Contribution of Principles of Governance on Effective Student Leadership in Public Universities in Kenya: A Comparative Study of Two Universities.

Dr. Washington Okeyo Ph.D
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Senior Lecturer
Management University of Africa in Nairobi

Ratanya Scholastica
Assistant Lecturer
Technical University of Mombasa

ABSTRACT

Effective student leadership is considered as one of the major elements that guarantee sustainable development and success for student bodies. Good governance principles are significant ingredients for aspiring student leadership. The overall objective of this study was to determine the contribution of principles of governance on effective student leadership. This was a comparative study on the perspectives of principles of governance and leadership in Technical University of Mombasa and Pwani University. Descriptive survey research design was used and it was a census study on 48 student leaders. Structured closed ended questionnaires were used to collect data which was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics through Statistical Package of Social Sciences version 23. The findings show that principles of governance had no relationship with student leadership (r=-0.581, p>0.05 for Technical University and r=-0.494, p>0.05) for Pwani University. However, one of the main findings of the study was that, legitimacy and direction did not have any relationship with effective student leadership for both Technical University and Pwani University as had been predicted. Another finding is that performance has a relationship with effective student leadership in Technical University in Technical University but not PUSA. The Universities should therefore, enhance training of student leaders on governance issues so as to develop effective student leadership.

Keywords: Corporate Governance, Direction, Leadership, Legitimacy, Performance

INTRODUCTION

The role of student leadership and governance in universities has been a topic of heated debate in the history of universities worldwide. Klopf (1960) reveals the murkiness of the history of student governance when he discusses the struggle to determine and give credit to the location of the first student governing body. Some form of student governance has been apparent in American colleges since the late 1700's when William and Mary College organized a student governing body. In Africa, student leadership gained momentum in many countries after these countries gained independence in the late fifties to early sixties. This was fueled by the rapid expansion of higher education which was anchored on the belief that education was likely to contribute to national development of the African countries (Yesufu, 1973). Most countries established public national universities which were modelled around their colonial masters although named after respective African countries or major cities.

In East Africa, the three countries – Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika (now Tanzania), gained independence nearly in successive years in 1962 and 1963. This motivated start-up of one

regional university which they named after the region – University of East Africa which had campuses located in and named after their respective capital cities – Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, and Makerere respectively. Student unrest started manifesting at this early stage but in the individual campuses. Subsequently, each country's university became autonomous and was granted its own Charter and the unrest continued.

The matter of student unrest and its manifestation in universities is based on agency theory and stewardship theory. Agency theory was first fronted by Modgliani and Miller (1958) to support their works that led to capital structure theory on using debt and equity to finance an organization's investments. Jensen and Meckling (1976) later used agency theory to explain the conflict that arises between the principal (shareholder) and agent (manager) as regards an organizations investment and their management. Later on, Block (1993) formulated Stewardship theory arguing that stewardship is the choice for service which manifests in terms of teamwork in an environment embracing diversity and practicing accountability and innovation (Sergiovanni (2000). This study will however be based on agency theory since it best explains the conflict that exists between the government (principals) and universities (managers) as they try to balance the use of inadequate financial resources provided by the government to provide services to students.

Student unrest has been defined in different ways by various authors. Ojo (1995) referred to it as student crisis and defined it as the effects caused by students as they demand their rights from university authorities. Another definition by Adeyemi (2009) portrays student unrest in terms of demonstrations by students arising from their protest to pressurize the university administration for their demands leading to destruction of lives and property. Other researchers have referred to student unrest as protests undertaken by the student community in the process of confronting university authority over their dissatisfaction with the way their issues are handled (Falua, 2004; Adeyemi, 2009).

This study adopts the definition by Adeyemi (2009) which best explains the way unrest of students manifest in Kenya. In this definition, student unrest, takes the form of demonstrations, pressurizing the university administration, and destruction of life and property. Student demonstration is an important issue to many stakeholders including the student community, the university administration, the society at large, and the government (Kiboiy, 2013). According to the study by Kiboiy (2013), demonstrations by students leads to premature closure of universities which makes the students spend longer time in pursuit of their academic programmes. This results in interruptions of student programmes and consequent delay in their post-education productive life. Also when students pressurize university administration, this has a negative impact on the University plans and disorganizes academic calendars which assume that each cohort or student intake will stay in the university for a specified period of time (Judge, 2015).

Governance includes the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members (with associated accountability) and their primary duty of enhancing the prosperity and viability of the organization (OECD, 2014). Corporate governance, relates to "the processes of interaction and decision-making among the actors involved in a collective problem that lead to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of social norms and institutions (Hufty, 2011). It is about the more strategic aspects of steering making the larger decisions about both direction and roles. Similarly, any University management expects student leaders at every level to undertake or commit themselves to adopt good governance practices as part of their obligations. Klopf (1960) reveals the murkiness of the history of student governance when he discusses the struggle to determine and give credit to the location of the first student

governing body. Some form of student governance has been apparent in American colleges since the late 1700's when William and Mary College organized a student governing body. Student governance is seen as a purposeful and important element in higher education, particularly as a conduit to reach, teach, and serve the students enrolled in higher education institutions (Bambenek & Shifton, 2003). This study is based on three independent variables namely: legitimacy of student leaders, direction (vision) of student leaders, performance of student leaders and effective student leadership (UNDP, 1997) is the dependent variable.

Leadership is the ability to recognize a certain goal, and also, the group persons that have common interests, and who essentially accomplish the goal (Fieldings, 2012). It is the ability to work with others in order to achieve their goals. The concept of leadership and the educational goals of leadership development have been given very little attention by most of the institutions of higher learning (Kathryn, et al 2016). Even if students are not particularly interested in developing leadership skills, virtually any of activities can be viewed as opportunity either to provide service to others or to enrich their group experience. According to Mghanga (2014), students' leaders champion, defend, articulate and represent the interests of students in the university. In this regard, students' leaders should be examples of discipline, diligence, academic performance and humane moral values and be a bridge of dialogue between students and university administration. Student governance is seen as a purposeful and important element in higher education, particularly as a conduit to reach, teach, and serve the students (Bambenek & Shifton, 2003; Oketch, 2004). Governance includes the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members and their primary duty of enhancing the prosperity and viability of the organization (OECD, 2014). Therefore, Graham, Amos and Plumptre (2003) note that the nature of governance - both the means and the end – needs to be understood; only then does it make sense to elaborate the principles in order to create a meaningful analytical tool.

Technical University of Mombasa (TUM) was established in 1951 as Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education (MIOME) and has passed through various transitional levels to become what it is now. The students' total student population in 2016 was 10,680. Students' views and problems are all addressed under the student umbrella body the Technical University of Mombasa Students Organization. TUM Students' Organization (TUMSO) has a total membership of twenty seven (27) student leaders and is headed by the TUMSO Secretary General. On the other hand, Pwani University is a Kenyan Public University located in Kilifi County. The University began as Kilifi Institute of Agriculture in 1984 and converted to Kilifi Institute of Agriculture in 2017 and later upgraded to a Constituent College of Kenyatta University before being given a full charter in March 2013 to become a full-fledged University. Pwani University Students Association (PUSA) was started in early 2007 and currently has a total student leadership population of twenty one (21) student leaders.

The need to carry out this study was motivated by the fact that most student leaders from public universities and institutions of higher learning have had challenges with management due to lack of effective student leadership. This has brought about student unrests leading to disruption of academic programs and destruction of property (Mwiria & Ng'ethe, 2006). According to Magolda and Ebben (2006) colleges and universities are discovering the importance of providing purposeful, meaningful out-of-class experience for all students. The emergence of principles of good governance is now being used elsewhere including private universities and other private entities to improve organizational performance (Kathryn et al., 2016). It is for this reason that student governments need to be typically structured along various functional spheres. It is due to this consistency of lack of good governance among

student leaders in public universities in Kenya that this study seeks to explore and find out how principles of good governance can make effective student leadership to be enhanced.

This study was guided by four objectives namely: to determine the effect of legitimacy of student leaders on effective student leadership in public universities in Kenya; to identify the effectof direction(vision) of student leaderson effective student leadership in public universities in Kenya; to determine the effect of performance of student leaders on effective student leadership in public universities in Kenya and to establish the comparable effect of principles of governance on effective student leadership at Technical University of Mombasa Students' Organization against the effect of principles of governance on effective student leadership at Pwani University Students' Association. This study is justified for a number of reasons. First, in Kenya, it is hoped that the findings of this study will help the public and private Universities leadership to understand how student leaders can improve their leadership through effective governance principles. This will hopefully help reduce issues of unrest in Universities in Kenya due to poor student leadership. The study is also intended to benefit policy makers, academicians, researchers and advocates of human rights to improve student governance in institutions of higher learning especially the Universities.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
The conceptual framework shows a diagrammatic presentation of the relationship between independent (principles of governance) and the dependent variable (effective student leadership) as shown on Figure 1.1.

Independent Variables   **Dependent Variable**
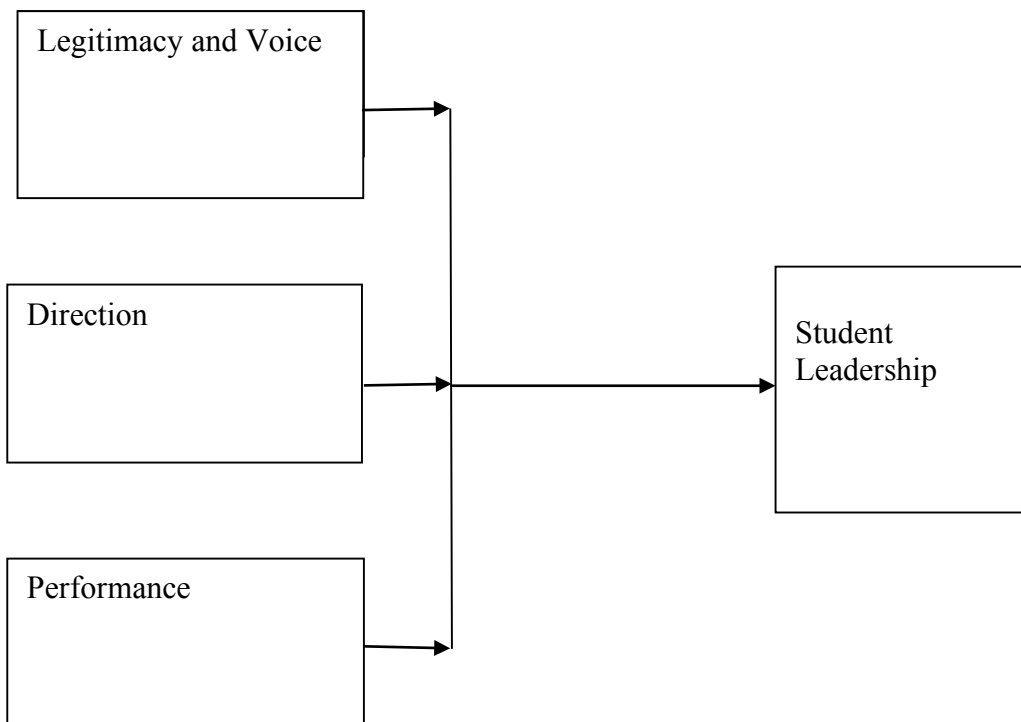
Research Hypotheses
The study was guided by three hypotheses:
H_1: There is a relationship between legitimacy of student leaders and effective student leadership.
H_2: There is a relationship between direction of student leaders and effective student leadership.

H₃: There is a relationship between performance of student leaders and effective student leadership.

H₄: There is a combined effect of legitimacy, direction and performance on effective student leadership.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This research is a comparative study of Technical University of Mombasa and Pwani University in Kilifi Town. The overall objective of the study was to establish the role principles of governance and student leadership play in student unrest in the two universities and determine their levels. The study adopted descriptive survey design and data was collected at a particular point in time in July 2017. The target population of this study included all the twenty seven (27) student leaders of the Technical University of Mombasa's Student Union and twenty-one (21) student leaders of Pwani University's Students Union. This was therefore a census study and the target population was all the student leaders in the two universities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). The study used quantitative primary data collected using self-administered structured questionnaires with closed and open ended questions. The questionnaire had sections on the five principles of governance developed by UNDP (1997) for Governance and Sustainable Human Development.

Both qualitative and quantitative questions were set on each aspect of each principle. Five-Point Likert-type scales ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree was used. According to Likert (1932) a Likert-scale is a beneficial technique used for measurement of attitudes. A pilot study was carried out a week before the actual study. The results of the pilot study was used to determine the quality of the survey instruments in terms of what the student leaders would feel about the questions asked, and identify and review questions that may not be clearly stated. Cronbach's alpha test on the student leaders' response from pilot study revealed some inconsistencies across the open questions. According to Cronbach (1975), the alpha value is a measure used to assess the reliability, or internal consistency, of a set of scale or test item. The alpha values from the pilot study are presented on Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Reliability Statistics: Cronbach'sAlpha[a]

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha[a]	No. of Items
Legitimacy and effective student leadership	0.584	6
Direction and effective student leadership	0.700	8
Performance and effective student leadership	0.853	8
Effective student leadership	0.717	4

As Table 3.2 shows the test returned strong alpha coefficient values for tests of reliability. Data was coded under a particular heading; viewed, summarized, and then analytical ideas about that code were drawn out and this formed the platform from which analysis can emerge (Chandran, 2004).

Data was analyzed using the Microsoft SPSS Version 23. The output was then presented in tabulated summaries and figures. Percentages were used to establish the number of proportion of respondents' responses. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of the variables and their relationship. A similar regression analysis was then applied for both Technical University of Mombasa and Pwani University Students' Associations as shown in the following model:

$$Y= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e$$

Where, Y= Student leadership   e=error
X_1= Legitimacy and voice $ß_0$= represent constant
X_2= Direction $ß_{123}$ = are regression coefficients
X_3= Performance

Ethical considerations made included application of the principle of anonymity which essentially means that the participant remains anonymous throughout the study - even to the researchers themselves (Jaramilla & Lazo, 2010). A permit to carry out the study was also obtained from the National Commission of Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) charged with regulation of research in Kenya.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

At the end of data collection period, a total of 45 questionnaires (24 from TUMSO and 21 from PUSA student leaders respectively) were returned giving an impressive 89.58% response rate. Analysis by age indicates that a higher number (83.3%) of students were in the 19-25 age group from TUMSO while slightly less (78.9%) were from PUSA. This clearly showed that the younger students at the two Universities are engaged in leadership. Regarding male gender, 79.2% from TUMSO and 78.9% from PUSA responded. This showed that male students had higher preference for leadership compared to their female counterparts. The results further show that one hundred percent (100%) of TUMSO student leaders are Kenyans as shown in the findings. This indicates that all student leaders from the two universities were from Kenya. The implication is that non-Kenyans, if any, were not engaged in leadership at both universities. Further analysis show that majority (79.2%) of the TUMSO student leaders were undergraduates while 78.9% leaders in PUSA were undergraduates. This shows that, there were slightly more undergraduate student leaders at TUMSO compared by Pwani Universities.

Testing of Hypotheses

Regression analysis was applied to test the study hypotheses at 95% confidence interval using one-tail approach. The results of the tests are presented in Tables 1.2, Table 1.3, and Table 1.4.

Table 1.2: Model Summary of Hypothesis Testing

University	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Technical University	1	.313a	.098	.057	.32266
Pwani University	1	.199a	.039	.017	.46833

a. Predictors: (Constant), Principles of Governance

The results in Table 1.2 show a comparison of how student leadership relates to principles of governance in the two universities. In TUM, R-square for is 0.057 while in TUM it is 0.017 % (PUSA). Therefore, this outcome clearly shows that the model was satisfactory for determining the relationship of the variables. Regression Analysis on the overall principles of governance and effective student leadership was conducted and the results are presented on Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Analysis of variance

University		Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Technical University	1	Regression	.249	1	.249	2.389	.136b
		Residual	2.290	22	.104		
		Total	2.539	23			
Pwani University	1	Regression	.153	1	.153	.697	.415b
		Residual	3.729	17	.219		
		Total	3.882	18			

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership
b. Predictors: (Constant), Principles of Governance

The results in Table 1.3 show that the overall model was not statistically significant. This implies that the overall model cannot be used to explain how variations in principles of governance affect effective student leadership in both universities. The regression of coefficients results of Technical University and Pwani University Student's Association were computed. Table 1.4 shows results of the significance of overall principles of governance on effective student leadership for the two Public Universities.

Table 1.4 Regression of Coefficients

University	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
Technical University	1	(Constant)	5.908	1.418		4.166	.000
		Principles of Governance	-.581	.376	-.313	-1.546	.136
Pwani University	1	(Constant)	5.678	2.217		2.562	.020
		Principles of Governance	-.494	.592	-.199	-.835	.415

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership

The results in Table 1.4 reveal that at individual level, the principles of governance were found to have no relationship with student leadership and thus of no significance (r=-0.581, p>0.05 for TUMSO and r=-0.494, p>0.05) for PUSA. This means that when the principles of governance change in student leaders, then their mode of student leadership is not affected.

Results of Hypotheses Tests
The study sought to understand whether there was any correlation between the independent and dependent variables. This was testing using Pearson's correlation coefficient approach. This information is presented on Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Regression of Coefficients results of TUMSO and PUSA

University	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
Technical University	1	(Constant)	5.024	1.614		3.113	.006
		Legitimacy	.029	.197	-.033	-.149	.883
		Direction	.262	.213	-.299	-1.226	.236
		Performance	.206	.219	-.214	.942	.035
		Accountability	.195	.267	.159	.728	.047
		Fairness	.042	.301	-.034	-.139	.891
Pwani University	1	(Constant)	5.436	2.404		2.261	.042
		Legitimacy	.331	.195	-.434	1.701	.113
		Direction	.282	.460	-.169	-.614	.550
		Performance	.348	.291	.301	1.197	.253
		Accountability	.062	.246	.062	.251	.028
		Fairness	.263	.409	-.175	-.644	.531

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership

Hypothesis H_{01}: stated that legitimacy of student leaders has a relationship with effective student leadership. This hypothesis was tested using ordinary linear regression analysis. The test was that if the p-value was less than 0.05 then there was a significant relationship. Results from Table 1.5 indicate that the p-value = 0.883>0.05 for TUMSO. This shows that there is no significant relationship between legitimacy and student leadership. Where a change in legitimacy of student leadership takes place, student leadership is not affected at all. P-value for PUSA is 0.113>0.05 which indicates that there is no significant relationship between legitimacy and student leadership.

Hypothesis H_{02}: Stated that direction of student leaders has a relationship with effective student leadership. The findings from Table 1.5 show that the p-value is 0.236 which is greater than 0.05. This implies there is no significant relationship between direction and effective student leadership. There a change in the direction of student leaders does not result in variation of leadership. In PUSA, p-value is 0.550 which is also greater than 0.05 which means that there is no significant relationship between direction of student leaders and effective student leadership.

Hypothesis H_{03}: stated that performance of student leaders has a relationship with effective student leadership. The results in Table 1.5 indicate that p-value for TUM is 0.035 which is less than 0.05. This can be interpreted to mean that there is a significant relationship between performance of student leaders and effective student leadership in TUM such that a change in the performance of leaders results in a corresponding change in effective student leadership. For PUSA the p-value for performance is 0.253 which is greater than 0.05. This means that performance of student leaders in PUSA had no relationship with effective student leadership.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusion
The overall objective of this study was to find out the contribution of principles of governance on effective student leadership in public universities in Kenya. Good governance and effective leadership are the essential requirements for an organization to be considered successful in

the eyes of all stakeholders in the 21st century (Walsh, 2012). Based on legitimacy of student leaders, creating an atmosphere of growth, enhancing change, being an influential person and having integrity were used as the modes to measure effective student leadership. This finding contradicts that of Dugan (2006) who asserts that legitimate power is power that one derives from formal position or office held in an organization and therefore had an influence in leadership. However, according to Mwiria *et al.* (2007), indeed rightfulness of students is still a major challenge in institutions of higher learning and more consensuses needs to be created. In regard to direction of student leaders creating an atmosphere of growth, enhancing change, being an influential person and having integrity were used as the modes to measure student leadership. Mwiria *et al.* (2007) asserts that a student government is an important resource in management of student affairs and is required to show direction that students should pursue. On the basis of performance of Student Leaders and Effective Student Leadership, regression analysis results reveal that has a relationship with effective student leadership in Technical University of Mombasa Students' Organization. However, the results revealed that performance of student leaders did not have a significant relationship toeffective student leadership in Pwani University Students Association.

COMPARISON OF TUMSO AND PUSA RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study hypothesized that, legitimacy was important to provide students leaders with sound leadership by allowing other students to air their views. According to Walsh and Black (2011) legitimacy of leaders is an important concept which yields rewards through improved communication and team morale thus increasing a leader's effectiveness. Direction of student leaders in TUMSO and PUSA was also found not to have any significance on student leadership. This study's findings are similar to Harris *et al.* (2013) who assert that direction for a leader influences the organization by aligning their systems, culture and organization structure to ensure consistency with strategy. The researcher found that performance of student leaders from TUMSO had an influence on and was significantly associated with student leadership. This compares favourably with Yukl (2009) who found that performance is a systematic results oriented approach to leaders for high performance organization, teams, and individuals. This keeps the entire team focused on one goal. In relation to the conceptual framework (Figure 1.1), when the leaders apply the principles of governance effectively the result is effective leadership. According to the proposed conceptual framework, the findings failed to confirm that legitimacy of student leaders, direction of student leaders has an influence on leadership. On the other hand, the findings confirmed that indeed performance has a significant relationship with effective leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that University and Higher Education Institutions leaders need to seek more training on practice of legitimacy in student organizations. Over the past several decades, substantial investments have been made to maximize access to basic education in developing countries. This notwithstanding, there has been need for policy makers to improve strategic direction for teams today. It is also recommended that mentors from industry should help provide appropriate institutions and processes so as to ensure the teams achieve their goals. This mentorship would help provide further exposure to governance practices for effective student leadership. This study also suggests that more studies should be done to establish whether public university students receive any form of training before vying for leadership position in university unions.

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