

The Assessment of Principals Perception on Democratic Governance in Technical and Vocational Colleges (TVC) in Bungoma County, Kenya.

Cosmus Katana¹, Dr. Oroni Nicholas Barasa²

¹Department of Economics, Finance and Accounting, Kibabii University

²Department of Education Planning and Management, Kibabii University

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Abstract: The study is set to examine the Technical and Vocational College (TVC) Principal's perception on democratic governance in public tertiary institutions. The study utilized cross sectional descriptive survey strategy that employed mixed methods approach of inquiry in a sequential procedure. The target population of the study was 54 Principals, trainers, parents and 244 trainees of public technical and vocational institutions in Bungoma, County, Kenya. Data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means and frequencies to summarize data and inferential statistics: regression model, ANOVA and the test were used to test difference between means scores of variables in the study hypothesis. The findings of the study indicated that; there is still need for TVC Principal to be enlightened on how to lead tertiary institutions democratically, opportunities for trainee's participation on tertiary institutions governance. The study recommends that Principals should engender parents' participation in TVC governance. It is anticipated that the findings of the study will inform the ministry of education on training needs of TVC Principals and board of governors with regard to democratic management of tertiary institutions and how to create a democratic culture in their tertiary institutions.

Key Words: Democratic Governance, Principals, Perception, Enhancing, Trainers

I. Introduction

The concept of the democratic colleges has its origins in the writings of John Dewey. Dewey believed that a democratic society was one in which the divisions between groups no matter on what criteria, should be minimized and that shared values, meanings and goals should be maximized (Gordon, M., & English, A. R. (2016). Thus, to achieve a democratically governed society, it is necessary to first have a democratically governed college (Dewey, 1916) as cited by Dworkin (2000) who suggests that the implementation of a democratic college would have implications for the roles and behaviors of administrators and trainers within it.

Many countries are reforming the way colleges are run and looking in particular at the issues of leadership and management (Gunter, H. M., Grimaldi, E., Hall, D., & Serpieri, R. (Eds.). (2016). Democratic college governance is one of the emerging trends in the developed and developing world. According to Gallos and Bolman (2021), states that there is need to rebrand education management for efficient service delivery in the leadership of learning institutions and that superior educational management styles should be considered too as a basic foundation of satisfactory functioning of democracy in colleges.

Research conducted by Grapragasem, Krishnan, & Mansor, (2014), noticed the roles of principals in Malaysia to have been evolving, due to both globalization as well as various policies imposed by the government. In South Africa, the South African college act (SASA) was introduced in 1996 and among other things it makes provision for democratic management and governance of south African colleges through the democratically elected college governance structures that involved all stakeholders in the decision-making process (Sebidi, 2023).

Statement of the problem

The management of colleges in Kenya has faced a number of challenges over the past few years. These challenges have been rampant in areas such as trainees unrest lack of financial transparency, poor results of KNEC and trainer absenteeism in most public institutions (Wandera, 2008). Backman and Trafford (2007) argue that democratic college governance enhances learning as trainees are provided opportunities to maximize their potential. It reduces conflict as the emphasis is on shared decision making and respect

Through this study, principals will be informed on alternative ways of improving democratic practices in their institutions. The findings will help in fostering trainee development by helping them assimilate practices of. It will also boost their academic performance and will aid policy makers in designing policies that will enhance democracy in colleges.

Objective of the study

To establish the challenges Principals face in enhancing democratic Technical, Vocational and Education and Training (TVET) governance in Bungoma county, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

The study was based on three theories of democracy. Benjamin Baber participatory democratic theory which has its roots in Dewey conception of democracy, Thomas J. Sergiovannis theory on the principals’ roles and responsibilities in college-based management of colleges and Iris young theory on inclusion and democracy.

Conceptual Framework

The study adopted a conceptual framework where democratic college governance is itemized as dependent variable while level of democratization in colleges, structures and processes which promote democracy in colleges, principal perception and challenges they face in democratic governance of colleges are the independent variables. While extraneous variables are government policies and board of governors.

II. Literature Review

Challenges Facing College Principals in Enhancing Democratic College Governance

Spreading democracy in a college can be stressful. College principals face mitigating factors. By its very nature democracy challenges old hierarchies and authorities, and the conflicts that may emerge can be hurtful and wearing for administrators (Apple, p. 2022). Further, there are situations, emergencies for instance, where the leader needs to take quick decisions. Under such circumstances, democratic processes are flouted, as Jones (2005) contented, in crises there is no time to hold meetings. This can be perceived wrongly by other stakeholders. Another disadvantage of democratic governance has to do with situations where staff lacks competence, crucial information to make decisions. In such cases, the leader has to monitor and provide constant guidance to staff.

Experts and researchers report the challenges facing the college leaders include, the increasing authentic collaboration with college communities, making the SBM work as pedagogy of empowerment and democracy (Pang, 2008, Gamage, 2006b,1996a, Gamage & Zajda, 2005a, Cranston,2002, Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1988). The principals are also challenged to encourage the involvement and participation of community groups, including industry and commerce. He or she needs to convince the other members of the partnership to arrive at particular decision before instructions can be issued. Establishing a committee structure of the college council consisting of experts and those interested in developing programs for college improvement is another step in the extending the democratic principal of under participation with opportunities to tap the potential of the wider community (Gamage, 1996a;1996e).

Regarding the problems and issues that are confronting the implementation of SBM, researchers reveal that the barriers include poor resources in colleges, lack of professional development for college leaders and confusion on the part of college councils in relation to new roles and responsibilities. There are also difficulties of coordination, lack of decision-making authority, low parental participation, and under funding of education by governments (Gamage &Sooksomchitra, 2004; Mulyasa, 2004; Munn, 2000; Schlegel,2000; Maksymjuk, 2000; Belk, 1998; Hancock,1998; Oswald,1995; Herman & Herman, 1993).

Democracy depends on the participation of people and accordingly democratic colleges require the participation of all stakeholders (Mnube,2009). Stakeholders’ apathy also hinders democratic participation. For instance, a study by Renuka (2012) cited lack of time to attend meetings; transport and communication issues are factors affecting parents’ participation. Relationships between learners and some trainers could also hinder democratic college practices. Democratic colleges move away from traditional, hierarchical power relations towards egalitarian relationships and this comes with challenges thus college principals should work on minimizing them.

To cope with the new challenges confronted by the college leaders within the dramatically changed environments, Gamage (1996a; 197) has proposed a college development model which is shown in the figure below

Challenges	Participatory decision making Multiple ownership of policies Developing loyalty to college
Human Resource Management	Orderly trainee and staff management Staff and trainee development Building trust and confidence
Allocation of Resources	Developing strategic planning Developing global budgeting Prioritizing
Leadership Styles	Transformational,

	Instructional, Situational
Learning Programs	Programs to meet trainee needs Programs for the community Peer and community support
Nontraditional Roles	Collaboration with community Commerce and industry relations Negotiations for services
Governance	College council/board Modified bureaucracy Committee structure
Entrepreneurship	Competitive college improvement Innovative approaches to help College's image and marketing
Empowerment	New participatory structures Delegation and empowerment Theory Y approach to staff
Skills	Inter personal and communication Negotiation and public relations Conflict management and resolution

III. Methodology

Challenges that Hinder Democratic College Governance.

Principals and trainers' responses on challenges that hinder democratic college governance:

Item	Respondents	No.&%	Strongly agree/agree	undecided	Disagree/ strongly disagree	TOTAL
Lack of interest among parents	Principal	No. %	54 59.1%	14 15.2%	24 25.7%	92 100
	Trainer	No. %	36 39.2%	32 34.8%	24 26%	92 100%
Lack of awareness among parents	Principal	No. %	38 41.1%	20 21.1%	34 37.8%	92 100
	Trainer	No. %	52 56.6%	16 17.4%	24 26.1%	92 100
Communication barriers	Principal	No. %	58 63.1%	10 10.9%	24 26%	92 100
	Trainer	No. %	53 57.6%	17 18.5%	22 23.9%	92 100

Lack of support from BOG	Principal	No.	36	33	23	92
		%	39.1%	35.9%	25%	100
	Trainer	No.	49	13	30	92
		%	53.2%	14.2%	32.6%	100

Study findings from the table above reveal that most of the principals 59.1% agreed and strongly agreed that lack of interest among parents hinders Democratic College Governance (DCG). On communication barriers majority of the principals 63.1% agreed and strongly agreed that communication barrier hinders effective democratization of colleges. Communication was also highlighted as a barrier by the trainers as a factor which hinders effective Democratic College Governance as majority of the respondents 57.6% strongly agreed and agreed. It was also established from the trainers that lack of awareness among parents hindered Democratic College Governance as majority of the respondents 56.6% strongly agreed and agreed. It was also established from the trainers that lack of awareness among parents hindered Democratic College Governance as majority of the respondents 56.6% strongly agreed and agreed. The trainer findings also show that lack of support from the BOG hinders Democratic College Governance as of the respondents 53.2% strongly agreed and agreed respectively while 39.1% strongly agreed and agreed. It can therefore be revealed from the above findings that lack of interest among parents, awareness and communication are barriers to democratic college governance in public technical colleges in Bungoma county. According to (Meier,2003) democratic college culture is characterized by a lot of human intervention. Jamali et al., (2006) are in agreement that good teamwork is motivated in college by good leadership and effective communication. Responses from the interviews carried out on two principals of pendo and fanaka technical college on challenges that hinder Democratic College Governance were categorized into the following themes:

Lack of support from parents: the principal of Technical and Vocational Colleges(TVC) complained that most parents do not show up for important meetings despite being notified through text messages and other means of communication. The principal further stated that parents have not taken ownership of their colleges as they should; parent, trainer meetings for example he says gives parents a chance to see what happens in the classrooms but unfortunately most parents do not use the opportunity.

Time: principals stated that the process of consultation is time consuming especially when handling issues with varied opinions or matters which require urgency. Principal of TVC revealed that in some instances he makes unilateral decisions. They stated that delays could impact negatively on the functioning of the college. Woods and Gronn (2009) in support assert that decisions may be delayed substantially and the direction of the organization can be rendered unclear by prolonged debates.

Curriculum: the college curriculum as stated by principal one has no room for democracy to thrive for the learners. They argued that curriculum does not emphasize on trainees centered learning and schedules are very tight and thus timetabling for extra trainee peer learning and personal study remains a challenge.

Training in democratic participation: the TVC principals cited lack of training among stakeholders on their role as active participants of college management. The principal stated that some of the members of the college board did not have an idea of the basic education act. Tsotetsi et-al (2008) argues that training should be done based on needs of their members for effective decentralized and cooperative college governance.

Inferential Statistics

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	. 0.773 ^a	.597	.591	9.209
a. Predictors: (Constant), Assessment of Principals Perception				

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5743.871	1	5743.871	582.277	.000 ^b
	Residual	2258.969	229	9.864		
	Total	8002.840	230			
a. Dependent Variable: Democratic Governance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Assessment of Principals Perception						

The model shows a moderate to strong relationship between the assessment of principals' perceptions and democratic governance, indicated by an R value of 0.773. This suggests that there is a significant positive correlation between how principals perceive democratic governance and how it actually functions in colleges. The R^2 value of 0.597 tells us that approximately 59.7% of the variation in democratic governance can be explained by principals' perceptions. This is considered a moderate explanatory power, meaning that while the model accounts for a good portion of the variation, other factors not included in the model might also be influencing democratic governance.

The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.591 is very similar to the R^2 , indicating that the model holds its explanatory power even after accounting for the number of predictors. This reinforces the reliability of the model in predicting democratic governance based on principals' perceptions.

The standard error of the estimate, which is 9.209, represents the average deviation of the observed values from the predicted values. A smaller standard error would indicate a better fit, and this value suggests moderate variability in the predictions, meaning there is some deviation between what the model predicts and the actual observed outcomes.

The ANOVA table tests the overall significance of the model. The sum of squares for regression is 5743.871, indicating that the model explains a substantial portion of the variation in democratic governance. In contrast, the residual sum of squares is 2258.969, representing the unexplained variance. This difference between the regression sum of squares and the residual sum of squares shows that a significant portion of the variation is explained by the model.

The F-statistic of 582.277 is calculated by dividing the mean square for regression by the mean square for residuals. This high F-value indicates that the model is very effective at explaining the variation in democratic governance. A higher F-value generally suggests a better-fitting model. The p-value (Sig.) of 0.000 confirms the statistical significance of the model. Since this value is well below the typical threshold of 0.05, we can confidently say that the assessment of principals' perceptions significantly affects democratic governance. The p-value indicates that the relationship between the two variables is not due to random chance.

IV. Summary

Democracy is important in so far as providing the citizen of a country the greatest possible measure of freedom and encouragement for the individual to develop his own talent, initiative and moral responsibility (Chand & Prakash, 2007). Dewey (1916) asserts that if individuals are to pursue and establish a democratic way of life, they must be afforded opportunities to learn the meaning of that way of life. They must be afforded opportunities to learn the meaning of that way of life. In other words, a democratic society should afford members of a society freedom of individual developments, self-expression, equality, participation, dialogue and right to be heard.

V. Conclusions

The study findings show that there is still need for college principals to be enlightened or how to lead colleges democratically because they are still in the process of democratizing their colleges and some democratic procedures such as trainee participation in BOG are in the introductory stages thus, they need training on how to involve them meaningfully. Principals viewed themselves as autonomous and flexible in college governance through trainers thought otherwise. Also, most college principals do not interact freely with their trainers though they appreciated the importance of trainers and parents' participation in college governance. It was also clear that most public technical college do not provide opportunities for their trainees to give their view on issues which affect them and they were excluded from key decision-making bodies. It was also concluded that there was no consultation with trainees when formulating college rules and that principals and trainers do not interpret these rules for their trainees. Thus, it can be concluded that meaningful trainee participation in college governance has not taken root as expected.

VI. Recommendations

The ministry of education should develop to policy on education for democracy where college administrators would be trained in order to impact to knowledge, skills and values democracy in their institution. There is need for college administrators especially to colleges principals to implement education policies such as the provision of the basic education act 2012 on college governance, student friendly colleges (SFC) which empower trainees to take part in decision making process in colleges and also provide them with channels they air their grievances. Trainees' council should also be given special training on leadership. College principals should also create opportunities for trainees and staff to meet outside classroom eg organizing sports events, sharing lunch facilities and other recreation areas.

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