

**AN ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING  
PRACTICES AND ITS INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' UNREST  
MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MERU  
COUNTY OF KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background of the Study:** This study undertook a critical assessment of the influence of decision making leadership styles of the management in schools and its influence of students' unrest management Meru County of Kenya.

**Study Objective:** The study objectives were; to determine democratic leadership style, and its influence on students' unrest management in Meru county of Kenya, to establish the influence of autocratic leadership style, and its influence of students' unrests management in Meru County in Kenya, to examine influence of participative leadership style and its influence on students unrest management in Meru County of Kenya, and to establish the influence of management collaborative leadership style, and its influence on student unrests management in Meru County of Kenya.

**Methodology:** The research was carried out using mixed methods design and the results showed that most principals used democratic and participative leadership styles and encourage teachers' career growth.

**Findings:** The researcher concluded that there is a significant influence of decision making practices on student unrest in public secondary Schools in Meru County.

**Key terms:** *Leadership Styles, Mixed Method Design & Student Unrest Management.*

## **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Students' unrests have become a common feature in Kenya with tragic loss of lives, destruction of property and declining standards of education. The institutions and systems charged with eliminating or reducing students' unrests and learners' disruptive behaviour have not been successful. The tone and character of students unrest in Kenyan secondary schools has not only changed subtly but also dramatically in the past several years, students protests have become more militant; it occurs more frequently, involves more public secondary schools, covers more issues and involves students in a more direct manner than several years ago. There is more threat of actual disruption of classes and administration. More incidents of property damage occur in the course of protests. Hundreds of innocent lives have been lost and performance in national examinations has deteriorated (MoEST, 2008).

In Kenyan Secondary Schools, students' unrest has increased in frequency. For example in St. Kizito Secondary School, 71 girls were raped by their boys' colleagues, and in the encounter that followed, 19 of them died. In Kyanguli Secondary School Ukambani, 68 students died in a fire inferno, in Bombolulu Secondary School, 26 students perished in a dormitory inferno, and in Nyeri High School, their colleagues burnt 4 students presidents alive. In another case in Kabarnet High school, students rioted and burnt school property worth 20 million. In Kilifi, students of Matsongoni Secondary School burnt property and buildings worth 5.2 million over a period of over five years (MOEST, 2018).

In Kenya, the first case of student unrest was reported in 1908 in Maseno Secondary School (MOEST, 2008). Since 1980s the number of schools experiencing students unrest had increased from 22, [0.9%] to 187 [72%] schools in Kenya. Between the years 2000 and 2001, 250 schools experienced learner unrest out of a possible 3234 secondary schools, which translates into 8% of Kenyan Secondary Schools (Republic of Kenya, 2001). According to a Parliamentary report by the Ministry for Education, in June/July 2008, 254 schools experienced students' unrest in Kenya (MoEST, 2008).

In Meru County, Saint Kizito, 19 girls died in students unrest in 1991, Kanyakine burnt one dormitory, Akirangondu, St. Angela, Aboguthuci, Nkubu High School, Nkando Secondary school, Nkuene boys, Kaaga Boys, Kianjai have experienced student unrests some like Nkubu, Kaaga, Nkuene and Kanyakine Boys went on strike three times in 2015 (Republic of Kenya

County Education report, 2016). Meru County of Kenya accounted for about 11 per cent of all school students' unrest in the country in the same period, which is higher than the national average of 8%. In Kenya, there is scanty research on school management practices influence on students' unrest management. However, a number of managers in industry and commerce have formulated theories based on their experience has managers such as Tylor, Fayol, Weber, Gullic Urick as cited by Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012).

Fayol was the first theorist to recognize management of organizations as an important element in the achievement effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources in the organizations. School management practices functionally integrate communication, decision-making, policy programme development in school structure and power relations in a school system. School management practices help create school culture which inspires a sense of identity through shared philosophies, values, and attitudes. The conceptualization and operationalization of the mechanism of management practice systems are anchored on the assumption that the school social system fosters integration and adaptation for effective school resource management (Kondalkar, 2013).

The world is always changing with time and school managers are faced with complex and challenging pressures and opportunities. They must ensure that scarce resources are used in an optimum manner and ensure long-term survival of their institutions.

Long-term survival involves effectiveness in the ability to adapt in order to achieve their set goals. It also involves the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances; organizations planning and implementation and coping with change remains one of the many challenges facing school managers in public Secondary Schools.

Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) considers the school as a social system reminiscent of organizational theory in which groups of people such as students, teachers, curriculum specialists and administrators interact according to certain norms and behaviours. Administrators, who rely on this approach, plan the curriculum in terms of programmes, schedules, space, resources and equipment, personnel and departments. This holistic approach advocates among other things the need for selecting, organizing, communicating with and supervising people involved in curriculum decisions. It considers committees and group processes, human relations, leadership styles and methods and decision-making. The focus on school management practices is

significant in that it deals with unexplored field of study and a burning issue of our time. Furthermore, the society keeps on improving and solutions of today will generate social problems of tomorrow.

Koech (2004) concurs with National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) that youth unrest in schools and colleges are a major problem affecting the Kenyan society. NCCCK posits that a large number of schools have experienced disturbances in every year. In 2015, over 150 schools reported students' unrest (MoEST, 2016).

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Student unrest is a global problem affecting countries in Europe, America, Canada, and Asian countries. Its intensity varies from country to country, region-to-region, but remains a concern to all stakeholders and Kenya included. Secondary schools students discipline is at crossroads in Kenya with increased rate of students' unrest, bringing to question the effectiveness of schools management practices, and its influence on students 'unrest management in Kenyan secondary schools. Students' unrest has resulted in loss of life, disruption of learning, and destruction of property. Reasons advanced for the students' unrest include examination fever, drug abuse, poor parental guidance and peer pressure (Republic of Kenya, 2001). The exact reasons for the unrest have not been researched on and this makes it difficult to eliminate them and predict when they will occur and pro-actively act on them. Studies done on student unrest have focused on the external influences of student unrest and there is scant information focusing on school management practices of decision-making styles in the internal environment of school within Meru County. It is still not clear why students' unrests have been on increase instead of declining after implementing some policies to reduce the workload in the education system. In January to July 2016, 66 out of 192 Schools in Meru County experienced students' unrest accounting to about 30% of all Meru County Secondary Schools with Form 4 students. That level of students' unrest was higher than the national average of 8%.

This study is therefore timely and can inform policy since student unrest management is a global issue and therefore, necessary to investigate the influence of school management practices and their influence on students' unrest management. If the issue of students' unrests is not resolved, the integration and adoption of management practices on school system will lead to high rate of student unrest in Meru County of Kenya. The study focuses on internal school management

practices. School management practices impact negatively or positively on the integration and adaptation of school systems leading to either high school performance or students' unrest.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

1. To determine schools' management democratic leadership style, and its influence on students' unrest management in Meru county of Kenya.
2. To establish the influence of schools' management autocratic leadership style, and its influence of students' unrests management in Meru county in Kenya.
3. To examine influence of schools' management participative leadership style and its influence on students unrest management in Meru county of Kenya.
4. To establish the influence of schools' management collaborative style, and its influence on student unrests management in Meru county of Kenya.

### **1.4 Hypothesis that guided the study**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant influence between management decision making practices and students' unrest management in public secondary Schools in Meru County, Kenya.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

In Meru, in 2016 there were 66 students' strikes reported to the County Educational Office. Of those 66, about 30% schools reported destruction and burning of school property (County Educational Officer report, 2016). Fransisca (2012) in a study done in Nairobi north district on institutional factors influencing student unrest concluded that peer pressure and indisciplined student body contributes to student unrest. The study also found parent lack of concern of their children, strict school rules; poor diet, poor teacher student relationships, drug abuse, lack of guidance and counselling and lack of good role models were the main institutional factors influencing student unrest.

Decision-making is a practice of choosing from among alternatives and it is important to understanding educational administration since choice practised play a key role in motivational leadership, communication and school change. Decision-making supersedes all other management functions such as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating and controlling, all involve decision-making (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012), suggest five decision-making styles, which may be arranged along a continuum from autocratic to group participation. Autocratic leadership uses existing information and solves the problem unilaterally. The leader can also use informed - autocratic style where the leader solves the problem unilaterally after obtaining necessary information from subordinates. The leader can also use individual-consultative style by sharing the problem with staff members individually and make decisions that may or may not reflect the influence of subordinates. The leader may also use groups to solve problems: -group-consultative style where the leader shares the problem with group members, solicit their ideas and makes decisions that may or may not reflect the influence of subordinates. Finally, the leader may use a group-agreement style where the leader shares the problem with subordinates and together generate and evaluate alternatives in an attempt to reach consensus, this then becomes the group decision.

In autocratic leadership style, the leader has the power to make decisions alone, having total authority. Thus, this leadership style is good for employees who have little education skills and need close supervision to perform certain tasks. Creative employees and team players resent this type of leadership, since they are unable to enhance processes of decision-making, resulting to job dissatisfaction (Lewin, Lippit & White, 2010). In democratic leadership style, the leader listens to the team's ideas and studies them, but will make the final decision. Team players contribute to the final decision thus increasing employee satisfaction and ownership, by feeling that their input was considered when the final decision was taken. Leaders make frequent use of problem solving meetings, When changes arises, this type of leadership helps the team to adapt to the changes better and more rapidly than other styles, knowing they were consulted and contributed to the decision making process, thereby minimizing resistance suggested changes. Democratic leadership style incorporates both participative and collaborative leadership style. However, leaders should be prepared to accept less than optimum solutions' and its difficulty when decisions are needed in a short period of time or at that moment (Lewin, Lippit & White, 2010).

In Laissez-Faire Leadership style, the leader treats staff members and students as independent decision-makers. This leadership style is best for experts in the tasks they are allocated. On the other hand, this type of style is also associated with leaders that do not lead at all but coach, or act as facilitators, failing in supervising team members, resulting in lack of control and higher

costs, leading to failure, conflicts and deteriorating in discipline standards (Lewin, Lippit & White, 2010).

According to Katz (1955) as cited by Northouse, (2007), there are three sets of leadership skills that leaders ought to master, these are technical skills:-knowledge and skills about a type of activity; human skills:-knowledge about and ability to work with people; and conceptual skills-ability to work with ideas and concepts to creating a vision and strategic plan. School principals must have technical skills. These are the learned capacity or ability to carry out pre-determined activities and results through tools, machines, techniques, and methods of organizations. Four of the key technical skills that a leader must master are planning, organizing, directing and controlling. According to Toni (2004), technical skills are the abilities to use processes, practices, techniques and tools of the specific area a manager supervises. The manager must have enough technical knowledge and skills to intelligently direct employees, organize tasks, communicate work groups' needs to others and solve problems.

In order to accomplish the goals and objectives set forth in the planning stages, the leader must learn to establish the structures of the team and the people that are part of the team, and be able to control the work to be completed by the team. In the education set up, five performance areas have been identified as the critical leadership skills a principal must demonstrate to effectively lead a school in improving student achievement. The school principal or head teacher must: have collaborative problem solving and open communication skills; collecting, analysing and using data to identify school needs, using data to identify and plan for needed changes in the instructional program, implementing and monitoring the school improvement plan and using systems thinking to establish a clear focus on attaining student achievement goals. These are as cyclical in nature and must be demonstrated continuously throughout the school improvement process. The end product of this process is the school improvement plan, whereas the end goals for the process is improved student achievement.

Secondly, schools principals must be trained on conceptual skills, Toni (2004), says SMT should have strong conceptual skills, including decision-making, problem solving and creativity. SMTs are responsible for strategic planning and implementation and daily operational issues. It is that power and responsibilities within the school that should not be centred on one person, but divided among as many of the staff as possible so that all feel involved in the decision-making



process and understand rationale behind school policies. This implies that decision-making and problem solving should be shared by all members of the SMT, conceptual skills; to see the big picture and ensure that the organization, or that part of it for which they are responsible, is consistently in tune with a changing operating environment. They are good at recognizing and analysing complex issues, problem solving and decision-making.

Thirdly, school managers must be both analytical and personal when it comes to managing time, resources and personnel. Rowald (2017), says in today's organization, the heterogeneity of work teams is increasing, since members of work teams have different ages, genders and come from different cultures. Consequently, team leaders face challenges dealing with multiple needs, values and motives of their followers. Toni (2004) says an important aspect of a manager's job is to motivate employees to achieve organizational goals. Plunkett and Attner (2012), posit that motivation is the psychological process that gives behaviour purpose and direction. The ability to motivate is an important managerial skill. The manager is responsible for helping subordinates perform efficiently and effectively.

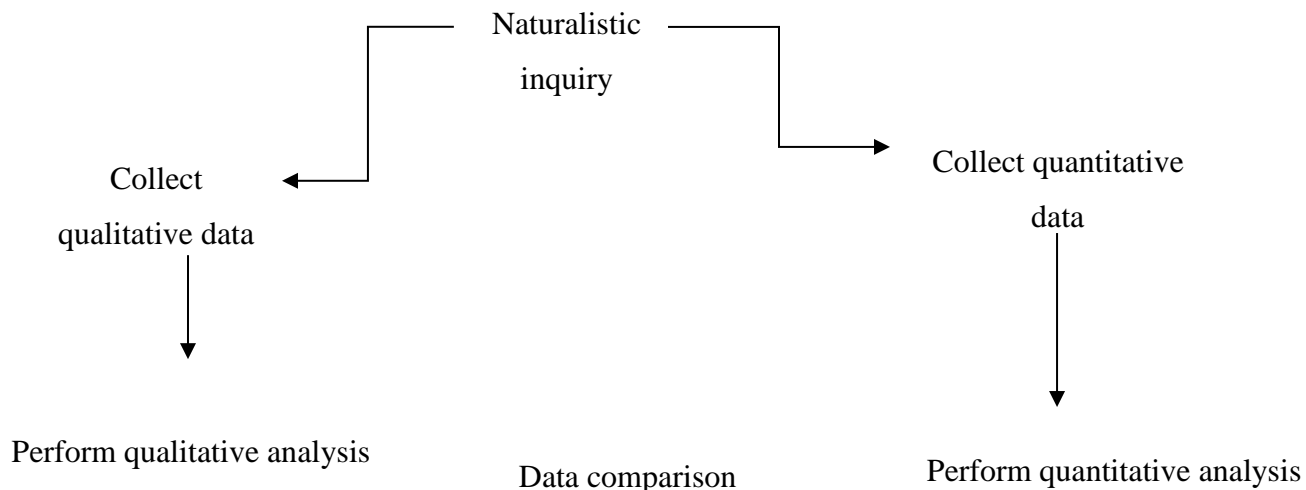
Principals who have long experience are better managers, Plunkett and Attner (2012), points out those managers of the best run organizations rely heavily on experiential understanding, and the more experiences one is exposed to, the broader principal's base will be for sharing and understanding of issues concerning the institution.

### **3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study used concurrent triangulation design. According to Creswell (2003) as cited by Almalki (2016), triangulation is appropriate for mixed methodology and was efficient since both qualitative and quantitative data was collected at the same time during one phase of the research. The design was deemed suitable for this study as the researcher sought to examine the current state of school management practices influence on student unrest without adjusting any condition of the study. It also helped to make finding rich and comprehensive. Multiple data sources that included questionnaires and interview schedules were used, and combined to determine the study findings. The design also helped the researcher to bring together the different strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of quantitative methods with this of qualitative methods. This further helped the researcher understand the research problem, and relate quantitative results to qualitative findings (Creswell & Plano, 2003). One way to envision the possibilities for



combining qualitative and quantitative analysis is the use of pathoris model of measurement design and analysis as shown below.



**Figure 1: Concurrent Triangulation Design**

Adopted from Creswell (2003)

#### 4.0 Findings of the Study

##### 4.1 School Characteristics and School Unrest (dependent variable)

To get a background about student unrests, the study inquired about whether the school had gone on strike the last four years, to the students who were the real participants in those strikes, when it occurred, and the behaviour exhibited by the students. The same information was sought from the County Education Officer.

The study findings on whether their school has ever gone on strike in the last four years between 2013 and 2016 show the following;

**Table 1: Has your school ever gone on strike in the last four years**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	187	99.5
No	1	.5
Total	188	100.0

Source: Researcher (2017)

Table 1 shows 99.5% (187) students responded that there were strikes in their schools in the last four years and about 1% responded that there was no strike in their school in the last four years. This was also supported by the information provided by the County Director of education who indicated, “*That in 2016 between January and June in Meru County, 66 secondary schools out of 192 targeted for the study went on strike*”. To establish the frequency of the incidents, the students were asked to indicate on which year the student unrest occurred. Students responded as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: When did the strike occur?**

	Frequency	Percent
2012	48	25.5
2013	40	21.3
2014	70	37.2
2015	30	16.0
Total	188	100.0

Source: Researcher (2017)

The findings in Table 2 from student respondents indicate that 26% (48) of strikes occurred in 2012, 21% (21) occurred in 2013, 37% (70) occurred in 2014 and 16% occurred in 2015. The conclusion of the study was that student strikes occurred in almost all schools in Meru county of Kenya in the last four years.

On the kind of unacceptable behaviour did the students display during the strike the students responses are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Which unacceptable behaviour did students engaged in?**

	Frequency	Percent
Refused to attend class	47	25.0
Destroy school property	48	25.5
Refused food	73	38.8
Match out of school compound	20	10.6
Total	188	100.0

Source; Researcher 2017

The findings in Table 3 show 25% (47) of student respondent refused to attend classes, 25% (48) destroyed school property, 39% (73) refused to eat food and 11% (20) matched out of the school compound. The conclusion of the study was most students strikes was food related and in one quarter of the cases students destroyed school property.

**Table 4: Mean and Deviation**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
As your school ever gone for strike in the last four years	1.01	0.073
Unacceptable behaviour displayed	2.35	0.972

Source; Researcher 2017

In Table 4, all the responses fall below 1 standard deviation which indicates that students were almost unanimous that most students strikes are food related and in most cases students refused to attend class, matched out of school compound and in a quarter of the cases destroyed school property.

## **4.2 How do the school management decision-making practices influence unrest in Meru County of Kenya?**

### **4.2.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis**

The second objective was to assess the extent to which school management practices contributes to students’ unrest. To achieve this, the principals, the discipline and guidance and counselling master/mistresses were asked to comment on school management decision-making practices that were suspected to contribute to student strike.

The study examined the decision-making practices and its influence on students’ unrest in public secondary schools, with reference to school management practices under three levels, namely: descriptive statistics, thematic analysis and mixed method interpretation of data. The findings are presented in the subsequent tables. The findings are based on analysis of variable indicators; A list of management styles was provided in the principals questionnaire to rank the extent to which they were used by principals. They are; Do principals explain the need to Change and help them to See Logic Rationale for Change. (Democratic style in decision-making), Do principals force employees to accept change by use of threats. (Directive style in decision-making), Do principals allow staff to participate in the change process by discussing issues affecting them. (Participative style in decision-making), and Do principals offer additional incentives for compliance to staff and students. (Collaborative decision-making). Also A list of management

styles was provided in the Discipline and G&C Masters/Mistresses questionnaire to rank the extent to which they were used by principals. They are; whether the supervisor manages changes well, whether senior management provides clear direction for the future, whether teachers are fairly treated, whether the supervisor sets clear expectations and goals with the staff, and whether there is a strong interdepartmental cooperation.

**4.2.2 School management decision making practices and its influence on student unrest management**

**Table 5: School management decision-making practices, and its influence on student unrest management. (Decision-making styles): principals’ respondents.**

<b>Item</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Explain the need to Change and help them to See Logic Rationale for Change	Disagree	1	5.9
	Agree	9	52.9
	Strongly agree	7	41.2
	Total	17	100.0
Offer Additional Incentives for Compliance to Staff and Students	Disagree	1	5.9
	Undecided	2	11.8
	Agree	10	58.8
	Strongly agree	4	23.5
	Total	17	100.0
	Strongly disagree	10	58.8
	Disagree	6	35.3
	Agree	1	5.9
Allow Staff to participate in the Change Process by discussing issues affecting them	Total	17	100.0
	Undecided	2	11.8
	Agree	8	47.1
	Strongly agree	7	41.2
	Total	17	100.0

Source: researcher (2017)

The findings in Table 5 indicate that 94.1% (16) principal respondents strongly agreed, and agreed that principal explained the need for change, help teacher and student to understand the logical rationale for change and only 5.9% (1) disagreed that principals explained rationale for change. The results concurs with Hoy and Miskes (2005) who in his study found that schools that had humanistic open systems had higher achievement as a result of staff members and student motivation.

The findings in Table 5 indicate that 82% (14) principal respondents, strongly agreed and agreed, that the principal should offer additional incentive to students and teacher for compliance, 6% disagreed and 12% were undecided. The study finding was majority of the principals offer additional incentives to students, teachers for compliance with change.

The findings in Table 5 indicate 94% principal respondents, disagreed, that threats and intimidation should not be used to force staff and student to accept change, and 6% agreed that threats and intimidation should be used to force change process in schools.

The findings in Table 5 indicate that 88% principal respondents responded, that they allow staff and students to participate in discussion on change process and 12% were undecided. The study finding was that most schools allowed students and staff to participate in discussion issues affecting them or the change process. The findings are consistent with study findings by Chan, Cheng and Hau (1991) as cited by Chengz (2006), indicate that schools with competent principals in Hong Kong had high satisfaction index of 60% and above.

**Table 6: School management decision making practices mean/std. deviation**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Explain the need to change and help the to see logic rational for change	4.29	.772
Offer additional incentives for compliance to staff and students	4.00	.791
Allow staff to participate in the process by discussing issues affecting them	4.29	.686

Source: researcher (2017)

The variables analyzed in Table 6, lie below one standard deviation of the mean. This means that the group is homogenous which means the respondents have a similar opinion of the communication practices on student unrest management, at 95% confidence level ( $\sigma < 1$ ). The conclusion of the study was that principals felt that they consulted students/parents/teachers when making decisions.

**Table 7: School management decision-making practices, and its influence on student unrests management. (Decision-making styles): teachers’ respondents.**

Item		Frequency	percent
Senior management provides clear direction for the future	Strongly Disagree	3	8.1
	Disagree	1	2.7
	Agree	19	51.4
	Strongly Agree	14	37.8
	Total	37	100.0
My supervisor sets clear expectations and goals with me	Strongly Disagree	2	5.4
	Disagree	1	2.7
	Agree	25	67.6
	Strongly Agree	9	24.3
	Total	37	100.0
Do teachers feel they are fairly treated by the school administration	Disagree	3	8.1
	Undecided	4	10.8
	Agree	16	43.2
	Strongly Agree	14	37.8
	Total	37	100.0
There is a strong level of inter-department cooperation	Strongly Disagree	2	5.4
	Disagree	1	2.7
	Undecided	6	16.2
	Agree	17	45.9
	Strongly Agree	11	29.7
Total	37	100.0	

Source researcher (2017)

Findings on Table 7 indicates that 89% (33) of Guidance and Counseling masters/mistresses and discipline masters/mistresses agreed that senior management provided clear direction of the future, 11% (4) disagreed with the same. The study established that principals give clear direction on what needs to done, which may reduce truancy and delinquent behavior on the part of students.

N.C.E.S (2014) study findings indicated that factors that lead to better learning climate were low absenteeism, better examination results and reduced delinquency which concurs with this study finding that if students guided well few conflicts will be experienced in schools.

The data analysis in Table 7 shows 92% (34) of Guidance and Counseling masters/mistresses and discipline masters/mistresses agreed that supervisor’s set clear expectations and goals, while

8% (3) disagreed with the same. The study conclusion was that most supervisors set clear goals and consults teachers and students on issues that affect them. These findings agree with Lunenburg and Ornstein's (2012), who argue that in a democratic procedure, every person has a say in the practices by voting for his/ her viewpoint. Democratic decision-making is associated with an individualistic cultural viewpoint, which tends to see each person as separate autonomous being. These practices can lead to considerable bureaucracy or 'red tape'. Many Schools are not so much democratic; - decision-making is by few at the top who then impose their decisions on subordinates. Justifying their style, that if everybody was involved in all types of decision bureaucratic practices would be unwieldy and time-consuming. Mattingly (2007) have studied the relationship between school culture and decision making involving the working staff and found that the decisions made by the school principal are generally influenced by the degree to which features of the options are compatible with features of the School culture. The higher the degree of compatibility the more likely it is that the decisions will endorse that option. When that happens students, strikes are reduced and vice versa

Table 7 results indicate that 8% (3) of the Guidance and Counseling masters/mistresses and discipline masters/mistresses respondents agreed that they are treated unfairly, 11% (4) were undecided and 81% (30) strongly agreed or agreed they are treated fairly. The findings imply that most teachers feel well treated by the administration. Marsumoto and Juang (2008) agrees with the study findings that fair treatment to staff, enhanced productivity and anyone with an interest in an issue should have a say in the process. People should have equal opportunity to develop their abilities and one must compete with others for upward mobility (Lunenburg & Orstein, 2012).

Findings in Table 7 indicate that 76.6% (28) of Guidance and Counseling masters/mistresses and discipline masters/mistresses respondents agreed, 8% (3) disagreed and 16% (6) were undecided that there were strong inter-departmental cooperation. The study conclusion was that there was effective communication in most schools and that may have reduced inter-departmental conflicts, and hence students unrest. The findings concurs with Maslowski (2009), whose research indicated that by incorporating staff in the management of the school, student enrolment increased with a remarkable growth. The reason for that, being the principal had communicated their expectations to teachers, encouraged good quality teaching, permanent readiness of teachers



to discuss students’ progress, shortcomings, encouraged teachers willingness to discuss issues, and changes within the school system

**Table 8: School management decision making practices mean/std. deviation**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
My supervisor manages change well	4.27	0.99
Senior management provides clear direction for the future	4.08	1.115
Teachers feel they are fairly treated	3.97	0.897
My supervisor sets clear expectations and goals with me	4.03	0.928
There is a strong level of inter-department co-operation	3.92	1.038

Source: Researcher (2017)

The variables analyzed in Table 8, lie below two standard deviation of the mean. This means that about 95.4% lie between two standard deviations of the mean and the group is thus homogenous which means the respondents have a similar opinion of the communication practices on student unrest management, at 95% confidence level ( $\sigma < 2$ ). The conclusion of the study was that about 50% of respondents felt that principals consulted students/parents/teachers when making decisions, they also felt fairly treated and administrators resolved their disputes fairly.

**Table 9: Chi-square on influence of decision making practices on Student unrest in Meru County**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29.164 <sup>a</sup>	12	.004
Likelihood Ratio	19.052	12	.087
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.275	1	.259
N of Valid Cases	37		

a. 17 cells (85.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

On the influence of decision making practices on students’ unrest that is; My supervisor manages change well, Senior management provides clear direction for the future, Teachers feel they are fairly treated, My supervisor sets clear expectations and goals with me and if there is a strong level of inter-department co-operation all the P values obtained were less than 0.5 indicating that the observed frequencies for all the variables would be significantly different from what you

would expect to get by chance. Thus the researcher concluded that there is a significant influence of decision making practices on student unrest in public secondary Schools in Meru County.

So the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepts H<sub>1</sub>, alternative hypothesis that there is a significant association, between decision-making process and student unrest in public secondary Schools in Meru county of Kenya. This implies that decision-making process in public secondary Schools in Meru county of Kenya is a significant factor, in influencing students' unrest in public secondary Schools in Meru Count, Kenya. Under thematic analysis, respondent's opinion as far as decision-making practices influence students' unrest was established. The findings based on the themes were indicated.

#### **4.2.3 Thematic Analysis and Interpretation**

Under thematic analysis, the researcher sought the opinion of the County Educational Officer on how the management decision-making practices influence students' unrests in schools in Meru County of Kenya. The researcher followed variables in decision-making practices specifically what was her opinion on use of participative leadership style, democratic style and collaborative style.

The thematic analysis focused on responses from the interview schedule conducted with the County Education Officer. In the analysis of interview responses under thematic analysis, respondent's opinion as far as the principal use participative or collaborative decision-making was

*“Participative or collaborative decision making means the action of working with someone to produce or create something or to work jointly with others especially in a School environment”*(County Educational Officer, 2016).

In your opinion, do principals consult students and parents when implementing school policy?

The respondent responded that,

*“many principals do not consult students regularly, parents meetings are not adequate for consultation, and that is evident from the disturbances that the county office deals with indicates inadequate consultation on issues touching on parents contribution in running the schools”*(County Educational Officer, 2016).

On whether the teachers are treated fairly by school administrator, the respondent responded that

*“in most cases there are no complaints from teacher, they are involved in decision-making”*(County Educational Officer, 2016).

She added that,

*“Most student unrests are influenced by inadequate funding of games, athletic and drama festivals. On the resolution of disputes, the respondents responded that “principals try to resolve disputes, but still many were not resolved especially those that are concerned with issues of financing of activities, buying of school buses, that are modern and of high sitting capacity”*(County Educational Officer, 2016).

On Collaborative decision-making, the respondent said,

*“We encourage principals and teachers to consult regularly and also hold meetings with the students on issues that affect them in morning assemblies, in meeting and with housemasters”*(County Educational Officer, 2016).

However, there are some Schools, which implemented school policies without consulting students. On commitment to their duties, the respondents indicated that some principals have been under committed, others were sacked and some resigned to concentrate on their private businesses.

#### **4.2.4 Mixing of Data and Interpretation**

The study established the significance of the various variables concerning decision- making practices in Schools. It was supported by descriptive data results which indicates that, 94% principals respondents, and 88%, discipline, and guidance and counselling masters/mistresses, also concurs with the same that, they discuss academic learning issues with students, and, also less than 15% indicate that principal’s implements School policy without consultation. The County Education Officer also concurs with the findings that there are principals who implement School policies without consulting the stakeholders that small percentage of principals may cause conflicts in schools leading to student unrests. According to the opinion of the County Education Officer, principals consulted stakeholders for instance staff members, parents, provided direction to academic learning activities but failed to discuss School policies with students and some are not committed to their work due to other personal commitments such as private business.

The emotions emerging from C.E.O response on whether principals leadership style influence students unrests, was a sense of sadness in that most principals did not give students opportunities to discuss issues that concern them although she was of the feeling that pressures and tasks undertaken by principals may have contributed to the situation in Meru schools

Hoy and Miskes (2005) posits that resolving disputes in an open school system requires the cooperation of parents, teachers, students and the surrounding community and this type of school has shared values which provide a stable social system, as a result of the school management practising democratic style of decision making which is all inclusive. This reduces conflicts and student unrests.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

The second objective was to determine the influence of school management decision-making practices on students' unrests in Meru County of Kenya. The study found out slightly less than half agreed that principals consulted the parents/teachers/students when making decision about issues that concern them, while slightly more than half did not agree. It was also found that majority of respondents agreed that they were fairly treated, while more than half of the respondents indicated that their disputes were resolved fairly, while less than half indicated their disputes were never resolved. The County Education Officer supports the findings that principals did not consult as widely when making decisions.

### **5.2 Recommendations for further research.**

An examination of factors that influence principals in making unilateral decisions and failing to consult other stakeholders.

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