

**PRINCIPALS' STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN KCSE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in
Educational Management of Chuka University**

**CHUKA UNIVERSITY
OCTOBER 2024**

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS


Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for an award of diploma or conferment of degree in this or any other institution

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the loving memory of my late wife, Idah Gitonga, and to our adorable children, Hemdan Haile Murimi and Hilarie Hadad Munene for their strength and kindness in bearing my absence and grant me peace and encouragement. I also dedicate this to Dr. Steve Muthomi Micheni, whose insight and motivation encouraged me to pursue this course.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The list kept getting longer as I began to consider all the people I would like to thank for their encouragement, advice, and dedication in making my thesis possible. I want to start by giving thanks to Almighty God for giving me the strength, courage, and stamina to enroll in and complete this course.

My deepest gratitude and special thanks go to my supervisors, Dr. Peter Kimanthi Mbaka and Dr. Mercy Nkinga Kariuki, whose company and enthusiasm helped me stay focused and rejuvenated whenever I felt drained. I appreciate them for taking time out of their busy schedules to conduct the interviews that contributed to the completion of this work.

I am grateful to the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) for allowing me to conduct my research in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. I also appreciate the County Director of Education (Tharaka Nithi) and all the school principals who made it possible for me to gather data from their establishments. A special thank you goes to Dr. Steve Muthomi and Joachim Njagi for their assistance in processing the research data and providing insightful interpretational advice.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the principals and heads of departments in the selected schools for providing the essential information to complete this thesis. Special thanks to the Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers taking time out from their busy schedules to conduct the interviews that were vital to this research.

I am thankful for my course mates and cohort members, especially Araka Apiud, Sarah Wanja and Lenity Kaburu, whose company and enthusiasm helped me stay focused and rejuvenated whenever I felt drained during this process. To my parents, the late Jediel Mwirigi and Catherine Mwirigi, and my siblings Frank Mwenda, Kenfrey Koome, Weddy Kathure, Caroline Makena and Justin Mawira, I am deeply indebted for your unwavering support and encouragement throughout my studies

ABSTRACT

Kenyan students consistently do poorly on national exams, even with significant investments in the country's educational system. To enhance student results, some educational changes have been put into place, such as the introduction of strategic performance management (SPM). On the other hand, there is a dearth of information in the literature about how these management techniques actually affect students' performance on national exams, especially in Kenyan secondary schools. Strategic performance management practices are difficult to adopt, and many school principals find it difficult to carry out their plans efficiently. Thus, the goal of this research was to ascertain how the strategic performance management practices of the principals affected the academic performance of their Kenya Certificate Secondary Education (KCSE) students in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Researchers used correlational research methodologies and descriptive surveys to determine how strategic performance management affected students' academic achievement. A straightforward random sampling method was used to choose 294 study participants. A schedule of interviews was created for SCQASO, and study materials included questionnaires for department heads and principals. Before being used, the tools underwent validity and reliability assessments. Prior to administering the instrument, validity of the face, content, and constructs were determined. Using data from a pilot study in Meru County, reliability was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Reliability values of 0.863 and 0.785 were found for the questionnaires of principals and head of departments, respectively, indicating an acceptable reliability threshold. Thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 software was used to clean, code, and analyze quantitative data both descriptively and inferentially. Standard deviation, averages, percentages, and frequencies were among the descriptive metrics utilized. Data was analyzed using inferential statistics, such as Chi-square, to ascertain the association between students' performance in the KCSE and the strategic performance management techniques utilized by principals. The study's conclusions demonstrated that schools in Tharaka Nithi County had a formal strategic performance management system with a clearly defined vision, mission, and goals and objectives. However, principals only partially implemented these practices as cornerstones in their schools, and there was a correlation between student performance in the KCSE and strategic performance management practices. Other obstacles to the implementation of strategic performance management systems in schools included teachers' and principals' skepticism, a lack of funding, unclear roles, and poor communication. The study's conclusions and suggestions will advance our understanding of how principals' strategic performance management practices affect students' results on national exams. Administrators, planners, and policy makers in the education sector may find the study's findings helpful in devising strategies for improving students' performance through strategic performance management techniques.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BSC	: Balanced Scorecard (BSC)
BOM	: Board of Management
CBT	: Center for British Teachers
CDE	: County Director of Education
DEMA	: Devolved Education Management Activity
DRC	: Democratic Republic of Congo
HOD	: Head of Department
KCSE	: Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KEMI	: Kenya Education Management Institute
NACOSTI	: National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
PA	: Parents Associations
PC	: Performance Contracting
PM	: Performance Management
PMS	: Performance Management Systems
QDAP	: Qualitative Data Analysis Program
SCQASO	: Sub-county Quality Assurance and Standards officers
SIPs	: Strategic Improvement Plans
SMP	: Strategic Management Practices
SNE	: Special Needs Education
SWOT	: Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats
SPM	: Strategic Performance Management
SPMS	: Strategic Performance Management System
TPAD	: Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development
USAID	: United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Education is a fundamental human right that promotes national economic development. This explains why countries globally prepare and raise budgetary allocations to fund educational programs each fiscal year (Adeniran, 2020). As a result, academic success or performance among students in educational facilities is a critical goal in the development of all educational programs. Continuous tests and assessments are often used to assess academic achievement, with a focus on skills and declarative and procedural knowledge (Sánchez-Álvarez., BerriosMartos & Extremera, 2020). Every educational system places a premium on pupils' secondary school academic success (Hirshleifer, 2021).

A variety of school factors influence students' academic success, including principals' strategic performance and management techniques (Brew, Nketiah & Korateng, (2021). Strategic performance management (SPM) is the review, monitoring, and improvement of methodologies used by a company to attain its goals (Aktar, 2018). SPM was initially introduced into school administration in 2015 (Redding & Layland). SPM, on the other hand, includes issues such as productivity, performance reviews, and ongoing systems for tracking progress, refining methodology, and exceeding objectives. It focuses on human capital, establishes performance metrics, aligns resources, and develops strategies to create an organizational framework (Lewis, 2019). Strategic performance management in the educational setting aims to improve student academic performance (De Waal, 2017). Strategic performance management practices enable administrators to develop strategies that are consistent with the school's core values, mission, motto, and vision (Andrews, 2010). These results in long-term strategies for efficiently managing opportunities and challenges based on institutional strengths and limitations (Sababu, 2007).

In the education sector, SPM guarantees that educators have the necessary tools for professional growth, in order to be inspired, and understand what is expected from them (Karuhanga, 2015). Strategic performance management assists administrators to coordinate personnel, resources and systems to achieve their goals (Amanchukwu.,

Stanley & Ololube, 2015). According to this paradigm, the principal of the school drafts or amends the strategic plan at the team level, sets performance indicators, assigns staff members for maximum effectiveness, evaluates it and starts a review to correct it (Huaisheng, 2019). Indeed, if the SPM is strengthened in schools, academic performance of learners especially in national examinations may be improved. However, this will depend unavoidably on the principals' extent of executing SPM efficiently (Mutinda, 2016).

The school management system was found to be a predictor of students' academic success in a study on the effect of strategic management system on student performance conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia (Tsereteli, Khatuna & Aptarashvili, 2011). According to a related study conducted in three secondary schools in New Zealand, strategic performance management was deeply engrained in the schools' cultures and had a major role in their success (Bryant, Escalante & Selva, 2017). Furthermore, based on the findings of a study on the impact of strategic performance management (SPM) on students' academic performance in Turkey, the majority of schools did not place enough emphasis on SPM, which led to low academic performance (Kose & Kose, 2019).

Across the globe, educational administrators utilize an array of strategies to seize command of their institutions and improve students' academic performance [Koc & Celik (2015); Galafa, (2018); Ndayor & Nkechi, (2019)]. However, studies carried out in the Philippines revealed that a variety of barriers prevented SPM from being used in real classroom settings (Torneo & Mojika, 2020). The competencies of principals are one of the main obstacles to the successful implementation of SPM in secondary schools. According to a study done at secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, learners' academic performance was significantly impacted by the principals' competency (Mohammed, Edu & Etoh, 2020). According to research done in Kenya, public schools' strategic management plan implementation levels were inadequate and ineffective (Akala, 2021). There was a lack of clarity in the execution of the SPM programs and their lack of proper definition (Seje et al., 2021).

In order to mainstream SPM and improve educational quality, the Nigerian government consistently invests in it through public schools (Amoli & Aghashahi, 2016). Conversely, the majority of East African nations continue to place a high premium on the adoption of SPM in their educational systems (Lewis, 2019). According to a research done in Tanzania's Babati District, schools' academic performance increased when strategic plans were implemented (Kwaslema & Onyango, 2021). Furthermore, most government-aided secondary schools in Yumbe district, Uganda, relied heavily on strategic planning for administrative purposes (Anguzu, 2018).

Notably, in order to improve SPM procedures and raise performance in educational institutions, the government of Kenya has developed programs like Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) and Performance Contracting (PC) (Kavua, 2020; Inyega et al., 2021). In a similar vein, to improve student performance on national exams, the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) places a strong emphasis on Performance Management (PM) in schools (Kavua, 2020). In most Kenyan schools, though, this has not been completed (Nkarichia, 2021). Moreover, the majority of school principals still encounter a number of difficulties when putting SPM into practice (Mburia & Bett, 2020).

Although substantial amount of studies has been done on SPM, there is little information on principals' SPM impact on students' academic performance in the study area, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. In this county students' performance in KCSE has not significantly improved despite the formulation of policies directed towards improving students' learning outcomes (Nkarichia, 2021). Table 1 shows students' academic mean score and mean grade in Tharaka Nithi County compared with the national statistics.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of National and Tharaka-Nithi County KCSE performance

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average
National mean score	4.536	4.299	3.683	4.361	4.450	4.302
National mean grade	C-	D+	D+	D+	D+	D+
Tharaka Nithi mean score	4.233	4.461	4.719	3.727	4.409	4.409
Tharaka Nithi mean grade	D+	D+	C-	D+	D+	D+

Source: Tharaka-Nithi County Director of Education Office Reports, (2023)

The comparison of KCSE performance between national average mean scores and Tharaka-Nithi County mean scores average over particular years, as shown in Table 1, emphasizes how crucial it was to look into the strategic performance management practices used by County's public secondary school principals. Data from 2018 to 2022 show that student low performance had fluctuated over time, which highlights the necessity for a thorough study of the factors influencing academic achievement. To discover effective tactics, reduce performance discrepancies, and influence policy creation, it was imperative to examine the effectiveness of principals' strategic performance management practices. Through thorough analysis and enhancement of these strategic performances management approaches, Tharaka-Nithi County could effectively improve the region's educational environment, encourage consistency in student accomplishments, and implement focused interventions to raise academic standards.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, academic achievement is highly regarded and seen as a way to boost the country's economy. In spite of this, learners' total KCSE performance is still below average. The strategic performance management practices used by the school principals are one of the many reasons for the subpar performance. Remarkably, most secondary school principals in the nation lack a strategic strategy for performance management. Furthermore, not much is known about how strategic performance management practices and student achievement on national exams in Kenyan secondary schools relate to one another. Although general management tactics in education have been the subject of various researches, there is notably little data regarding the precise relationship between these strategies and student achievement, especially when it comes to Kenyan secondary schools. This worry is best illustrated by Tharaka Nithi County, which consistently performed below average in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exams from 2018 to 2022. The KCSE mean grade has stalled at a level below the minimal need for university admission, despite government efforts to establish strategic management approaches to increase standards of administration and performance management in line with contemporary methodologies and educational trends. This begs the important question of whether

the County's public secondary school principals were utilizing strategic performance management techniques to enhance KCSE student performance. Thus, the purpose of this study was to ascertain whether or not public secondary school principals in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, were implementing strategic performance management techniques, and whether or not these practices were directly related to students' KCSE scores.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to investigate the relationship between principals' strategic performance management practices and performance of students in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To investigate the types of strategic performance management practices employed by principals and their effect on students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.
- ii. To determine the extent to which strategic performance management practices employed by principals affected students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.
- iii. To establish the relationship between strategic performance management practices and performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.
- iv. To explore the challenges faced by principals in implementing strategic performance management system to improve students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed by this study:

- i. Which strategic performance management practices were employed by principals in public secondary schools to enhance performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya?
- ii. To what extent did the strategic performance management practices employment by principals affect students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya?
- iii. What were the challenges faced by principals in implementing strategic performance management system to improve students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya?

1.6 Hypothesis of the Study

The study was guided by the following hypothesis which was tested at $\alpha = 0.05$ significant level.

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between strategic performance management practices on performance of students in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

1.7 Significance of the Study

In the global education system, efforts to raise public school students' academic performance are vital. It is anticipated that research on secondary school principals' strategic performance management techniques will advance knowledge by revealing how these strategies affect students' results on national exams taken in public secondary schools. The findings of this study will help planners and policymakers in the field of education decide how best to respond and allocate resources in the event that students perform poorly on national exams at basic education institutions. It is intended that the recommendations and conclusions would help school boards of management and secondary school administrators make the most use of the few resources available in order to improve students' performance on national exams in their respective secondary schools. The findings will assist educators in recognizing the advantages of postmodern pedagogy over traditional pedagogy and how to best implement it to enhance student performance.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The study, which was conducted in Tharaka Nithi County, looked at the state of secondary school principals' use of strategic performance management techniques to improve their students' KCSE scores. The study looked at how much principals in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, used strategic performance management techniques to help pupils perform better on the KCSE. The study also analyzed the difficulties encountered in putting the strategic performance management system into practice in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County and looked at any connections between the performance of students in the KCSE and the strategic performance management practices used by principals. During the course of a month, principals and teachers at public secondary schools provided the study's data.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The vast nature of Tharaka Nithi County presented a challenge to the researcher in covering all the sub-counties. A limitation of the study also arose from self-reports acquired from the respondents. Self-reported answers may be exaggerated; respondents may be reluctant to reveal private details. However, the respondents were requested to provide honest responses and were guaranteed that the findings of the study would be kept confidential and used for academic purposes only to enhance their response rate. A second limitation involved the lack of documented strategic plans, evidence of stakeholder involvement in the development of strategic plans, and school targets.

1.10 Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on the following assumptions:

- i. That principals in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County were using performance management strategies to influence students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE).
- ii. That schools had updated strategic management measures such as strategic plans among other performance management operating standards and procedures.

- iii. That all participants who consented to participate in the study responded to the survey questionnaire and returned it within the time frame specified by the investigator.

1.11 Operational Definition of Terms

The following are operational definitions of significant terms that have been used in the study:

- KCSE Performance:** Refers to grades attained by students at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination upon completing the secondary school education cycle.
- Challenges:** Refer to factors which hinder the successful implementation of Strategic Performance Management in schools. For this study challenges include those problems which principals encounter in their effort to implement SPM in their respective secondary schools.
- Strategic Management Practices:** Refers to principals' management activities, which deals with decisions making in, regards to the purpose of the school mission, vision, objectives, strategies and development of long-term plans for efficient management of environmental opportunities and threats in line with the school strengths and weaknesses.
- Strategic Performance Management:** Refers to a systematic approach that principals use to apply their strategies across their teams and departments to enhance improved students' performance in KCSE. By setting clear expectations and guidelines, principals may ensure that their teaching staff are aligned with their goals and work towards achieving them efficiently.
- Strategic Plan:** Refers to a list of actions steps carefully ordered to achieve specific targets resulting from internal and external source of

variables that are likely to affect the school. For this study, it is expected that each school has a strategic plan that is in operation for five years aimed at providing focus on the teaching-learning process.

Relationship:

Refers to the way the strategic performance management practices employed by principals are connected to students' performance in examinations in their schools.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Students' Performance in National Examinations

Globally, education is regarded as critical not just for individual advancement, but also for communal and national development. Individuals must raise awareness and increase their educational skills in order to effect improvements in all areas and employ current and innovative tactics and methods (Kapur, 2018). Students' success is influenced not just by natural skill, but also by a variety of factors that contribute to improved performance. It is necessary to provide quality education for our children in order to improve the social and economic well-being of society and the nation as a whole (Ullah and Almani, 2022). Numerous factors impacting students' academic performance have been investigated, but many issues remain (Brew, Nketiah & Koranteng, 2021).

The factors influencing pupils' academic performance in Indian secondary schools were researched (Kapur, 2018). The study found that in secondary schools, there were several factors both inside and outside the school that influenced pupils' academic success. The main areas considered were factors influencing students' academic performance, academic performance and a large number of students in class, parental and associated factors relating to academic achievement, contribution of school factors to students' academic performance, influence of poverty on academic achievement, and other causes of low academic achievement.

Similarly, a study in Makran division, Balochistan, Pakistan investigated the school and student-related factors that influenced student secondary school performance (Ullah & Almani, 2022). To collect data, the researchers distributed questionnaires to 650 secondary school pupils and 200 teachers. Furthermore, 24 head teachers were chosen for data collection using a purposive selection strategy. This study determined that there was a favorable association between the school, student-related characteristics, and students' academic achievement. Similarly, a regression test was used to determine the effect of independent variables and dependent variables on student performance. The study found that both school-related and intrinsic factors had a substantial impact on students' academic performance in secondary schools.

This study discovered that the most important factors influencing students' academic performance were insufficient teachers, a lack of reading and teaching materials in school, untrained teachers and learning environments, inadequate classrooms, and poor school management.

Locally, Kieti (2018) researched factors impacting students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mutunguru sub-county, Machakos County. The study aimed to identify factors influencing students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mutunguru sub-county, Machakos County. The study aimed to determine the impact of learning resources, administrative practices, teacher-related factors, and socio-economic background on academic performance. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The real schools in various categories were allocated and sampled using a stratified random sampling technique. The study found that administrative practices had a substantial positive and significant influence on academic performance, as did teacher-related characteristics and learners' socioeconomic backgrounds.

In addition, Kitur, Choge, and Tanui (2020) evaluated the association between principals' transformational leadership style and secondary school students' academic achievement in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Bomet County, Kenya. The descriptive survey design was used in this investigation. A stratified random sampling approach was used to choose schools as boys', girls', and mixed schools. The study found that the principals' idealistic influence had a substantial and significant relationship with learners' academic achievement in the KCSE. Thus, idealized influence traits were the most efficient at increasing pupils' academic progress. It is worth noting that numerous factors influencing secondary school pupils' academic performance have been explored. However, none of these studies looked into the principals' strategic performance management practices and their impact on student performance in national exams. As a result, the purpose of this study was to look into the relationship between principals' strategic performance management practices and student performance in KCSE at public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

2.2 Strategic Performance Management Practices in Secondary Schools

Performance management is the process of making sure a set of actions and results effectively and efficiently satisfies the objectives of an organization (De Waal, 2017). The previously mentioned is the ongoing process of enhancing performance through goal-setting on both an individual and team level that is in line with the organization's strategic goals, performance planning to meet the goals, progress review and assessment, and training personnel (Gerrish, 2016). One technique to assist and enhance teachers' work in schools is through strategic performance management. SPM provides a structure for teachers and their team leader to discuss and decide upon goals and priorities within the larger context of school development plans. In order to assist students, instructors, and schools, this concentrates attention on more effective teaching and leadership (Gerrish, 2016).

The four fundamental components of strategic performance management practice are strategy design, execution, evaluation, and control, according to Mone and London (2018). The strategic performance management, also known as the strategic management process, is embodied by these four components. Because of this, strategic performance management may be viewed as a sequence of decisions and actions that result in the development and implementation of strategies meant to assist a company in achieving its objectives (Helmold, 2022). Thus, planning, execution, and performance control in a corporate operation are all outcomes of a set of organizational activities that make up strategic performance management.

Creating a plan and ensuring its implementation are managerial tasks that involve five different responsibilities (Gabow and Kinyua, 2018). Creating a concept for the business and a vision for the ideal future state of the organization are some of these tasks, as is converting the mission into specific short- and long-term performance objectives, designing a strategy that works for the organization and has the potential to yield the desired results, implementing the chosen strategy successfully and efficiently, evaluating performance, and initiating corrective action. According to Abdi & Kinyua (2018), in order to accomplish their business objectives, organizations whether for profit or not, private or public need to use strategic management techniques.

The critical components of strategic performance management in education include strategic planning, strategic decision-making, defining the school's direction and plans, including stakeholder participation in the creation and implementation of the plans, as well as their evaluation and control (Yaakob, Musa, Habibi & Othman, 2019). They are a group of administrative choices and activities that impact students' long-term academic success as well as school performance. According to Ross (2014), strategy formation is the process by which an organization decides which courses of action will best help it achieve its stated objectives. The success of an organization depends on this process because it provides a foundation for the actions that will provide the desired outcomes. Strategy development is inextricably tied to organizational performance, success, and survival in any given business.

Schools operate in environments that provide numerous challenges, and preserving competitiveness calls for tact (Otiso, 2008). Sensitivity means knowing how to evaluate the environment and creating appropriate alignment and adaptation plans. Parmenter (2015) states that a strategy's execution consists of a series of steps that guide an organization along its selected path toward the achievement of its desired outcomes. The developed strategy is institutionalized and operationalized in general during the implementation process. This includes a number of administratively-focused sub-activities and entails coordinating a firm's resources and competencies with the specific goal of achieving the stated strategic intents. The management has the power to persuade members and subunits to act in ways that advance organizational objectives and goals.

According to Juneja (2020), formal strategic planning, task and responsibility identification, competency definition, ensuring team members possess the necessary skills, timely feedback on how well team members are using their individual competencies to complete tasks and meet objectives, and rewarding and motivating effective performance are all necessary for effective performance management. The manager needs to be aware of the procedures and techniques for enhancing performance in the event that it falls short of the predetermined standards.

Performance management systems should include staff member performance evaluations as a means of making objective judgments about human resource performance and providing documentation to support those decisions (Sun and Van Ryzin, 2014). Nonetheless, proponents of performance management remain upbeat about this strategy's potential to aid in schools' success. According to studies conducted by Pulakos, Hanso, Arad, and Moye (2015), 95% of managers are not happy with their performance management procedures. Therefore, assessing the performance management strategies used by principals in charge of public secondary schools would help them make objective judgments about human resources and will also allow them to produce evidence supporting the significance of using performance management strategies. It is commonly believed that using strategic performance management to improve learning outcomes in the education sector is a good idea. Few attempts have been made to verify this premise empirically, nevertheless (Sun & Van Ryzin, 2014).

A study was done to find out how school administrators' performance management strategies affected students' academic achievement in New York City public schools as determined by test results (Sun & Van Ryzin, 2014). Even after adjusting for student, personnel, and school variables, the study found that schools with stronger performance management practices really had better results in terms of both the level and increased students' performance in exams. They contended that staff performance reviews ought to be a part of a performance management system in order to make unbiased judgments regarding the performance of human resources and to provide evidence to support such judgments.

Similar to this, Pollanen, Abdel-Maksoud, Elbanna, and Mahama (2017) looked into how strategic performance measures (SPM) affected organizational performance in Canadian public organizations and how they were used in strategic decision making. The study found a favorable correlation between the SPM of efficacy and efficiency and performance, as well as between the former and decisions about strategy assessment and implementation. Because it used strategic performance indicators to gauge sustainability and performance, they believed that strategic performance management was crucial for oversight and assessment. Secondary schools can utilize

indicators in this way that incorporate strategies in both short- and long-term functional objectives, paying attention to target action tactics, causation and target arrangements, and the availability of greater performance from several angles. Because it takes into account the coordination of strategic impacts and the optimization of resources, which eventually leads to the development of higher school performance, strategic performance management is essential in this context for the monitoring and assessment of school performance.

An assessment was carried out at secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria, to determine how well teachers were managing the schools and how well the pupils were performing academically in mathematics (Arop et al., 2020). The results of the study demonstrated a significant relationship between the academic performance of students and the leadership styles of principals, as well as between teachers' effectiveness, motivation, and discipline as well as school supervision, students' records management and discipline. In order to increase teacher effectiveness and raise students' academic achievement in mathematics, the researchers advised secondary school principals to carry out their regular and consistent school management responsibilities. Nevertheless, school is noteworthy from this study that the researchers did not look into how the strategic performance management techniques of the principal affected the overall performance of the students, which was the study's focus.

Furthermore, Garbal et al. (2019) looked at how teachers' pedagogical practices in public secondary schools in Bauchi state, Nigeria, were affected by administrators' evaluation of their professional records. The inquiry used a descriptive survey design. From 29 public junior secondary schools in the Bauchi South Senatorial District, 375 instructors were randomly selected and 29 principals were purposefully chosen for the study. According to the study's findings, many administrators of public secondary schools in the Nigerian state of Bauchi did not consistently take supervisory steps to examine teachers' lesson notes, work records, and lesson plans. It was also found that the majority of principals in Bauchi State's public secondary schools merely signed the professional records of their instructors without offering any encouraging remarks. According to the study, principals in Bauchi state's public secondary schools who kept

an eye on teachers' records had a statistically significant impact on the ways in which teachers taught.

Mduma and Mkulu (2021) sought to ascertain the effect of teachers' professional development techniques on their work performance in Nyamagana District, Mwanza Region, Tanzania. The findings demonstrated that training the workforce, or instructors, had the greatest influence on enhancing teaching approaches, reducing teacher burnout, stress, and turnover, increasing effectiveness, and improving teacher personnel overall. Teachers were given the chance to improve their classroom management techniques, streamline the supervision, evaluation, and assessment processes, improve their ability to communicate effectively, and ensure their discipline at work through regular performance reviews at their schools. Therefore, by assessing the strategic performance management practices used by public secondary school principals, this study will help them make objective decisions about human resources and will also produce documentation that demonstrates the significance of implementing strategic performance management techniques.

In Kenya, formal performance management in schools' dates back to 2012 when the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), created the Devolved Education Management Activity (DEMA) to train school managers in strategic planning as a reform tool in education at the school level to enhance performance-based management after identifying performance management gaps in secondary schools. The Center for British Teachers (CfBT), currently known as the Education Trust, implemented the program (USAID, 2013). Strategic planning was deemed by DEMA to be a crucial step in realizing improved performance-based management in secondary schools. The main goal was to raise the standards of administration and performance management in line with modern techniques and educational trends. As a result of this, the aim of this study was therefore to establish the types of strategic management practices which principals had put in place to help their schools improve in performance in the national examinations.

Ngugi and Bula (2019) assessed the connection between performance practices and employee performance. According to county education data, the study's target audience consisted of 90 public schools in Kiambu County and was conducted using a descriptive research approach. 50 principals, 67 school accountants, 70 senior instructors, and 47 school personnel who did not meet the target level were among the accessible population. Thus, the sample size consisted of 234 public school personnel. The study discovered that goal-setting, competency-based assessment, career planning, and continuous feedback all significantly and favorably affected staff performance in Kiambu County public schools. According to the survey, the schools weren't quite compliant or collaborative enough, despite their eagerness to set goals for their employees. The poll also revealed that although the schools valued the feedback, it was not given in a prompt, accurate, transparent, or methodical manner. The study's conclusions indicate that while competency-based evaluation was only partially implemented as a performance management technique in Kiambu County's public schools, it did enhance staff performance. Furthermore, it was shown that even while career planning was favorably connected with performance, Kiambu County's public schools were not fully utilizing it.

The performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Kikuyu Constituency, Kiambu County, was studied in relation to principals' use of methods for the teacher performance appraisal and development (TPAD) instrument (Tumusiime, 2022). The study combined qualitative and quantitative paradigms in a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. Twelve public secondary schools were chosen by simple random selection, and 190 teachers were chosen from those schools using proportionate sampling. Twelve principals, a TSC County Director, and a quality assurance and standards officer (QASO) were selected via purposeful sampling. The study discovered that the following factors all had a positive and significant impact on teacher performance in public secondary schools: principals' use of rewards in implementing TPAD; principals' support for teacher professional development; communication of TPAD appraisal results; teachers' attitudes toward principals' implementation of TPAD; and collaborative planning. It was found that in public secondary schools, principals' TPAD implementation tactics were a reliable indicator of teachers' efficacy.

A research study on conflict management tactics employed by school principals and their impact on teacher job performance in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya was conducted (Muhatia, 2022). A mixed-methods research technique was used. The target population included schools, the County Director of Education, principals, and teachers. The sample size consisted of one CDE, 22 principals, and 357 instructors. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were utilized. The findings demonstrated that principals' communication, innovation, inspiration, and team spirit as conflict resolution tactics positively improved the job performance of teachers in Kisii County's public secondary schools. The study concluded that principals' conflict management tactics were effective in explaining teachers' work performance. Therefore, it was crucial that this study establishes the types of strategic performance management practices which principals had put in place to help students improve their performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

2.3 Extent of Strategic Performance Management Practices use in Secondary Schools

Performance management practices in most public secondary schools in Kenya over the years have failed to achieve the desired levels thereby creating a performance improvement zone which requires intervention measures. Strategic planning as an element of strategic performance management practices was adopted and embraced by many schools by 2014 and was seen as a reform tool that could be used to improve performance management in schools. Even though there was intervention by the ministry of education (MOE) by 2015, notable gaps still exist and many schools are still achieving low achievement levels in management practices. Despite secondary schools' principals having been trained on strategic planning, there is minimal documented literature on the implementation of the reform tool for improving performance management practices in public secondary schools in Kenya (Odhiambo, 2021).

Strategic performance management is essential within a school because it can transform resources to effective education solutions (Steiss, 2019). The decision-making quality of the school management agency is reflected in the continuous

control, evaluation and measurement of performance and output, capacity growth and sustainability; the basic pillar of educational development (Johnsen, 2015). The importance of strategic performance management is reflected in its ability to circumvent irrational choices, speedy conclusions which might devoid practicability, as well as uninformed choices that affects the school performance in a negative way (Abdel-Maksoud, 2015). Against this background, the notion of strategic performance management might be considered essential, and strategic decisions can be measured by considering facts that are important to organizational performance, alternatives, and operating methods.

In their study Seje, Ombati and Maithya, (2021) assessed the Principals' use of effective control mechanisms as well as the advancement of the plans and frameworks they had put in place to enhance performance management at Kenya's public secondary schools located in Nyamira County. The study had 225 respondents in total and employed a descriptive survey approach. The subjects were grouped using stratified sampling, and the participants were chosen at random from each stratum. The Slovin algorithm was utilized to choose the HODs, whereas purposeful sampling was employed to choose the Principals and Deputies. The study's findings showed that most principals did not use efficient strategic plan control and evaluation, which had an impact on how performance management procedures improved. The attainment of the intended standards in performance practices was thus hampered by the ineffective control and assessment of strategic designs and structures.

An investigation on the development of strategic plans, the levels of strategic plan implementation, the levels of strategic plan control and evaluation, and the extent to which strategic planning was used by principals in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya was conducted (Odhiambo, 2021). The study's main findings revealed that, while all secondary schools had developed strategic plans with clear designs and structures for strategic direction, most principals were not effectively implementing the plans, and strategies were not effectively controlled and evaluated, all of which had an impact on improvements in performance management practices. As a result, it was established that the issues identified in secondary school performance management procedures were caused by a failure to employ strategic

planning as a tool for enhancing performance. Strategic planning, when used properly by principals, had the potential to be a reform tool for driving performance improvement in strategic management practices.

Supervisory, leadership and communication competencies of principals had a substantial cumulative impact on teachers' work performance with regard to delivering instruction, attending classes, composing notes, and maintaining records (Owan and Agunwa, 2019). This was revealed in their study to examine the administrative proficiency of principals and the productivity of teachers in the Calabar Education Zone, Nigeria. The study employed a correlational research methodology and employed purposive sampling to choose a sample of eight hundred teachers. The study's findings showed a substantial relationship between teachers' work performance in terms of record keeping, note-taking, instructional delivery, and attendance in relation to the supervisory, leadership, and communication competencies of principals. Against this insight, this study explored the extent to which principals were using the essential elements of strategic performance management in Tharaka Nithi County that contributed to optimal students' performance in KCSE.

In public secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria, Ajetunmobi and Oladejo (2020) explored participatory management, professional development, and teacher performance. Correlational survey design was utilized in the study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to choose 504 participants from a pool of 12,745 instructors working in 217 public secondary schools, making up the sample size. The findings demonstrated a strong and favorable relationship between teachers' job performance and participatory management and professional development, respectively. The study found that by implementing these two management intervention measures, teachers' work performance might be improved. Therefore, among other things, it was suggested that the relevant authorities enhance the current programs for the professional development of teachers and promote teacher participation in management.

In secondary schools in the Ondo Central Senatorial District of Ondo State, Nigeria, Ayeni (2018) looked at principals' methods of decision-making and the extent to which teachers participated in it. She also assessed the effects of these factors on teachers' performance in their instructional tasks and students' academic achievement. This study proved that a well-performing school may meet its academic achievement goals as stated in its strategic plan. A strategic plan offers guidance for the future and supports the school board in making governance decisions. With a plan in place, the board has a roadmap that it can monitor, assess, and adjust to help with better governance choices and offer guidance for the school's future. Ayeni (2018) suggests recruiting qualified instructors to help with the implementation of school strategic plans in order to guarantee an improvement in school performance.

Locally, Muma and Odhiambo (2019) looked at particular facets of task delegation and how it affected principals' ability to effectively manage public secondary schools in Kenya's Rachuonyo South Sub-County. The study utilized a descriptive survey approach. A simple random sampling procedure was employed to select a sample of 25 Principals, representing 33.3% of the total population. Additionally, a sample of 150 Heads of Departments, accounting for 42.8% of the population, was selected. Lastly, a sample of 150 Teachers, representing 34.5% of the population, was also chosen. The survey revealed that principals engaged in communication with the staff by means of structured staff meetings. The principals occasionally conducted staff motivation. The inclusion of expertise as a factor in the delegation of duties was discovered to lead to an enhancement in the average performance of the school. The job description was discovered to enhance the quality of work output.

Supervision is an administrative activity that involves the desire to oversee the everyday activities of school workers. Principals facilitate the implementation of a variety of instructional activities aimed at producing an effective and quality educational system that improves the teaching-learning situation (Mutua, Kimiti & Koech, 2022). The authors employed a descriptive research approach to look into the impact of principals' supervision processes on teacher job performance in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub County, Kenya. The target audience consisted of 32 administrators and 107 instructors chosen from the Sub County's 32 public

secondary schools. Data were gathered using surveys and interviews. The study discovered a favorable and significant relationship between principals' supervising processes and teachers' work effectiveness. The key supervisory procedures that boosted teacher job performance were: Supervising teachers' work plans, ensuring teachers' punctuality in class, tracking teachers' instructional paper generation, and advising instructors on curriculum and teaching methods difficulties. The study showed that principals created a positive environment in order to form good relationships with teachers, thereby improving both top-down and bottom-up communication. This would allow teachers to address any underlying issues while also providing insights for improving their connection.

In order to better understand the performance and strategic planning of public secondary schools in the Kakamega South Sub-county, Alubisia (2022) conducted a research. According to the study, the schools had a written strategic plan as well as a purpose, vision, and core values. However, the involvement of strategic planning professionals in the strategy formation process was rather low. The impact of strategy implementation on the performance of Nairobi City's County Secondary Schools was examined (Maina, 2021). The research design for this study was a descriptive survey. Thirty County Secondary Schools in Nairobi City were the subject of the investigation. There were 270 participants in the target population. Using a straightforward random sampling technique, the study selected 180 individuals at random from the target group. The study found that the performance of Nairobi City County Secondary schools was significantly and favorably impacted by the dedication of upper management. Furthermore, the study revealed that the performance of secondary schools in the County was positively and significantly impacted by the organizational culture. The study's conclusions also showed that student performance in County secondary schools was significantly and favorably impacted by individual commitment.

The study conducted by Riungu, Senaji and Mugambi (2019) examined the role of strategy implementation in determining the competitive academic performance of Kenyan secondary schools. With a frame size of 919, the study used a cross-sectional survey design with principals of secondary schools in eastern Counties as the target

population. The survey monkey formula was used to draw a sample of 273 secondary schools which were then separated into strata. Random samples were taken from each stratum after the schools were further stratified. The results showed that schools had complex plans for implementing strategies and procedures, and that these plans, when implemented, allowed the schools to maintain their competitiveness. Competitive academic performance was found to be significantly impacted by the overall plan implementation technique.

Juma, Wanyama and Masibo (2023) also examined the relationship between strategy assessment and academic accomplishment in public secondary schools in Kenya's Bungoma County. The study's conclusions showed a strong positive correlation between academic achievement in public secondary schools and strategy evaluation. The results of the study indicate that the strategic evaluation tasks, including SWOT analysis, objective setting and achievement, academic performance review, and periodic performance appraisal, were executed successfully. In order to close this information gap, it was crucial therefore that the current study examined the degree to which principals in Tharaka Nithi County utilized components of strategic performance management tools to enhance students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

2.4 Strategic Performance Management Practices and Students' Performance in Secondary Schools

Strategic performance management includes all of the activities that a business must plan, monitor, analyze, and assess in order to meet its goals and objectives (Hunger, 2020). According to Jonyo (2017), one of the instruments used in strategic performance management is a metric system for measuring target achievement. One powerful tool for institutional academic advancement in education is the development of performance measures. Strategic performance management in education is the process of establishing clear targets, monitoring progress, and employing deliberate methods to achieve learning outcomes. Establishing a favorable learning environment and fostering students' excellence in the classroom require strategic performance management. In light of this, the current investigation will examine the crucial

components of strategic performance management that support the best possible KCSE performance for students.

As per Manduku, Hungai, Sikuku & Adhola, (2019) school's likelihood of achieving academic success or failure is greatly influenced by the management tactics implemented by principals, like performance management. Performance evaluations are one way that managers of firms can measure productivity (Nzozzo and du Plessis , 2020). This process involves comparing an employee's actual job performance to the expected levels in order to assess the latter. Nzozzo and du Plessis (2020) suggest that implementing real-time feedback to instructors and having principals do impromptu one-on-one performance check-ins could potentially improve student academic attainment in national tests. Real-time feedback has been associated with many benefits, including improved performance, retention, recruiting, and shift management skills. Real-time feedback is now feasible because of the advancements in tablets, laptops, and smartphones. Principals of schools can use performance management software to give comments at any time.

Educationists worldwide should be aware of the elements impacting students' success on national examinations Steinmayr, Meiner, Weideinger & Wirthwein, 2014). Research has been done on the association between drug usage, school discipline concerns, resources, infrastructure, and KCSE performance in schools, among other factors. However, one aspect of strategic performance management practices that hasn't gotten enough attention is its effect on academic accomplishment. The current study looked at how much principals in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County used strategic performance management practices to support students' academic attainment in an effort to close this information gap.

To improve students' learning outcomes, the strategic management of schools has drawn a lot of attention from throughout the world. For example, in a very recent study, Coskun and Nizaeva (2023) looked at the use of balanced scorecard (BSC)-based strategic performance management in educational institutions. These researchers discovered that BSC, as a comprehensive strategic performance management tool, helps educational institutions focus their strategies and fulfill their

missions by providing a balanced performance system. Because of this, since the BSC was initially presented, many public and private educational institutions have included it into their management frameworks. In addition to the interest that practitioners and administrators have shown in the BSC, scholars from around the globe have also written articles on different aspects of the BSC's implementation in the field of education. Determining the extent to which secondary school principals employed these tactics in an effort to improve students' academic performance was the aim of the current study.

In a similar vein, Demir, Kim, Current, & Jahnke, (2019) investigated the ways in which US school principals and teachers carried out strategic improvement plans (SIPs). They discovered that principals might alter workflow, offer fresh approaches, and take other actions that would help instructors accomplish their objectives by using performance management systems. The schools would then be able to carry out their purpose and produce their best students. They claimed that it was essential to look out for new trends in performance management and research useful technology in order to improve productivity levels and streamline existing procedures. It was unclear, nevertheless, if the principals of the public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County had included strategic performance management practices into their management in order to raise students' KCSE scores. The goal of this study was to provide more clarification.

Additionally, Rheinecker (2015) looked into how Michigan students' academic progress was affected by the implementation of school strategic plans. The findings demonstrated that schools implemented their strategic plans using a variety of operational tactics. Sara (2018) contends that a performance management system should always be tailored to the unique requirements of the school because each one has its own internal environment, unique strengths and weaknesses, vision, and mission. This implies that while performance management has similar purposes and aims across a wide range of educational settings, the type of system that is adopted and implemented varied depending on the unique characteristics of the institution. However, because Rheinecker (2015) and Sara (2018) did not focus on how strategic

performance management practices may motivate students to do better in their academics, there remained a knowledge gap that the current study sought to fill.

A study conducted by Zarifsanaiey, Daneshvar, Omrani & Rezaee, (2016) looked at the association between Shiraz University students' academic performance and the adoption of performance management systems in Pakistan. The study's findings demonstrated that one strategic management approach that significantly improved student performance levels was tutoring. It should be noted that although the Zarifsanaiey et al. (2016) study focused on broad approaches to strategic management, it also examined the connection between the methods used by particular principals and the academic achievements of their students. A 2019 study by Abd, Abbas, and Khudair found that the execution of plans raised academic attainment in Iraq by a large margin. None of these studies, meanwhile, provided an explanation of the Kenyan setting. Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine whether the performance of students in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, and the execution of strategic performance management plans were related.

Raising student accomplishment was the aim of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) education sector strategy 2016–2025, an integrated strategic management framework (Gustin, 2020). Its strategic goal was to improve monitoring and strengthen the execution of the strategic plan in order to increase the bar for instruction. Because of the poor academic ranking, this was necessary. In a related study assessing the effect of strategy implementation on school performance in private secondary schools in Tshangu District, City Province of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mawanika (2021) discovered a significant positive correlation between strategy implementation and school performance. Although educational institutions were being forced to adopt strategic performance management more and more, opinions on how this would impact students' academic performance remained widely divided.

Strategies for strategic management, like evaluating the work plans of instructors, have a big impact on that organizational performance in Somalia (Ahmed, 2019). To

improve success, principals should do more than just routinely review the attendance record and plans. They could also drop by classrooms on an as-needed basis to ensure that the rules are being followed. A study by Kombate, Emanuel, and Richard (2021) in Togo found that companies that choose a rational implementation strategy without an administrative reform program had typically poorly performing traditional bureaucracies. The proposed study found evidence for the potential use of strategic performance management practices as a stand-in tactic to raise students' academic performance on Kenyan KCSE exams. However, there wasn't much local evidence to support this assertion. The current study sought to close this gap by assessing the effect of strategic performance management approaches on students' academic progress in the KCSE in public secondary schools.

Additionally, the goals of Kwaslema and Onyango (2021) were to learn how instructors felt about the quality of the strategic plan developed by the schools, how students' academic performance was affected by the plan's implementation, and what measures needed to be taken to ensure that strategic planning in Tanzania's Babati district was conducted successfully. The study employed a mixed research methodology in conjunction with a convergent parallel design. The study population consisted of 2,844 stakeholders from 5 sample schools, of whom 185 respondents were chosen. The study found that the Strategic Plan was well-developed, that putting it into practice improved student achievement, and that school administrators used a range of strategies to ensure that the goals were met.

The academic achievement of students was significantly impacted by the administrative style of the principal (Mutunga, 2023). This was demonstrated in his investigation of the impact of principals' administrative styles on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools located in the Yatta sub-county of Machakos County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was used for this investigation. There were a total of 19 principals and 228 instructors in the study sample. The sample was selected using a combination of systematic and random selection methods. A contributing factor to the poor current KCSE student achievement levels was the principals' incapacity to implement capacity building initiatives and provide adequate resources. The administrative procedures of principals were found to have a favorable

and significant correlation with pupils' academic success. Students' academic achievement was also found to be significantly impacted by the principal's level of instructional oversight.

In public secondary schools in Mwatate Sub County, Taita Taveta County, Kenya, Kituku, Piliyesi, and Anyona (2020) investigated the effects of principals' instructional supervision strategies on students' academic advancement. In particular, a convergent parallel design was employed in a mixed-method study design. Along with 1300 form four students from the 26 public secondary schools, the researcher also focused on 26 principals, 130 instructors, and 1 Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (SQASO). Two different sampling techniques were employed in the study: probability (simple and stratified random) and non-probability (purposive sampling). The study's findings showed that principals monitored student academic progress in the classroom and they examined official documentation. However, principals lacked the necessary skills for supervision, were overworked as TSC agents, and had a negative attitude toward oversight. It was recommended that teachers should take part in in-service training to broaden their knowledge and skill set for better topic comprehension and delivery.

The study conducted by Mercy and Njiru (2023) aimed to evaluate the relationship between the performance of public secondary schools in Embu County and the implementation of the strategy. In this study, a descriptive research design was employed. A multistage cluster and random sampling technique was employed to select a sample size of 100, or 200 responders out of the total population. The findings indicated that, of the four variables, academic background had the greatest impact, followed by discipline and training, while school type had the least effect on performance. The findings demonstrated that a number of variables, including school style, discipline, training, and academic background, had a significant influence on the performance of Embu County's public secondary schools. The study concluded that schools ought to allow themselves to be subjected to external inspections by the government and other interested parties in order to evaluate tactics, give staff leadership training, review and update their training policy, revamp their culture,

improve communication, locate new funding sources, and update their punitive measures to account for other factors like detention.

Another study examined the impact of teacher performance assessments on the academic achievement of students in public secondary schools located in Vihiga County, Kenya (Didinya, Ouda, & Ndanu, 2018). The study employed an explanatory sequential design. Out of the fifty-one public secondary schools, sixteen were selected as samples using stratified random sampling. Department heads, deputy principals, and principals made up a deliberate sample. Using stratified sampling, which was followed by simple random sampling, a sample of the teachers and students was taken. From the 21,064 respondents in the study population, a sample of 366 respondents was chosen. The study's conclusions showed that teachers' professional knowledge and application, inventiveness and originality, and time management abilities all had a favorable effect on students' academic success. This suggested that secondary school principals needed to have a toolkit of management techniques that improve both the academic achievement of the students and the institution. Thus, at public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, the current study sought to ascertain the impact of strategic performance management practices on students' academic progress in the KCSE.

As strategic performance management tools for basic learning institutions, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in Kenya developed the strategic plan, service charter, performance contract, work plans, monitoring and evaluation reports, performance appraisal reports, and integrated personnel and payroll data (IPPD) (Jonyo, 2017). Academic achievement of students is determined by the principals' capacity to use strategic performance management tools, claims Clayton (2019). Unfortunately, a lot of students in public secondary schools continue to leave this level of study with poor KCSE results. This suggests that secondary school principals should possess a toolset of management strategies that enhance the institution's and the students' academic performance. It is crucial to evaluate the impact of strategic performance management approaches on students' KCSE performance. Finding out if strategic performance management practices at public secondary schools in Tharaka

Nithi County, Kenya, had a beneficial or detrimental effect on students' academic achievement in the KCSE was the aim of this study.

Academic success of students and the application of strategies are favorably connected (Bagine, Kubai, and Njagi, 2022). This was found in their investigation on the ways in which the management strategies employed by the principals in public secondary schools in Imenti North Sub-county, Meru County, Kenya, affected the academic achievement of their students. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The sample consisted of 30 principals and was chosen by purposive sampling of two department heads from each school. It was claimed that 57.5% of the changes in the school mean score could be attributed to the strategy's successful execution. The study found a favorable correlation between student performance and the effectiveness of instructional materials. The challenges faced in the process of implementation had a significant effect on the school's success. The staff's dissatisfaction with the facilities had a significant influence on how the principal's strategies were carried out, which negatively affected the school's success.

In a related study, Mugeru (2015) examined the effect of management practices on Kenya Certificate of Primary Education performance in Chuka Division of Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The study discovered that because there was no professional development program in place to promote and encourage head teachers' acquisition of new and applicable knowledge, they did not attend seminars to polish their managerial skills. An obvious sign of a demotivated instructor was the lack of a rewards program for exceptional work. The study's findings also demonstrated that poor facilities and understaffing for elementary school education had an effect on the region's academic performance. There is definitely a lack of knowledge regarding the benefits of strategic performance management practices in Tharaka Nithi County. Information regarding the effects of implementing a strategic performance management system on the academic performance of secondary school pupils was definitely lacking in Tharaka Nithi County. The assertion that Tharaka Nithi County pupils' performance on national exams had improved after performance management was put in place was not sufficiently supported by the available data. In order to bridge this gap, the proposed study looked into how well secondary school principals

in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, could employ strategic performance management practices to raise their students' KCSE scores.

There aren't many studies conducted in Tharaka Nithi County, particularly the ones that focused on strategic performance management systems. Kamau (2019) looked on how teacher performance reviews effected instruction and learning in Maara Sub County. Even though it was part of performance management, the study couldn't find a link between student academic success and appraisal. Mburia and Bett (2020) investigated the effects of knowledge management approaches on project performance in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Some school principals still struggled to implement effective performance management programs that could help students achieve high academic standing, even though research has shown that appropriate knowledge management techniques could help projects be completed successfully.

2.5 Challenges of Using Strategic Performance Management System in Schools

It is the responsibility of school administrators to employ effective management techniques in order to enhance students' performance on national examinations (Maponya, 2020). But according to studies, principals have a variety of difficulties in doing so, which negatively impacts pupils' academic performance on national examinations. According to Lee (2015), one of the reasons the performance management process in schools doesn't work was because it lacked structure. This was not a one-time process; rather, it needed to be repeated more often. Since improving an organization's employees' overall performance was the main objective of a performance management process, schools needed to have a well-thought-out structure in place to oversee it. An effective school performance management system facilitates staff comprehension.

According to Bianchi (2016), performance management in schools occasionally failed as a result of choosing the wrong goals in an attempt to maximize the performance of teachers and other staff members. Sometimes it was difficult for principals to communicate expectations to their staff. It was essential that they explained to the staff why performance management was beneficial. Employees, both academic and non-academic, ought to be aware of the benefits of a performance management

system and have access to the resources they required to keep improving. Performance management systems without incentives and acknowledgment for staff members' achievements were more likely to fall short, according to Bawa (2017). Appreciation and acknowledgment were essential for preserving employee morale and increasing output. It was critical to keep an eye on worker performance and to thank them for their efforts.

Teachers and school officials only carried out tactics without fully appreciating the consequences of the actions they took (Yaakob et al., 2019). These results were obtained from a Malaysian study. The results of the survey also demonstrated how little teachers understood the importance of strategic planning and management in the classroom. A study conducted in Indonesia by Bandur (2012) found that the principal faced real difficulties in managing the school, particularly in relation to strategic management and the application of associated strategies. The principals' first obstacle was having to mentally adjust to the increased requirements of strategic long-term planning after new policy and management innovation. The researcher suggested that in order to promote cooperation in collaborative school decision-making, principals should delegate authority and control to the school level. This entailed creating curriculum-based education, textbooks, school buildings, annual programs, budgets, common visions, and even rules about student discipline.

The possible effects of strategic planning on academic accomplishment in public secondary schools were examined by Wasike and Dhafana (2019) in Damas, the province of North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The target audience was the Goma, North Kivu provincial public secondary schools. The study discovered that formal strategic planning was used in most schools and that performance and strategic planning had a positive relationship. Another important study found a positive correlation between performance and strategic planning, but it was not the sole element influencing performance. Remarkably, only modest levels of stakeholder involvement were made in the development of strategic plans, and only moderate environmental analysis was conducted during the strategic planning process.

Using findings from the Gauteng School Governing Bodies, the effect of strategic management on secondary school monitoring and assessment was examined (Madzimure and Mashishi, 2021). Data for the qualitative study came from interviews with ten people selected at random. Instead of selecting the sample at random, a purposeful sampling process was used. The study discovered that poor reporting procedures, a lack of cooperation and communication, and a dearth of relevant data made it difficult to monitor and assess secondary education. Since strategic management reduced uncertainty, reduced resistance to change, and emphasized the organization's strategic advantages, it was acknowledged as being essential to monitoring and evaluation.

Similar to this, Onuorah (2020) investigated the challenges that secondary schools in the Otoucha Education Zone in Anambra State encountered when putting their strategic plans into practice. In the Otoucha Education Zone of Anambra State, 680 teachers and 26 principals of public secondary schools made up the study's population through a descriptive survey. Using simple random sampling, the researcher chose a sample of thirty percent of the teachers in the Zone. The findings demonstrated the limited adoption of strategic plans by secondary school principals in the Otoucha Education Zone of Anambra State. It was also discovered that several problems, such as a lack of funding, insufficient institutional leadership, a scarcity of qualified personnel, a lack of interest on the part of stakeholders, poor communication skills, ignorance of the strategy implementation plan, a lack of teaching resources, and a lack of physical facilities, were impeding the implementation of strategic plans in secondary schools in the Otoucha Education Zone.

In Njombe Town Council, Tanzania, public secondary schools faced difficulties in implementing education strategic planning. Sanga, Chaula, and Mhando (2023) assessed these difficulties. A case study research design and a qualitative research methodology were both used in the study. The study included forty responders in its sample. The findings indicated that a variety of factors affected education strategic planning, such as financial hardships, a lack of cooperation from parents and teachers, a long commute from home to school, a scarcity of science teachers, inadequate infrastructure, a top-down planning model, unstable education policies, a poor

selection of primary school students for public secondary schools, and a shortage of teaching and learning resources. The results of the study indicated that a major problem preventing school strategic planning from being implemented in all public secondary schools was a lack of funds.

When putting strategic plans into practice, school heads encountered numerous difficulties (Malusu and Mkulu, 2020). This was made clear in their investigation into the administrative challenges faced by public secondary school heads in Tanzania's Kondo Town Council when putting their strategic plans into action. The study employed a mixed research method approach with a convergent parallel design. A mixed research method approach and a convergent parallel design were employed in the investigation. Seventy people participated in the study; sixty-one of them were secondary school teachers, one was a district education official, four were ward education officers, and four were school principals. They used simple random sampling that was stratified in addition to purposeful procedures. The study's conclusions showed that while school heads engaged in strategic planning, they encountered difficulties implementing their goals because of a lack of funding, poor infrastructure, limited community involvement, a scarcity of teachers, poor training, and interference from political leaders.

Locally, Seje, Ombati, and Maithya (2021) evaluated how well the principals used control mechanisms and how their plans and frameworks for improving performance management in Kenya's public secondary schools were progressing. A descriptive survey approach was used in the study, which had 225 participants overall. Using stratified sampling, the respondents were divided into groups, and volunteers were selected at random from each stratum. The Principals and Deputies were selected through deliberate sampling, whereas the HODs were selected using the Slovin algorithm. According to the study's findings, the majority of principals did not employ effective strategic plan control and evaluation, which had an effect on the advancement of performance management practices. Thus, inadequate performance practices made it more difficult to achieve the intended standards in performance practices. Many challenges were encountered during the strategic planning

implementation procedures as a performance enhancement tool because of inadequate funding, inadequate oversight, and inadequate evaluation frameworks.

In a similar vein, Mukabi, (2022) investigated variables influencing the execution of strategic plans in public secondary schools located in Kakamega County, Kenya. Utilizing a combination of correlation design and descriptive survey methods, the study targeted a total population of 645 respondents with a sample population of 171. Multiple-stage sampling techniques were applied. The study discovered that training, resources, and stakeholder involvement all significantly impacted how successfully school strategies were put into practice. The study discovered that school administration lacked appropriate strategic planning training, stakeholders were not fully involved in the process, and there were not enough resources available to implement strategic plans. Consequently, the research recommended that the government enhance financing for public secondary schools and guarantee that all pertinent stakeholders actively participate in the strategic planning process.

Further, in Kirinyaga County, Kenya, private primary schools utilize strategic plans. Maina (2021) examined the impact of organizational resources on these plans' implementation. Research designs that were cross-sectional, explanatory, and descriptive were used in the study. Ninety head teachers, ninety chairpersons of parent organizations, and ninety chairpersons of boards of management made up the 270 respondents that the study was aiming for. To choose 81 respondents for the sample size, the study employed deliberate sampling. There were 27 head teachers, 27 PA chairpersons, and 27 Board of Management chairpersons in the sample. The study's findings showed that organizational leadership, financial, human, and information technology resources all had a positive statistically significant impact on Kirinyaga's private schools ability to execute their strategic goals.

An investigation was conducted on the elements associated to stakeholders that impact the execution of strategic plans in public secondary schools located in the Machakos Sub-county of Kenya (Kyai, 2019). The study found no correlation between stakeholder training and strategic plan implementation. The study also showed that improving stakeholder communication and resource allocation had a

favorable impact on how well strategic plans were implemented. Imende, Olel, and Gogo (2020) investigated the impact of resources on the implementation of strategic plans in the public secondary schools of Kakamega County. The study used a combination of descriptive survey methods and correlation design, aiming to reach a total population of 645 respondents with a sample population of 173. Multiple-stage sampling techniques were applied. According to the poll, public secondary schools in Kakamega County lacked the funding required to fulfill their strategic objectives.

The implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools is influenced by government policies, leadership, and resource allocation (Ngetich 2019). This was proved in his study, which concentrated on nine of the forty-six public secondary schools in the Rongai Sub-County and employed a descriptive survey design. The study employed purposive and simple random selection techniques to choose a sample size of eleven respondents, comprising department heads, principals, teachers, and deputy principals. The findings demonstrated that the effectiveness of strategic plans executed in the schools was significantly influenced by government policies, resource allocation, and leadership. On the other hand, the model did not demonstrate that organization structure was significant. The study recommended that key stakeholders who were responsible for implementing the strategic plans in the schools receive training in order to maintain positive relationships with all parties involved. Furthermore, the study recommended that school administrators improve the ways in which they interact with stakeholders and include them in the planning process.

In his study, which was conducted in Tharaka-Nithi County, M'rithi (2014) claims that structural modification concerns plagued the implementation of performance management systems in inclusive public secondary schools. The research findings indicated that teachers' lack of Special Needs Education (SNE) competence was the largest barrier to the adoption of performance management strategies in relation to the structural alteration of the learning environment in public secondary schools for inclusive education. Mbiuki (2019) looked into how the implementation of strategic plans affected the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Maara Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The majority of schools, according to the report, had not implemented the strategic plan evaluation methods that could

help raise student achievement. However, the study did not examine the challenges that educational institutions faced in carrying out their strategic goals. The proposed study aimed to fill this gap by analyzing the challenges associated with implementing performance management practices and offering suggestions for future directions for performance management, particularly in public secondary school settings.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The study was based on two theories. Namely: Systems Management Theory and Capital Theory of School Effectiveness.

2.6.1 Systems Management Theory

The theoretical basis for this study came from the Systems Management Theory, which was first put forth by Bertalanffy in 1940 and subsequently advanced by Bogdanoy in 1980. Lazlo (1996) and Meadows (2008) were also consulted (Gordon, 2021). The theory holds that for a firm to operate as a whole, its many components must work in unison for the bigger system to perform as efficiently as possible. According to the idea, interdependence, subsystem linkages, and synergy are some of the key factors that define an organization's performance. While workers are one of a company's most important assets, departments, work groups, and organizational hierarchy are essential to its success. Managers must examine patterns and events in their businesses in order to determine the optimal management style, which will allow them to work together on various programs as a whole as opposed to working in separate units (Gordon, 2021).

Advocates of the System management system see organizations as open systems composed of related, interdependent components that interact with one another as subsystems. Consequently, collaborative study on these several sub-systems is better than solitary studies. Inputs, a transformational process, outputs, feedback, and the environment make up the organization's five components. Through employee work activities, the inputs data, raw materials, and human resources go through a transformative process to produce outputs. Since the outputs affect other systems, feedback is typically obtained by seeing how the outputs affect the environment-based

inputs. When faced with external forces, internal aspects often respond negatively (Gordon, 2021).

Subsystem dependencies and interactions, as well as interactions between internal and external components, are the foundations of organizational efficiency (Mele et al, 2010). Every component of the entire educational system depends on the others and cannot operate at its best without them. As a result, it's likely that elements that negatively impact one school subsystem will also negatively impact other subsystems within the school. To a certain extent, this may have an impact on the entire educational system. Regular interactions occur between many elements of a school system as well, albeit they can take many forms (Mele et al., 2010). The idea also described how administrators ought to have the authority to alter the organizational structure of the school in order to enhance overall performance.

Since this theory evaluates the efficacy of the system as a whole rather than simply a single subsystem, it is applicable to this study. This is due to the fact that decisions and actions taken in one area of the school will have an impact on decisions and actions made in other areas. According to Bale and Polese (2010), a competitive firm's ability to establish communication channels, coordinate information flow, rationalize and harmonize the development of a firm with respect to all external relationships, and recognize and manage functions and relationships are all closely related to each other. The management of the organizations must then address the system and direct it toward a purpose by converting static structural relationships into dynamic interactions with other functional systems (Gordon, 2021).

2.6.2 Capital Theory of School Effectiveness

However, according to the Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement, a successful school successfully employs high leverage tactics based on creative, evidence-based professional practice to mobilize both its social and intellectual capital in order to achieve the intended educational outcomes of moral and intellectual excellence (Hargreaves, 2001). Four ideas are essential, according to the "capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement": results, leverage, productive capacity, and social capital. These ideas include the ability to act strategically and

powerfully, as well as the connection between teacher effort and educational outcomes, or the improvements in students' moral and intellectual development brought about by a combination of tactics and instructor input. Accordingly, it is maintained that successful educational institutions focus on practical methods for raising students' academic achievement (Hargreaves, 2001).

Because it addresses intellectual capital, which this theory defines as a combination of creating a school vision, determining a school's core values, conceptualizing and articulating a school-wide pedagogy, insights regarding school improvement strategies, and student performance in KCSE across subject areas, this theory is appropriate for use in this study. The capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement is applicable to this study because of its theoretical concepts, which include outcomes, leverage strategies, intellectual capital, and social capital, have an effect on students' academic performance and educational quality in a manner similar to that of the strategic program areas of the strategic plan (Hargreaves, 2001). Thus, the capital theory of education will be used in this study to examine how secondary school administrators' tactics have improved their pupils' performance on the KCSE.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The causal relationships between the independent and dependent variables are depicted in the framework (Figure 1). According to the conceptual framework, the study's independent variables include the strategic performance management strategies used by secondary school principals, the degree to which these strategies are implemented, the possibility of a relationship between strategic performance management and student performance in the KCSE, and the difficulties encountered when putting the strategies into practice. The study's dependent variable is how well pupils performed on the KCSE.

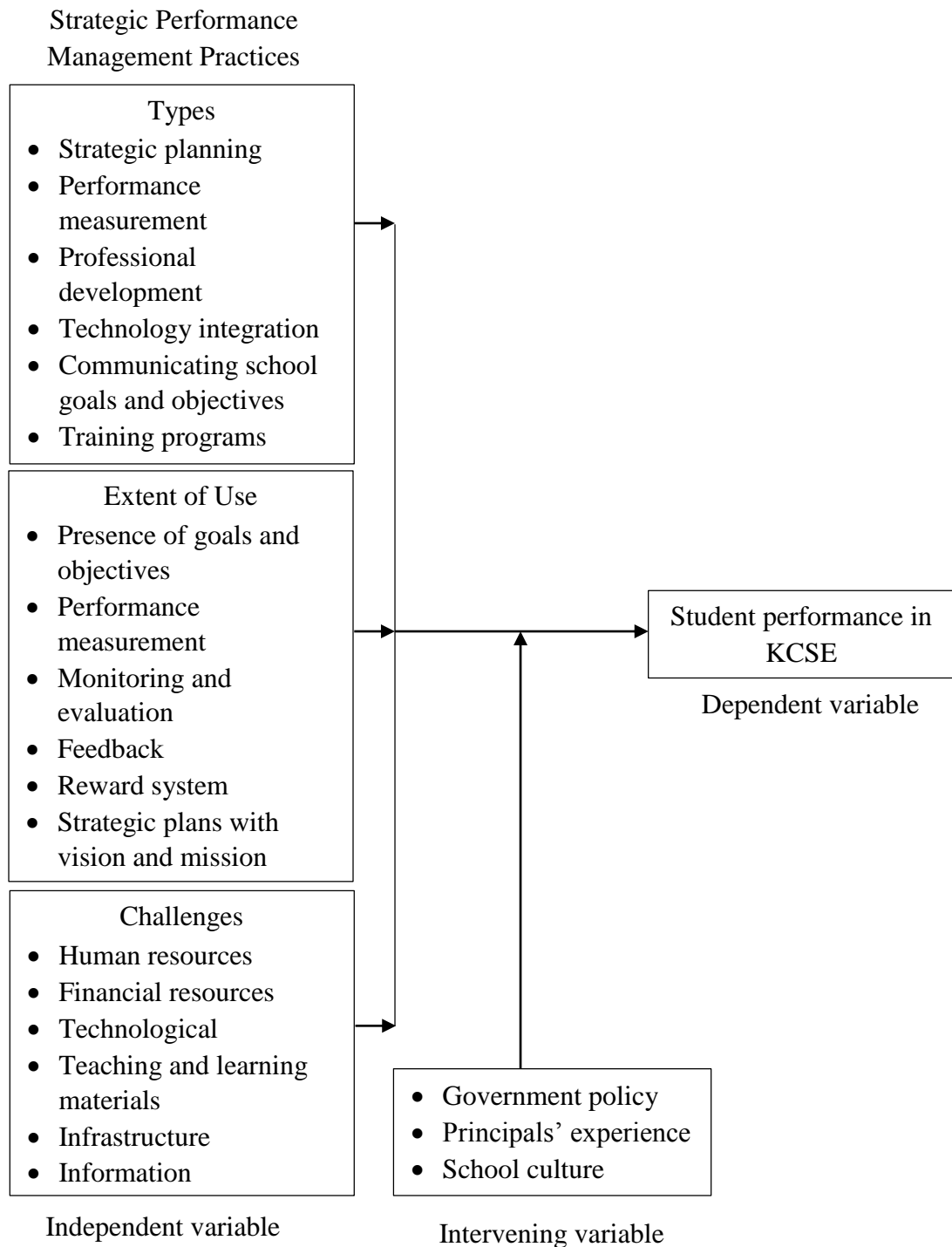


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between Study Variables

The assumption of this study was that strategic performance management practices had positive influence on performance of students in KCSE in public secondary schools. Strategic performance management practices bring about improved decision making, increased efficiency, better coordination between departments and improved

alignment with school goals. Strategic performance management practices in schools are approaches which provide a framework so that the most important priority of the school – performance of students in national examinations – is taken care of. These approaches increase motivation, communication and engagement and keep everyone in a school – from teachers to administrators – connected. SPM implementation challenges are those factors that hinder effective strategy implementation and they emanate both from the internal and external environment of the public secondary schools. It is expected that if the strategic performance management practices are heightened in public secondary schools, students' performance in KCSE can be improved significantly.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Location

The study was conducted in Tharaka Nithi County, one of the 47 counties in Kenya (Appendix I). Tharaka Nithi County is located in the Eastern Region part of Kenya. It borders the counties of Embu to the south and southwest, Meru to the north and northeast, Kitui to the east and southeast, Kirinyaga and Nyeri to the west. The county comprises of five (5) sub-counties namely: Meru south, Maara, Igambang'ombe, Tharaka south and Tharaka north. There are 158 public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County.

3.2 Research Design

Descriptive and correlational research designs were employed in the study. Descriptive research design was used to establish the type of SPM employed by the principals and their effects on students' performance in national examinations. Correlational research design was utilized to establish the relationship between SPM and students' performance in KCSE.

3.3 Study Population

All public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County were included in the study. In Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, there are 158 public secondary schools with 158 principals and 948 head of departments. There are 5 sub county quality assurance and standard officers [(SCQUASO), Table 2]

Table 2: Distribution of the Study Population

Sub County	Target Population			
	Principals	HoDs	SCQASO	Total
Maara	56	336	1	393
Meru South	39	234	1	274
Igambang'ombe	21	126	1	148
Tharaka North	14	84	1	99
Tharaka South	28	168	1	197
Total	158	948	5	1,111

Source: Tharaka Nithi County Director of Education Office Reports, 2023

3.4 Determination of Sample Size

The sample size was calculated according to Yamane (2007) as follows,

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of significance = 5%).

Therefore, the sample size to be used in this study is given as

$$n = \frac{1,111}{1 + 1,111(0.05)^2} = 294.10$$

=294

Hence 294 respondents were sampled in the study area.

3.5 Sampling Procedures

The research was confined to public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. There are 158 public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The schools involved in the study from each category were selected using cluster sampling technique. Cluster sampling was considered because the population of Tharaka Nithi is geographically demarcated into five distinct sub counties. Thirty (30%) of the principals (47 Principals) was obtained. Simple random proportionate sampling was employed to obtain principals from each sub county. Since Yamane formulae allowed a sample of 294, then 247 head of departments were considered. Simple proportionate sampling was again employed to obtain 247 head of departments from the 948. A total of 299 were selected with an additional of five to cater for attrition.

Table 3: Distribution of the Sample

Sub County	Number of Principals	Sample	HoDs	Sample	SCQASO
Maara	56	15	336	89	1
Meru South	39	10	234	61	1
Igambang'ombe	21	6	126	33	1
Tharaka North	14	4	84	21	1
Tharaka South	28	7	168	43	1
Total	158	42	948	247	5

3.6 Research Instruments

Data and information was collected by use of questionnaires and an interview schedule. (Appendix B, C and D).

3.6.1 Questionnaire for Principals and Head of Departments

The researcher designed a questionnaire for the principals and head of departments (HODs) with items that respondents would respond to. The questionnaires had sections A to E. Section A of each questionnaire gathered respondents' demographic information; section B focused on Strategic performance management practices used. Section C covered the extent of strategic performance management strategies use in schools. Section D focused on establishing the relationship between strategic performance management and performance of students in KCSE. Section E focused on general statements about students KCSE performance. Section F focused on the challenges principals faced in improving students' academic achievement using strategic performance management system in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County. According to Borg, Gall, and Gall (2003), questionnaires are helpful for research because they gather data that cannot be immediately observed, such as inquiries into people motivations, sentiments, attitudes, and accomplishments. As methods for gathering data, questionnaires also offer less expensive and time-consuming advantages. These advantages guided the selection of the questionnaires for this investigation. Only closed-ended responses were allowed on the questionnaire in this study.

3.6.2 Interview Schedule

To better evaluate how principals' strategic performance management practices influence the students' performance in KCSE examination in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, the researcher developed an interview schedule. The Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers were the interviewees. The schedule included 4 semi-structured items. The respondents were interviewed by asking questions and capturing the answers. Due to their versatility and capacity for further questioning, interview schedules might be used when it became essential to explain concepts (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). To avoid imposing the researcher's frame of reference on the data that was acquired, the interview schedule was largely semi-structured (Marshall, 1998).

3.6.3 Pilot Study

In order to determine whether the study was feasible, whether the research protocol was practical and workable, and whether the sample frame and method was efficient, a pilot study was used to construct and test the suitability of research instrument. Twenty nine (29) respondents made up of fourteen (14) principals and fifteen (15) head of departments (HODs) in secondary schools in neighbouring Meru County using single administration method made up the pilot study sample since this complied with Johnson (2009) recommendation that a pilot study sample should be 10%–20% of the planned sample. One Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer was also interviewed.

3.6.4 Validity

Test validity is determined by how accurately it evaluates the variables it claims to (Kathuri & Pals, 1993). According to Mugenda & Mugenda (1999), the measure of validity is the extent to which data analysis outcomes accurately reflect the phenomenon under study. Following Kothari's (1983) suggestion that validity can be evaluated by using a panel of experts who will judge how well the measuring instrument complies with the standards without having a numerical way to express it, the researcher evaluated the content validity of the instruments with the assistance of the supervisors. By discussing the study tools to experts in Chuka University's Faculty of Education and Resource Development, it was possible to ascertain the content and face validity of the instruments. This was done to show how well they can foresee how principal's strategic performance management practices influenced performance of students in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

3.6.5 Reliability

How consistently the empirical indicators hold across two or more efforts to validate the theoretical idea characterizes an instrument's reliability (Orodho, 2005). The many survey items were examined for internal consistency using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The assumption that items measuring the same notion should correlate leads to the internal consistency coefficient approximating the measurement's reliability. Since the coefficients for Principals and Heads of Department questionnaires were

0.863 and 0.785 respectively (Table 1). The reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above is satisfactory for a study thus, the instruments were considered reliable for the research.

Table 4: Reliability Coefficients for Principals and Heads of Department Questionnaires

Respondents	Number of items	Reliability coefficient (α)
Principals	48	0.863
Head of Departments	48	0.785

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Structured questionnaires were used to collect information from forty-two (42) principals and 251 heads of department who were randomly selected. In addition, interview schedules were used to obtain data from the 5 sub county assurance and standards officers (SCQASO) were purposively sampled. The H.O.Ds personally filled the questionnaires and handed them in real-time. Also the principal personally filled the questionnaires on various aspects of strategic performance management skills. The quality assurance and standards officers who were interviewed and information recorded.

3.8 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was thoroughly organized and cleaned by the researcher after data collection. When cleaning the data, the researcher removed the data pieces that were not adequately addressing the research objectives. The remaining survey items were organized, categorized, and input into the social sciences statistical program (SPSS version 26) for analysis. For descriptive statistics the researcher used Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for analysis. The information gathered was displayed using tables and bar charts. Inferential statistics including Chi-square was used to analyze data to determine the relationship between principals' strategic performance management practices and the students' performance in KCSE. Qualitative data was analyzed by grouping similar responses together as per the study objectives. Data analysis was done using inferential statistics and results will be presented in cross tabulations, frequency and percentages.

Table 5: Summary of Data Analysis Methods

Hypothesis and Research Questions	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Statistical measure/Test statistic
Ho1: There is no statistical relationship between performance management practices and performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County.	Relationship	Strategic performance management strategies	Frequencies Percentages Chi-square
What strategic performance management strategies are employed by principals to promote performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County?	Strategic performance management practices	Performance in KCSE	Frequencies Percentages
What is the extent of strategic performance management practices employed by principals in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi county, Kenya?	Practices	Implementation of strategic performance management system	Frequencies Percentages
What are the challenges faced by principals in implementing strategic performance management system in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya?	Challenges	Implementation of strategic performance management system	Frequencies percentages

3.9 Ethical Considerations

In ensuring the ethical integrity of this research endeavor, a thorough approach was taken to safeguard the rights and well-being of all participants involved. To commence the research process, the necessary ethical clearances were obtained from reputable institutions. A research clearance letter was formally sought from the Research and Ethics Committee at Chuka University, ensuring that the study aligns with established ethical standards in academia. Additionally, a research permit was acquired from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) to further solidify the ethical foundation of the study (appendix H). Prior to engaging participants in the study, explicit consent was obtained from each respondent. The consent process involved a detailed explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications. Participants were assured that their

involvement was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without facing any repercussions. Confidentiality was a paramount consideration throughout the research process. Respondents were explicitly informed that their personal information and responses was to be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Any identifying details that could compromise the anonymity of participants was carefully handled and omitted from the final research report. To further ensure confidentiality, data was securely stored and only accessible to the research team. In acknowledging the contributions of existing scholarly work, proper citation practices were adhered to rigorously. All references and sources utilized in the study were duly acknowledged and cited in accordance with academic standards. This commitment to citing sources aimed at not only to upholding academic integrity but also to recognize the intellectual contributions of prior researchers and scholars, preventing any potential issues of plagiarism. By adhering to these ethical considerations, the researcher sought to maintain the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and respect for the rights of all participants, thereby contributing to the credibility and reliability of the study's findings

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The researcher distributed 294 questionnaires to 42 principals and 251 heads of departments in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. In addition, interviews were conducted with 5 Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SCQASO). The response rate is revealed in Table 6.

Table 6: Response Rate

Category	Response		Non Response	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Principals	39	93.62	3	6.38
Teachers	246	98.02	5	1.98
SCQASO	4	80.00	1	20.0
Total	289	97.03	9	2.97

A total of 285 questionnaires for principals and Heads of Departments were duly completed and returned. An overall response rate of 97.03 % was obtained against a non-response rate of 2.97%. Polonsky (2012) pointed out that a response rate of 70% and above is deemed very good for data analysis and reporting hence the response rate obtained was suitable for this study.

4.2 Respondents Demographic Characteristics

A description of the study sample is provided in this section. The demographic profile offers details on population alignment and aids in forming an impression of the various subcategories that comprise the larger population. In order to evaluate sample characteristics and assess whether samples are representative of the populations of interest, researchers collect demographic data from the study participants. Although they cannot be changed, demographic factors can be related to dependent variables, allowing researchers to explain their links. The researcher in this study determined the respondents' Age, gender, the greatest level of education, teaching experience and their current position to examine the characteristics of the respondents.

4.2.1 Distribution of the respondents by Gender and Age

The respondents were asked to tick appropriately against their gender and their appropriate age bracket. During analysis the researcher cross tabulated the responses on gender and age. the responses obtained for the school principals are as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Gender and Age Distribution of the Principals

		Gender				Total	
		Female		Male		F	%
Age		F	%	F	%		
	36-45	1	5.0	2	8.3	3	6.8
	46-55	12	60.0	17	70.8	29	65.9
	56-60	7	35.0	5	20.9	12	27.3
Total		20	45.5	24	54.5	44	100.0

From the outcome of the analysis of respondents' gender and age revealed in Table 7, 45.5% were female principals while 54.5% were male principals. The results indicate a gender imbalance favouring men among principals. This could be attributed to challenges encountered by female principals compared to their male counterparts in school leadership positions. Due to their responsibilities to their families, female teachers may be reluctant to take on administrative roles, which contribute to the low percentage of female principals. Because there is a gender gap in favour of male principals, female students may suffer because there are not enough mentors and role models for them in public secondary schools. As a result, the gender gap in favor of men is shown among the students. A research conducted on barriers to female leadership and their influence on women inclusivity in management in public schools by Kilonzo (2020) revealed that female teachers were reluctant to take up administrative roles for fear of being deployed to schools far from home. Most (65.9%) of the principals were in the 46-55 years' age bracket with only 6.8% being in the 36-44 years' age bracket. Those who indicated that they were in the 56-60 years' age bracket were 27.3%. Similarly, the researcher established the distribution of Heads of department by gender and age (Table 8).

Table 8: Distribution of HODs by Gender and Age

		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female		F	%
		F	%	F	%	F	%
Age	36-45 years	103	79.2	90	76.9	193	78.1
	46-55 years	24	18.5	26	22.2	50	20.2
	Above 55 years	3	2.3	1	0.9	4	1.7
Total		130	52.6	117	47.4	247	100.0

Information presented in Table 8 shows that there were more (52.6%) male than female (47.4%) heads of department. Majority (78.1%) of the heads of department were in the 36-45 years' age bracket, with male heads of departments (79.2%) being more than the female (76.9%) HODs in this age bracket. Those HODs who indicated that they were in the 46- 55 years bracket and Above 55 years were 20.2% and 1.7% respectively.

4.2.2 Distribution of Respondents by Category of School

The study sought to ascertain the distribution of respondents by type of institution in the selected public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The responses are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9: Distribution of the Respondents by Category of School

	Principals		Heads of Department	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
National	1	2.3	10	4.0
Extra-county	9	20.5	70	28.3
County	21	47.7	94	38.1
Sub-county	13	29.5	73	29.6
Total	44	100.0	247	100.0

Majority of the principals (47.7%) and heads of department (38.1%) were drawn from County schools as shown in Table 9. Principals from sub county secondary schools accounted for 29.5% while 20.5% were drawn from extra county schools, 47.7 % from county schools and only 2.3% from the national schools. On the other hand, 29.6% of the heads of departments were from sub county schools, 38.1% form county schools, 28.3% from extra county schools and only 4.0% were from national schools. This is an indicator that Tharaka Nithi County has a higher number of county and sub

county public secondary schools and very few national and extra county schools. Since placement in these schools is done using the scores in KCPE, with the national school and extra county schools attracting students with very high scores in KCPE. Students admitted in county and sub county schools have relatively average marks or below average which is likely to affect their KCSE performance.

4.2.3 Highest Academic Qualification

The study sought the respondents' information on their level of education. The findings are presented in table 10.

Table 10: Highest Level of Education

	Principals		Heads of Departments	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
B.Ed	25	56.8	217	87.9
PGDE	3	6.8	11	4.5
M.Ed	16	36.4	19	7.6
PhD	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	44	100.0	247	100

The study findings as presented in Table 10 reveals that neither the principal nor the HODs had a PhD. Majority (56.8%) and (87.9%) of the principals and heads of departments respectively had bachelors' degree. There were more principals (36.4%) as compared to Heads of department (7.6%) with a master's degree. Principals who had a PGDE accounted for 6.8% while only 4.5% of the heads of department possessed similar qualification

4.2.5 Years of Experience

The principals were asked to indicate the number of years served as principal. The research findings are captured in Table 11.

Table 11: Principals years of Experience

	Frequency	Percent
0-4 years	2	4.5
5-9 years	8	18.2
10-14 years	11	25.0
15-19 years	9	20.5
20 years	14	31.8
Total	44	100.0

Computations displayed in Table 11 reveal that most (31.8%) of the principals had served for period of 20 years, 25.0% had served for between 10-14 years, 20.5% for 15-19 years while 18.2 % had served for a period of 5-9 years. Only 4.5% of the principals had served for a period of less than five years. The findings indicate that majority of the principals in public secondary schools had served as principals for a significant number of years hence had experience in management of school affairs.

The years of service served by the majority of the teachers reveal that they possessed the relevant information on participation, retention, management of resources, and students learning outcomes. The researcher could therefore rely on the information provided by the respondents.

4.2.6 Number of Strategic Performance Management Courses Attended

The researcher inquired from the principals the number of Strategic Performance Management Courses Attended. The findings of the analysis are captured in Table 12

Table 12: Number of Strategic Management Courses Attended

	Frequency	Percent
None	9	20.5
One	20	45.5
Two	12	27.3
Three	2	4.5
More than three	1	2.3
Total	44	100.0

According to data in Table 12, many (45.5%) of the principals had attended strategic performance management courses once. A significant number (20.5%) of the principals indicated that they have never attended any course in strategic performance management. Those who had attended the course twice accounted for 27.3% of the principals. A small proportion 4.5% and 2.3% of the principals had attended the strategic performance management course three times or more than three times respectively. Results from the aforementioned statistics indicate that most principals received the necessary training to comprehend the dynamics relating to the strategic performance management practices in public secondary schools. Since the strategic performance management practices courses attended could influence students' performance, the principals were in a position to provide the pertinent information.

The number of course attended in strategic performance management may also determine the extent of strategic performance management practice use in schools.

4.3 Principals Responses on Types of Strategic Performance Management Practices

The opinions of the principals and heads of department were sought to establish the types of strategic performance management practices employed in schools to enhance performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County's public secondary schools. A five point Likert scale was used in which: Strongly agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) =4, Not sure (NS)= 3, Disagree (D)= 2, strongly disagree (SD) = 1. The responses obtained from the principals were analyzed and were displayed in Table 13.

Table 13: Principals Responses on Types of Strategic Performance Management Practices

Item	SA n(%)	A n(%)	NS n(%)	D n(%)	SD n(%)
There is a formal strategic performance management system for improving KCSE performance	11(25.0)	25(56.8)	6(13.6)	2(4.5)	-
There is clearly stated vision and mission statements of the school	26(59.1)	17(38.6)	1(2.3)	-	-
There is clear communication of school goals and objectives	17(38.6)	23(52.3)	3(6.8)	1(2.3)	-
There is controlling, monitoring and evaluation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement	17(38.6)	23(52.3)	2(4.5)	2(4.5)	-
There is rewarding of smart work of teachers and support staff	10(22.7)	27(61.4)	2(4.5)	4(9.1)	1(2.3)
There is stakeholder involvement in decision making in the school	11(25.0)	28(63.6)	3(6.8)	2(4.5)	-
There is teaching staff involvement in decision making	14(31.8)	25(56.8)	4(9.1)	1(2.3)	-
There is provision of teaching and support staff growth opportunities within the school	8(18.2)	25(56.8)	5(11.4)	6(13.6)	-
There are clearly stipulated guidelines for technology integration (ICT).	2(4.5)	23(52.3)	10(22.7)	8(18.2)	1(2.3)
There is regular communication and timely feedback mechanisms	12(27.3)	29(65.9)	1(2.3)	2(4.5)	-
There is performance planning and reviews	13(29.5)	25(56.8)	4(9.1)	2(4.5)	-
There is coaching and action planning for performance related difficulties	12(27.3)	24(54.5)	5(11.5)	3(6.8)	-
There is implementation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement.	16(36.4)	26(59.1)	2(4.5)	-	-

The research finding on Table 13, indicated that majority (81.8%) of the principals were in agreement that there was a formal strategic performance management system for improving KCSE performance in their schools. A few (4.5%) disagreed while

13.6% were not sure. A large proportion (97.7%) of the principals also agreed that there was clearly stated vision and mission statements of the school, while 2.3% were not sure. There was clear communication of school goals and objectives as suggested by majority (90.9%) of the principals who agreed. A few (6.8%) of the principals were not sure while 2.3% disagreed. On whether there was controlling, monitoring and evaluation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement, most (90.9%) of the principals agreed, 4.5% were not sure and a similar proportion (4.5%) disagreed. A high number (84.1%) of the respondents agreed that there was rewarding of smart work of teachers and support staff, 4.5% were not sure and 11.4% disagreed. A large number (88.6%) of the principals agreed that there was stakeholders' involvement in decision making in schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Only 4.5% disagreed and 6.8% were not sure. There was involvement of teaching staff in decision making as reported by many (88.6%) of the respondents. a small proportion (2.3%) disagreed while 9.1% were not sure. The principals also agreed that there was provision of teaching and support staff growth opportunities within the school as reported by many (75.0%) of the respondents, only 13.6% disagreed and 11.4% were not sure. A large proportion (56.8%) of the principals also agreed that there were clearly stipulated guidelines for technology integration (ICT). Another 22.7% were not sure while 20.5% disagreed.

The high (93.2%) number of principals also noted that there was regular communication and timely feedback mechanisms, 4.5% disagreed, while 2.3% were not sure. Regarding whether there were performance planning and review meetings, many (96.3%) of the principals agreed, 9.1% were not sure and 4.5% disagreed. There was coaching and action planning for performance related difficulties as reported by majority (81.8%) of the principals who agreed. Only 6.8% disagreed and 11.5% were not sure. Pertaining to if there was implementation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement, a big number (95.5% of the principals agreed, 4.5% were not sure and none (0.0%) disagreed. Similarly, the researcher sought the opinion of the heads of department on types of strategic management practices employed by principals and their effect on students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County Kenya. The responses obtained are displayed in Table 14.

Table 14: Heads of Department views on types of strategic management practices

Item	SA n(%)	A n(%)	NS n(%)	D n(%)	SD n(%)
There is a formal Strategic Performance Management System for improving KCSE performance	67(27.1)	139(56.3)	21(8.5)	10(4.0)	10(4.0)
There is clearly stated vision and mission statements of the school	134(54.3)	101(40.9)	4(1.6)	7(2.8)	1(0.4)
There is clear communication of school goals and objectives	94(38.1)	120(48.6)	23(9.3)	10(4.0)	-
There is controlling, monitoring and evaluation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement	72(29.1)	139(56.3)	18(7.3)	13(5.3)	5(2.0)
There is rewarding of smart work of teachers and support staff	59(23.9)	119(48.2)	21(8.5)	36(14.6)	12(4.9)
There is stakeholder involvement in decision making in the school	70(28.3)	128(51.8)	30(12.1)	10(4.0)	9(3.6)
There is teaching staff involvement in decision making	68(27.5)	136(55.1)	17(6.9)	15(6.1)	11(4.5)
There is provision of teaching and support staff growth opportunities within the school	45(18.2)	131(53.0)	38(15.4)	21(8.5)	12(4.9)
There are clearly stipulated guidelines for technology integration (ICT).	40(16.2)	120(48.6)	34(13.8)	36(14.6)	17(6.9)
There is regular communication and timely feedback mechanisms	59(23.9)	140(56.7)	24(9.7)	17(6.9)	7(2.8)
There is performance planning and reviews	53(21.5)	141(57.1)	33(13.4)	11(4.5)	9(3.6)
There is coaching and action planning for performance related difficulties	44(17.8)	130(52.6)	35(14.2)	32(13.0)	6(2.4)
There is implementation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement.	82(33.2)	129(52.2)	14(5.7)	13(5.3)	9(3.6)

Data analyzed and presented in Table 14 revealed that many (83.4%) of the heads of departments agreed that there was a formal Strategic Performance Management System for improving KCSE performance in schools, only 8.0% disagreed while 8.5% were not sure. The respondents also agreed (95.2%) that there was clearly stated vision and mission statements of the school, 3.2% disagreed while 1.6% were not sure. Pertaining to whether there was clear communication of school goals and

objectives, most (86.7%) of the heads of department agreed, 4.0% disagreed and 9.3% were not sure. The study also established that there was controlling, monitoring and evaluation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement as most (85.4%) of the respondents agreed, 7.3% were not sure and only 7.3% disagreed.

A large proportion (72.1%) of the heads of department agreed that there was rewarding of smart work of teachers and support staff, 19.5% disagreed while only 8.5% who indicated that they were not sure. There was stakeholder involvement in decision making in the school as noted by many (80.1%) of the respondents who agreed. A few (7.6%) of the heads of department disagreed while 12.1% were not sure. A large number (82.6%) of the respondents agreed that there was involvement of the teaching staff in decision making. On whether there was provision of teaching and support staff growth opportunities within the school, a high proportion (71.2%) of the HODs agreed, 15.4% were not sure and 13.4% disagreed. When asked if there existed a clearly stipulated guideline for technology integration, most (64.8%) agreed, 13.8% were unsure and 21.5% disagreed. Similarly, many (80.6%) of the respondents agreed that there was regular communication and timely feedback mechanisms. Those who were not sure accounted for 9.7% , while 9.7% disagreed. Pertaining to whether there was performance planning and reviews in secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, most (78.6% of the respondents agreed while 8.1% disagreed and 13.4% were not sure. The study also established that there was coaching and action planning for performance related difficulties as well as implementation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement as many (70.4%) and (85.4% of the respondents agreed respectively.

The findings are in agreement with a study by Kinyua (2023) who investigated the relationship between strategy control and competitive academic performance in selected secondary schools in Kenya's Eastern Region Counties. The study's findings revealed that schools evaluated strategic plans to ensure that they were on track to implement the strategies, and that overall strategy control practice had a substantial impact on competitive academic achievement. Based on the research findings, it was advised that strategic management training be extended to all school administrators, who should embrace strategy control as the best approach to ensure that plans are

implemented correctly. To ensure that strategy implementers stay focused, strategy control tools must be tailored to the school's specific operational environment.

4.3.1 Interview Findings on the Types of Strategic Performance Management Practices and Performance of Students in KCSE

The SCQASO were asked about the types of strategic performance management practices used in schools in their sub-counties.

Researcher: *What are examples of strategic performance management practices in your sub county employed by principals to improve KCSE performance in their schools?*

Respondent 1: *Some of the examples of strategic performance management practices in my sub county employed by principals to improve KCSE performance in their schools include formulation and implementation of strategies for KCSE improvement such as timely coverage of syllabus, teaching staff and support staff/student motivation, giving rewards to students, teachers and support staff, team building for both teachers and support staff, stakeholder involvement and teaching staff involvement in decision making.*

Researcher: *What are examples of strategic performance management practices in your sub county employed by principals to improve KCSE performance in their schools?*

Respondent 2: *Examples of strategic performance management practices in my sub-county employed by principals to improve KCSE performance in their schools were effective syllabus coverage, timely syllabus coverage by end of May, provision of adequate revision materials, frequent and regular evaluation of candidates, ensuring candidates are present in school, staff and student motivation, giving rewards to both teachers and students, teachers working as a team and parental involvement.*

Researcher: *What are examples of strategic performance management practices in your sub county employed by principals to improve KCSE performance in their schools?*

Respondent 3: *Some of the strategic performance management practices employed by principals in my sub-county to improve KCSE performance include parent*

engagements through meetings, candidate's open day forums both at school and sub-county level, team building for both teaching and none teaching staff, rewards, stakeholders involvement in decision making, efficient communication and feedback mechanisms, formulating and implementing strategies for KCSE performance at school levels.

Researcher: *What are examples of strategic performance management practices in your sub county employed by principals to improve KCSE performance in their schools?*

Respondent 4: *Examples of strategic performance management practices employed by principals in my sub-county are parents' involvements, enhancement of students' discipline, teachers' teamwork and discipline, early syllabus coverage to allow time for revision and involvement of other in decision making.*

The respondents agreed with principals and head of departments some of the types strategic performance management are parental involvement, giving of rewards, frequent and regular evaluation of candidates and also frequent and regular evaluation of candidates.

4.4 The Extent of Strategic Performance Management Practices Use in Schools

The researcher sought to find out the extent of strategic performance management practices use in Schools. Different sets of statements anchored on a five point Likert type scale ranging from to a Very Large Extent (VLE) = 5, Large Extent (LE), = 4, Moderate Extent (ME) = 3, Small Extent (SM)= 2, Not at All (NA) = 1 were used to measure the indicators. The criteria for the interpretation of the means from the Likert scale (Table 15).

Table 15: Likert Scale Mean Interpretation Table

Likert scale	Interpretation
Not at All (NA)	1.00-1.79
Small Extent (SM)	1.80-2.59
Moderate Extent (ME)	2.60-3.39
Large Extent (LE)	3.40-4.19
Very Large Extent (VLE)	4.20-5.00

4.4.1 Principals Views on Extent of Strategic Performance Management Practices in Schools

Principals views on the extent of strategic performance management practices use in schools were sought and analyzed, and are presented in Table 16.

Table 16: Principals Views on Extent of Strategic Performance Management use in Schools

Survey Question	NA n(%)	SE n(%)	ME n(%)	LE n(%)	VLE n(%)	Mean	SD	interpretation
To what extent do principals utilize strategic planning as a foundational practice in their schools?	1(2.3)	5(11.4)	20(45.5)	15(34.1)	3(6.8)	3.318	0.856	Moderate Extent
In your opinion, how extensively do principals involve teachers and staff in strategic management planning process?	1(2.3)	4(9.1)	18(40.9)	16(36.4)	5(11.4)	3.4545	0.901	Large extent
To what extent are the strategic goals and objectives clearly defined by principals in their schools?	1(2.3)	4(9.1)	16(36.4)	22(50)	1(2.3)	3.409	0.787	Large extent
How much emphasis do principals place on aligning resources with the strategic priorities of the school?	-	10(22.7)	13(29.5)	18(40.9)	3(6.8)	3.318	0.909	Moderate Extent
To what extent do principals evaluate the students' achievement rates?	2(4.5)	10(22.7)	21(47.7)	11(25.0)	-	2.932	0.818	Moderate Extent
In your opinion, how consistently do principals establish and monitor performance metrics in their plans?	4(9.1)	9(20.5)	13(29.5)	15(34.1)	3(6.8)	3.091	1.095	Moderate Extent
To what extent do principals encourage culture of continuous improvement and innovation in their schools?	4(9.1)	3(6.8)	19(43.2)	13(29.5)	5(11.4)	3.273	1.064	Moderate Extent
To what extent do principals monitor and evaluate performance?	2(4.5)	6(13.6)	17(38.6)	15(34.1)	4(9.1)	3.296	0.978	Moderate Extent
To what extent do principals relay feedback of performance to stakeholders?	2(4.5)	7(15.9)	19(43.2)	12(27.3)	4(9.1)	3.205	0.978	Moderate Extent

Information presented in table 16 revealed that principals utilize strategic planning as a foundational practice in their schools to a moderate extent. A mean of 3.318 and a standard deviation of 0.856 were obtained for this survey question. Hence it was concluded that principals utilized strategic planning as a foundation practice in their schools to a moderate extent. Pertaining to how extensively principals involved teachers and staff in strategic management planning process, it was revealed that it was done to a large extent. A mean of 3.4545 and a standard deviation of 0.901 were obtained for this survey question. Hence it was concluded that principals involved teachers and other staff in strategic management planning process to a large extent.

On what extent were the strategic goals and objectives clearly defined by principals in their schools, it was established that it was done to a large extent. A mean of 3.409 and a standard deviation of 0.787 were obtained and the researcher drew a conclusion that the strategic goals and objectives were defined by principals to a large extent in their schools. On how much emphasis principals placed on aligning resources with the strategic priorities of the school a mean of 3.318 and a standard deviation of 0.909 were obtained. Hence it was concluded that the principals placed emphasis on aligning resources with strategic priorities of the school to a moderate extent. The principals (mean= 2.932, SD= 0.818) were of the view that principals influenced students' achievement rate to a moderate extent. Principals also reported that school principals established and monitored performance metrics in their plans to a moderate extent (Mean= 3.091, SD=1.096). The researcher also established that the principals encouraged culture of continuous improvement in their schools to a moderate extent (Mean = 3.273, SD= 1.064). Principals monitored and evaluated performance to a moderate extent (Mean= 3.296, SD= 0.978). The principals relay feedback of performance to the stake holder to a moderate extent as revealed by the study findings (Mean= 3.205, SD=0.978).

4.4.2 Heads of Department Views on Extent of Strategic Performance Management Practices in Schools

Teachers views on the extent of strategic performance management practices use in schools were analyzed and are presented in Table 17.

Table 17 Heads of Department Views on Extent of Strategic Performance Management Practices in Schools

Survey Question	NA n(%)	SE n(%)	ME n(%)	LE n(%)	VLE n(%)	Mean	SD	interpretation
To what extent do principals utilize strategic planning as a foundational practice in their schools?	10(4.0)	42(17.0)	94(38.1)	75(30.4)	26(10.5)	3.263	0.996	Moderate extent
In your opinion, how extensively do principals involve teachers and staff in strategic management planning process?	8(3.2)	40(16.2)	89(36.0)	82(33.2)	28(11.3)	3.332	0.985	Moderate extent
To what extent are the strategic goals and objectives clearly defined by principals in their schools?	12(4.9)	49(19.8)	75(30.4)	83(33.6)	28(11.3)	3.267	1.056	Moderate extent
How much emphasis do principals place on aligning resources with the strategic priorities of the school?	14(5.7)	46(18.6)	71(28.7)	90(36.4)	26(10.5)	3.275	1.061	Moderate extent
To what extent do principals evaluated the students' achievement rates?	12(4.9)	39(15.8)	95(38.5)	74(30.0)	27(10.9)	3.263	1.012	Moderate extent
In your opinion, how consistently do principals establish and monitor performance metrics in their plans?	11(4.5)	42(17.0)	68(27.5)	97(39.3)	29(11.7)	3.368	1.039	Moderate extent
To what extent do principals encourage culture of continuous improvement and innovation in their schools?	12(4.9)	36(14.6)	66(26.7)	76(30.8)	57(23.1)	3.644	2.248	Large extent
To what extent do principals monitor and evaluate performance?	12(4.9)	39(15.8)	58(23.5)	78(31.6)	60(24.3)	3.547	1.160	Large extent
To what extent do principals relay feedback of performance to stakeholders?	11(4.5)	49(19.8)	63(25.5)	81(32.8)	43(17.4)	3.389	1.120	Moderate extent

The information on Table 17 show that principals utilized strategic planning as a foundational practice in their schools to a moderate extent (Mean=3.263, SD=0.996). Pertaining to how extensively do principals involve teachers and staff in strategic management planning process, the responses obtained and analyzed revealed that this was done to a moderate extent (Mean = 3.332, SD=0.985). The school principals clearly defined the strategic goals and objectives to a moderate extent (Mean=3.267, SD=1.056).

Regarding how much emphasis principals placed on aligning resources with the strategic priorities of the school, it was revealed that this was done to a moderate extent (Mean=3.275, SD=1.061). Pertaining to what extent do principals focus on the students' achievement rates, it was established that they did so to a moderate extent (Mean=.3.263, SD=1.012). The study further sought the opinion of the heads of department on how consistently the principals established and monitored performance metrics in their plans and the responses obtained revealed that they did so to a moderate extent (Mean=3.368, SD=1.039). When asked to what extent do principals encouraged culture of continuous improvement and innovation in their schools, the heads of departments said that the principals did so to a large extent (Mean= 3.644, SD= 2.248). The principals also to a large extent monitored and evaluated performance to a large extent (Mean=3.547, SD=1.160). The research also established that principals relayed feedback of performance to stakeholders to a moderate extent (Mean=3.389, SD=1.120)

The findings on the extent to which principals utilized strategic performance management practices affected students' performance in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County. This was because principals utilized strategic planning as a foundational practice in their schools to a moderate extent. Similarly, principals involve teachers and staff in strategic management planning process and they defined strategic goals and objectives clearly in their schools to a moderate extent. Additionally, principals placed emphasis on aligning resources with the strategic priorities of the school, evaluated the students' achievement rates, established and monitored performance metrics in their plans. They also relayed feedback of performance to stakeholders to a moderate extent. However, they encouraged culture of continuous improvement and

innovation and they monitored and evaluated performance in their schools to a large extent.

The findings are in agreement with Kieti, (2018) who investigated the relationship between administrative practices and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mutunguru sub-county, Machakos County. The study sought to investigate factors which influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mutunguru sub-county, Machakos County. The study was guided by the following research objectives; to establish the influence of learning resources on students' academic performance, to assess the influence of administrative practices on students' academic performance, to investigate the influence of teacher related factors on students' academic performance and to analyze the influence of the students' socio-economic background on academic performance. The study employed descriptive survey research design. Stratified random sampling technique was used to allocate and sample the actual schools in various school categories. The study revealed that the influence of administrative practices on academic performance was strongly positive and significant and similarly, teacher related factors and socio-economic background of the learners had a statistically significant influence on academic performance.

4.4.3 Interview Findings on the Extent of Strategic Performance Management Practices and Performance of Students in KCSE

The SCQASO were asked about the extent of use of strategic performance management practices they identified in the schools in their sub-counties.

Researcher: In each of the strategic performance management practices mentioned, to which extent are they used in schools in your sub-county?

Respondent 1: The strategic performance management practices mentioned above are used in the schools in my sub-county at varying extent depending on different categories of schools. In some schools they are used to a very large extent, others moderate extent, others to a small extent resulting to good performance while in some schools they are really used hence resulting to poor performance in those schools. This is the case in majority of secondary schools in the sub-county. It is notable where

they are in use to a large extent the schools have performance slightly above the sub-county mean.

Researcher: *In each of the strategic performance management practices mentioned, to which extent are they used in schools in your sub-county?*

Respondent 2: *The strategic performance management practices mentioned above are largely used to a large extent in the schools in my sub-county. These strategies are evident in the majority of the good performing schools. Similarly, the moderately performing schools also use them. But a significant number of low performing schools use them to a small extent thus resulting to low performance in the schools.*

Researcher: *In each of the strategic performance management practices mentioned, to which extent are they used in schools in your sub-county?*

Respondent 3: *A significant number of schools have extensively used stakeholder engagement, staff team building, teachers involvement in decision making and rewards which have helped in registering high performance. Other schools have moderately used them hence moderate performance while other schools which have not embraced them register low performance in KCSE.*

Researcher: *In each of the strategic performance management practices mentioned, to which extent are they used in schools in your sub-county?*

Respondent 4: *The strategic performance management practices mentioned above is largely in use in majority of secondary schools in my sub-county. However, a significant number of schools have experienced myriad of challenges in their effort to implement these strategies in their schools and this has resulted to low students' performance in KCSE in the sub-county.*

The respondents agreed with the principals and head of department that strategic performance management practices were in use in majority of the schools in their sub counties. These strategic performance management practices have enabled those schools post good student performance in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya,

4.5 Hypothesis testing to determine the relationship between strategic performance Management Practices and student performance in KCSE

Objective three examined the relationship between strategic performance management practices and performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The null hypothesis H_0 1 stated: There was no statistical significant relationship between strategic performance management practices on performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. For the researcher to test this hypothesis, a chi square test was computed. The analysis of the hypothesis testing for the principals is presented in Table 18.

Table 18: Chi Square Test for Principals

	Value	df	p-value
Pearson Chi-Square	328.411 ^a	304	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	155.120	304	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.996	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	44		

The finding in Table 18 show that, $\chi^2 (304, 44) = 328.411$, $p=0.000$ indicated that there was statistical significant relationship between strategic performance management practices and performance in KCSE. P-value was less than 0.05, therefore the null hypothesis that there was no statistical significant relationship between strategic performance management practices on performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County was rejected and alternative hypothesis that there was statistically significant relationship between strategic performance management practices on performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County adopted.

The chi-square test for heads of department was also computed and the results were revealed in Table 19.

Table 19: Chi Square Test for Heads of Departments

	Value	df	p-value
Pearson Chi-Square	1098.058 ^a	750	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	562.503	750	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	58.634	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	247		

The findings in Table 19 above shows that, $\chi^2 (750, 247) = 1098.058, p=0.000$ indicating that there was a statistically significant relationship between strategic performance management practices. Based on the chi square test results from the HODs, the null hypothesis that there was no statistically significant relationship between strategic performance management practices on performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis that there was statistically significant relationship between strategic performance management practices on performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County. The findings of the study are in line with the results of a study by Sun, & Van Ryzin (2014) who investigated the relationship between performance management practices by school leaders and educational outcomes, as measured by standardized test scores in New York City public schools. The study established that schools which did a better job at performance management indeed had better outcomes in terms of both the level and improved students' performance in examinations even when controlling for student, staffing, and school characteristics.

4.5.1 Interview Findings on the Relationship of Strategic Performance Management Practices and Performance of Students in KCSE

The SCQASO were asked about how they linked the strategic performance management practices with students' performance in KCSE.

Researcher: How do you link each of the strategic performance management practices mentioned with performance in KCSE in your sub county?

Respondent 1: The above-mentioned strategic performance management practices are linked to good performance in KCSE in quite a number of secondary schools in my sub-county. Quite a number of these secondary schools have consistently posted mean scores above the sub-county mean score. Therefore, these strategic performance management practices have proved to be very effective in the posting of good results in these schools.

Researcher: How do you link each of the strategic performance management practices mentioned with performance in KCSE in your sub county?

Respondent 2: The above-mentioned strategic performance management practices are effective in producing good performance in KCSE as students gain confidence

and ability to answer exam questions correctly, they build knowledge on the examination content, acquisition of exam answering skills and the sub-county mean grade is determined by all the candidates.

Researcher: *How do you link each of the strategic performance management practices mentioned with performance in KCSE in your sub county?*

Respondent 3: *The strategies are well linked to high students' performance in KCSE and the schools which have adopted them have been on upwards trajectory. Therefore, their use should be embraced and strengthened in all the schools in the sub-county.*

Researcher: *How do you link each of the strategic performance management practices mentioned with performance in KCSE in your sub county?*

Respondent 4: *Parents participation through meeting are key in supporting these strategic performance management practices as they are all positively linked to high students' performance in KCSE in the sub-county.*

The respondents agreed with the principals and head of department that strategic performance management practices were positively linked to good student performance in KCSE in their sub-counties. This is because the schools which have embraced them have registered good student performance in national examinations.

4.6 Challenges in Implementing Strategic Performance Management practices

The opinions and views of school principals and heads of department were sought on challenge that the principals encountered in implementing strategic performance management system to improve performance in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The respondents were required to tick appropriately on a Likert scale in which Extremely likely (= 5, Likely (L) =4, Neutral (N) = 3, Unlikely (UL) = 2, Extremely Unlikely (EU) = 1. The responses obtained were analyzed and presented in Table 20.

Table 20: Principals Views on Challenges in Implementing Strategic Performance Management

Survey Question	EL n(%)	L n(%)	N n(%)	UL n(%)	EU n(%)
In your own opinion, how are the principal and teachers' skeptics likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in your school?	6(13.6)	23(52.3)	6(13.6)	4(9.1)	5(11.4)
How are the principal and teachers inadequate knowledge of strategic planning likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in your school?	7(15.9)	20(45.5)	6(13.6)	7(15.9)	4(9.1)
How are the principal and teachers encountering destructions by other school extenuating factors likely to affect negatively the implementations of SPM in your school?	6(13.6)	21(47.7)	7(15.9)	6(13.6)	4(9.1)
How are the principal and teachers lack of role clarity likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in your school?	5(11.4)	22(50.0)	8(18.2)	6(13.6)	3(6.8)
How are the principal and teachers lack of effective communication likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPMS in your school?	8(18.2)	20(45.5)	3(6.8)	11(25.0)	2(4.5)
In your own opinion, how is the principal and teachers dealing with unrealistic expectations likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPMS in your school?	10(22.7)	17(38.6)	6(13.6)	7(15.9)	4(9.1)
How is the principal and teachers having infrequent review meetings likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in your school?	8(18.2)	19(43.2)	6(13.6)	6(13.6)	5(11.4)
In your own opinion, how is the principal and teachers lack of adequate funding for school improvement likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in your school?	13(29.5)	22(50.0)	3(6.8)	6(13.6)	-
In your own opinion, how is the principal and teachers having inadequate funds for motivating and rewarding teachers and students likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in your school?	19(43.3)	17(38.6)	3(6.8)	3(6.8)	2(4.5)

The finding from Table 20 revealed that principals and teachers' skeptics were likely to affect the implementation of SPM negatively in schools as reported by most

(52.3%) of the respondents. Another 13.6% felt that this was extremely likely to affect the implementation with a similar proportion (13.6%) of the principals being neutral. Only 9.1% and 11.4% felt that this may unlikely or extremely unlikely to affect the implementation of SPM negatively in schools respectively. Many (45.5%) of the principals were of the opinion that inadequate knowledge of strategic planning was likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in schools, another 15.9% pointed out that it was extremely likely to affect. Pertaining to how are the principals and teachers encountering distractions by other school extenuating factors likely to affect negatively the implementations of SPM in their school, many (47.7%) noted it was likely, 13.6% extremely likely, 15.9% were neutral while 13.9% and 9.1% were of the opinion it was unlikely or extremely unlikely to negatively affect the implementation of SPM in schools.

A large proportion (50.0%) of the principals held the view that the principals and teachers lack of role clarity was likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in their schools. Another 45.5% of the principals noted that principal and teachers' inadequate knowledge of strategic planning was likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in their schools. On how the principals and teachers dealing with unrealistic expectations was likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPMS in their schools, most (38.6%) noted it was likely to do so, 22.7% extremely likely, 13.6% were neutral while 15.9% said it was unlikely and 9.1% extremely unlikely. Principal and teachers having infrequent review meetings was likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in schools as reported by high (43.2%) of the principals. A large proportion (50.0%) of the principals noted that principals and teachers lack of adequate funding for school improvement was likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in schools. A large (43.3%) of the principals were of the opinion that principals and teachers having inadequate funds for motivating and rewarding teachers and students was extremely likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in their schools. Another 38.9% noted that it was likely to do so.

Table 21: Heads of Department Views on Challenges in Implementing Strategic Performance Management

Survey Question	EL n(%)	L n(%)	N n(%)	UL n(%)	EU n(%)
In your own opinion, how are the principal and teachers' skeptics likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in your school?	51(20.6)	95(38.5)	37(15.0)	51(20.6)	13(5.3)
How are the principal and teachers inadequate knowledge of strategic planning likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in your school?	41(16.6)	75(30.4)	61(24.7)	50(20.2)	20(8.1)
How are the principal and teachers encountering destructions by other school extenuating factors likely to affect negatively the implementations of SPM in your school?	21(8.5)	109(44.1)	52(21.1)	49(19.8)	16(6.5)
How are the principal and teachers lack of role clarity likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in your school?	28(11.3)	100(40.5)	48(19.4)	45(18.2)	26(10.5)
How are the principal and teachers lack of effective communication likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPMS in your school?	42(17.0)	100(40.5)	38(15.4)	38(15.4)	29(11.7)
In your own opinion, how is the principal and teachers dealing with unrealistic expectations likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPMS in your school?	40(16.2)	111(44.9)	31(12.6)	36(14.6)	29(11.7)
How is the principal and teachers having infrequent review meetings likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in your school?	44(17.8)	111(44.9)	33(13.4)	32(13.0)	27(10.9)

Table 21 Continues..

In your own opinion, how is the principal and teachers lack of adequate funding for school improvement likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in your school?	76(30.8)	92(37.2)	43(17.4)	27(10.9)	9(3.6)
In your own opinion, how is the principal and teachers having inadequate funds for motivating and rewarding teachers and students likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in your school?	91(36.8)	101(40.9)	22(8.9)	20(8.1)	13(5.3)

Information presented on Table 21 revealed that many (38.5%) of the heads of department was of the opinion that principal and teachers' skeptics were likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in schools. Those who felt that it was extremely likely to affect were 20.6%, 15.0% were neutral, 20.6% felt it was unlikely to affect and 5.3% were of the opinion that it was extremely unlikely do so. On how the principals and teachers' inadequate knowledge of strategic planning was likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in schools, most (30.4%) of the HODs felt it was likely to do so. Another 16.6% felt that it was extremely likely. On the other hand, 24.7% were neutral, 20.2% were of the opinion it was unlikely while 8.1% held the view that it was extremely unlikely. Most (44.1%) of the HODs pointed out that principal and teachers encountering destructions by other school extenuating factors was likely to affect negatively the implementations of SPM in schools. Regarding how likely the principal and teachers lack of role clarity likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPM in school, a large proportion (40.5%) were of the opinion it was likely while 11.3% felt that it was extremely likely. The study also revealed that 19.4% were neutral, 18.2% noted it was unlikely and 10.5% were of the opinion it was extremely unlikely.

Principals and teachers lack of effective communication was likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPMS in schools as reported by many (40.5%) of

the respondents. Another 17.0% felt that it is extremely likely to do so. Further investigation revealed that a large proportion (44.9%) of HODs felt that principal and teachers dealing with unrealistic expectations were likely to affect negatively the implementation of SPMS in their schools. Another 17.8% felt that it is extremely likely while 13.4% were neutral. A few (10.9%) felt that it was extremely unlikely and 13.4% held the opinion that it was unlikely. Many (37.2%) of the HODs felt that principal and teachers lack of adequate funding for school improvement was likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in their schools. Pertaining to how likely the principal and teachers having inadequate funds for motivating and rewarding teachers and students was likely to affect negatively the implementation of strategic performance management system in their schools, majority (40.9%) of the respondents noted it was likely to do so, 36.8% noted that it was extremely likely, 8.9% were neutral. On the other hand, 8.1% and 5.3% noted that it was unlikely and extremely unlikely respectively to do so.

From the above findings, the researcher concluded that the challenges which principals faced while implementing strategic performance practices in their schools were; principals and teachers' skeptics, inadequate knowledge of strategic planning, other school extenuating factors and the principals and teachers lack of role clarity. These factors hampered the implementation of strategic performance management practices which therefore affected students' performance in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County. Other factors included inadequate knowledge of strategic planning, the principals and teachers dealing with unrealistic expectations, lack of adequate funding and inadequate funds for motivating and rewarding teachers and students.

These findings are in agreement with Malusu and Mkulu, (2020) who investigated the administrative obstacles that heads of public secondary schools experienced when implementing strategic plans in Kondoa Town Council, Tanzania. The study used a convergent parallel design using a mixed research method approach. The study used a convergent parallel design and a mixed research method approach. The study included 70 participants, 61 of whom were secondary school teachers, 1 District Education Officer, 4 ward education officers, and 4 school principals. Purposive approaches were utilized in addition to stratified, simple random sampling. The

study's findings indicated that although school heads participated in strategic planning, they faced challenges in carrying out their plans due to a lack of resources, inadequate training, low community involvement, teachers' shortage, inadequate infrastructure, and political leaders' meddling.

4.6.1 Interview Findings on the Challenges of Strategic Performance Management Practices implementation and Performance of Students in KCSE

The SCQASO were asked about the challenges the school principals facing in the implementation of strategic performance management to improve KCSE performance in their sub-counties.

***Researcher:** What challenges are the school principals facing in the implementation of strategic performance management to improve KCSE performance in your sub-county?*

***Respondent 1:** The challenges which the school principals are facing in implementation of strategic performance management practices in their schools to improve KCSE performance include inadequate knowledge in the strategic planning, inadequate support from the stakeholders, poor payments of school fees by parents, inadequate funding, delayed release of capitation by the government and high cost of living leading to high food prices.*

***Researcher:** What challenges are the school principals facing in the implementation of strategic performance management to improve KCSE performance in your sub-county?*

***Respondent 2:** The challenges which principals face in the implementation of strategic performance management practices in their schools include teachers shortage, teacher preparation, lack of teacher motivation, inadequate financial resources, failure of teachers to give timely feedback, family wrangles hence parental support, economic challenges hence poor payment of school fees, lack of training on strategic planning and unreliable funding from the government.*

***Researcher:** What challenges are the school principals facing in the implementation of strategic performance management to improve KCSE performance in your sub-county?*

Respondent 3: *The challenges which principals face when implementing strategic performance management in their schools include financial crisis occasioned by unpredictable government release of capitation, poor payment of school fees by parents due to their poor social economic status, high cost of living leading to high food prices, poor school headship, lack of adequate infrastructure and shortage of teachers prevailing in the country.*

Researcher: *What challenges are the school principals facing in the implementation of strategic performance management to improve KCSE performance in your sub-county?*

Respondent 4: *The challenges the schools face in their effort to implement strategic performance practices include inadequate funding by the government and parents contribution, shortage of teachers in the sub-county, inadequate infrastructure and students indiscipline issues.*

The respondents agreed with the principals and head of department that inadequate funding, shortage infrastructure and lack of training in strategic performance management. The researcher concluded that lack of financial resources and training in strategic planning affected the implementation of strategic performance management systems in their schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary of the Research Findings

The first objective was designed to find out the types of strategic performance management (SPM) practices employed by principals and their effect on students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The study findings revealed that there exists a formal strategic performance management (SPM) system for improving performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The vision and mission as well as the goals and objectives are clearly stated and communicated to members of the school community and the stakeholders. The principals regularly carry out monitoring and evaluation of the various strategies put in place for improving performance in KCSE. Rewarding of smart work by teaching and support staff, involvement of stakeholders and teachers in decision making as well as provision of staff growth opportunities were strategic performance management practices adopted to improve performance in KCSE. There also exists a well stipulated guideline for ICT integration in schools as well as regular and timely communication and feedback mechanisms in schools. Finally, the principals have adopted coaching and action planning for performance related difficulties as a strategy to enhance performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

The second objective to determine the extent to which strategic performance management practices employed by principals affect students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The research findings show that principals utilize strategic planning as a foundation practice to a moderate extent in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. There was variation in the principals and HODs responses on the extent to which the principals involve teachers and support staff in strategic performance management planning process. The principals claimed to do so to a large extent but the HODs felt that it was done to a moderate extent. The principals' responses on the extent to which principals clearly defined strategic goals and objectives showed they did so to a greater extent which differed from the findings from the HODs who indicated that they did so to a moderate extent. Principals placed emphasis on aligning resources with strategic priorities of the school as well as monitoring performance metrics to a moderate

extent. The culture of continuous improvement in schools was encouraged to a greater extent and feedback rely on performance to stakeholders was done to a moderate extent.

The third objective sought to determine the relationship between strategic performance management practices and performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The study finding shows that there was a statistically significant relationship between strategic management practices and performance of students in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

The fourth objective was to find out the challenges faced by principals in implementing strategic performance management system to improve students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The findings of the study revealed that implementation of strategic performance management systems in public secondary schools in is hampered by principals and teachers' skeptics and inadequate knowledge of strategic planning. Further, distraction from other school extenuating factors, lack of role clarity and effective communication among principals and teachers, infrequent meetings, lack of adequate funding for motivating and reward system as well as dealing with unrealistic expectations by principals were established as challenges facing the implementation of strategic performance management in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County.

5.2 Conclusion

The first objective was designed to find out the types of strategic performance management (SPM) practices employed by principals and their effect on students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. It is logical to conclude that there exists a formal strategic planning management system with clearly stated vision and mission as well as well-defined goals and objectives. Control, monitoring and evaluation of strategies for improving performance in KCSE were done and rewarding of staff and students was carried out. There was collective decision making and provision of opportunities for profession growth among the staff. The researcher also concluded that guidelines for ICT integration were clearly stipulated and timely and regular feedback mechanisms had been put in place.

Coaching and action planning for performance related difficulties were also carried out in schools.

The second objective to determine the extent to which strategic performance management practices employed by principals affected students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. It was concluded that strategic planning as a foundation practice was utilized in schools to a moderate extent. Teachers and support staff participated in the strategic planning process to a moderate extent. The principals defined the goals and objective and placed emphasis on aligning resources with school strategic priorities to a moderate extent. Monitoring of performance and encouraging of culture of continuous improvement was done by the school principals to a large extent. The third objective sought to determine the relationship between strategic performance management practices and performance of students in KCSE in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. It was concluded that there existed a relationship between strategic performance management practices and performance of students in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi, County, Kenya.

The fourth objective was to find out the challenges faced by principals in implementing strategic performance management system to improve students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. It was concluded that implementation of strategic performance management systems in public secondary schools was hampered by principals and teachers' skeptics and inadequate knowledge of strategic planning. Further, distraction from other school extenuating factors, lack of role clarity and effective communication among principals and teachers, infrequent meetings, lack of adequate funding for motivating and reward system as well as dealing with unrealistic expectations by principals were established as challenges facing the implementation of strategic performance management in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

The researcher recommends from the findings of the study objective:

- i. The Ministry of Education should help the schools design and roll out strategic performance management frameworks that are customized to address the

unique characteristics and needs of individual schools in Tharaka Nithi County.

- ii. To maximize the impact of strategic performance management practices on student outcomes, the principals should strengthen school-level monitoring and evaluation systems. Implementing regular assessments and feedback loops will enable schools to fine-tune their strategic plans in real-time, ensuring a continuous improvement cycle that boosts performance.
- iii. The Ministry of Education should launch specialized capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing principals' competencies in strategic performance management. These initiatives should emphasize training in data-driven decision-making, resource optimization, and stakeholder engagement. By empowering principals with these skills, the effectiveness of strategic plans will be improved, leading to better results.
- iv. The school boards of managements should initiate community and stakeholder engagement programs that align with schools' strategic objectives. By actively involving parents, local leaders, and community members, these programs will help surmount implementation challenges, fostering a shared responsibility that drives improved student performance in the KCSE.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

To further understand other factors influencing students' performance in national examinations in the education sector the researcher suggests areas requiring further research that may provide insights in the area. These are:

- i. Comparative Analysis of Strategic Performance Management in Public vs. Private Schools: Explore the differences in the implementation and outcomes of strategic performance management practices between public and private secondary schools in various regions, including Tharaka Nithi County.
- ii. A study on the impact of the sponsor of schools and the academic performance of students in national examinations in secondary schools should be carried out in Kenya.
- iii. A similar study should be carried out to establish the head teachers' strategic performance management practices and performance of students in national examinations in primary schools in Kenya.

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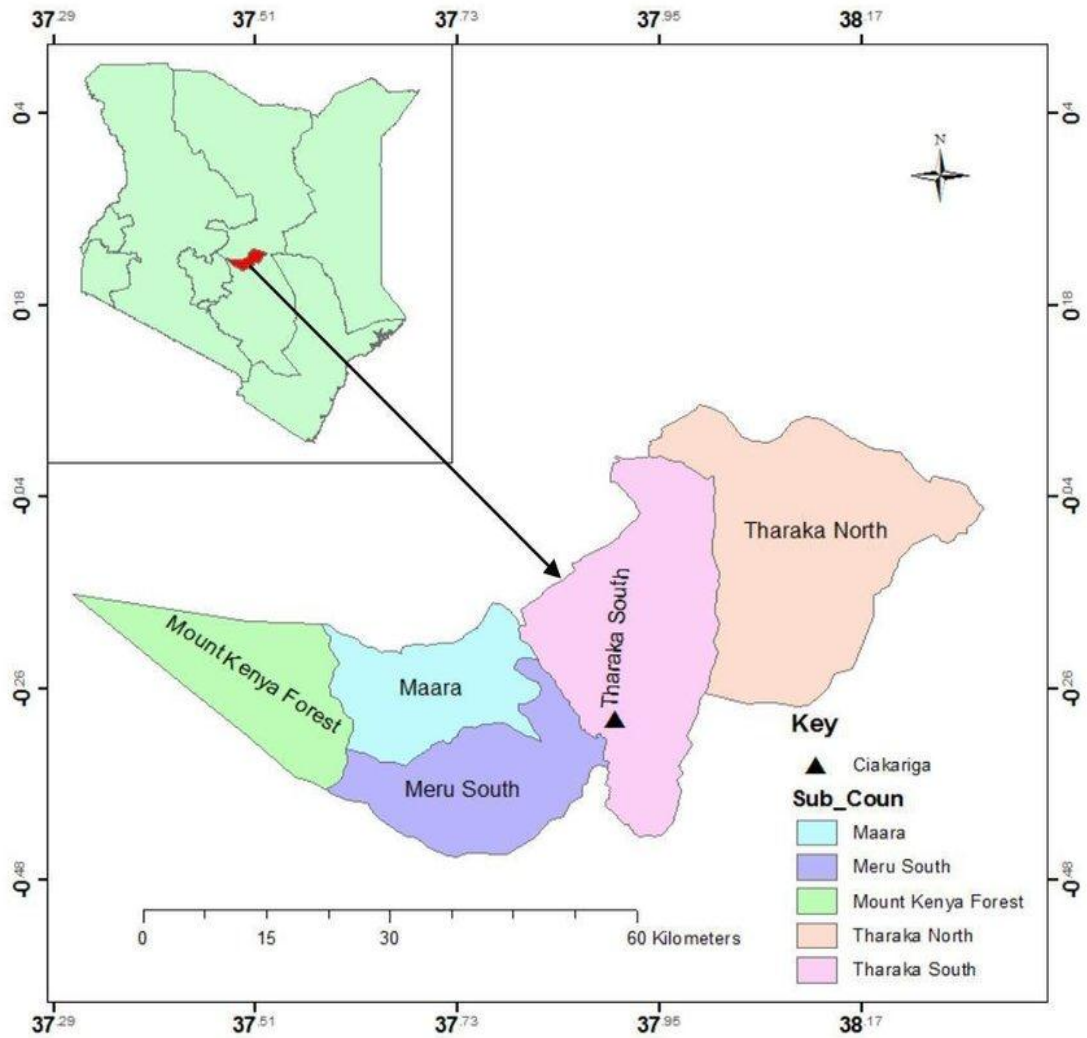
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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Map of the Study Area



Source: Google map (2023)

Appendix II: Questionnaire for the School Principals

Introduction

I am a post graduate student at Chuka University conducting a study on principals' strategic performance management practices and students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This questionnaire is to obtain information related to the study only the information provided will be confidential and no individual details will be disclosed. Kindly take a few minutes to complete the short questionnaire. Do not write your name the questionnaire is for you and the information requested should be original.

Section A: Background Information

Question	Response
Age	Tick Appropriately: 36-45 years [] 46-55 years [] years and above []
Gender	Tick Appropriately: Male [] Female [] Others []
Category of school	National [] Extra-county [] County [] District [] Others (Specify).....
Position in school	Principal [] D/principal [] Head of Department []
Years of experience	0-4 years [] 5-9 years [] 10-14 years [] 15-19 years [] 20 years []
Highest level of education	Tick Appropriately: B.Ed. [] PGDE [] M.Ed. [] PhD [] Others Specify.....
Have you attended any strategic performance management courses? If yes how many?	None [] One [] Two [] Three [] More than three []

School performance in KCSE for the past three years

Year	2020	2021	2022
Mean score			

Section B: Students' Performance in KCSE

Below are hypothesized statements about students' performance in KCSE. (Kindly tick (√) appropriately). Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Not sure= 3, Agree= 4, Strongly agree = 5,

No.	Statement	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1	Our students are adequately prepared KCSE examinations.					
2	Performance of students in our school is above average.					
3	The teachers input is variable in performance of our students in KCSE					
4	Team work between the principal, teachers and students has brought good performance of our students in KCSE.					
5	The well maintained discipline of our students has led to good performance in KCSE.					
6	The parents' regular involvement has led to good performance of our students in KCSE.					
7	The students' regular class attendance has led to good performance in KCSE.					
8	Regular students rewarding has contributed to their good performance in KCSE.					

Section C: Types of Strategic Performance Management Practices Employed by Principals

To what extent do you agree that the following types of strategic performance management practices (SPM) are in use in your school to enhance performance of students in in KCSE? (Kindly tick (√) appropriately).

Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Not sure= 3, Agree= 4, Strongly agree =

No.	Item	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1	There is a formal Strategic Performance Management System for improving KCSE performance					
2	There is clearly stated vision and mission statements of the school					
3	There is clear communication of school goals and objectives					

4	There is controlling, monitoring and evaluation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement					
5	There is rewarding of smart work of teachers and support staff					
6	There is stakeholder involvement in decision making in the school					
7	There is teaching staff involvement in decision making					
8	There is provision of teaching and support staff growth opportunities within the school					
9	There are clearly stipulated guidelines for technology integration (ICT).					
10	There is regular communication and timely feedback mechanisms					
11	There is performance planning and reviews					
12	There is coaching and action planning for performance related difficulties					
13	There is implementation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement.					

Section D: The Extent of Strategic Performance Management Practices Use in Schools

1. To what extent do you agree that the following are in use in your school to enhance performance of students in in KCSE? (Kindly tick (√) appropriately). To a Very Not at All (NA) = 1, To a Small Extent (SM)= 2, To a Moderate Extent (ME) = 3, To a Large Extent (LE), = 4, Large Extent (VLE) = 5

No.	Survey Question	NA	SE	ME	LE	VLE
1	To what extent do principals utilize strategic planning as a foundational practice in their schools?					
2	In your opinion, how extensively do principals involve teachers and staff in strategic management planning process?					
3	To what extent are the strategic goals and objectives clearly defined by principals in their schools?					
4	How much emphasis do principals					

	place on aligning resources with the strategic priorities of the school?					
5	To what extent do principals the students achievement rates?					
6	In your opinion, how consistently do principals establish and monitor performance metrics in their plans?					
7	To what extent do principals encourage culture of continuous improvement and innovation in their schools?					
8	To what extent do principals monitor and evaluate performance?					
9	To what extent do principals relay feedback of performance to stakeholders?					

Section E: Strategic performance management practices and performance in KCSE

How effective is strategic performance management practices with respect to your school situation? (Kindly tick (√) appropriately). Don't Know (DK) = 1, Ineffective (IE) = 2, Moderately Effective (ME) = 3, Effective (E) = 4, Very Effective (VE) = 5,

No	Survey Question	DK	IE	ME	E	VE
1	In your own opinion, how has the vision and mission of the school proved in enabling your school improves in KCSE performance?					
2	How has the clearly stating the goals and objectives in the school strategic plan helped in giving direction to teaching and hence improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
3	In your own opinion, how has performance metrics like teacher effectiveness and achievement rates helped in improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
4	How has giving feedback to stakeholders helped in improvement in KCSE performance in your school?					
5	In your own opinion, how has monitoring, controlling and evaluating teaching strategies helped in improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
6	How has identifying and analyzing internal strengths and weaknesses helped improving performance in KCSE in your school?					

7	In your own opinion, how has formulating effective teaching plans helped in improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
8	How has evaluating the degree to which teaching strategies have been successful helped in improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
9	In your own opinion how has making changes when desired results have not been produced helped in improving in KCSE performance in your school?					

Section F: Challenges in Implementing Strategic Performance Management

To what extent do you agree that the challenges in the table below affect the implementation strategic performance management practices (SPM) are in your school to enhance performance of students in in KCSE? (Kindly tick (√) appropriately).

Extremely unlikely = 1, Unlikely = 2, Not sure= 3, Likely =4, Extremely Likely = 5.

No.	Survey statement	EU	U	NS	L	EL
1	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers skeptics.					
2	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers inadequate knowledge of strategic planning.					
3	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers encountering destructions by other school extenuating factors.					
4	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers lack of role clarity.					
5	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers lack of effective communication.					
6	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers dealing with unrealistic expectations.					
7	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly					

	challenged by the principal and teachers having infrequent review meetings.					
8	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers lack of adequate funding for school improvement.					
9	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers having inadequate funds for motivating and rewarding teachers and students.					

Thank you very much for your time and collaboration

Appendix III: Questionnaire for the Head of Departments

Introduction

I am a post graduate student at Chuka University conducting a study on principals' strategic performance management practices and students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This questionnaire is to obtain information related to the study only the information provided will be confidential and no individual details will be disclosed. Kindly take a few minutes to complete the short questionnaire. Do not write your name the questionnaire is for you and the information requested should be original.

Section A: Background Information

Question	Response
1. Age	Tick Appropriately: 36-45 years [] 46-55 years [] 56 years and above []
2. Gender	Tick Appropriately: Male [] Female [] Others []
3. Category of school	National [] Extra-county [] County [] District [] Others (Specify).....
4. Position in school	Principal [] D/principal [] Head of Department []
5. Years of experience	0-4 years [] 5-9 years [] 10-14 years [] 15-19 years [] 20 years []
6. Highest level of education	Tick Appropriately: B.Ed. [] PGDE [] M.Ed. [] PhD [] Others Specify.....
7. Have you attended any strategic performance management courses? If yes how many?	None [] One [] Two [] Three [] More than three []

School performance in KCSE for the past three years

Year	2020	2021	2022
Mean score			

Section B: Students' performance in KCSE

Below are hypothesized statements about students' performance in KCSE. (Kindly tick (√) appropriately). Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Not sure = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly agree = 5.

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1	Our students are adequately prepared KCSE examinations.					
2	Performance of students in our school is above average.					
3	The teachers input is variable in performance of our students in KCSE					
4	Team work between the principal, teachers and students has brought good performance of our students in KCSE.					
5	The well maintained discipline of our students has led to good performance in KCSE.					
6	The parents' regular involvement has led to good performance of our students in KCSE.					
7	The students' regular class attendance has led to good performance in KCSE.					
8	Regular students rewarding has contributed to their good performance in KCSE.					

Section C: Types of Strategic Performance Management Practices Employed by Principals

To what extent do you agree that the following types of strategic performance management practices (SPM) are in use in your school to enhance performance of students in in KCSE? (Kindly tick (√) appropriately).

Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Not sure= 3, Agree = 4, Strongly agree = 5.

No.	Item	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1	There is a formal Strategic Performance Management System for improving KCSE performance					
2	There is clearly stated vision and mission statements of the school					
3	There is clear communication of school goals and objectives					
4	There is controlling, monitoring					

	and evaluation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement					
5	There is rewarding of smart work of teachers and support staff					
6	There is stakeholder involvement in decision making in the school					
7	There is teaching staff involvement in decision making					
8	There is provision of teaching and support staff growth opportunities within the school					
9	There are clearly stipulated guidelines for technology integration (ICT).					
10	There is regular communication and timely feedback mechanisms					
11	There is performance planning and reviews					
12	There is coaching and action planning for performance related difficulties					
13	There is implementation of strategies for KCSE performance improvement.					

Section D: The Extent of Strategic Performance Management Practices Use in Schools

1. To what extent do you agree that the following are in use in your school to enhance performance of students in in KCSE? (Kindly tick (√) appropriately). To a Very Not at All (NA) = 1, To a Small Extent (SM)= 2, To a Moderate Extent (ME) = 3, To a Large Extent (LE), = 4, Large Extent (VLE) = 5,

No.	Survey Question	NA	SE	ME	LE	VLE
1	To what extent do principals utilize strategic planning as a foundational practice in their schools?					
2	In your opinion, how extensively do principals involve teachers and staff in strategic management planning process?					
3	To what extent are the strategic goals and objectives clearly defined by principals in their schools?					
4	How much emphasis do principals					

	place on aligning resources with the strategic priorities of the school?					
5	To what extent do principals the students achievement rates?					
6	In your opinion, how consistently do principals establish and monitor performance metrics in their plans?					
7	To what extent do principals encourage culture of continuous improvement and innovation in their schools?					
8	To what extent do principals monitor and evaluate performance?					
9	To what extent do principals relay feedback of performance to stakeholders?					

Section E: Strategic performance management practices and performance in KCSE

How effective is strategic performance management practices with respect to your school situation? (Kindly tick (√) appropriately). Don't Know (DK) = 1, Ineffective (IE) = 2, Moderately Effective (ME) = 3, Effective (E) = 4, Very Effective (VE) = 5,

No.	Survey Question	DK	IE	ME	E	VE
1	In your own opinion, how has the vision and mission of the school proved in enabling your school improves in KCSE performance?					
2	How has the clearly stating the goals and objectives in the school strategic plan helped in giving direction to teaching and hence improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
3	In your own opinion, how has performance metrics like teacher effectiveness and achievement rates helped in improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
4	How has giving feedback to stakeholders helped in improvement in KCSE performance in your school?					
5	In your own opinion, how has monitoring, controlling and evaluating teaching strategies helped in improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
6	How has identifying and analyzing internal strengths and weaknesses helped improving performance in KCSE					

	in your school?					
7	In your own opinion, how has formulating effective teaching plans helped in improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
8	How has evaluating the degree to which teaching strategies have been successful helped in improving performance in KCSE in your school?					
9	In your own opinion how has making changes when desired results have not been produced helped in improving in KCSE performance in your school?					

Section F: Challenges in Implementing Strategic Performance Management

To what extent do you agree that the challenges in the table below affect the implementation strategic performance management practices (SPM) are in your school to enhance performance of students in in KCSE? (Kindly tick (√) appropriately).

Extremely unlikely = 1, Unlikely = 2, Not sure= 3, Likely =4, Extremely Likely = 5.

No.	Survey statement	EU	U	NS	L	EL
1	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers skeptics.					
2	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers inadequate knowledge of strategic planning.					
3	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers encountering destructions by other school extenuating factors.					
4	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers lack of role clarity.					
5	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers lack of effective communication.					
6	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers dealing with unrealistic expectations.					
7	Strategic performance management					

	practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers having infrequent review meetings.					
8	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers lack of adequate funding for school improvement.					
9	Strategic performance management practices implementation is highly challenged by the principal and teachers having inadequate funds for motivating and rewarding teachers and students.					

Thank you very much for your time and collaboration.

Appendix IV: Interview Guide for the Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers

1. What are examples of strategic performance management practices in your sub county employed by principals to improve KCSE performance in their schools?

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2. In each of the strategic performance management practices mentioned, to which extent are they used in schools in your sub-county?

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3. How do you link each of the strategic performance management practices mention with performance in KCSE in your sub county?

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4. What challenges are the school principals facing in the implementation of strategic performance management practices to improve KCSE performance in your sub-county?

.....
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.....
.....

Thank you very much for your time and collaboration

Appendix V: Reliability Test

Principal Reliability Test

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	14	100.0
	Excluded	0	.0
	Total	14	100.0

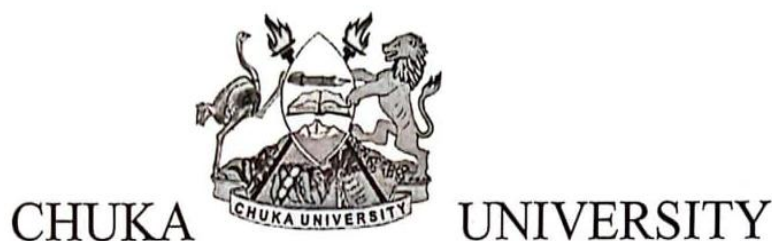
Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.863	55

Head of Department Reliability Test

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	15	100.0
	Excluded	0	.0
	Total	15	100.0

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.785	55

Appendix VI: Letter of Introduction



Knowledge is Wealth (*Sapientia divitia est*) Akili ni Mali

**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

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Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

REF: EM15/45708/19

24th June, 2024

Director
National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete
P O Box 30623, 00100
Nairobi.

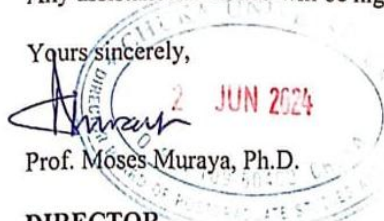
Dear Sir / Madam,

HUMPHREY GITONGA MWIRIGI

The above-named person is a *bona fide* student of Chuka University pursuing MED in Educational Management, proposal titled: **Principals' Strategic Performance Management Practices and Students Performance in KCSE in Public Secondary Schools in Tharaka Nithi , Kenya.**

Mr. Gitonga has defended at the Faculty level and is now expected to conduct research. Any assistance accorded will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Moses Muraya, Ph.D.

DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

Appendix VII: Ethics Review Letter

CHUKA



UNIVERSITY

Knowledge is Wealth (*Sapientia divitia est*) Akili ni Mali

CHUKA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Telephones: 020-2310512/18

Direct Line: 0772894438

Email: info@chuka.ac.ke

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka

Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

5th June, 2024

REF: CUIERC/ NACOSTI/543

TO: Humphrey Gitonga Mwirigi

RE: Principals' Strategic Performance Management Practices and Students Performance in KCSE in Public Secondary Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

This is to inform you that *Chuka University IERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812*. The approval period is 5th June, 2024 – 5th June, 2025.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Chuka University IERC*.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Chuka University IERC*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely


Dr. Benjamin Kunga
SECRETARY

Appendix VIII: County Director of Education Authorization



**REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
STATE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION**

Telegrams: "Elimu", Chuka
Telephone: Chuka 630353
FAX: 064 630166
Email: tharakanithicountyedu@gmail.com
When replying please quote:

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
THARAKA NITHI
P.O. BOX 113-60400
CHUKA.

18TH APRIL, 2024

TNC/ED/RA/GEN/129/105

Mr. Humprey Gitonga Mwirigi
CHUKA UNIVERSITY


RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FOR MR. HUMPREY GITONGA MWIRIGI

I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research on "*Principals' Strategic Performance Management Practices and Students Performance in KCSE in Public Secondary Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya*" The research will be undertaken for a period ending **11/July/2025**.

On completion of the research, you are expected to give a hard copy and soft copy of the research report/thesis to this office.


The research Authorization is granted according to all existing rules and regulations in force from time to time and observance of Covid-19 Guidelines and protocols as recommended by the relevant government MDAs.

Good luck!


County Director of Education
Tharaka - Nithi
P. O. Box 113 - 60400,
Chuka

Bridget Wambua (Mrs)
County Director of Education
THARAKA NITHI

Appendix IX: NACOSTI Permit

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 144196	Date of Issue: 11/July/2024
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Mr. HUMPHREY GITONGA MWIRIGI of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Tharaka-Nithi on the topic: PRINCIPALS' STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND STUDENTS PERFORMANCE IN KCSE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 11/July/2025.</p>	
License No: NACOSTI/P/24/37533	
144196 Applicant Identification Number	 Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code 
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