The Factors Militating against Effective Functioning of Students' Leadership in Model National Secondary Schools in Kenya.

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Abstract

The study investigated the factors that militate against the effective functioning of students' leadership. An interpretivist research paradigm guided this study. This qualitative study explored how the views of principals, teachers, students and student leaders illuminated the discussion in the broader literature around issues of student leadership, in particular on how schools facilitate the democratic processes of elections and functioning of Student leadership. Fifteen one-hour, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three council students, eighteen non-student councils, three principals and three teachers from the three Model National Secondary Schools. Additionally, three focus group discussions were conducted, comprising six students from each school. This study utilised two non-random sampling: purposive and convenience sampling. The study concluded that leadership functioning is faced with a myriad of challenges. Most of these challenges, I can argue, relates to skills and knowledge deficits among school principals. These principals have found it difficult to let go of their past practices and adopt new ones that will be consistent with the new realities of 21st-century leadership and management. The study recommended that to obtain a supportive environment for effective functioning of student leadership; there should be intensive training provided by the employer, the Ministry of Education. Ministry of Education needs to develop training guidelines for student leadership to build the capacity of student leaders.

Key Terms: Students' leadership, interpretivist research paradigm, democratic processes of elections.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For approximately twenty years, there has been a global shift within education policy towards the incorporation of student leadership in the management of schools (Walsh, 2008). Internationally and nationally, policy has tremendously expressed the intent to encourage students to take greater ownership of their learning, play a greater role within their schools' decision-making and change processes, and, ultimately, play an active role in the process of democracy and civic society structures. This reflects the longstanding recognition, indicating how schools are ideal institutions that can transmit social norms like participation and civic leadership toward developing the skills and knowledge needed to meet these norms (Walsh, 2008). It also follows an age-long policy tradition framing schools as institutions serving a set of accepted public purposes, which include developing young people's ability to participate in schools and communities as citizens and as leaders. These policies include Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that clearly states that when adults make decisions affecting children, children have the right to speak about their thoughts on what should happen and consider their opinions. Nationally, the constitution of Kenya of 2010, has a robust chapter on the bill of rights that underscores equality and freedom from discrimination, freedom of association and political rights (Kenya Law Report, 2010). The Kenya Basic Education Act of 2013 has emphasised students' place in the school leadership domain (the Republic of Kenya, 2013). The inclusion of student representative in the school board of management, as outlined in Section 56, sub-section 1 (g) of the Basic Education Act of 2013, clearly indicates the significance of student councils in managing school affairs. Being part of the school board, students are theoretically involved in developing a code of conduct for learners, management of discipline, sports, classroom and other delegated responsibilities. Throughout the thesis, I use the term 'student' and 'learners' interchangeably, to refer to school going young people attending secondary schools. These learners are still at the school level, and when they complete their studies, they move on to higher education institutions of various forms.

The Kenya secondary education system has undergone a tempestuous process characterised by student unrest, examination cheating, and the burning of schools for the last one decade (MOEST, 2000). A study by the UNICEF and the Ministry of Education in Kenya revealed that student participation in the daily running of the school was directly linked to better academic performance and less school strikes (Karanja, 2010). Students are not just the beneficiaries of the school programmes, but they are co-interested parties in raising the quality of their academic programmes. According to Karanja (2010), a major limitation for effective and meaningful students' participation in decision making has been the lack of appropriate and clear legal and institutional structures for proper operationalisation of student engagement in school governance. However, there has been a change with the creation of Student Councils in secondary schools and with the new policy implementation, the Kenya Policy on Education and Training of 2012.

Student councils are the governing structures established in secondary schools by an act of parliament where students have been given a voice to make decisions and be heard (ROK, 2013). In Kenya, however, policies do not clearly stipulate how students should be incorporated in school governance in line with democratic principles. Most African countries inherited colonial, authoritarian school structures, through systems that encouraged unquestioning loyalty to authority (Sifuna, 2000). The colonial state in Africa did not only want an

'educated native,' but a 'loyal, educated native as well' (Sifuna, 2000). One aspect of the inherited school structure and organisation that has been heavily criticised by civil societies (Manor, 2004) as contravening democratic values, is the inherent characteristics of the prefect system within the emerging student leadership system. Most secondary schools in English speaking African countries have some form of prefect system, where the duty of the prefects normally is to act as general agents of social control, checking lateness, reporting misbehaviour to teachers, organising the tidiness of the school compound, and generally acting as messengers of the staff (Sifuna, 2000,). It will seem as though the prefect system is aimed at satisfying the authorities rather than the student population. In several studies done on student governance in Kenya, it was found that student leadership functioned as the school administration extended arm and served the interest of administrators rather than the students. The prefect system is the main structure used in students' participation in decision making in Kenya, while teachers include students in decision making to mainly encourage compliance rather than anything else (Jwan & Ongondo, 2000).

It was also found that teachers often handpicked student leaders, and this resulted to resentment in the rest of the school body (Nyabisi & Mwelu, 2018). In a democratic and participatory school management, there should be in a school a student council consisting of representatives from all classes, who should be elected by students themselves (ROK, 2012). In any school, an effective students' council should have an "executive committee with an elected president and vice president, and its function should be to organise co-curricular, cultural and social activities within the school" (Chaube & Chaube, 1995). However, since student councils were instituted, we as researchers, do not know much about the practices of such student councils. We do not know how they are elected into their positions. School leaders in schools, including Model National Secondary Schools, have been tasked with the responsibility to ensure that student councils are elected democratically and that they fulfil their legislated mandate of representing student constituency. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the factors that enable or militate against students' leadership's effective functioning.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Student Leadership: Student leadership has emerged as a voice that constantly needs the attention of the school leadership. The term Student leadership recognises the social justice principle and practice that give students an opportunity to participate in the affairs that concern them and the community within which they function. Miller and Nadler (2006) argue that the discourse of student involvement in school governance revolves around student entitlement of citizenship and the rights of the franchise of citizen in a democracy. Students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools that adults cannot fully replicate. Rudduck (2005) perceives the student as the object in the process of conversations which is directed by teachers inviting opinion and seeking advice and perspective from students and also seeking to re-engage the disengaged through student's voice. In this study, my interest is in understanding the views of students and student leaders towards the role, challenges and enablement of Student leadership and, in particular, their understanding of the principles of democracy, participation and representation and how these principles are manifest in Student leadership.

Functions of Student Leadership: Varied views exist on the role of student leadership across schools and countries. From the literature reviewed on student leadership as highlighted above, the common functions of student leadership, especially in developing countries, are those that limit information generation and school supervision. Traditionally, student prefects were agents of information collection for the school administration and teachers. They acted as spies and reported all cases that were contrary to school rules and regulations to the administration. Student leadership enhances school governance through their representative roles, resolution of interclass conflicts, supervising and monitoring school programmes such as preparations, reporting on teachers' lesson attendance, reporting on cases of indiscipline and inducting new students (Chemutai & Chumba, 2014). In developed countries such as Norway, and in particular beacon schools such as Ospelia upper secondary school, student roles initially involved deciding the kind of food offered in the cafeteria and also deciding if the school should allow soft drinking machines (Jorunn, 2006). These functions have changed as a result of active student leadership based on democratic principles, profiling the school to the outside world, deciding on classroom activities, planning and establishing criteria for evaluating school work. In South Africa, Representative Councils of Learners (RCLs) are tasked with maintaining order in schools, promoting good relations and communication, setting positive examples, supporting the education program, and maintaining and refining the school's traditions (Hunt, 2014). In this sense, RCLs do not give voice to inequality or inadequacy, and they are not able to make informed decisions (Hunt, 2014).

Barriers to Student Leadership: The discussion here is drawing from Kimberley's (2010) work. Kimberley (2010) argues that leadership practices are not smooth but beset with challenges. He highlights the existence of opposite forces that work against effective leadership practices. He refers to these forces as barriers to leadership. According to Kimberley (2010), major initiatives aimed at supporting young people's participation in leadership are felt more in non-education spheres than in educational spheres. Despite the explicit acknowledgement of student participation in policy, young people remain routinely excluded from real participation in the operation or governance of their school Kimberley (2010). From the comfort of the classroom experience, students learn of the importance of democracy, but they do not experience this practically. The culture of most schools is seeing students as leaders of tomorrow but not of today. Students are seen as lacking competent skills to participate in a democratic process (Kimberly, 2010). This construction of young people as lacking decision-making capability is seen as a major hindrance to student leadership. In this regard, Black et al. (2014) identified four types of barriers to student leadership: exclusive leadership model barriers, practice barriers, school governance and organisation barriers, and policy and system barriers. Under exclusive leadership models, the schools tend to create a tokenistic body of student leadership that is dominated and structured by adults' ideas and students, and their interests are disregarded. This model marginalises the expression of other forms of leadership within the school context. The practice barrier, on the other hand, addresses what goes on in the classroom situation. Capacities of student leadership cannot be developed entirely by teaching civic and citizenship education without providing a platform for practice. Collins (2004) argues that civic education that denies participatory student roles works against its intended purpose.

Holdsworth (2001) postulates that most student leadership is not allowed to have anything beyond their voice on school governance and organisation barriers. Furthermore, there is an increasing exclusion of young people from the governance structures of the schools by the school management. Lastly, on policy and system barriers, schools are faced with enormous work of implementing numerous policies to the extent that policies touching on student leadership are superficially implemented to satisfy the policymakers. Other barriers to the effective implementation of participatory student leadership border on cultural contradictions. Stephens (2007) contends that the African child will rather remain quiet in the presence of an adult as a sign of respect. These cultural constructions are deeply embedded in the African child and can act against effective student participation in school management activities. Students' attitude and awareness is another barrier to enhancing student leadership. In Kenya, a study by Chemutai and Chumba (2014) on student councils' participation in decision making in public secondary schools located in Kericho West Sub-County, found that among the factors hindering effective participation of student councils in decision making included academic demands, limited intellectual capacity, lack of attendance to school matters and in-attendance to school meetings. This study purposes at assessing the barriers to student leadership, and the above barriers will act as corroborative indicators.

Enablers of Student Leadership: The discussion here is based on Black et al. (2014) work. Black et al. (2014) identify five key enablers to entrenching student leadership practices in schools. Three of them are central to this study. First are the values and attitudes that underpin the practice of student leadership in schools. These values and attitudes enhance a belief that schools have an obligation to nurture future leaders through student leadership and an understanding that students have innate capabilities that can foster positive outcomes. Secondly, is the policy framework that encourages and support student leadership. The inclusion of student leadership in policy frameworks articulates an expectation that schools should drive action to enable student leadership. In a Kenyan case, this is clearly indicated in a number of policy documents that include the Policy Framework on Education and Training and the Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic of Kenya [ROK], 2012; ROK, 2013). The third enabler of student leadership lies in creating a network of supportive environments and opportunities for student participation outside the school context. The development of students' personal attributes that enable them to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people is crucial to enhancing their leadership potential in schools. In this study, I explore the enablers of student leadership in the context of Black et al. (2014) work.

Social Systems Theory: The Social Systems theory (SST) is a theory that attempts to describe, explain and predict organisational behaviour (Daft, 2009). According to the Social Systems Theory, all organisations are systems comprising different units or parts, which are interrelated and interdependent in carrying out their activities and geared towards the attainment of common goals (Parsons, 2005). These different units are known as subsystems. Subsystems are the interdependent interacting elements of a system that need to function in a coordinated way to function properly to achieve its goals. In the case of a school, the school gets students, teachers, resource materials and finances from the supra systems. The inputs are transformed into finished

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products by the system. For instance, a school produces a person who is changed with values, skills and knowledge, enabling him/her to positively contribute to society and self.

All subsystems does distinct but complementary roles in attaining the common achievements of the system (Kwasira & Ndung'u, 2015). Thus, even if the principal occupies a higher position than student councils, the role of student councils is not inferior to that of the principal. They all perform various but interrelated tasks in an interdependent manner to achieve high levels of school discipline and the consequent educational goals (Kowalski, 2010). It is, therefore, important that school administrators appreciate and recognise the role played by student councils regardless of their administrative hierarchy position. The managerial subsystem of the principal plays the role of coordinator, planner, controller and facilitator of activities of the entire system to ensure efficiency (Shaw, 2006). The malfunctioning of a human body organ will affect another organ negatively or even the entire body. Since a system is a set of interacting and interdependent elements, a one-point change will eventually trigger a chain of events that will impact the entire system (Kowalski, 2010).

Drawing from this argument, it is clear that a change in the functioning of the student council system will have an effect on the stakeholders. That is why school unrests caused by ineffective student council systems may lead to the destruction of school property or even the loss of human life. The principal should clearly define the school's goals and the role of each individual or group towards the attainment of this goal. Thus, principals use good communication systems to ensure a smooth two-way flow of information to all student councils, students, teachers, and support staff. Macky and Johnson (2003) also discuss the importance of achieving 'horizontal fit', or 'horizontal integration', to ensure unity amongst the different elements that make up the organisation's overall system. It is because of this reason that the Social Systems Theory is considered suitable for this study. This is because schools are a social system with subsystems such as the student council, which requires proper coordination, training, role clarity, and a healthy relationship with the school administration and students to carry out its role effectively.

3.0 RESULTS

Challenges in the Elections and the Functioning of Student Leadership Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school.
Participants in this study showed mixed responses to what constituted challenges in the elections and functioning of student leadership at RSS. The Principal and the Senior Teacher raised the issue of students electing popular council leaders who had no credential of leadership. The Senior Teacher contended that elected leaders were unable to toe the line of school leadership. The views of the School Captain corroborated the arguments of Mr Rain. The initial democratic elections of council leaders were disputed because the students were keen to vote in leaders who would favour them at the expense of the expectations of school leadership. These are the words of the School Captain:

> *Okay. First, let me clarify something. Um, in our school we used to vote, the students are the ones who used to vote, but for the last two years, the teachers nominated you. Because they realised that the students go for someone they like as someone who's going to favour them, something like that. So, the*

> *teachers themselves decided to choose student leaders* (School Captain: Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school).

The titles of the elected student council posed some challenges to the school leadership. Initially, council leaders were given titles fashioned to those held by political leaders in the country. For instance, the School Captain was given the title 'President'. This caused jitters among the teachers and school administration as the student president demanded privileges that came with the title, such as bodyguards. Moreover, the title 'President' seemed to place the student leader in a level position with the school principal. Mrs Keino gives her elaboration on this issue:

> *Yes, where does the Act say it has to be democratic? It was changed, the other one was democratic, and we were using very big names like the president and deputy president until it brought a problem whereby now they called presidents and deputy presidents in school they were more superior than the principal. So the titles were bringing issues in school until last year when they were changed* (Mrs Keino: School Principal Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school).

The Dining Hall Captain's response to the question about whether the council elections were democratic or not revealed another challenge facing the elections and the functioning of student leadership at RSS. The teachers' decisions to select council leaders on the basis of their own judgement devoid of the students' input created a helpless and voiceless student leadership. In fact, some may argue that such a practice was reminiscent of the prefect system of the past and thus undermined democratic values enshrined in the new education policy of 2012. However, it is evident that students could not do anything to oppose the teachers' choice within the current scenario. These are the sentiments expressed by the Dining Hall Captain on this matter:

> *Elections are not democratic, this is because as much as the teachers are the ones that select, maybe the students will not be comfortable with the person, you know, the teachers, may know the outward character of a student leader but not the inside the students know you inside out. So, maybe, the students may not be comfortable with you, but they can't do anything about it. So, they're just there. They can't tell you anything. So, I don't think that is a democracy* (Dining Hall Captain: Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school).

The lack of support for students' involvement in electing their council leaders came out strong from the Games Captain's utterances. It is evident that teachers' influence in the will of the students during elections was a major challenge in growing democratic space for students at RSS. Stories that came from student participants paint a negative picture about issues of democracy at RSS. It is becoming clearer that students' democratic rights were being violated, and there is no evidence to suggest that students challenged such undemocratic behaviour of school leadership. Here are the words of the Games Captain:

> *So, democracy is important because when you give the students an opportunity to elect their leaders, they get to have them in office. And so you know, at times, the teachers do not support the leaders that we choose or rather the leaders that we elect. But when students themselves get to appoint them into the office and then realise that their performance is not good, they are now convinced that this person indeed was not the right person. So, you don't get, you don't get to influence them by telling them, but*

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> *they get to see it. And learn from their own perspective* (Games Captain: Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school).

The participants in the FGD voiced their concern at the level of mistrust that characterised the school leadership-student leadership relationship at RSS. According to one of the participants, the teachers' lack of trust towards the students' ability in electing their leaders and respecting their choices was a major challenge facing the election and functioning of student leadership at RSS. These are utterances of the participant:

> *You see, we students have the right to choose our leaders, but teachers don't trust us. They see us as children who cannot make any decisions. So let them allow us to choose our leaders and let them respect our decisions to elect whoever we want* (FGD Participant 6: Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school).

Restricted functionality of student leadership emerged as one of the challenges that faced student leadership at RSS. Concerning student participation in school governance, Article 12 of the UNCRC emphasises that all matters affecting the child are relevant. Students at RSS were engaged in limited traditional areas that existed within the prefect system. Areas such as classroom management, supervision of the dormitories, kitchen, games, and timekeeping remained the only stronghold for student leadership. Participation in critical issues involving decision making on matters concerning democratic school governance, development of school rules, attending board of management at RSS was restricted to school administration. The principal, together with the teachers, represented students' interest in such matters. These are the utterances of Mr Rain:

> *Students participate in the following areas: In-class management, extra-curricular activities, dorm management, governance of clubs and societies, kitchen, and in labs management. In the mentioned areas, they participate actively, but in school management committees, they only give their views* (Mr Rain: Senior Teacher Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school).

The participants' admission of the lack of support from the school and the outside environment posed a challenge to the functionality of student leadership at RSS. Black et al. (2011) argue that providing training, professional development and implementation support to increase knowledge and foster behaviour change is an enabler for student leadership. Training support can be provided by professional entities from out of the school environment. This was lacking based on the comments of Mrs Keino. Here are the utterances of Mrs Keino:

> *The outside environment is not supportive of student leadership. I have not heard of any other than when they invite the students for training, and we are unable to pay for the training* (Mrs Keino: School Principal Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school).

Davies (2011), in his study of what constitutes effective training for student leaders, argued that school-based programmes that make use of the staff and the alumni were the best and affordable methods to teach leadership skills. A notable challenge that emerged among the participants at RSS was the lack of awareness portrayed to the existing legal frameworks that required schools to have student councils. Both the student leaders and the non-student leaders showed no knowledge about where they drew their legal mandate. All three student leaders gave a no-response when asked whether they were aware of any existing legal framework or not. Mrs Keino's initial response revealed a level of awareness of the existing legal framework but would not give an example when probed further. Here are the utterances of Mrs Keino:

> *I am not aware of any existing legal framework, but I know there is a guideline* (Mrs Keino: School Principal Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school).

The comments of Mrs Keino were corroborated by those of Mr Rain, a Senior Teacher who further revealed that students were never given the opportunity to understand the legal instruments that supported their existence. This disempowered the students and made them be vulnerable to manipulation when it came to the issues of elections and the functioning of student leadership. These are the sentiments of Mr Rain:

> *In this school, no. They are not informed. There is no training for leadership only after the elections is when they are trained of what is expected of them* (Mr Rain: Senior Teacher Rejesha Secondary School - Girls school).

A study by Omollo and Yusuph (2017) found out that the lack of leadership training was one of the challenges that student leaders faced in their leadership. According to Keogh and Whyte (2005), training is an important ingredient of student leadership. According to these scholars, training prepares student leaders to function by providing them with skills to operate effectively, come to consensus about issues, manage meetings, organise activities, represent and access views, and negotiate with the management. In summary, the participants revealed a number of challenges that students faced in terms of the election and functioning of student leadership. Some of the challenges emerged before and after the case study; the school reverted to the teacher-nomination of student leaders. From the perspective of school leadership, democratic elections posed some challenges that had to be addressed by abandoning democratic processes and reinstall authoritarian models of appointing student leaders rather than allowing students to elect them. They cited the election of unsuitable leaders, titles of student leaders as challenges that made the teachers change the system of election. The helpless and voiceless student leadership emerged after teacher adopted the nomination process instead of election. Mistrust of school leadership-student leadership relationship and restricted functionality was also cited as existing challenges facing student leadership at RSS.

Challenges in the Elections and the Functioning of Student Leadership in Hofu Secondary School
The challenges facing the elections and the functioning of student leadership at HSS were dissimilar to those raised by the participants at Rejesha Secondary School. Since student leaders' election was conducted at HSS, the challenges that emerged ranged from the teachers' interference of election results to restricted student participation in the decision-making process. The elections of student leadership faced a plethora of challenges at HSS. The nature of civic education that students were given was superficial. According to the Student President, civic education was an exercise that was merely mentioned during school assemblies. Here are the words of the Student President:

> *Concerning civic education, the Principal and teachers inform students during school parades.* (Student president: Hofu Secondary School).

According to Mr Kime, the Senior Teacher, some of the things that were taught during the assembly time, which were synonymous with civic education, had to do with the qualifications for student leadership and electoral malpractices. These are the sentiments of Mr Kime:

> *We actually hold barazas (informal meetings) and inform students about what we want, the qualification of candidates, and the consequences of electoral malpractices* (Mr Kime: Senior Teacher Hofu Secondary School).

Existing literature highlights various elements of civic education that students need to be aware of before, during and after the elections of student leadership. Finkel (2003) outlines three elements or components of civic education which students can be exposed to in schools. These include civic competence, adherence to democratic values and norms and democratic participation. Civic education also includes elements of peace education (Sommerfelt & Vambheim, 2008). Teachers' interference in the electoral democracy emerged as a challenge that affected the perception of students towards the student leaders. There was agreement among the participants that teachers held the veto power over student leadership elections at HSS. Winning by majority votes of the students was not enough to guarantee one with a position at the student council. The teachers' approval was necessary for one to be sure of occupying the position. The Games Captain uttered words that revealed the teachers' interference with the desires of the students during elections. Here are the words of the Games Captain:

> *For me, as my colleagues have said, it is democratic, but a small part is not democratic that is because the students are told to choose their leaders, and there is a student who is liked by many but according to the teachers doesn't have the qualities needed; therefore, when she applies for the seat, she ends up being rejected, and they choose another one whom they think has the qualities they need* (Games Captain: Hofu Secondary School).

Teachers' favouritism emerged as another challenge facing the electoral process of student leadership at HSS. The student president intimated that teachers at often times favoured certain students regardless of their acceptability by the student fraternity. This favouritism caused a lot of discontentment among the FGD participants. This is what the student president had to say:

> *At some point, yes. For example, something like favouritism is almost everywhere because you will find teachers favouring some students for a position in leadership; they want those who will favour them. So they push that student to be the leader* (Student president: Hofu Secondary School).

The school principal Mrs Enchoke opined how the electoral democracy produced weak leaders to the school leadership; the teachers' mode of nominating student leadership was the best compared to the democratic process of electing student leaders. Intimidation and false accusations of students by student leaders emerged as another challenge facing the functioning of student leadership at HSS. The Dining Hall Captain revealed a case where a student was falsely accused by a council student, creating an image that student leadership was an agency of school leadership and not a representative of the students. These are the sentiments of the DHC:

> *Yeah! There was a scenario whereby one of the student councils took a student to the teachers for a wrong the student never committed and made the student be punished for no apparent reason because the teachers trusted the prefect so much they made themselves blind* (Dining Hall Captain: Hofu Secondary School).

The FGD participant corroborated the words of the Games Captain by describing teachers' habit of disapproving their choice of leadership as a major challenge facing the elections and functioning of student leadership at HSS. These are the words of one participant:

> *If teachers respect the students' choice, we will begin to see true student representation in school management* (FGD Participant 4: Hofu Secondary School).

Teachers' interference in the election process sounded loudest from the participants' perspectives. The students recognised the existence of electoral democracy but decried the manner in which teachers overturned their choices of student leadership through favouritism. Superficial civic education was alluded to by some participants as a challenge in the election process of Student leadership.

Challenges in the Elections and the Functioning of Student Leadership in Jitu Secondary School
The participants in this study disclosed a myriad of challenges in the elections and functioning of student leadership, and some of them have been alluded to in the preceding sections of this chapter. These challenges are categorised in this case study as election and operational challenges. On the election challenges, the attitude of the Principal and the school administration towards the students hindered the growth of the democratic election process at JSS as students were not given an opportunity to vote leaders capable of representing them. The Principal and the Senior Teacher viewed electoral democracy as a source for ineffective student leadership. The voice of the Student President well captured these sentiments.

> *Before, students were given a chance to vote and elect their leaders, but the Principal and the administration discovered that students were electing students whom they thought would favour them and be on their side. So that a student leader ni mtu wa kuwa side Yao (The student leader is one who is on the side of students)* (Student President: Jitu Secondary School).

The extract above indicates that democratic election processes were subverted from true democracy to something else. It is evident that school leadership posed a real threat to democratic practices and values and thus constituted a challenge in the election and functioning of student leadership at JSS. School leadership expressed a belief in democracy but did not demonstrate any inclination to put democratic ideals into practice. The words of the School Principal reveal a lack of congruence with his belief in democracy and the reality on the ground. Electoral democracy entails freedom for the electorates in electing their preferred leaders. These are the views of the School Principal when asked whether the student elections were democratic in his school or not:

> *We do not conduct direct representation, but we believe that student elections are democratic since they participate in the election process, though not directly* (Mr Nkonge: Principal Jitu Secondary School).

The words of the Principal contradict those of the Senior Teacher who hit the nail on the head concerning the actual state of student elections. The exact picture on the ground was that there were no democratic student elections at JSS we know democracy. This shows inconsistencies between the Principal's thoughts and actions in ensuring that democratic student elections were held at JSS. Here are the sentiments expressed by the Senior Teacher on whether or not student elections were democratic:

> *No. because at some point, we are able to stop some candidates to ensure our definition of democracy is a guiding principle* (Mr Ndetu: Senior Teacher Jitu Secondary School).

Student election as a popularity contest posed yet another challenge in enhancing electoral democracy at JSS. This is the perspective of the teachers and school leadership, and this may not be perceived as such by the students. When students were given the freedom of electing their leaders through a democratic process, they grabbed that opportunity to elect leaders who seemed popular among them. This, according to the DHC, caused uneasiness on the part of school leadership, and consequently, they stopped this freedom of the students to elect student leaders of their choice. This is what the Dining Hall Captain had to say:

> As I said earlier, student-led elections is about popularity who is more popular than the other and is also based on the excitement of the student, but in teacher-led elections, the teacher see something in you, and they nominate you for the right reason yeah (Dining Hall Captain: Jitu Secondary School).

The views expressed by this DHC are sympathetic towards school management, and they do not see anything wrong with the actions of school leadership in terms of undermining democratic practices and values. However, there were also other challenges relating to the functionality of the students. Some of the operational challenges that student leadership faced include maintaining a balance between the needs for belonging and leadership. Individual student leaders faced a dilemma between responding to the needs of a group of students where they belonged and serving the entire student fraternity. In particular, this related to mealtimes where the Dining Hall Captain had to contend with demands to favour his class or offer just leadership. These are the utterances of the DHC.

> It has been challenging to be a student leader. For example, students from my class expect me to favour them during lunchtime, but I am supposed to do the right thing. That is quite challenging as you end losing some friends (Dining Hall Captain: Jitu Secondary School).

Abuse of office by some of the student leaders emerged as another challenge facing student leadership at JSS. The student president revealed a case of false accusation orchestrated by a student leader who, by virtue of being the representative of the school leadership, took advantage of this and were able to make an innocent student punished, ostensibly for a fictitious mistake. An example of this has been given in the previous sections, where a detailed explanation of this was provided. In conclusion, the participants in this case study school revealed the following as challenges that were facing the elections and functioning of student leadership at JSS. First, it is the attitude of the Principal and the school administration that students were incapable of electing their leaders objectively, which virtually trampled on the students' democratic rights to exercise their choice. Second, there were clear inconsistencies between what the principal espoused as democracy and how he acted on the ground in the name of democracy. Lastly, some student leaders clearly abused their offices and positions of trust by falsely accusing their fellow students to settle their personal scores. Such behaviours are clearly unethical.

Existing literature corroborates the sentiments of the participants on challenges facing the election and functioning of student leadership in JSS. For example, woods (2005) found out that some educators viewed students as unprepared and unable to undertake adult-oriented tasks. In addition, murage et al. (2019) found that among the challenges that student leaders faced while executing their functions was balancing between their academic pursuit and leadership roles.

Differentiated Understanding of Barriers and Enablers of Effective Functioning of Student Leadership Incapacitated Student Leadership: An empowered and informed student leadership comes from a deliberate move by the school leadership to create awareness of the existing legal framework and develop leadership programmes for student leaders. Descriptive analysis of the participants' views reveals that student leadership exist in an environment of obscurity in the three case study schools. Student leadership's understanding of their representative roles and their capacity to articulate students' issues is a prerequisite to having functional student councils in schools. The participants' similar views in the three case study schools that *"schools can nurture future leaders"*. This is a pointer that student leadership needs to be capacitated through training and the creation of awareness. Mr Rain, a Senior Teacher at RSS, disclosed the absence of capacity building programmes for student leadership in his statement, *"Students are not informed of the legal and policy framework affecting their Student leadership. There is no creation of awareness for student leaders of existing legal frameworks"*.

The functionality of student leadership depends on mechanisms put in place to prepare student leaders in understanding their roles and the source of their mandate. This can be done through facilitated training by the school leadership and support from the school environment. The lack of these core enablers means that student leadership in the three case study schools remains incapacitated. As a result, student leaders only function as agents of school leadership instead of playing their student-representative roles. Mr Nkonge, the Principal Jitu Secondary School, expressed his sentiments of the lack of outside support as a barrier in building the capacity of Student leadership:

The nature of civics education was found to be inadequate in enhancing the vibrancy of student leadership in HSS. The student president in HSS, where elections were conducted after the nomination exercise, revealed that the principal conducted civic education a few days before elections during school parades. This means that students are not adequately prepared during elections, which leaves the constituted body incapacitated as the significance of elections is not emphasised.

Schools have a civic role in developing students into literate political citizenry (Leung et al., 2014). However, studies examining the impact of student councils found out that they had a weak influence in school and the classroom (Parker & Leithwood, 2000). There are multiple benefits available to students participating in some form of school-based leadership despite the challenges facing students in leadership roles. Johnson (2005) and Lavery (2006) conjectured a lack of support by staff, student disengagement and misunderstanding of staff regarding student roles as main concerns. Kirera (2015), in the study of challenges student leaders face in managing student discipline, found that most of them are not capacitated to discharge their duties well.

Tokenistic Student Participation: School leadership has emerging inherent measures in the three case study schools to control and make students powerless. On the basis of student participation in school, Article 12 of the UNCRC emphasises that all matters affecting the child are relevant. However, based on the descriptive analysis, it is evident that the restrictive nature of student participation gives an impression of tokenism. The admission of the Dining Hall Captain that students were represented in the School's Board of Management by the principal clearly indicates how students are denied their rights for self-representation. The FGD participant voiced her frustration in the ineptness of student leadership that only served the interest of their master (School

leadership). The FGD participant at RSS echoed similar sentiments. In sub-section 5.3.3 of chapter three, the FGD participant revealed how student leadership was constituted to fulfil the school administration's expectations. These sentiments from the descriptive analysis of the three case study schools explicitly relegates student leadership in the three schools to tokenistic participation.

The descriptive analysis reveals a student mindset that is characteristic of tokenistic participation. The inability of students to believe in themselves is in itself a reflection of student leadership that plays second fiddle to school leadership. The mind-set of the Dining Hall Captain at JSS on whether students can be left alone speaks loud: *No because in our current world, there is a lot of peer pressure, and if not guided by the teachers or parents or guardians, you might end making the wrong decision.* At the school level, Leung et al. (2014) discovered that schools were more inclined to inform students and consult them through formal and controlled channels rather than real participation and sharing of powers with students. A participatory mechanism that does not lead to a meaningful action that creates authentic change in terms of recognition and respect in the lives of students, then the so-called participation is simply a token gesture (Lister, 2007). The civic mission of schools lies in nurturing and supporting students to become a good and participatory citizen (Yuen et al., 2019).

Students as Innovators: Student as innovators emerged strongly from the descriptive analysis on the contribution of the student leaders in the three case study schools. The students showed great innovative ideas in the management of student affairs. For instance, the School Captain at RSS disclosed how student leadership came up with an idea of preparation time which probably addressed their academic goals. Student leaders at JSS innovated a "*move by running*" rule to enable students to redeem the time wasted by walking. It was one school where student leadership literary commands the discipline of students through innovative ideas. Mr Ndetu, a Senior Teacher at JSS, revealed how students' innovation designed the school uniform that ensured girls wore dresses that ensured swift movement. The innovation was informed by the desire to redeem time meant for an academic motive. The Principal HSS revealed how students' innovative ideas contributed in raising funds to finish the stalled projects in schools such as the Library and Administration Block. The views of the principal say it all: "*The students came up with pieces of artwork for the visitors, and it really worked magic during the funds drive*".

The elected students at HSS showed innovative ideas detached from academic goals from the three case study schools. The teacher nominated (RSS and JSS) student leaders' innovative ideas were inclined to enhance their academic pursuit. Student leaders as innovators inspire trust among other students to create their own change within the school set-up (Cunniff et al., 2013). The innovative ventures of students in leadership positions inspire them to be proactive in making a difference in school governance. If students as innovators is a goal, the provision of opportunities to advance students as active agents of their own learning should be the norm of most school learning processes (Wagner, 2014).

Enablers of Effective Functioning of Students' Leadership
The findings have shown that there were very few positive stories about the functioning of student leadership. This is based largely on the conceptions of student leadership by school leaders. Therefore, there was a rarity of the enablers of effective functioning, particularly based on Black et al. (2014). The existence of values and

attitudes that conceptualise student leadership as a springboard of future leaders in the three schools emerged as a possible enabler. However, such an enabler remained a possibility that never was explored in practice. An indisputable enabler of effective functioning of student leadership in the three schools can be understood from the student leadership's contributions. It is clear that student leadership excelled in innovative ideas that enhanced their academic goals. This is an implicit indication that student leadership can equally excel in other areas of student affairs.

Barriers of Effective Functioning of Students' Leadership
The findings suggest that there were more barriers to the effective functioning of student leaders than were enablers. Multiple factors that militated against the effective functioning of student leadership in the three schools included beliefs by school leadership that students are children and thus cannot manage their own affairs without close monitoring of adults. I have discussed these factors based on Black et al. (2014) Model of four types of barriers. The three of the four barriers are central in my findings. These are exclusive leadership model barriers, practice barriers and, school governance and organisational barriers. Amongst the exclusive leadership model barriers that stood out in this study was tokenistic student participation. Restrictive roles of student leadership represented the practice barriers. Student leadership's roles were restricted to enhancing academic performance in the three case study schools. Other barriers that emerged from student leaders included the need to balance between the need for belonging and the expectations of leadership. On school governance and organisation barriers, the attribution of student leadership as agents of school leadership featured prominently. Other barriers that emerged in this study included incapacitated student leadership due to a lack of training programmes. It became clear that school leadership did not promote democratic values, principles and practices as they should. This constituted a barrier to the effective functioning of student leadership.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusion: Contextually, the study has revealed that leadership functioning is faced with a myriad of challenges. Most of these challenges, I can argue, relates to skills and knowledge deficits among school principals. As a result, these principals have found it difficult to let go of their past practices and adopt new ones that will be consistent with the new realities of 21st-century leadership and management.
Recommendations: Creating a supportive environment for student leadership's effective functioning depends upon transformational leadership dispensed by principals as transformational leaders. This can happen once there is a shift in their paradigm and they fully embrace democratic ethos, values and principles. This may require intensive training that may be provided by the employer, the Ministry of Education. Therefore, the Ministry of Education needs to develop training guidelines for student leadership to build the capacity of student leaders.

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