannot be achieved without addressing barriers to participation and ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable groups are not left behind (Amenya, 2024). Studies show that schools in ASAL areas often lack infrastructure, trained personnel, and sensitization on inclusive policies that cater for the diverse needs of the learners (Baffoe Opoku, 2023). Research has revealed that inclusivity enhanced through community involvement, inclusive curricula, and policy frameworks that promote universal access to education. Efforts to improve inclusivity are often achieved through capacity-building, funding support, and policy frameworks on equity, sustainability and effectiveness of public education systems (Solomon et al., 2022; Njenga, 2024).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted documentary analysis and a qualitative method to collect information based on thematic areas covered by research objectives. The Qualitative method provided a comprehensive analysis as well as a holistic understanding of governance challenges facing schools and the impact it has on the sustainable quality education and its sustainability (Creswell, J., & Plano Clark, V., 2023). The study used purposive

sampling to select documents that are necessary and relevant to the research objectives. The documents sampled addressed school governance elements: transparency, accountability, stakeholders' engagement and inclusivity. The documentary analysis explored on how school governance practices promote sustainable quality education. The information obtained from documentary analysis related to school governance and sustainable quality education. Qualitative analysis majorly involved thematic analysis to identify recurring school governance issues, stakeholders' perspectives and policy pronouncements (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Ethical considerations involved the acknowledging all the sources of empirical evidence that was used in the study. The researcher also used publicly available documents that were credible and maintained integrity in interpreting the official and scholarly papers.

4.0 RESULTS /FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the findings and discussions of the study aligned with the research objectives and supported by relevant empirical studies.

4.1 Transparency and Sustainable Quality Education in Public Schools in Kenya

The research study findings revealed evidence of public institutions failing to adhere to transparency practices, which is

considered a cornerstone of sustainable quality education delivery. The link between transparent governance and effective implementation of educational policies is paramount in the creation of an enabling environment in any learning institution. The study observed evidence of mismanagement of school resources and dismal academic performance as attributed to poor governance practices.

There is a policy requirement that school leaders are expected to engage themselves in the best practices that involve displaying in school public noticeboards, the records of government capitation funds disbursement to the school, development fund contributions by parents, as well as donor funding to support the school. The school's financial reports are also presented to Parents Annual meetings for accountability purposes. This transparency builds trust among parents and other interested stakeholders and also reduces cases of misappropriation of school financial resources. As a result of confidence attained from proper accountability, stakeholders and the entire community contribute more willingly to the development of school infrastructure such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and sanitary facilities. The availability of these educational facilities leads to the attainment of sustainable quality education. To curtail vested interests among some Boards of Management, schools have adopted an e-procurement

system for school supplies, reducing manual transactions that often led to inflated costs and unfair award of school tenders for the acquisition of goods, services, and works. With real-time access to procurement records, the Board of Management (BoM) and the parents' association can track the procurement processes. This curtails corruption as well as ensuring the timely delivery of learning materials and smooth curriculum implementation, contributing to sustainable quality education.

Mustoip et al. (2023) demonstrated that transparency leads to efficiency in the school operations which are responsible for improved school facilities, motivated teachers and learners, improved learning outcomes, and increased stakeholders trust. Moreover, Chukwuemeka-Nworu et al., (2024) provided robust evidence that best transparency practices in schools include prudent financial utilization and display of amounts and sources of school finances lead to public confidence on the management school. Collectively, the study findings revealed that transparency strongly and significantly influences the attainment of sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya.

4.2 Accountability and Sustainable Quality Education

The policy documents on accountability indicated that school management has established accountability mechanisms

and frameworks to ensure monitoring and evaluation as well as reporting, forming an integral part of sustainable quality education. These frameworks ensure continuous assessment and improvement in service delivery in public schools. Baffoe Opoku (2023) and Amenyah (2024) presented empirical evidence linking poor accountability to mismanagement, resource wastage, and weak infrastructure, particularly in ASAL areas.

The governance principle, which is accountability, spells out the role and responsibility of school leaders in the execution of their duties in the school operations. The research study revealed that most of the school leaders had developed accountability structures that enhanced quality teaching and learning and the improvement of learners' learning outcomes. The school leaders in most schools have signed with Boards of Management and the employer, Teachers Service Commission, the performance contracting, outlining key deliverable indicators like learning outcomes, and infrastructural development which will guarantee sustainable quality education. These are monitored through regular review meetings and reports by the school actors and the management. The study also observed that schools' management had introduced a digital system that identifies and addresses teacher absenteeism and learner truancy, thus improving learners' discipline and performance. Njenga

(2024) and Solomon et al. (2022) showed that capacity building of school leaders on accountability systems in public schools significantly improved the learners' achievement on learning outcomes as well as sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya.

4.3 Stakeholders' Engagement and Sustainable Quality Education

The documentary analysis indicated that an inclusive decision-making process not only builds ownership but also enhances stakeholders' participation in matters relating the management of the school. The involvement of the stakeholders in diverse areas would give them an opportunity to contribute to the schools' development where they are endowed. Stakeholders are instrumental in the development of a school's strategic plan. A strategic plan is a tool of management that a school uses to genuinely engage all the stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, students, and the local community, to outline the strategic objectives and identify all the actors, as well as resource mobilization, to actualize the strategic goals. Stakeholders collectively prioritize the needs of the school, such as a science laboratory, sanitary facilities, and special needs resources. The participatory process strengthens community ownership as well as improving infrastructural development and learners' learning outcomes.

However, the research findings revealed the existence of governance challenges such as inconsistent stakeholders' participation structures, limited stakeholders' influence on decision making, and compromise on school governance practices and their effectiveness in promoting sustainable quality education. Rijal (2023) and Murugi & Mugwe (2023) provide documentary and empirical backing for the critical role of stakeholders in their engagement of school development agenda and governance. The research findings affirmed that stakeholders structured public participation, inclusivity, and collaborative participation models significantly influenced sustainable quality education in public schools.

4.4 Inclusivity and Sustainable Quality Education in Public Schools in Kenya

An inclusive school is where all the learners are afforded education opportunities irrespective of their socio-economic-cultural backgrounds and abilities. The research study revealed that Boards of Management ensure that resources are distributed equitably and that the teachers employ appropriate and inclusive pedagogies, and provide special attention to learners from marginalised communities, enhance learners' enrolment, retention, and significantly improve learning outcomes.

Infrastructural development embraces inclusivity by incorporating the building of ramps, adapting toilets, and providing assistive learning devices that assist learners with disabilities to participate in the learning process. The school leaders retrain teachers and support staff on inclusive education approaches. These efforts lead to increased enrolment of learners with disabilities, improved learning outcomes, and greater community appreciation of inclusive education principles.

Amenya's (2024) and Baffoe Opoku's (2023) documentary and empirical evidence show that without inclusivity, particularly in marginalized and disadvantaged communities, sustainable quality education will be compromised in the institutions of learning. The studies further show how gaps in infrastructure, policy, and trained personnel negatively impact equitable access to inclusive education. Njenga (2024) and Solomon et al. (2022) further illustrate that inclusive education is enhanced through community engagement, adaptable curricula, and targeted policy support. The study findings revealed that interventions directly address systemic exclusion and promote long-term, sustainable quality education.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main aim of the study was to examine the influence of school governance principles: transparency, accountability, stakeholders' engagement, and inclusivity on sustainable quality education in public schools in Kenya. The study established that school governance was integral in shaping consistency in school performance, thus contributing to sustainable quality education. The study also revealed that transparency improves policy implementation, promotes equitable resource allocation, and boosts community trust. Transparency in schools significantly contributed to sustainable quality education through enhanced openness in school operations, reducing the incidence of corruption and inefficient use of resources in public schools. Accountability frameworks enable the monitoring of school performance and efficient service delivery, leading to consistently improved learning outcomes, responsible for sustainable quality education. Accountability mechanisms are essential in driving performance, ensuring proper utilization of resources, and sustainable quality education. The study, therefore, revealed that accountability significantly contributed positively to sustainable quality education in public schools.

Inclusivity ensures equitable learning opportunities for marginalized and vulnerable learners in public schools. The study observed that inclusivity was

realized through equitable distribution of learning resources as well as employing appropriate and differentiated learning and teaching approaches. Inclusivity enhanced access, enrolment, retention, and transition, which significantly improved learning outcomes and further achieved sustainable quality education.

Finally, stakeholders' engagement in decision-making processes strengthens the linkage between schools and communities. Stakeholders are critical since they have a stake or interest in the existence and management of the schools. The study observed that the effectiveness of stakeholders' engagement alleviates the challenges that a school may experience, causing inconsistency in school performance. Without targeted interventions, marginalized learners continue to face systemic barriers that reduce their participation in education. The study, therefore, revealed that inclusivity significantly influenced sustainable quality education in public schools.

The study recommends the following; that there is need to strengthen governance structures in the school to promote transparency in the provision open access information and data on school management, and financial reporting; enhance accountability frameworks through regular monitoring, participatory monitoring and evaluations of school

performance; institutionalize stakeholder engagement by creating stakeholder engagement frameworks to guide the engagement procedures in decision-making processes; and implement inclusive education policies that address the needs of learners with disabilities as well as learners from disadvantaged backgrounds through investing in adaptive infrastructure and curricula; and finally develop capacity building programs targeting school leadership.

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