

**“STUDENTS’ PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING:  
A STUDY OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STRIKES IN  
NAIROBI PROVINCE”**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

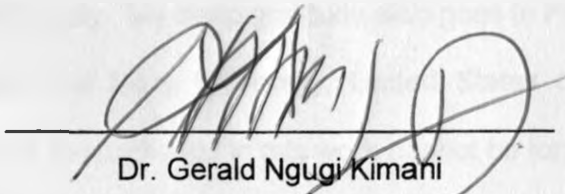
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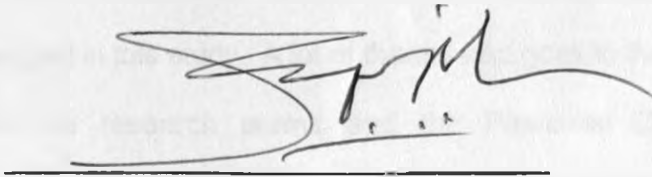
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## DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my family; my husband; Dr. Paul Nyaga Mbatia, daughters; Damaris Wambui and Beth Judith Nyambura, and son; Antony Simon Mbatia, who saw me through this study with undying love, encouragement, support and patience, that boosted my morale.

## ABSTRACT

The concept of participatory decision making permeates virtually all facets of our lives today. However, students' participation in decision making as a tool towards the enhancement of administrative effectiveness and efficiency in Kenyan secondary schools has not been wholly embraced by schools. The inadequate facilitation of students' participation in secondary school decision making processes has been cited in various forums as a cause of school strikes/unrests as a result of lack and/or limited students' participation in decision making. The study was envisaged to serve as an important pointer for efforts towards enhancement of participatory decision making in secondary schools in Kenya.

The study sought to fulfill four objectives, namely:

1. To find out the key factors that explain the increasing student strikes in secondary schools in Nairobi Province in the late 1990s.
2. To investigate whether limited and/or lack of students' participation in decision making processes had any significant influence on upsurge of student strikes in Nairobi province in the 1990s.
3. To explore the extent to which principals involved students in school decision making processes.
4. To examine whether changes calling for multipartism have had any significant influence on students' demand for participation in decision making.

To realize these objectives, the study tested three hypotheses. The dependent variable for all these research questions was student strikes. The hypotheses sought to establish whether the dependent variable was influenced by the following independent variables; type of school, limited and/or lack of student participation in decision making processes and undemocratic prefect system in schools.

The study was designed as a cross sectional survey research study. Random sampling was used to select 35 public secondary schools in Nairobi province. All students and principals in the selected schools were given questionnaires to complete. In all, 478 secondary school students and 25 principals were studied.

Based on the study's data, the following are the key findings of this study:

1. Majority of the students (67.9%) revealed that they were not satisfied that they were adequately involved in decision making processes in their school.
2. The most prevalent causes of school strikes and unrests among secondary school students were lack of student participation in decision making, lack of dialogue between principals and students, too much powers vested on prefects, lack of democratic system in schools and drug abuse among students.
3. The majority of principals tended to exercise complete control over some democratic processes in school seen as most appropriate for students' participation. This came out despite their acceptance that students' participation in decision making is very important since they are the direct recipients of the decisions so made.

4. The most common methods suggested for curbing school strikes/unrests include: involving all the stakeholders in school decision making, ensuring that principals are present and accessible to students, and enhancing student guidance and counseling in schools.
5. The socio-political changes taking place in the society have made students more aware of their democratic rights hence demanding participation in decision making processes. Out of the twenty three principals who responded to the item on causes of strikes, the highest percentage (26.1%) indicated that one of the causes of increased strikes is that students are more informed about their rights of participation in decision making.

Drawing from its findings, this study suggests the following recommendations.

1. Students should be allowed to participate actively in schools' decision making processes. This could be done through establishment of student councils in schools.
2. A policy should be established through the Ministry of Education on how principals could involve students in decision making processes and increase dialogue with students. This would have a positive impact on student behaviour in school instead of principals exercising complete control.
3. The prefect system in schools should be reviewed to allow students to elect prefects. The study found that majority of the students felt that prefects had too much power.



4. Frequent workshops, in-service and refresher courses on participatory decision making should be organized by the Ministry of Education or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) targeting the school principals.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>BOG</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Board of Governors</b>
<b>CED</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Charter for Education and Democracy</b>
<b>CLARION</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Centre of Law and Research International</b>
<b>KCSE</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination</b>
<b>IIEP</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>International Institute for Educational Planning</b>
<b>NCKK</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>The National Council of Churches of Kenya</b>
<b>PTA</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Parents-Teachers Association</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</b>

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS CLARIFYING COMPONENTS

#### Background to the Problem

The need for participation of secondary school students in decision making started in the 1960s in the United States of America. This later spread to other parts of the world in two decades that followed this period (Powers, D. R. and powers, M. F., 1984). According to Cleveland in Powers et al (1984, p. 1), "a desire for participatory governance is rising around the world. We are moving from doctrines of centralized power to notions of decentralization, devolution, separatism and a broadened participation".

The desire for students' participation in decision making can be supported by two arguments. One argument revolves around the relative maturity of secondary school students. The second argument revolves around the position of the school in society. The first argument looks at secondary school students as people who are mature enough to take responsibility of any administrative tasks assigned to them by the school administration. The argument that secondary school students are not mature is not valid in view of the fact that about 40 per cent, are eighteen years (voting age) and above (Kinyanjui, 1976). Kinyanjui (1976) further argues that there is need to shift from the situation in which students are passive recipients of knowledge to active participants in the process of learning. Therefore, there is a critical need in secondary schools to accept that it is not a crime for students to organize themselves and have leaders who articulate their views and grievances. Moreover, secondary school students have been

known to take responsibility vested on them with the scruples of adults, although they are not adults in the real sense (Gathenya, 1992).

The second argument put forth, looks at the position of the school in society. According to Kinyanjui, (1976) the school is an integral part of the society. So changes in the society should be reflected and embraced in the school. The society puts immense responsibilities to the school. First, since society is the only source of human and material resources into the school, it has a direct link to the school in that it has a say in what is offered to the students during learning (Muchelle, 1996). Second, the same society is the main consumer of school outputs. Hence, what society desires in its citizenry should be appropriately reflected in the school, its main point of enculturation (Powers et al, 1984).

The advent of democracy in the United States saw the position of the school gain prominence hitherto unknown; that of the laboratories of democracy (Powers et al 1984). The school since then has been seen as an agent for training students in the skills and attitudes for participatory administration and democracy. With the start of democratisation process in education arose demands for students' participation in school administration. This has with time spread to other parts of the world and Kenya is no exception. Indeed there is a realization that students need to be involved in order to learn important life skills of living and participating in their community and larger society. The Ministry of Education (1993) suggests that no school can succeed without involving students in some of the decision-making processes and even in the general management of the school.

The concept of participatory administration in education and students participation became noticeable in United States in the 1960s (Powers et al.,

1984). At this time, school enrolments went up in the United States due to increased demand for education. This meant that schools had to evolve new administrative techniques (Powers et al, 1984). An immediate factor that led to concerted efforts towards participation of students in administration was the discovery in the U.S.A. of the root cause of student's unrest and vandalism (Muchelle 1996). Investigations into the causes of unrest and vandalism revealed great frustration by students due to lack of participation in the administrative process of their institutions (Muchelle, 1996). This realization brought the issue of student participation to the fore. According to Mbae (1994) the democratic wind of change which in the recent past has blown across the world has not spared Africa, Kenya included. In Kenya, policy makers consider the school almost as important for its function of political socialization as for its manpower development function (Mbae, 1994). The simultaneous economic adjustment and political liberalization affected the relation between teachers, students and parents in school. The changes have had important ramifications on students expectations in schools especially on the rights claimed by the students (Gaynor, 1998). The rights that students claim have increased and include the right to participate in decision making.

Kenya, like the rest of the countries in Africa has not undertaken much effort to promote the democratic administration through students' participation in decision-making (Nation Correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1995, p.5). Very often school administrators practice tyranny in the name of discipline. The assumption here is that allowing students greater say in the running of their own affairs is a threat to discipline (Mbae, 1994). However, this need not be so. Research study in Tanzania shows that where democratization has been taken seriously in schools there has been improved discipline as all

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participants have felt responsible for their schools (Kisangu in Mbae, 1994). The trend is far from being settled as exemplified by increasing cases of students resulting to strike action, as they demand dialogue with school authorities. Complaints about school principals who are undemocratic have been common in the Kenyan press. For instance in Kwale District, students of Taru Secondary School went on strike protesting alleged harsh rules imposed by a new principal. They claimed that the new principal was a 'dictator' (Nation Correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1995, p.5). It is apparent that students were protesting rigid domination. The challenges of being the head of a school seem to sour to new heights everyday. Students have taken to a new form of sadism to express their sentiments (Education and Training, 1999). Violence in school seems to be jolting parents and education authorities to attention the world over.

For instance, armed students stormed into the Columbine School in Denver, Colorado, and shot 14 students and teachers to death. The killer student then went into a firing spree killing several students and injuring others seriously (Nation Correspondent, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999, p.4). Alliance Boys High School marched to the Kenya National Examinations Council offices to protest against their head whom they accused of being too strict. A teacher at the school also laid blame on the principal for stopping students from sitting a national examination for committing minor offences ranging from putting their hands in their pockets to reading during parade (Nation Correspondent, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1998, p.19). After walking for 15 km to get to the Nation Centre, Nairobi, where they expressed their grievances, 200 girls of Limuru Girls' School stated that they were protesting what they termed as highhandedness by the principal, whom they blamed of being dictatorial saying she did not

listen to their grievances (Nation Correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1997, p.36). In Nyeri High School, four students were doused in petrol and set on fire (Nation Correspondent 24<sup>th</sup> May 1999, p.6). All the four boys died. A deputy head boy of Kianyaga high school suffered 10% burns when his bed was set on fire while he was asleep (Nation Correspondent, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1999, p.10). Barely five days after the Nyeri incident, there were reports on the press that three other schools in Central Province had been closed when the students threatened to burn their teachers (Nation Correspondent, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1999, p.10). A prefect in Nakuru had his clothes burnt but he escaped bodily harm. Given the increasing cases of violence in schools there is need to identify the factors that explain student strikes. The increasing cases of violence indicate deep-seated problems in schools. The root cause of the violence needs to be identified.

According to police spokesman, 193 cases of strikes and riots were reported in secondary schools and colleges in 1997, 180 in 1998 and 135 by mid 1999. In Central Province alone, a total of 201 cases have been reported over the three years. Nyeri district was leading with 25 cases in secondary schools in 1999 followed by Machakos district with 14 incidents (Nation Correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1999, p.19).

Some efforts have been made to address the increasing problem of school strikes in Kenya. For example, a three-day national conference at Kenyatta University called for the establishment of a democratic culture where all the stakeholders will make equal contribution in academic affairs in the country. It was resolved that the Ministry of Education, Boards of Governors (B.O.Gs.) and the Parents And Teachers Associations (P.T.As.) should shed the traditional administrative strategies and involve everyone else including

the students in their deliberations (Nation Correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1999, p.19). A Nairobi psychiatrist Dr. Gatere said, "the youth required an opportunity to participate in decision-making, no matter how limited the participation was," (Nation Correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1999, p. 19). Hence all members of the school community must be involved in decision-making if an effective disciplinary system is to be established. According to Mbiti (1974), in school, democracy should be the guiding principle where all views are listened to with equal respect. Asunda (1983) states that there is an awareness in most parents, teachers and students of their individual rights in the education world. This awareness coupled with rises in population and poverty are challenges that need competent leadership in various organizations in the country.

Hence in making schools more democratic there is need to train students to take an active part in the running of the school. As pointed out by Griffin (1996, p. 53) "Freedom of thought and speech should be encouraged with appropriate forums and channels of communication existing to satisfy students' aspiration". The challenge of school management today is, therefore, to allow students to be involved in decision-making processes. The school principal needs to realize that effectiveness in management depends on being able to diagnose and adapt to the dynamics of ever changing situations (Ministry of Education, 1993). Kinyanjui (1976) noted that if it is the objective of our educational system to prepare and equip the youth of this country to play an active and effective role in the affairs of the nation, then it is vital that they start to do so in the school they attend. A good example is the case of school parliament (Baraza) as practiced in Starehe Boys Centre. It enables students to bring suggestions, to voice criticisms or to challenge any



act of authority which seem to them to be unnecessary or unjust (See Griffin 1996, p. 88).<sup>1</sup> Participation by all parties in schools is important because it acts as a barometer for community attitude and support of the plans. Kinyanjui (1976), Nkinyangi (1981), Freire (1992), Mbae (1993), Muchelle (1996) and Griffin (1996) also support the above view by indicating that students ought to be active participants in schools. Muchiri (1998) indicated that when students are encouraged to take part in the administration of the school, they learn to be self-directing, responsible and law abiding. They speak out and so support the school discipline because they have had something to say in it. However, Muchiri, in the study cited earlier found that most schools do not have a student council and that where a student council exists, students are never allowed to elect their own representatives. Yet this is perhaps the most potent tool for student participation in school management (Ministry of Education, 1993).

Another study by Mwiria in Muchiri (1998) found that 71.1% of the school principals he interviewed did not involve their students in decision making. Muchelle (1996) also found that school principals exercised complete control over some school electoral processes, seen as most appropriate for student involvement. He found that the amount of participation allowed in schools was not sufficient to give students a chance to practice democratic skills. Indeed Muchelle found that 80.0% of the principals did not allow

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<sup>1</sup> The school parliament (Baraza) at Starehe Boys Centre takes place after supper each Friday and lasts one-and-a-half hours. For its duration there is a type of parliamentary immunity, enabling any boy to bring suggestions, to voice criticizing or to challenge any act of authority which seems to him to be unnecessary or unjust .... No subject is prohibited ... The system rests on the assumption perfectly understood by everybody, that Baraza is privileged and what is said within it cannot give rise to recrimination, reward of victimization outside. It is also understood that complaints must be genuinely felt and must be put forward in courteous terms ... Barazas are psychotherapeutic – critics and

students to elect prefects. These findings indicate that student involvement in decision making is minimal in schools. According to the Charter of Education and Democracy in Kenya (1993), one of the problems identified is lack of participation in the educational design and planning process by all interested parties. This has resulted in student unrests and strikes associated with authoritarianism, harsh rules and lack of dialogue in schools. The present regulations in secondary schools do not give students an opportunity to be heard or appeal against unfair decisions (Nation Correspondent, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1998, p.19). However, Okumbe (1998, p. 121) indicates that, "the right of appeal is a very important ingredient of a democratic disciplinary process. Staff and students must be allowed to defend themselves against the offence for which they have been charged". If we value the freedom that democracy offers, we should allow our children to exercise them as soon as they are able (Chamberline, 1989). As argued by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (1994), the school loses credibility if in championing the cause of popular participation, it frustrates it within its borders. Hence schools should allow student participation in decision making to prepare them for life in a democratic society.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Kenya, not much effort has been made towards the realization of students' participation in decision-making (Muchelle, 1996). It is apparent that a number of secondary school principals have dealt with decision making with little and/or no student involvement (Muchiri, 1998). This has raised criticism

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complaints gain an audience for their views, the 'oppressed' have the chance to air their

from students and in some cases resulted in strikes and unrests. In support of this, more cases similar in substance, are discussed below.

For example, students of Pangani Girls' School in Nairobi Province conducted a protest march over their principal whom they accused of a dictatorial and 'high-handed' administration (Standard Correspondent, 14<sup>th</sup> September 1995, p.12). Another case in point is Lenana School, in Nairobi Province. Some Lenana School students burnt a vehicle belonging to their principal. They accused the principal of imposing 'harsh' rules in the school (Nation Correspondent, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1998, p.8). In February 1998, four cases of secondary school strikes were reported in Nairobi. Responding to the rising cases of school strikes education researcher, Dr. Abayi (Nation Correspondent, 1988) stated that students live in 'dictatorial' institutions and when they ask for minor remedies for their problems, nobody bothers to listen. He indicated that no avenues for dialogue are provided by leaders in many spheres of the Kenyan society while it should be encouraged especially in schools to avert strikes (Nation Correspondent, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1998, p.19). The persistent strikes can be attributed to the undemocratic situation in schools (Nation Correspondent, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1998, p.19).

In virtually all cases of school strikes, students blame the school administration for their highhandedness (Nation correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1977, p.36). Strikes can probably be minimized if school principals opened up to students. As a response to the growing crisis in secondary schools, there is need to reorganize the school organizational structures. This should include a new emphasis on the participation of students in decision making. A number of studies have been conducted around the aspect of participatory

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grievances. Happiness and a deep sense of belonging are fostered.

administration in schools. However, not much has been undertaken to establish the extent of student participation in decision making in schools. Any efforts at facilitating participatory administration should in essence start with students' participation in decision making given that with democratization, students are increasingly becoming aware of their rights hence demanding participation in decision making.

Given the background presented showing the upsurge of the school strikes in Nairobi, this study attempts to answer the following related research questions.

1. To what extent are students involved in decision-making processes in Nairobi secondary schools?
2. What factors explain the recent upsurge of school strikes in Nairobi?
3. To what extent is lack of students' involvement in decision making related to the widespread problem of school strikes?
4. What are the major factors that explain the problem of school strikes in Nairobi?
5. How have the socio-political changes in society related to the rising problem of school strikes in Nairobi Province?

The study was therefore designed to investigate the extent of student participation in decision-making processes. In addition, the study sought to establish whether limited and/or lack of involvement in decision making has resulted to increased strikes. Further, the study sought to establish the root cause of the upsurge in student's strikes in Nairobi and their relation to the socio-political changes taking place in the society. These variables have not been examined in related studies already carried out.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The study aimed at establishing the extent to which students were participating in decision making in schools in Nairobi Province. In addition, the study set out to investigate the root cause of upsurge in students' strikes in Nairobi Province. Further, the study sought to establish whether upsurge in student strikes was influenced by factors such as socio-political changes taking place in the society. The study also sought to investigate why students are increasingly claiming participation in decision making.

## **Objectives of the Study**

This study sought to fulfil the following four specific objectives:

1. To find out the key factors that explain the increasing student strikes in secondary schools in Nairobi Province in the late 1990s.
2. To investigate whether limited and/or lack of students' participation in decision-making processes had any significant influence on upsurge of student strikes in Nairobi Province.
3. To explore the extent to which school principals involved students in school decision making processes.
4. To examine whether socio-political changes calling for multi-partism have had any significant influence on student's demand for participation in decision making.

## Hypotheses

The study has three hypotheses. These hypotheses are:

1. Type of school attended (boarding or day; boys' or girls') determines occurrence of school strikes.
2. Limited and/or lack of student participation in decision-making processes determines occurrence of school strikes.
3. Undemocratic prefect system in schools determines occurrence of school strikes.

## Significance of the Study

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The study on participatory decision making was deemed to be significant in the following ways:

Firstly, it is expected that the findings will enable educational policy makers to formulate policies on participatory decision-making, and also discuss ways in which participatory decision making can be enhanced in secondary schools. The awareness created in educational policy makers will serve as an important pointer towards enhancing participatory decision making in schools. Secondly, the findings of the study will serve to sensitize school principals on the practice of participatory decision making in schools. With such sensitization principals will be motivated towards increasing efforts to facilitate participatory decision making in schools hence minimize school strikes.

Thirdly, the findings of the study are expected to be of use to teacher training institutions. It is from this pool of teachers that school principals are drawn. The findings of the study should give a bearing on what teacher

trainers should do so as to enhance participatory decision making in schools. With this information, the institutions should be able to tailor educational administration courses to reflect the changes in theory and practice. Finally, the findings of the study will stimulate interest and further research in the area, for educators with a view to improving the quality of educational administration.

### **Justification of the Study Area**

The choice of Nairobi Province for the study is because it recorded a high number of secondary school strikes in the 1990s. In February 1998 alone, four cases of secondary school strikes were reported in Nairobi (Nation Correspondent, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1998, p.8). There were sixteen schools that went on strike in Nairobi Province between March 1993 to June 1998 (Nation Correspondent, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1993, p.6). A look at the various schools that rioted in Nairobi, compared to the other provinces showed that the causes of the strikes were poor management by dictatorial heads and teachers. (Nation Correspondent, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1997, p.4). The province has also got a number of national as well as provincial secondary schools, which was seen as an appropriate representation of the entire country. In addition, Nairobi being the capital city is at the centre of political processes. Hence schools in Nairobi are likely to be affected more by the democratic process.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation was that the study covered responses of principals and students only. However, a school is an amalgamation of several groups: parents, teachers, Board of Governors and Parents Teachers Association members. Their views, suggestions and if possible their attitudes towards participatory decision making in school also need to be established. Before this is done, any developments to be derived from the findings of the study should be applied with caution.

The second limitation was that, the concept of participatory decision making is a relatively new concept to educational administration. It has only gained prominence from the 1960s; a period that saw the start of the democratization process in education. The literature available on this concept in education in Kenya was found to be insufficient for a comprehensive literature review.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

Firstly, the study was restricted to Nairobi Province. No schools outside the province were studied. This provided an urban set up; hence generalization of the study findings to rural set-up should be taken with caution. The study was concerned only with secondary schools. Primary schools and other institutions of learning in the province were not studied. The study also systematically left out private secondary schools. It could be possible that the set up in the administration in private schools and public secondary schools are not similar.



Another delimitation of the study was the sample size. School population in Nairobi Province is a very small proportion of the entire school population in the country. The findings of the study would therefore be generalized on the area of the study although a number of findings would have valid implications for the whole country.

### **Basic Assumptions of the Study**

The study had the following four assumptions:

1. That all the secondary school principals and students were sufficiently informed about the concept of participatory decision making and were, therefore, in a position to adequately respond to the items in the questionnaires.
2. That all responses received from the principals and students were a true reflection of their views towards the participation of students in decision making in schools.
3. That students were aware of their right of opportunities for participation in school management.

### **Definitions of Significant Terms**

**Decision Making Processes:** refers to the process of prioritizing important issues from a set of competing alternative choices and executing the best available choice.

**Democracy in Education:** refers to that school administrative set up that allows students to have greater opportunities for initiative, independence and responsibilities in participating in school decision making processes.

**Democratic Participation:** refers to managerial methods used by school principals which involve all the significant others like students, teachers and parents by getting their ideas and suggestions before making a decision that affects them.

**Education Administration:** refers to the direction, control and management of all matters pertaining to education

**Principal:** refers to the administrative head of secondary school, who is responsible to a governing body or manager of the school.

**Participatory Decision-Making:** refers to a system of administration which requires an administrator to involve subordinates in organizational decision making process. In schools, principals are thus expected to actively involve students among other subordinates in the decision making of the institution.

**School Strikes:** refers to unruliness or violent means employed by students to redress grievances which may appear to be incapable of correction by any other means.

**Secondary School:** refers to an institution of learning which is post-primary where students receive regular instructions for four years from form one to four.

**Student:** refers to an individual undergoing a course of study and instruction in a secondary school leading to attainment of a Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE).

### **Organization of the Study**

The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter consists of the problem and its clarifying components. Chapter Two consists of the literature review and conceptual framework. The literature review is organized under

the following sub-headings: democracy in administration and participatory administration, the significance of students' participation in decision-making in schools, the upsurge of school strikes: a consequence of democratization? Impact of democratization on secondary school administration, towards collective participation and democratic leadership in school decision making processes summary and conceptual framework.

In Chapter Three, the research methodology is discussed. This includes research design, target population, sample and sampling techniques, research instrument, instrument validity, instrument reliability, instrument administration and data analysis techniques. Chapter four analyses data and discusses the findings of the study. Chapter five gives the summary of the study's findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter reviews relevant literature and provides a conceptual framework for the study. The chapter is divided into the following sections: democracy in administration and participatory administration: the significance of students' participation in decision making in schools, the upsurge of school strikes: a consequence of democratization?, towards collective participation and democratic leadership in school decision making processes, summary and conceptual framework.

#### **Democracy in Administration and Participatory Administration**

Democracy originates from a Greek word *Demokratia*. *Demos* meaning people and *Kratos* meaning rule. Democracy therefore refers to a political system in which the people rule. It represents a way of expressing as well as securing compliance. Democratization simply means the process of making something democratic (Malekela in CED, 1994). A country is democratic when a large section of the people participate as directly as possible in the exercise of power (see Abraham Lincoln in Nyong'o (1987). Democracy is not new in Africa. In pre-colonial times, most traditional communities practiced democracy in a very special manner. They talked till they agreed. The traditional African society conducted its business through discussion (Nyerere in CED, 1994). Hence there was adequate consultation which is an important aspect of democracy.

However, today we speak of democratization within the African continent as if it is a borrowed term. Colonialism to a large extent destroyed

democratic structures and institutions in Africa. An authoritarian regime replaced democratic African governments following the imperialistic sign. This inevitably encouraged domination and oppression and with it an increasing absence of democracy even after the demise of colonization (CED, 1994).

This notwithstanding, the 1980 decade was characterized by a rediscovery of 'civil society' as a major social force in struggles against dictatorship and military regimes. It was destined to be a principal player in movements for democratization (Sachikonye in Ndegwa, 1998). Therefore, the public sphere in Kenya was largely defined by a political culture that emphasized totalitarianism and subservience over challenges to central authority (Ndegwa, 1998). However, by the early 1980s the state was facing a serious fiscal crisis forcing it to conclude a series of agreements with the World Bank and agree to a package of economic Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). This new imperative of economic reform would have important implications on the shape of economic and social privileges of citizenship. At about the same time, a political crisis was emerging in part, as a logical result of the increasingly brutal and unrepresentative state unable to cushion repression with economic benefits and facing a rising strata of agitators.

Structural adjustment programmes have affected economic and social rights especially by forcing the state to curtail its social welfare functions in order to control deficits and bolster its ability to meet external debt obligations (Ndegwa, 1998). As part of the adjustment, the state therefore retracted its support for the promised right to universal free education and medical care. Instead, it introduced cost sharing in the form of user fees on educational services thereby transforming this privilege into a purchasable public good.

Structural adjustment programmes also entailed the state to restructure its participation. As a result of SAPs, there has been heightened demand for economic rights in the society.

Fundamentally, political liberalization reflects a discourse on rights and a changing perception of citizen rights and obligations. The contentiousness of the Kenyan transition can be viewed as reflecting a debate between one side that seeks to retain the status quo of minimal rights to citizens while another seeks to not only expand these rights, but also make clear that these rights are inherent in the individual rather than gifts dispensed by a generous state and which therefore cannot be withdrawn at will (Ndegwa, 1998). Hence economic and political reforms have substantively affected the content of citizenship in Kenya. Indeed adjustment and political reform have raised conflicts (Kaiser in Ndegwa, 1998). The masses have been able to force new compromise regarding political rights. The economic structural adjustment and political liberalization are significant events for the transition over rights that define the relationship between the state and the citizens.

The changes emanating from structural adjustment programmes may have also affected students' expectations. The democratization wave which has been sweeping across the African countries during the last few years has its impact on the educational sphere Mwiria (1994). Elsewhere Rutto (1994) argues that the changes that are taking place in Kenya are going to have significant effect on the conception of educational theory and practice. As Edwards (1994) suggests, it is appropriate and timely that issues of education and democracy be explored. This is because education is at the centre of social change and involves numerous participants. Education should be viewed as the exercise of critical judgement and the making of intelligent

choices based on clear values. This requires a change of attitude on the part of education institutions and educators. The image of an educator should no longer be that of a remote omniscient figure like Moses presenting the tables of the ten commandments but of the pastor, the shepherd who guides the flock on the adventure of learning. Democracy has to be built through reform of the authoritarian family and of the authoritarian school (Edwards, 1994).

The term democracy in education refers mainly to its vertical dimension of how educational institutions themselves operate. It refers to the relationship between individuals and between groups in educational institutions (Muchelle, 1996). According to Eider (1982), democracy in education refers to the extent to which the administrative process in school are open and accessible to all its members. Democratization of education has been a prominent concern of educators throughout the world. This can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century when there was a widespread conviction that school administrators were too authoritative. They were said to be resistant to change and innovation (Ebel in Muchelle, 1996). This triggered inquiry into the nature of school administration resulting in the advent of democratization of educational administration in the United States of America. The process of democratising school administration globally first became noticeable in school in the United States of America. There were demands for participation in decision making (Powers et al, 1984).

Democratization of educational administration received further impetus from the allied field of decentralization. The main principle in decentralization is the delegation of authority and function at all hierarchical levels thus allowing participation of all organisational components (Muchelle, 1996; Ndegwa, 1998). Decentralization, therefore, involves a shift of responsibility

for various decisions or action from the upper to lower levels in the structure of the educational system (Rueschemeyer Dietrich, Stephens Huber Evelyne and Stephens D. John, 1992). Hence, both democratization and decentralization of school administration call for the diffusion of the decision making process to include all members of the school. They both call for increased and greater opportunity for freedom, independence and initiative in thought and conduct to satisfy students aspiration (Griffin, 1996). Indeed they emphasize the facilitation of student participation in decision making as a tool for administrative efficiency and effectiveness. That is, to facilitate ways in which power holders and power subjects can interact for the benefit of the organisation (Muchelle). This can only be achieved through the participation of the power subjects in decision making.

According to Centre for Law and Research International (CLARION) (1996) there are three indicators and principles of democracy viz. peoples participation, basic human rights and transparency and accountability. In a democratic situation, people actively participate. Democracy thus becomes a political method of governing which accords them equal opportunities to participate. Accordingly, for any organisation to claim to be democratic, its members must have the freedom to form ideas, opinions and express them without fear. Consequently, decisions on how the different interested parties in the school enter into different relationships with each other have to be made on the basis of emerging principles of democracy. The organisational structure of the school must hence be democratized Rutto (1994) and Mbae (1994).

According to Mbae (1994) if the school is to successfully teach democracy, it must be organised and run along democratic lines. However,



the existing school organizational structure in Kenya does not enhance democracy. It instead seeks to confine students' behaviour and to influence their way of thinking by use of school rules and bureaucratic controls. This has to start with the students being encouraged to participate in the decision making process that ultimately structure their lives. Further, Mbae (1994) expresses a more radical view of preparing students for life in a democratic society and argues that the best way to teach students to be democratic is to allow them to practice democracy. On this note, Anderson (1971) argues that if young people take, they must also give. According to Offaway in Anderson (1971) teachers' leadership should be democratic, of the kind where the teacher communicates with the students, consults them and freely offers them a share in responsibility. Bantock in Anderson (1971) agrees that passivity on the part of the student is no longer acceptable as a characteristic of the learning process. Democratic approach expects students to be active contributors rather than just absorbers of knowledge. It is against this background that a reorientation of secondary education in line with the new political order is necessary. Students need to be empowered so that they can actively take part in the moulding of a democratic society.

According to the Report of Anderson (1971) there is strong evidence that school regimes in general have been failing to foster group and individual sense of responsibility in students and certainly tending to ignore the needs of status and independence. A Report of the Schools Discipline Committee in Uganda in Anderson (1971) calls for more effective channels of communication between the students and staff, so that the danger of fostering unvoiced grievances is avoided. The report refers to "talking things out" as a "normal African approach to solving problems". Griffin (1994, p. 3) also

suggests that schools should have a safety valve. Stresses and strains will arise in any large community. These if ignored or suppressed will lead to an unhappy school and may erupt into mass indiscipline. Accordingly, the wise head will build some form of safety valve into his system so that problems can be diffused before they attain dangerous dimensions. This suggests that autocratic decisions by head or staff enforced without explanation or consultation are bad policy (Anderson, 1971). According to Freire (1972) without dialogue there is no communication and without communication there can be no true education. This unfortunately, tends to be the dominant feature characterising most schools in Kenya. This system, as shown earlier, is incompatible with democracy. If Kenyans wish to prepare the youth to live in a democratic society, they must begin by reviewing the present educational system.

### **The Significance of Students' Participation in Decision Making in Schools**

Demands for an approach of 'collective responsibility' are being made on public institutions like schools and in the entire political arena (UNESCO, 1996). The contention is that individuals should be represented in the governing bodies where decisions are made that directly affect them. Participation of all parties in decision-making processes in the school is emphasized so as to provide a regular 'feedback' of information especially from the students. The school administrator will then understand the perceptions, needs and aspirations of students and their shortcomings (UNESCO, 1996).

However, educational administrators operate in a highly authoritarian manner. Kinyanjui (1976) observes that the cause of student strikes may stem from the way schools are organised and managed and the relationship that exists between the staff and students. Along this line, Ballantine (1985) in her study of the New York City school system in the United States notes that many of the pathologies can be traced to the over centralization of decisions combined with the proliferation of specialized administrative units. The students as members of the school community lack meaningful force for involving them in decision making as well as concomitant empowerment. They are threatened and dominated by the relatively more progressive school administrators most of them wanting to maintain the status quo. The school system then uses 'up down' rather than 'bottom-up' management (Ballantine, 1985).

Many secondary schools in Kenya still cling to traditional authority structures of the past (Wall, 1977). Consequently, most school principals tend to be authoritarian or even autocratic. As pointed out by Mbae (1994) the organizational structure of the Kenyan schools need to be democratized. This entails allowing students meaningful participation in all school matters that affect them. Ballantine (1985) views most of the obligations that students are required to shoulder as barbarous – as a tyranny of complicated rules imposed on students for the sole purpose of easing the teacher's task in inducing uniformity. However, the nature and function of school discipline should not be simply a device for securing superficial peace or a device allowing the work to roll on peacefully.

Mbae (1994) cites the example of the prefect system in schools which is undemocratic in that it over emphasizes obedience to the school rules while

paying little attention to the rights of the students. The prefects themselves are more interested in gaining the approval of the school authorities than in serving their fellow students. As later revealed by the study's data, prefects in many cases are not democratically elected but only appointed. A study by Muchelle (1996), cited earlier revealed that majority of the principals (80.0%) had not allowed their students to participate in the election of prefects. There exists fear among principals that allowing students to elect their own leaders is granting them excessive power. This contradicts the very principles on which democracy is founded, namely elective representation. This concurs with Kinyanjui's view (1976) that the education system in this country operates on the assumption that the best way to educate young people is to reduce them to the level of docility. The authoritarian structure of school rewards blind obedience. Hence Kenya's current educational system corresponds to the "banking" concept described by Freire (1992) as turning students into "containers" into receptacles to be filled by the teacher. Students then become the depositories and the teacher the depositor. This is a fundamental violation of democratic principles in school since students should be active participants.

A closer analysis of what is happening in most secondary schools shows that something needs to be done to help these institutions continue to succeed in achieving their aims. Mutua (1973) points out that traditional concepts of educational administration no longer fit the emerging demands that are placed on the administrator. Educational systems have developed and changed but their administrative structure and systems have failed to keep pace with them. This is exemplified when the country has time and

again come face-to-face with demands by students for participation in their administrative processes.

In the spirit of democracy, individuals must be free to express their ideas and opinions. Ombaka (1994) correctly observes that an education system must not be a break to creativeness but its accelerator. Education must therefore nurture democratic minds by allowing participation of students in matters that affect them. However, the historical roots of authoritarian schools are too deep to overcome at once. Along this line, Mophet (1974) points out that the kind and quality of leadership provided in educational administration is particularly important in the democratic society in which we live. He continues to emphasize that future leaders of educational institutions such as schools must be highly competent persons who believe in democracy. Democracy in its present form as practised in schools is conceived to be just getting powers and choosing who will be in power (Chamberline, 1989). Nevertheless, the defining characteristics of democracy should be that people are involved in decision making. A democratic society has an obligation to bring up children who value participation. In this spirit, UNESCO (1995) has urged African governments to participate fully in all programmes concerning education for democratisation and to treat the school as a laboratory for such an action. Education today should include concepts such as democracy, human rights and tolerance among others. Further, the partnership strategies providing for cost-sharing also presupposes the effective participation of all partners at all levels of education. Further, UNESCO (1994) notes that a culture of openness and tolerance is missing in our schools. There is a lot of incongruence between what is happening in the schools and the reality outside. Accordingly, the violent reactions of students

frequently manifested through school strikes can probably be explained by the authoritarian school environment (Kinyanjui., 1976). Lack of involvement of all stakeholders in decision making negates the ideal of participatory governance which is an essential component of the democratization process. As noted elsewhere, Griffin (1996) also views the causes of students strikes to be associated with bad methods of human management in most of the schools in Kenya. Therefore, the recent upsurge of student activism in Kenya could be largely motivated by a lack of participation in decisions on issues that affect them. Hence, violence and vandalism could probably be interpreted as a reaction of the students to the authoritarian nature of schools that deny them participation in a changing society advocating democratic governance.

Anderson (1971) in his study of disciplinary attitudes of boarding and day students in some secondary schools in Uganda, contends that strikes are essentially symptoms of deep-seated disciplinary issues and student dissatisfaction for less tangible than the immediate and apparent causes. Accordingly, strikes should be viewed in the content of a far more substantial basic causes. In this perspective students should be looked at as victims, as "being sinned against" rather than being sinners since these bad attitudes are very much tied up with the complex of educational social, cultural and economic causes of trouble in schools. This view concurs with Kinyanjui's (1976) concept of the 'Art of blaming the victims'. Nkinyangi (1981) also argues that there is need to establish adequate linkage between school and society in trying to explain the phenomena of school strikes. Students are never seen as a force of change except within the framework of established authority. Deconde in Nkinyangi (1981) states that students have always functioned as barometers of deep seated unrest and social change. Where

students have rebelled against the prevailing social order they have gone on to become agents of intellectual and social ferment. There is need to study student strikes within an overall context of the Kenyan society. This study is an attempt to fill the existing gap.

If schools are to be democratic institutions, then staff and students should be involved in the decision making process. Participation and involvement is the essence of democracy (Chamberline, 1989). The old cult that students have no say anywhere should be removed. These points of view are pointing to participatory school administration with regard to decision making. This is one remarkable feature that has been identified in successful schools with an efficient and effective administration (Muchelle, 1996). Participatory administration provides students with an example of people sharing responsibility, discussing, arguing, disagreeing and coming to a decision which binds them all (Chamberline, 1989). This enhances enthusiasm. The more opportunities are given to members of the school to participate in school management, the greater is likely to be their sense of commitment and ownership of school programmes (Ministry of Education, 1993).

In furthering the discourse of school strikes, schools can be viewed as mirrors of society. Occurrences and circumstances at the school place should be treated as social phenomena which may help to understand the social dynamics of the whole society Nkinyangi (1981). Accordingly rigorous investigation needs to be undertaken on the impact of democratization (at the national level) which is evolving; how it is observable at the school place and how the school has rapidly become another arena of the democratization process. In the past students rioted for immediate practical reasons. In the

1990s, riots seem to be part of a well organized student movement for some articulated wider social goals. Much of the contemporary discontent in the Kenyan schools is centred on issues such as unfair, unreasonable rules, autocratic decisions by head or staff enforced without consultation or explanation, bad methods of human management and high handedness of the head. A lot of strikes seem to be an expression of an attack against outmoded ways of school administration and management. As pointed out by Nkinyangi (1981) probable despair or impatience with the establishments as well as the school administration pace of affecting reforms may have led students to believe that only dire force can shake them out of their silence. Use of force could be a spontaneous response to deeply – rooted frustrations and feelings of powerlessness. Hence there is need to study the kind of issues which may have triggered the numerous secondary school strikes which have tended to increase since 1992 when Kenyans enhanced their efforts to restore democracy in the country.

### **The Upsurge of School Strikes: A Consequence of Democratization?**

Student rebellions against established authority has occurred in practically every country with significant student communities. Indeed, student protests of one kind or another seem to have become part and parcel of the "knowledge industry" Nkinyangi (1981). Calls for participatory administration first surfaced in the universities in the United States of America. At this time student activism, violence and vandalism became widespread. A committee appointed to look into the issue concluded that student activism was largely motivated by a lack of participation in decision making (Lee,



1971). The Kenya educational system has experienced an unprecedented number of student strikes. In 1974 there were seventy secondary school strikes in Kenya (Kinyanjui 1976). According to Nkinyangi (1981), in 1980 there was at least one reported strike each day somewhere in the primary schools, secondary schools, institutes of technology and seminaries. The student strikes have actually been on the increase especially in the 1990's. As observed by Griffin (1996), 202 major incidents were reported by the press from January 1993 to December 1995, an average of one per each four days of the school year. The ratio of student riot and strikes climbed to one incident per 2.6 days of the school year in 1996.

Asunda (1983) observes that the most recurrent complaint in many of the schools that suffered strikes was the inaccessibility of the principals to the students. Many students seem to feel that the principals do not care about them. It is clear that students want to have input in decision making. They may not be decision-makers but part of the decision making process. Ballantine (1985) supports this view when she points out that imposing rules on students evokes feelings of hostility in the student toward the teacher, rather than the affectionate confidence that should characterize their relationship. Nguru (1978) outlines various styles that a school principals can employ in administration, which include high discussion styles and high communication styles among others. So, continuous consultation should be at the hub of decision making. It makes others feel they have contributed and they are, therefore, more willing to implement the decision made (Barry, 1975). It is apparent that greater democratization in the country makes students reconsider the 'dictatorship' they experience.

According to the Principal of Precious Blood school, Nairobi, students learn to become trustworthy, responsible people of integrity – if we trust them and entrust them with responsibility (Education and Training, Vol. 3 No. 3, 1999). However, the existing governance system in schools has failed to accommodate students in the governance of education at the school level (National Co-ordinating Committee, 1993). The school principals and their assistants do not practice democracy in the running of their schools. Even when they call staff meetings, they dictate what they want done (Daily Nation, 16<sup>th</sup> October 1979, p.2). According to Freire (1990), nothing militates against democracy more than an educational practice which fails to offer opportunities for the analysis and debate of problems for genuine participation.

Nation Correspondent (1<sup>st</sup> April 1993, p. 6) reckons that “students in Kenya’s secondary schools are up in arms all too often”. The 1991 infamous St. Kizito rapes in Meru are on the increase country wide. There were 69 strikes in secondary schools in Central Province in 1997 compared to 63 in 1996 (Nation Correspondent, 10<sup>th</sup> March 1993, p.5). The number of secondary schools affected by strike action may have been greater than this because of unwillingness of school principals to report cases of student outbreaks, unless the situation is clearly out of control. As pointed out by Nkinyangi (1981) schools in Kenya have become like dormant volcanoes likely to erupt at any time. It is time to take a long sober and reasonable look at the issue of strikes in Kenya’s school system.

## **Student Strikes as Collective Behaviour**

Student strikes are a form of collective behaviour since they are a means of translating students' hidden and destructive impulses into overt behaviour. Student channel their energy in order to release their emotional difficulties.

### **(a) Understanding Collective Behaviour**

Crowd behaviour has long intrigued social psychologists. Three types of theory are used to describe and explain dynamics of crowd behaviour.

#### **(i) Contagion Theory**

The Contagion theory assumes that the crowd assimilates its members producing a psychic unity that alters the individual's normal emotions, thoughts and conduct (Zander, 1971). The individual then becomes an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will. Three principal mechanisms underlie the emergence of crowd properties; anonymity, contagion and suggestibility. Anonymity provides crowd members with a euphoric and exultant feeling of invisible power. This results in reduced moral restraints and destructive behaviour. The controls based upon guilt, shame, fear and commitment are weakened. Contagion on the other hand is the notion that excitability and the mob mind effect spread like an infectious disease. Likewise social contagion operates to communicate patterns of collective behaviour among secondary school students.

With the crowd settings people come to accept uncritically directives addressed to them. They lose their conscious personalities

and commit acts that otherwise would be alien to them. Hence individuals in crowd situation are susceptible to the influence of others.

**(ii) Convergence Theory**

Convergence theorists argue that a crowd functions as an attracting magnet. It supplies aggression – prone individuals with a pretext to translate their hidden and often destructive impulses into overt behaviour.

**(iii) Emergent – Norm Theory**

This theory emphasizes the differences in motives, attitudes and behaviours that characterize crowd members. Collective behaviour typically entails an attempt to define an ambiguous situation. According to Zander (1971) the behaviour of a few conspicuous and active members become perceived as a dominant course of action once it has been formulated, crowd members undertake to enforce the new norm, to convert others to it, inhibit behaviour contrary to the norm and institute restraining action against dissenters.

**(b) Classical Theories of Social Movements**

Social movement theories often relied heavily on psychological explanations for what is essentially a social phenomenon. The classical social movement theory includes several approaches.

**(i) Frustration – Aggression Theory**

Some kind of strain or disturbance creates disruptive psychological state in individuals and they then channel their energy into social movements, in order to relieve their emotional difficulties.

According to the frustration – Aggression Theory, Social Strain in form of frustration is an underlying motive for aggressive behaviour

including the formation of social movement. In trying to explain violent social movements, Gurr in Johnson (1992) argued that frustration most often arises from people's anger over relative deprivation – not getting what they think they deserve in comparison with others who they think should not be any better than they are. Along this line Psychologist Njenga (Nation correspondent), indicates that strikes are a manifestation of stress, which in case of schools gets multiplied during examinations. People try to vent it in protests or demonstrations (Daily Nation, Nov. 16 1998, Blackboard p. 1).

(ii) **Korn Hauser's Mass Society and Social Isolation Theory**

This theory attempts to focus on how conditions in societies as a whole promote or inhibit collective behaviour (violence). Collective behaviour then results when people feel a lack of connection between themselves and their communities. This happens when there are no groups through which people can effect decisions or feel like they belong in their communities (Johnson, 1992).

Korn Hauser called this condition of widespread social isolation 'mass society'. The social isolation it reflects is similar to Durkheim's concept of 'anomie' which causes deviant behaviour. Hence a large number of unattached and alienated people are the raw materials for social movement. When people feel submerged in a mass, they feel disconnected from meaningful involvement and relationships and this leads to experience strong feelings of anxiety. In order to escape from these feelings, people engage in extreme behaviour including social movement, so as to reduce unpleasant psychological conditions such as strain or anxiety.

This view is similar to Smelser's Theory of Structural Strain. Smelser argues that strain and contradiction in social systems gives rise to feelings of uncertainty and discontent. People then engage in collective behaviour as a way of relieving those feelings. Smelser provides a "value-added" approach to collective behaviour. He identifies six determinants of collective action each shaped by those that precede it and shaping those that follow. They include:

- a) **Structural conduciveness** – which refers to the broad social conditions that are necessary for an episode of collective behaviour to occur. The social networks set the stage for collective behaviour.
- b) **Structural strain** – it exists where various aspects of a system are in some way "out of joint" with one another. This causes stress that accumulates over time and makes people susceptible to courses of action not defined by existing social arrangements. They experience 'social malaise' which is a feeling of pervasive dissatisfaction and disgruntlement.
- c) **Relative deprivation** – refers to a state of mind in which a gap exists between what people seek and what seems attainable. As a group experiences improvements in its conditions of life, it may also experience a rise in its expectations. But the expectations may rise more rapidly than the actual improvements, leading to dissatisfaction. Their mode becomes revolutionary.
- d) **Spread of generalized beliefs** – according to Smelser, social movements do not develop simply as responses to vaguely felt anxieties or hostilities. They are actually shaped by the influence of definite ideologies.

- e) **Precipitating factors** – these are events or incidents that actually trigger direct action by those who become involved in the movement.
- f) **Coordinated group** – implies that some form of organization is required at this stage.
- g) **Operation of social control** – this means that the manner in which a social movement develops is strongly influenced by the operation of social control.

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The main focus of the theories above is to explain what transpires among a group of people in an organization to lead to strike action. In this study the school is considered as an organization composed of teachers, students and parents. The effectiveness of a school is dependent on the effective performance of each of the three parties. The three parties need to be involved in the decision making process. Hence students feel deprived of their rightful involvement. Frustrations result, that lead to aggressive behaviour in the form of strikes. The above theories are relevant to this study since the members of the school community who include teachers, students and parents seem to lack meaningful force for involving them in decision making. This leads to social isolation especially on the part of students resulting in riots and strikes. Muchiri (1998) in the earlier cited study found out that students are the least involved members of the school community. This is a major concern of this study. Under such circumstances students show their dissatisfaction in the form of strikes, riots, and protest to authority in school. The organizational structure of the school require to be democratized. All the stake holders in the school need to be involved in the decision-making process (Mbae, 1994).

There tends to be a discrepancy between students expectations and the reality and hence the students effort to close the gap through violent reactions. The authoritarian school environment negates the ideal of participatory governance which is an essential component of the democratization process. What goes on in the school should be reflective of the larger society. Poor management of schools by dictatorial principals and teachers lead to explosive situations (Nation Correspondent, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1997, p.4). Indeed, much of the contemporary discontent in the Kenyan schools is centred on such issues such as unfair, unreasonable rules, autocratic decisions, highhandedness by school heads, lack of dialogue, among others. Hence, violence and vandalism could generally be interpreted as a reaction of the students to the authoritarian nature of schools that deny them participation in a changing society advocating democratic governance.

Waithaka (1987) states that student unrest and indiscipline in schools more often than not are a reflection of the demands for their participation in school administration. Lack of participation in school activities makes the student feel alienated. It is therefore important to facilitate their participation in decision making. After all, schools are client beneficiary organisations. The student as a client needs to have a say in what is taught and learned in school and the decision making processes that accompany this teaching and learning (Muchelle, 1996). It is the student who benefits from the school organisation; the student therefore as a client needs to be involved in decision making, wherever necessary.

The discussion above implies that the school's organisational and administrative set-up hampers participatory administration procedures. This kind of repressive climate is best depicted by Griffin (1999) who equates such



schools to prisons in that one sub-group of their clientele (students) are involuntarily committed to the institution. To such a student, the school situation is one of forced membership, imposed goals and norms, an imposing task and an imposing authority structure (Muchelle, 1996).

One issue that comes out significantly in a discussion on participation is that of strikes in schools. Students have been known to destroy property as a protest against lack of participation as part of poor lines of communication. According to Waithaka (1987), principals who have accepted the establishment in school, a method of open courtyard discussion have been spared this agony.

Accordingly, one way of arresting rapidly increasing incidence of strikes in schools would probably be to pressurize for true democracy in schools. The orthodox approaches in their "Trickle Down" methodologies seem to have failed to improve conditions in schools. There is need to change from "Trickle-Down" to "Trickle-Up" or "Bottom-Up" approach in the management of schools. The challenge is to shift from teacher-centred decision making. According to Griffin, the entire school system must be student oriented. It should seek to provide the maximum benefits on students without impacting negatively on the teachers or other players (Nation Correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1999, p.19).

### **Impact of Democratization on Secondary School Administration**

According to D'aeth (1973, p. 1) "secondary education is continually being affected by the far reaching changes taking place in the Kenyan society; many of which impinge directly on it, especially on students". Consequently

the behaviour of students in secondary schools has changed compared to their predecessors. As shown by the study later, the aspirations of students are changing faster than the schools they attend.

Previously in the African society, children exercised very little freedom of choice of what to do or where to go. It was largely a case of following in father's or mother's footsteps. The situation is now radically different. The mass media invade the world of young people inexorably, stimulating their natural interest in cultural, political and social activities (D'aeth, 1973). Consequently young people have a wider background of knowledge, and tend to be more thoughtful, inquisitive and critical.

If the school is to successfully teach democracy, it must be organized and ran along democratic lines. This has to start with the students being encouraged to participate in the decision making processes that ultimately structure their lives. CLARION (1996, p. 18) argues that "central to the ideal of a democracy is the concept of participation. In democracy, people actively participate ... Democracy thus becomes a political method of governing people which accords them equal opportunities to participate...." According to Asunda (1983, p. 11) one of the goals of education in Kenya is to make each citizen aware of his or her democratic rights. This brings into the people an awareness of their individual rights and many of them are ready to question even their superiors on matters that affect them". The Daily Nation (February 5 1980, p. 12) puts it better by stating, "Today's child has learnt to dispute, ask questions and expect to be answered. During the colonial administration, the missionary teacher would cough and we would fly".

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forces within and outside the organisation. In schools, there has been a shift in social attitudes towards parent's rights and student's rights to be involved in the school administration. The spread of democracy and popular participation has contributed to this shift. Many in the school are demanding a greater say on how their schools are now run (Muchiri, 1998).

This study notes that most school administrators in Kenya are ill-equipped to cope with the new and emerging challenges resulting from the socio-political reforms which have been adopted by the government since 1992. This reality suggests a need to train and/or retrain school administrators to impart in them administrative skills required to cope with the emerging school environment that appears to be more democratized and hence more challenging to contain. The new administrative skills should be congruent with the ideals of democracy and should therefore reinforce participatory governance in school administration. Given the evidence documented in this study revealing that there is a problem in the administration of schools, it is logical to pose the following questions: What is the social and political motivation behind student solidarity during school strikes? Who are the leaders of school strikes? What are their aspirations and expectations and what is their general political orientation? One can cite past studies that have shed light on this question. For example, Mutinda (1977) observes that among the desirable qualities of an ideal administrator in the school is his/her ability to motivate his subordinates in their work by evoking in them a sense of co-operation, dedication to duty and hard work. In this respect, the administrator should exploit his ability to develop good human relations and adopt a democratic approach in his dealings with subordinates.

In delineating the ideal way of adopting a democratic approach in the administration and management in organizations, a study by Asuko (1980) further observes that effective management should be geared towards developing the subordinates to acquire less external control and more self-control. Such a management should link the superior and subordinates both vertically and horizontally. Along this line Mophet (1974) adds that the kind and quality of leadership provided in educational administration is particularly important in the democratic society in which we live because education is so basic to the satisfactory functioning of society. As stated by Hersely (1972) the manager in the final analysis belongs to two groups, namely the one he is responsible for and the one he is responsible to. Hence the school manager must belong to these two groups in order to allow for participatory management.

The secondary school covers a period of fundamental personality change and instability directly affecting the image of the self and others. It comes at a time when the development thrust towards independence of adults may lead to heightened aggressiveness, episodes of negativism and contra suggestibility (Wall, 1977). As suggested by D'aeth (1973) if young people are to shape their lives while passing through the phase of secondary education then it should give as much emphasis to the self-expressive and social as to the intellectual aspects. Ballantine (1985) observes that in the school a child can get habits that once developed will survive beyond school years and demand the satisfaction that is their due. Hence, we have a unique and irreplaceable opportunity to take hold of the child at a time when the gaps in our social organization have not yet been able to alter his nature profoundly, or to arouse in him feelings that make him politically rebellious to common life.

According to Ballantine (1985, p. 28) "this is virgin territory in which we can sow seeds that once taken root, will grow by themselves"

A major thesis to be tested by this study is that students' negative activism is probably motivated by a lack of participation in decisions. They discover that protest and violence command attention. Violence and vandalism by students could generally be interpreted as a reaction of the youth to the traditional nature of schools in a changing society advocating participatory leadership.

In the face of these problems, it is imperative that schools adopt and develop participatory leadership. This means leadership that is open and accommodative. Leadership anchored on the belief that each member of society has something to offer in the running of society and that no one individual or group has monopoly of ideas or truth (CLARION, 1993). This will result in acceptable leadership in schools hence harmonious living since as pointed in CLARION (1993, p. 94) leadership can only be acceptable to the led only when and "if they feel part of it and in control of their own destiny". In this way, students in schools will identify with the leadership and treat it as treasured property. Therefore, the first obligation of a school principal is to use a style of leadership that is consistent with democratic values, then provide an organisation in which it can flourish and then to provide opportunities for young people to learn and practice democracy (Sarah and Trafford in Muchelle, 1996).

Schools should have a leadership that creates the requisite enabling environments for teachers, parents and students to harness their potential. All the parties in the school should be involved at the decision-making level and in all democratic processes of the school. Above all students must be made

to see rights and responsibilities as two sides of the same coin (Mbae, 1993). Presently it is doubtful that the normal academic curriculum in secondary schools is adequately equipped to produce good citizens, much less citizens who are committed to the democratic ideals. It is evident that there has been notable discrepancies between theory and practice even in the few cases where democratic values have been taught (Mbae, 1993).

As pointed out by Kinyanjui (1976) students should be given a chance in schools to be listened to. Apparently as documented in this study, this appears to be the most critical missing link in the administration and management of schools in Kenya. This is evidenced by the increasing number of collective action by deviant students.

### **Towards Collective Participation and Democratic Leadership in School Decision-Making Process**

The concept of participatory administration is the brain-child of the behavioural science movement. A basic tenet of this movement is to look at members of an organisation as important players in the running of that organisation without whose involvement an organisation's administration may hamper its efficient and effective functioning (Muchelle, 1996).

The importance of participation in decision making is highly emphasized on numerous grounds. Participation in decision making becomes more important when the implementing of the decision requires the co-operative effort of others. Participation enhances democratic rights of individual members within a school.



Hoy and Miskel (1977) suggest the concept of zone of acceptance as an answer to when subordinates should be involved in decision making. In this connection the problem of determining which decisions fall inside and which fall outside of acceptance arises. Hoy and Miskel (1977) suggest two tests to identify issues that clearly fall within the subordinates zone of acceptance.

- 1) The test of relevance
- 2) The test of expertise

The test of relevance is concerned with the personal stake of the subordinates or students. The participation of students becomes high in the decision-making when they have a personal stake. If not, they will be receptive to the superior's decision.

The test of expertise denotes the qualification of the subordinates or students to contribute to the solution of the problem in the decision-making process. It then follows that issues which are not relevant to the students and for which they do not have expertise, fall within the zone of acceptance and no participation is necessary.

The impression created from the above is that participation is a right and duty of every member of a democratic society. This suggests that participation and democracy are two concepts closely linked together. The function of education is the construction and distribution of knowledge. The construction of knowledge implies freedom, consciousness and collective participation International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) (1989). Consequently, educational institutions are social instances in which it is possible to construct democracy as a political form to foster substantive quality of collective human life IIEP (1989). It therefore follows that the

adoption of participatory form of school administration is a concrete way of contributing to the construction of democracy in education and society (ibid). According to IIEP collective participation in educational administration can constitute a powerful antidote to the institutionalized authoritarianism of the formal bureaucracy and to the dogmatic action of minority groups.

Rodrigues in IIEP (1989) advocates the concept of 'collective action' in a bid to override the traditional centralized and bureaucratic management practices. He considers the 'collegiate' in which all the participants of the school are represented as the instrument of a democratic form of decision making. However, as noted by IIEP (1989) traditionally many school principals have been considered as semi-gods in the schools which they administer and manage. A more decentralized governance structure is needed in schools to enable them to respond effectively to a turbulent and ever changing social system. Students are young people full of energy. This energy can be harnessed for the benefit of society and school. A school programme that allows for student participation in its administrative process offers the greatest opportunity for such a gain otherwise the energies might be channeled in the wrong direction and pose serious problems to the school administration (Waithaka, 1987).

Decision-making is the heart of managing (Agarwal, 1990). A manager performs all his tasks and functions through making decisions. According to Agarwal, decision making is the process of locating and defining the problem, developing alternate solutions to the problem, weighing the various alternate solutions in terms of their possible consequences, choosing the optimum solution from among them, and implementing the decision effectively.

The success or failure of any organization depends on the types of decisions made and the acceptance of these decisions by employees in such a way that they can willingly perform their duties and responsibilities (Muchiri, 1998). It is therefore important to involve all interested parties in the decision making process of the school so as to achieve its goals. Participation in decision making is instrumental in raising student morale mainly because it helps them to exercise self control and high degree of creativity.

There are two major theories of decision making. These are the classical theory and the administrative man or behavioural theory. According to the classical theory, decisions are made rationally and are directed towards a single and stable goal (Agarwal, 1990). The decision maker should hence be in possession of full information relating to the problem, know all the alternative solutions to the problem, and consequences associated with each of them. In a school, the head teacher should then have a sense of the purpose of the school, an understanding of the problem about which a decision is needed, information sufficient to permit the design or understanding of available choices, and information to support the choice of a course of action (Campbell et al., 1983).

The classical theory is essentially a theory of decision making under conditions of certainty. According to the administrative man or behavioural theory of decision making, decisions are made on the basis of a limited, approximate model of the real situation. So managers aim at finding 'satisfying' rather than optimum solutions to problems. They act with bounded rationality rather than full rationality in decision making (Agarwal, 1990). Making decisions is one of the prime functions of educational management (Okumbe, 1998). Educational managers make decisions on allocation of

resources, enrolment of students, employment of teaching and non teaching staff, introduction to new curriculum or curriculum reformation, student and discipline among others. According to Okumbe (1998) participatory decision making is recommended because individuals who participate are usually more satisfied with the decision they have collectively made and they will enthusiastically support it. Furthermore participatory decision making is motivating and satisfying.

However, participatory decision making requires skilful leadership role so as to limit negative impact of group participation. This results in facilitation of both organisational goal attainment and personal need satisfaction and motivation. The leader can utilise consultative and democratic techniques. In consultative techniques the leader solicits for subordinates participation but the ultimate decision is in his hands. In democratic decision making, the whole group deliberates on the problem and through a consensus a decision is made by the entire group.

Agarwal (1990) gives guideline as an aid to effective decision making. The guidelines include defining the goals which should be compatible with and contribute to larger goals, ensuring that the decision contributes to the goal, adopting a diagnostic approach, involving subordinates in decision making process, ensuring successful implementation of the decision, evaluating the results and being flexible. For the purpose of this investigation, involving subordinates in decision making will include student involvement. Okumbe (1998), makes a distinct relationship between the administrative level one occupies in the administrative hierarchy and the kind of decisions he or she has to make. Top level educational managers are usually faced with non-programmed decisions. On the other hand, lower level educational managers

are usually faced with programmed and routine decisions. Non programmed decisions require environmental scanning. This involves gathering as much information as possible outside the educational organization. Figure I shows the relationship of decision type to management level in organizations.



Donnelly et al (1992) indicates that programmed decisions are made at lower levels of management. Such decisions are made within the framework of policies, rules and standard operating procedures. They require little deliberation and thinking. More than 90 per cent of organizational decisions are of this type (Drucker in Donnelly, 1992). Non programmed decisions on the other hand are made at higher levels of management. They pertain to unique one-time problems. These decisions require creative problem solving. Drucker calls non-programmed decisions as strategic decisions and regards them as truly managerial decisions.

Personal values of the decision maker affect his decisions (Donnelly, 1992). Dale in (Donnelly, 1992) gives five descriptions of personality types with their approach to decision making. His analysis is as follows:

- a) The Receptive or Defensive type where the decision maker heavily depends on others for their ideas, advice and guidance and delegates liberally. The decision maker tends to think that all brilliant, practical and useful ideas are possessed by others.
- b) The Exploitation or Aggressive Type where the decision maker uses other peoples ideas in a way as if they were his own. In doing so, he results to manipulations and politicking.
- c) The Hoarding Type. This type of decision maker tends to think that he/she is in possession of most of the valuable ideas, and is reluctant to share his ideas with others. He/she seeks to strengthen his/her position through his/her decisions.
- d) The marketing type decision maker believes in "selling" his decisions in order to gain acceptance.

- e) The Reproductive Type is the kind of manager who utilizes his own as well as other's abilities, insights, knowledge and information in decision making. He/she extends and seeks cooperation. He/she therefore permits his subordinates opportunities to take initiative and responsibility and encourages them to utilize and develop their abilities. According to Asuko (1983) the participation of staff and other assistants in decision making is important particularly if it is carried out through the institutional formal and informal groupings. This can be equated to consultative decision making. According to IIEP (1989) and Muchiri (1998) the most preferred style of decision making is consultative. Okumbe (1998) indicates that participatory decision making is a very useful vehicle for the facilitation of both organisational goal attainment and personal needs satisfaction and motivation.

In responding to the growing desire for democracy, schools may have to adopt participative decision making. Participative decision-making approach has several advantages:

- 1) It helps to evoke a sense of partnership of a community working together for the common good.
- 2) It increases freedom but requires all the participants to fulfil concomitant responsibilities so that the process can remain healthy.
- 3) Consultation adds to the decision making process on error-correction factor which occurs as various members of the school examine and weigh alternatives, cross-checking each other in the process.
- 4) In addition, decisions that result from democratic processes are likely to be supported by members they affect and by people responsible for their implementation.



- 5) Communication networks are maintained continuously among all levels of management. This enables the school community to review the initial decisions where need be.

## **Summary**

This study underscores the point made earlier: that consultative or participatory management needs to be evolved, developed and adopted in schools. In the face of the increasing student strikes and the continued agitation for their participation, much will be accomplished in adopting participatory management. The suggested strategy is well justified by several scholars in the light of the democratization wave which has radically changed the school environment. Studies by Mwiria (1994), Rutto (1994), Mbae (1994) and Griffin (1996) are in favour of participatory management.

In sum, therefore, lack of involvement in decision-making processes by students leads to the diagnosis of "wrong" and "unfelt" needs. Thus, in such a situation the students do not feel part of the consequent events and procedures. This experience underscores the urgency of gathering data needed to understand the importance of involving students in the decision-making process.

It should be noted that; participatory approach in decision making process is considered an essential component of democracy. Furthermore, this would also be a way of finding a lasting solution to the alarming upsurge of students' strikes. Effective involvement of all the elements of the school necessitates the use of management methodologies related to participatory leadership. In the schools there is need to adopt consultation, team work and

participation. The school administrators need to adjust their actions. They should take a facilitating role, helping the teachers, parents and students steer the process and consider their perceived options. The students are hence empowered to do more of their own analysis, to take charge of their lives. This is an empowerment process for the students and it involves the relinquishing of some control by the powers that be in schools.

Students may need to be exposed to self-criticism, acceptance of error, listening to one another, improvising, inventing, co-operating and adapting. School administrators could probably encourage students to use their best judgement and be ready to learn through action. The students should be supported to articulate their views. Their subjective views are married to those of the administrators. The synthesis is fed back to the former and it is used for developing them. The school administrators need to work in liaison with parents, teachers and students. The co-operation of these actors would be necessary in molding schools into democratic social institution (Chamberline, 1989). Therefore this study commits itself to the simple task to propitiate the divergent views in the literature cited by testing the following hypotheses:

- H:1 Type of school attended determines occurrence of strikes.**
- H:2 Limited and/or lack of students' participation in decision making processes determines occurrence of strikes.**
- H:3 Undemocratic prefect system in schools determines occurrence of strikes.**

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the concept of student participation in decision-making processes in the school. In this regard, this study assumes that the tensions evident in Kenyan secondary schools tend to have arisen from the consequences of the democratization wave, which has radically changed the school environment making student claim participation in decision making processes.

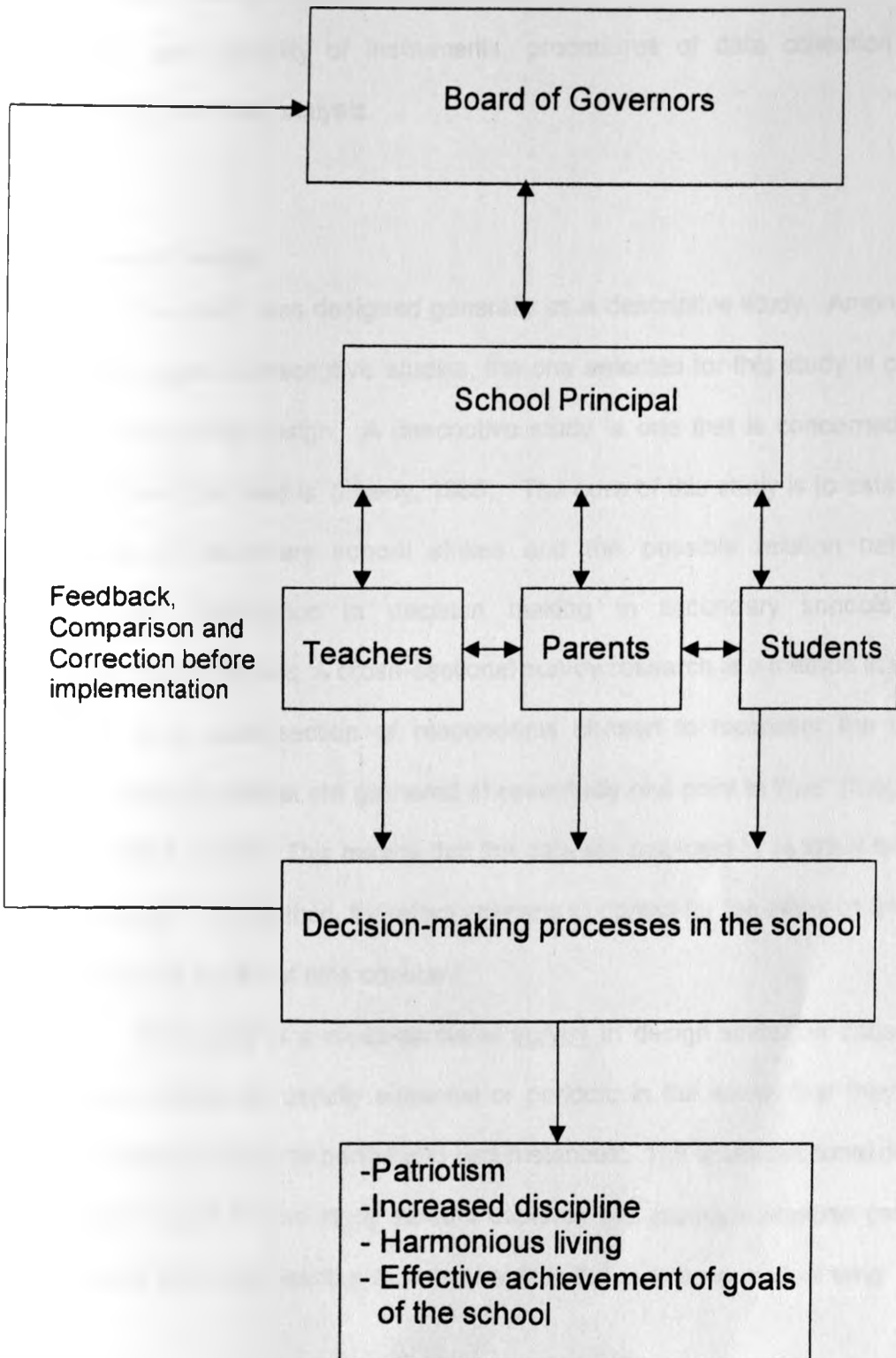
Fundamentally, political liberalization reflects a discourse on rights and a changing perception of student right and obligations. Unfortunately, secondary schools have not done much to promote the democratic ideals. A study carried out in Nigeria reveals that most school heads tend to be authoritarian or even autocratic Deby (1979) in Mbae (1994). In Kenya, a casual observation reveals the situation to be very much similar to that of Nigeria. Most of the schools tend to be bureaucratic and not democratic. This militates against democracy evoking feelings of hostility.

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Inadequate participation of teachers and students in decision making, authoritarian school environment, lack of freedom to form ideas, opinions and express them and lack of fuller participation by all interested parties in the secondary schools builds up deep-rooted disciplinary relations between teachers and students. The situation culminates in the new notoriously typical incidences of outbreak of strikes sparked off by a badly prepared school meal or a teachers provocative remark. The end product is lack of democratic processes in the school leading to effective achievement of aims and aspirations of the school.

Adoption of democratic processes where teachers, parents and students are allowed meaningful involvement in decision making processes in the school will lead to increased patriotism. Parents, teachers and students will own the school, be committed to the school goals resulting in harmonious relations. In this regard, Asuko (1983) states that in school management it is important to involve others and seek their cooperation in making decisions. Hence communication is also very crucial since it translates a school's objective into practice. According to Barry (1975), communication should cater for individual and group needs and be both external and internal. Hence good communication has feedback to it, from below and above it. As a result there will be enhanced student discipline. The end product will be effective achievement of aims and aspirations of the school.

A schematic representation of this conceptual framework is indicated in Figure II.

**Figure II****The Conceptual Framework**

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study. The chapter is organised under the following sub-headings: the research design, the target population, sample size and sampling procedure, research instruments, validity and reliability of instruments, procedures of data collection and techniques of data analysis.

#### Research Design

This study was designed generally as a descriptive study. Among the various types of descriptive studies, the one selected for this study is cross-sectional survey design. A descriptive study is one that is concerned with finding out the 'what is' (Leedy, 1985). The core of this study is to establish: causes of secondary school strikes and the possible relation between students' participation in decision making in secondary schools and occurrence of strikes. A cross-sectional survey research is a method in which "data on a cross-section of respondents chosen to represent the larger population of interest are gathered at essentially one point in time" (Singleton et al 1988, p.237). This means that the data are collected in as short time as is feasible. This method, therefore attempts to control for the effect of time i.e. it holds the impact of time constant.

This study is a cross-sectional survey in design since the causes of school strikes are usually seasonal or periodic in the sense that they vary depending on the time period and circumstances. The cross-sectional design is best suited for the study since it captures the apparent reasons causing deviant behaviour leading to school strikes for a given period of time. The

study cuts across the spectrum of school strikes among secondary schools in Nairobi Province in the late 1990s. The phenomenon involved in the study was occurrence of school strikes. A comparison of schools where strikes occurred versus those which did not experience strikes is made on the basis of the following variables: students' participation in decision making and social, political changes in the society. The comparison of the above variables on the dependent variable (occurrence of school strikes), was an attempt to discover possible causes or reasons for the upsurge of the phenomenon. The study seeks to establish what factors in a school help to explain the occurrence or absence of strikes.

### **Target Population**

The target population in this study consisted of students and principals of public secondary schools in Nairobi Province. The study systematically left out the private schools since it could be that the set up in the administration in private schools is different from the public schools. The study systematically left at the private schools since it could be that the set up in the administration in private schools is different from the public schools. Among the public secondary schools there were 11 day secondary schools for boys, 8 day secondary schools for girls, 5 boarding secondary schools for boys, 6 boarding secondary schools for girls, 15 mixed day secondary schools and 2 mixed boarding secondary schools for boys and girls. This gave a total of 47 public secondary schools in Nairobi Province. However, 2 of the 47 secondary schools were not included in the sampling as one was an approved school which is essentially a special school and the other had just been converted from a technical institute into a secondary school. In sum,

therefore, 45 secondary schools with 18840 students and 45 principals formed part of the target population of the study. These components of the school community were treated as the observational units of the study while school strikes were treated as the unit of analysis for the study.

### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

In terms of coverage, Gay (1981) suggests that, when dealing with a large population a descriptive study can work with a minimal sample of 10.0% of the population. However, for smaller populations a coverage of at least 20.0% is required. In this study, 78.0% of the total number of public secondary schools in Nairobi Province were covered. Accordingly, 35 out of 45 (78.0%) of secondary schools constituted the sample of the study. It is held that 78.0% of the target population is large enough a sample to provide a proportional representation of secondary schools in Nairobi Province. The researcher also wanted to cover three quarters of the schools in Nairobi and so arrived at 35 schools to ensure appropriate representation.

A random digit table by Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) was used to select the 35 schools. In order to obtain the sample for this study, a list of public secondary schools in Nairobi Province was obtained from the office of the Provincial Director of Education in Nairobi. From the list the names of the schools were written on a piece of paper and given random numbers. Whenever a digit that appeared in the table of random digits corresponded with the number of sampling unit in the list of schools, that sampling unit was selected for the sample. This process continued until the desired sample was reached. The high number of schools selected (35 out of 45) ensured that



variations across public secondary schools in Nairobi were captured by the study.

Further, this study used a table for determining sample size from a given population designed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970, p. 608). According to this table, a sample of 377 cases should be selected from a population of 18840 cases. In this regard, a total of 377 students was required for this study. The number of students to participate in the study from each of the 35 schools was obtained by dividing the number of sampled students with the number of sampled schools. By dividing 377 students by 35 schools we determine the number of students (11) to be covered in each of the 35 schools. Practically, since covering one more student would not add prohibitive costs, the researcher decided to cover 12 students in each of the 35 schools so as to cover a total of 420 students. Covering 12 students per school also helped the researcher to be able to select 4 students from each of the forms (i.e. forms two, three and four) to have a representative sample of each form. These students were selected using simple random sampling from lists of students per school obtained from each of the 35 selected secondary schools. The researcher used forms two, three and four since form ones were new and not competent to fill the questionnaire.

The participants in the study also included 35 principals from the 45 public secondary schools in Nairobi Province. This gave 78.0% coverage of principals in Nairobi Province. In sum therefore, the study sample consisted of 420 students and 35 principals.

## **Pilot Study**

Before embarking on the fieldwork, a pilot sample of thirty nine respondents was used for the study. Three principals and thirty six students from three schools were randomly selected for the pilot study. Twelve students were selected from each of the three schools in the pilot sample. So the pilot study consisted of thirty-six students and three principals. The pilot study helped to improve the quality of the instruments and their validity. The schools used in the pilot were not used in the main study since some modifications on the research instruments were made.

## **Research Instrument**

In this study, two sets of questionnaires were developed by the researcher as the key research instruments. One of the questionnaires was designed to collect data from the secondary school students and had 43 items. This questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part 1 consisted of 14 short questions on school and demographic data of the secondary school students. The latter included (data on age, gender, educational level, "type" of school (whether boys or girls), "category" of the school whether boarding day or boarding and day and "status" of the school, whether national, provincial or district. In addition, part 1 of the students' questionnaire had questions on adequacy of teachers, their quality, and commitment to work (of teachers and students), etc.

Part 2 of the questionnaire contained 18 questions whereby 2 of the questions were open while the others were closed ended. The closed ended questions were divided into a number of sub-items and respondents were required to indicate by means of circling against each sub-item the

appropriate response indicating the extent of involvement in decision making in the school. Negative items were assigned values in the reverse. The study used the open ended questions to measure the opinions of students on ways of enhancing student involvement in decision making, some of the decisions that they think the school authorities should allow students to make themselves, methods of choosing prefects in their school, etc.

Part 3 of the questionnaire contained 6 open ended questions on school unrests and strikes and 4 closed ended questions. In addition, part 3 contained a wide range of selected statements drawn from relevant literature on student unrests and strikes. These statements were, where, necessary simplified to make sure only one issue was involved and that ambiguity was avoided. The statements were then presented in such a form as to permit a judgement of value; this is because the statements were to form a scale of opinion, where there is no criterion of correctness. The statements which were very precise in meaning were then used to construct an attitude scale. On each item, the respondent indicated his or her level of agreement or disagreement. A four point scale was used. It had points labelled, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The items were structured in positively worded statements. The four responses were assigned scores 1, 2, 3, 4 depending on the direction of favourableness or unfavourableness. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree and 4 = Strongly Agree.

The second questionnaire was designed to collect data from the school principals and had a total of 31 items. This questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part 1 consisted of 9 closed ended questions on school and demographic data of the secondary school principals. The 9 questions generated data on age, gender, highest academic qualification and

professional grade, length of service, size of one's school, type of the school (National or Provincial) and status of the school (whether boarding, day or mixed). Part 2 of the principals' questionnaire was designed to elicit responses which would be used to arrive at a conclusion on the extent of student participation in decision making and principals' attitude towards participatory decision making in schools. Part 3 of this questionnaire had 3 closed ended questions and 10 open ended questions on student strikes and riots. In addition, Part 3 contained a wide range of statements collected from all available literature on student unrests and strikes. These statements were, where necessary, simplified to make sure that only one issue was involved and that ambiguity was avoided. These opinion statements were used to form an attitude scale as explained earlier.

### **Validity of Instruments**

Validity is the degree to which a test or a scale measures what it purports to measure (Borg and Gall, 1989). The initial step towards validating the instruments was done during the phase of proposal writing. In this phase, the questionnaires were appraised by 3 senior university lecturers who are experts in the area of Educational Administration.

The second step of instrument validation was done during the pilot study with 39 respondents from 3 secondary schools which were randomly selected from Nairobi Province. The pilot study was intended to help the researcher in the identification of items that were inadequate and/or ambiguous in eliciting the relevant information. These items would be discarded or modified in order to improve the quality of the instruments and their validity. During the pilot study, after each respondent completed filling

the questionnaire, each questionnaire item was discussed with him or her to determine its suitability, clarity and relevance for the purpose of this study. The items in which the respondents had difficulties in answering were noted and the researcher explained to the respondents as a group verbally before administering the questionnaires during the main study.

### **Reliability of Instruments**

Split-half method was used by the researcher to establish the reliability of the instruments. The instruments' items were split into two sub-tests by placing all scaled odd-numbered items in one sub-test and all scaled even-numbered items in another sub-test. This was done for both instruments separately. The scores for all the odd and even-numbered items for each of the 39 respondents in the pilot study were computed separately

In calculating the scores for each respondent the 28 scaled sub-items on the students' questionnaires and 38 scaled sub-items on the principals' questionnaires were ranged from one to four depending on the direction of favourableness or unfavourableness of the sub-items. The scores of each odd-numbers items were added separately. The Spearman rank correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) formula was applied to calculate split-half reliability of items.

The formula was:

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6D^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

Where D = Difference rank of each set of even-numbered and odd numbered

N = Total number of items in the instrument

The rank correlation obtained for the students' questionnaire was 0.97 while that for the principals' questionnaire was 0.61. These coefficients obtained,

however, represented the reliability of only half of the instruments. Since the reliability of an instrument is related to its length, that is, the longer the instrument (the more items it has) the better is the estimate of its accuracy, it was therefore imperative to apply a correction so as to obtain the reliability of the entire instruments. The Spearman Brown prophecy formula was applied to make the correction. The formula was:

$$\text{Reliability of (r)} = \frac{2 \times \text{reliability on half } (\frac{1}{2}) \text{ test}}{1 + \text{reliability on half } (\frac{1}{2}) \text{ test}}$$

The reliability coefficients after this correction were 0.98 for students and 0.76 for the questionnaire for school principals. As for the principals' questionnaire, it was further realized that increasing the number of respondents also increased the reliability coefficient. So the instruments were found to be valid and reliable and could therefore be used for final data collection. The items in which students had difficulties in answering were noted and the researcher explained to the students as a group verbally before administering the questionnaires during the main study.

### **Instrument Administration**

The instruments were administered in two stages; the pilot study and the main study. The main benefit derived at the pre-testing stage was that the stage provided the researcher with ideas and clues not foreseen prior to the study. This feedback led to some changes and improvements in the instruments for the main study.

The principals' questionnaires were distributed first and collected later at intervals of one week. This period was necessary in order to give the principals ample time in the completion of the items. A week had been considered enough time but this was found to be inadequate for some principals. Some principals needed persistent reminders before responding to the items. Others did not respond even after staying with the questionnaires for a whole month while others categorically refused to respond. As for the students questionnaires the researcher booked appointments with the respective school authorities for their administration. Then the schools were visited and the questionnaires administered on the appointed day using simple random sampling as detailed earlier.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

In analysing the data, the following statistical tools have been employed:

- (a) Descriptive statistics
- (b) Inductive or inferential statistics

In this study, both the descriptive and inferential statistics have been calculated using computer. The study used the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) programme in computing all the statistics. Descriptive statistics that were used in this study include mean and percentages. They are summarising measures which are used to condense raw data into forms which supply useful information efficiently (Wallis and Roberts, 1956).

The inferential statistical tools that were used by this study are cross-tabulations and measures of association. To test the hypothesis about the interrelationship between a respondent's score on one variable and his/her

score on a second and/or a third variable(s), cross-tabulations were used. The chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test was used to appraise statistical significance of relationship between various variables in the three hypotheses. In the interpretation of the direction of association and to facilitate comparisons across categories percentages are used. The rationale behind this is that the chi-square ( $X^2$ ) only tests the significance of an association without saying anything about its direction (Mangal, 1990; Siegel, 1956).

In addition, this study used the contingency coefficient (C) to provide a measure of association or relation between the study's variables. The rationale behind this is that contingency coefficient is appropriate for tables of any size (Siegal, 1956). The value of C is given by the formula:

$$c = \frac{x^2}{\sqrt{(n + x^2)}}$$

Where n is the sample size and x is the Chi-square value. Like other coefficients of correlation, C has no limit ( i.e.,  $C \neq 1$ ). The upper limit for the contingency coefficients is a function of the number of categories. For a table made up of an equal number of columns and rows,  $k=r$ , the upper limit for C, that is the C which would occur for two perfectly correlated variables is

$$C(\text{upper limit}) = \sqrt{\frac{K}{(K-1)}}$$



For example, the upper limit of C for a 2 x 2 tables is

$$\sqrt{\frac{1}{2}} = 0.707$$

Thus, since the smallest table used in testing the variables of the study was 2 x 2 table, and the biggest was 4 x 4 table, the maximum value which could C attain was considered to be .86. In this regard, the scale below will be used to interpret C:

.70 - .80	—————>	Very high
.50 - .60	—————>	High
.30 - .40	—————>	Moderate
.10 - .20	—————>	Low
Below .10	—————>	Very low

All hypothesized relationships were tested at 95.0% confidence level. In this regard, relationships equal to and above 95.0% level of confidence were regarded as significant while those below this measure were considered not significant.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

The major focus of the study is students' participation in decision making and students strikes/unrests. Accordingly, this chapter discusses key variables on the current state of student participation in decision making in public schools in Nairobi Province. To accomplish this goal descriptive data on students' participation in the form of frequency tables, percentages and measures of central tendency (median and mean) are discussed. The chapter examines the background information and demographic data of the students and principals. Students' perceived attributes of their schools are also given. In addition, an exploration of the extent of student participation in decision making is done. Subsequently the implications of limited and/or lack of student participation in decision making are examined with a focus on increased secondary school strikes.

Further, this chapter endeavours to examine and interpret the relationship among various variables identified. To achieve this objective, the guiding question of the research study that is largely answered in the chapter is; what factors explain the increasing secondary school strikes in Nairobi Province? To answer this broad question, the analysis is segmented into four sections namely: extent of students' participation in decision making, various management techniques applied by school principals in decision making, causes of secondary school unrests and strikes and ways of curbing them.

The study utilized Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test to appraise statistical significance of relationship between various variables to verify whether

observations made in the field significantly differ from the expected using 0.05 (95.0%) confidence level of significance. The essence is to establish whether or not the variations in the independent variable are indications of the dependent variable. In that regard, relationships above 95.0% level of confidence are regarded as significant while those below this measure are considered as not significant.

The study employed contingency coefficient to measure the strength of relationships among various variables measured at nominal level. The rationale behind this is that contingency coefficient is appropriate for tables of any size.

## **BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS AND SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

This section presents the characteristics or personal attributes of individual respondents, which include: age, sex, and academic qualification and administrative experience of the principals. The rationale behind the inclusion, of these attributes in the analysis is that they help to shed some light on the characteristics of secondary school students and principals in the province. In addition, students' and principals' attributes may have some bearing on increased strikes since the study posed the question – what factors explain the recent upsurge of school strikes in Nairobi Province? Students and principals personal attributes considered in this study are discussed below.

### Distribution of students by age and sex

In this study, variation in students' age ranged from 13-22 years with a mean of 16.5 years. The modal age was 16. The study attempted to cross-tabulate age against sex. This was established by asking respondents to indicate their age and sex. The findings are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of Students by age and sex**

Respondents Sex	RESPONDENTS ACTUAL AGE			
	13-15	16-18	19 and above	Total
Male	70 (59.8%)	210 (64.0%)	22 (91.7%)	302 (64.4%)
Female	47 (40.2%)	118 (36.0%)	2 (8.3%)	167 (35.6%)
Total	117 (100.0%)	328 (100.0%)	24 (100.0%)	469 (100.0%)

Figures in brackets indicate column percentage.

**N.B. Number of missing observations =9.**

**These include all those who did not respond to this variable.**

**$\chi^2 = 8.9$  with 2df. Significant at 95.0% confidence level.**

**C=0.1**

Certain pertinent information can be deduced from Table 1. It is clear that of all the 117 students in 13-15 years category, 59.8% were boys while 40.2% were girls. Indeed of all the 24 students in the 19 and above category, 97.1% were boys while only 8.3% were girls. This indicates that boys are relatively older than girls in secondary school. Data in Table 1 shows that about 70.% of the boys and girls fell in the category 16-18 years. This finding

reflects the statistical fact that secondary schools in Kenya are composed of mature students (See Kinyanjui, 1976).

Of the total sample 469 cases 302 (64.4%) were boys, while 167 (35.6%) were girls. The higher number of boys in the sample supports the casual observation made in the study that there are more boys than girls' schools in Nairobi Province. Indeed, out of the 47 public secondary schools in Nairobi Province, 34.0% are boys' 32.0% are girls and 34.0% are mixed (boys and girls).

#### **Distribution of school principals by age, sex, academic qualifications and administrative experience**

The data on the principals' age reveal that there are very few principals who are relatively young i.e. less than 40 years. The bulk of the principals were in age categories 46-50 (32.0%) and 51-55 (28.0%). This is not surprising given that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) requires one to go through several ranks before meeting the qualifications of being a head of a school. This explains why 68.0% of the principals were over 46 years old. Surprisingly, even though the mandatory retirement age for principals is 55 the study found 2 principals were over 55 years old.

Of the total sample of 25 cases, 14(56.0%) were males and 11(44.0%) were females. This finding support the casual observation made in the surveyed schools that there were more boys' schools than girls' schools. Indeed, in most cases boys' schools are headed by male principals and girls' schools by female principals.

Data associated with academic qualifications of the principals revealed that out of 24 principals, 19 of them (79.0%) were graduates. There was only one principal with S1 qualifications. Three principals had master in education degree while one principal had an honorary doctorate degree in education. The small number of masters degree level qualifications could be as a result of quitting for more paying jobs by those who acquire these qualifications (Muchiri, 1998). As expected, data on academic qualifications of school principals confirm that schools in Nairobi Province have well qualified personnel. This finding helps to support an important observation that increased school strikes in Nairobi are not as a result of unqualified teachers. This finding supports the students' perception of their teachers as well qualified later in the study.

The study also required the principals to state their administrative experience. Out of the 24 principals covered, 13 (52.0%) had over ten years of administrative experience. This indicated that the principals had a lot of experience in school administration. However, one would as well observe that perhaps, such experience did not help significantly to prevent strikes as indicated by increasing strikes (Griffins, 1996). This finding therefore calls for the Kenyan government to either review the existing Education Act in a bid to ensure that it incorporates administration or ensure that the Ministry of Education initiates in-service, workshops and refresher courses on school administration.

## **STUDENTS' PERCEIVED ATTRIBUTES OF QUALITY OF THEIR SCHOOLS IN NAIROBI PROVINCE**

In this section the researcher reports the respondents' rating of perceived attributes of their schools as measured by some selected indicators. The rationale behind this is that causes of school strikes in the recent past in Nairobi seem to be as a result of more substantial basic causes (Anderson, 1971). Indeed according to Nkinyangi (1981) students riot for some articulated wider social goals and not for immediate practical reasons like in the past.

Accordingly, the study considered six indicators of perceived quality of schools in the analysis to test the above relationship. The attributes of perceived quality of schools used in this study include: quality of school facilities, adequacy of teachers in numbers, quality of teachers in terms of qualifications, teachers' commitment to school work and rating of school performance in the national examinations. Data on the indicators of perceived quality of schools were obtained by asking the students of the visited schools in the province to describe their perceptions regarding the quality of their schools as measured by the aforementioned attributes. The results of the analysis are presented below.

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### **Perceived quality of schools as measured by "quantity of school facilities"**

Most studies cited in the literature review suggest that school strikes in the recent past are caused by student demands to participate in school administration. Such studies include, Kinyanjui (1976), Anderson (1971),

Nkinyangi (1981), Waithaka (1987), Griffin 1996 and Muchelle (1996). To be sure, these studies suggest that schools face a serious problem of lack of student participation in decision making. This study attempted to look for evidence to validate the claim that students do not riot for immediate practical reasons like lack of food as in the past. The distribution of the respondents' by their rating of quality of school facilities is given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Perceived quality of school as measured by “quantity of school facilities”**

Rating of quality of school facilities	Frequency	Percent
Poorly equipped	31	6.6
Not well equipped	137	28.9
Equipped	229	48.3
Very well equipped	77	16.2
Total	474	100.0

**NB: There were 4 missing observations which include students who did not respond to this item.**

As expected, Table 1 shows that over half of the respondents (64.5%) reported that their schools were equipped. Only 6.6% reported that their schools were poorly equipped. It can therefore be argued that most school strikes taking place in Nairobi in the recent past were not as a result of lack of school facilities. We observe, therefore, that other factors besides facilities in the school may have caused the strikes.

The variable “adequacy of teachers” in this study is measured by the number of teachers in a school for all the subjects. The distribution of respondents by their rating of adequacy of teachers is presented in Table 3.



**Table 3: Perceived quality school as measured by “adequacy of teachers”**

<b>Rating of adequacy of teachers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not adequate at all	5	1.1
Not adequate	69	14.7
Adequate	313	66.6
Very adequate	83	17.6
Total	470	100.0

**NB: There were 8 missing observations which include those who did not respond to this item.**

From Table 3, it is evident that over three quarters of the sampled students (84.2%) acknowledged that the schools covered in Nairobi Province had at least adequate number of teachers. This finding is not surprising since it supports casual observation that schools in Nairobi are indeed overstaffed. More precisely, Nairobi being an urban centre, and capital city attracts many job seekers and teachers are no exemption. At the same time, there is also pressure for wives to join their husbands in the city resulting in higher presence of women teachers than men teachers in Nairobi Province.

### **Perceived quality of schools as measured by “quality of teachers”**

Quality of teachers as an indicator of perceived quality of schools was included because, unqualified teachers in schools, are likely to cause unrests and strikes. This study attempted to measure this variable to invalidate the claim that the quality of teachers in schools in Nairobi may have an influence on increased strikes. The distribution of the respondents by their assessment of the quality of teachers is given in Table 4.

**Table 4: Perceived quality of schools as measured by students' assessment of "Quality of Teachers"**

<b>Student's assessment of teachers' qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not qualified	11	2.3
Qualified	466	97.7
Total	477	100.0

**NB: 1 missing observation which include one student who did not respond to this item.**

Of the 477 respondents, only a minimal 2.3% reported that they perceived teachers in their schools as not qualified. Indeed, an overwhelming majority (97.7%) reported that they perceived their schools as having qualified teachers.

**Perceived quality of schools as measured by "level of teachers commitment to their work"**

Level of teachers' commitment to their work as an indicator of quality of schools was included because, sometimes this could lead to an unrest in a school. This variable is measured by how committed teachers are to school work from the students' perspective. The distribution of the respondents by their rating of teachers' commitment is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Perceived quality of schools as measured by level of teachers' commitment to school work**

<b>Rating of Teachers Commitment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not committed at all	4	0.8
Not committed	48	10.1
Committed	278	58.3
Very committed	147	30.8
Total	477	100.0

**NB: 1 missing observation which include one student who did not respond.**

According to the findings of the study over half (58.3%) of the respondents reported that their teachers were committed to school work. Indeed, 30.8% of the respondents, reported that their teachers were very committed. This finding implies that majority of students at the public schools covered had confidence with the teachers who taught them.

#### **Perceived quality of schools as measured by “schools performance in the national examinations”**

Students in Nairobi Province were asked to rate their perceptions regarding their schools' performance in the national examinations. The distribution of the respondents by their rating of their schools performance in national examinations is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Perceived quality of school as measured by “performance in national examinations**

School performance rating	Frequency	Percent
Very poor	24	5.1
Poor	65	13.7
Fair	254	53.7
Good	90	19.0
Very good	40	8.5
Total	473	100.0

From Table 6, it is evident that over three quarters of the sampled students (81.2%) revealed that their schools performance in the national examinations was at least fair. This finding is not peculiar as it supports casual observations which reveal that most of the schools in Nairobi perform well in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations (K.C.S.E.). Indeed the leading schools are usually from Nairobi Province.

In sum, the study found that most of the sampled students were satisfied with the services of the studied schools in Nairobi Province. Given all the above findings, the data suggest that, most probably strikes occurring in Nairobi in the recent past were not as a result of poor facilities, lack of adequate teachers, unqualified teachers or poor performance in national examinations. It can therefore be argued that there is need to go out of these factors in trying to get the root cause of increased secondary school strikes.

## **STUDENTS’ PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING**

In this section the students’ level of participation in decision making in the studied schools is discussed. The rationale behind this is that some studies cited in the literature reveal that limited and/or lack of student participation in decision making, may have resulted in increased school

strikes, such studies include Kinyanjui (1976), Nkinyangi (1981), Waithaka (1987) and Mbae (1994). Accordingly, this study attempted to assess whether the extent of student participation in decision making is to students' satisfaction. In fact, one of the questions that the study attempted to answer was – to what extent are students involved in decision making process in schools in Nairobi Province?

Data on the level of satisfaction of the students regarding their involvement in decision making was obtained by asking them to report their levels of satisfaction. The distribution of the respondents by their levels of satisfaction with participation in decision making is presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Students' reported levels of satisfaction with participation in schools decision making processes**

Satisfaction levels	Frequency	Percent
Very dissatisfied	136	29.5
Dissatisfied	177	38.4
Satisfied	111	24.1
Very satisfied	37	8.0
Total	461	100.0

**NB: 17 cases are missing which include all those who did not respond to this item**

From Table 7, it clearly emerges that more than half of the respondents (67.9%) revealed that they were at least dissatisfied that students are adequately involved in decision making. The implication of this finding is that student participation in decision making in the studied schools appears to fall below the students' expectations. This finding is not peculiar to this study as it supports other cited studies such as Nkinyangi (1981) and Griffin (1996) which document that students are the least involved members of the school

community in decision making. There is, therefore, need to increase the levels of student's participation in decision making to satisfy their aspirations.

An attempt was also made to assess the students' participation in various aspects of decision making in the school. The rationale behind this is that some studies cited in the literature reveal that there is minimal student participation in school decision making processes. Such studies include Muchelle (1996), Mwiria in Muchiri (1998), Mbae (1994), etc. Indeed, Waithaka (1987), for example documents that students' participation in decision making procedures is very minimal. Accordingly, this study assessed the latter variable to validate the above claim – especially with introduction of democratization in society.

Students' participation in decision making was measured by some selected indicators. This was to help in further trying to answer one of the study's research questions – to what extent are students involved in decision making process in Nairobi secondary schools. The study considered four indicators of students' participation in decision making. The indicators of students participation used in this study include: students' involvement in formulation and revision of school rules teacher-student conferences, dialogue with the principals and method of choosing prefects in school.

Data on the indicators of students' participation in decision-making were obtained by asking the students of the sampled schools to describe their involvement in the selected indicators. The results of the analysis are presented below.

### Students' participation in formulation and revision of school rules

Most studies cited in the literature review suggest that students are never involved in the formulation and revision of school rules. Such studies include Waithaka (1987), Mbae (1994) and Muchiri (1998). These studies suggest that schools face a serious problem of lack of student participation in decision making in an era of democratization. This study attempted to look for evidence to validate the above claim. The distribution of the respondents by the frequency of participation in formulation and revision of school rules is given in Table 8.

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**Table 8: Students' participation in formulation and revision of school rules**

Participation in formulation and revision of school rules	Frequency	Percent
Never	182	38.7
Rarely	156	33.1
Often	101	21.5
Very often	29	6.2
Total	470	100.0

**NB: 8 missing observations which include all those students who did not respond to this item**

As expected, Table 8 shows that over a third of the respondents (38.7%) reported that they were never involved in the formulation and/or revision of school rules. Indeed an overwhelming majority (71.8%) reported that they were at least rarely involved in the formulation and revision of school rules. This finding implies that there is need to facilitate student participation in school decision making processes. As pointed out by Muchelle (in 1996) in a study cited earlier, lack of student involvement may hamper the effective and efficient functioning of schools.

The study also found out that most of the studied schools did not hold teacher-student conferences. Of the total sample of 465 cases, over three-quarters (77.0%) acknowledged that their schools did not hold teacher-student conferences. This finding further confirms that students are not allowed deliberations in school to practice democratic skills since such conferences are not a common phenomena in schools. This suggests that the present regulations in secondary schools need to be reviewed, to give students opportunities to be heard as this could be the cause of increased strikes and unrests in schools. Holding of teacher-student conferences would give students a forum to speak out.

### **Dialogue with School Principals**

Dialogue with school principals as an indicator of student participation in decision making was included because the literature reviewed in chapter two revealed that the most recurrent complaint in many of the schools that suffered strikes was the inaccessibility of the school principals to the students (Asunda 1983). Indeed according to the Nation Correspondent (23<sup>rd</sup> February 1995, p.5) cited earlier, the increasing cases of school strikes may be due to lack of dialogue in schools. This study attempted to measure this variable to validate the claim that there is lack of dialogue between school principals and students in schools. The distribution of the respondents by their rating of the frequency of dialogue with principals is given in Table 9.



**Table 9: Dialogue between Students and School Principals**

<b>Rating of dialogue</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Never	144	30.4
Rarely	189	39.9
Often	109	23.0
Very often	32	6.7
Total	474	100.0

**NB: 4 missing observations which include those students who did not respond to this item**

Of the 474 respondents over two thirds (70.3%) reported that the frequency of dialogue between students and school principals was at least rare. This finding is not surprising as it supports other similar findings by Asunda (1983), Griffin (1996) and Muchiri (1998) that there is lack of dialogue in schools. This finding implies that there is need to review the current structure in schools to ensure that all the stakeholders, including students are involved in school deliberations.

### **Methods of Choosing Prefects in School**

Method of choosing prefects as an indication of student participation in decision making was included because some of the studies cited in chapter two cited the prefect system in schools as being undemocratic. Mbae (1994) for example points out that few schools in Kenya are run by school councils that are democratically elected by students. That, the prefects themselves are not democratically elected, but only appointed. The resultant hatred witnessed in a number of schools today could be as a result of prefects not being democratically elected by students. This study attempted to measure this variable to validate the claim that appointment of prefects by teachers

could be a possible cause of school strikes. Indeed one of the study's research questions is – what are the factors that explain the recent upsurge of school strikes in Nairobi Province. The distribution of the respondents by their description of the method of choosing prefects in their schools is given in Table 10.

**Table 10: Method of choosing prefects in schools**

Method of choosing prefects	Frequency	Percent
Appointed by teachers	303	64.6
Elected by students	23	4.9
Identified by outgoing prefects	109	23.2
Proposed by other students	12	4.7
Others	22	4.7
Total	469	100.0

**NB: 9 missing observations which include those students who did not respond to this item.**

From Table 10, it clearly emerges that over half of the respondents (64.6%) acknowledged that prefects were appointed by teachers in their school. Further, only 4.9% of the total number of respondents reported that prefects were elected by students in their schools. The above findings indicate that the existing school organisational structure is not capable of enhancing democracy because it contradicts the principle of elective representation, which is a basic principle of democracy. This finding supports Mbae's (1994) documentation that lack of student participation in election of prefects negates the ideal of participatory school governance. This makes the students view the schools as being authoritarian and could result in violent reactions. This finding calls for a great deal of good will on the part of the government to take democratization in schools seriously. The government

needs to adopt an approach in school that is compatible with the ideals of democracy. Indeed, research study in Tanzania shows that where democratization has been taken seriously, there has been improved discipline as all participants have felt responsible for their institutions (Kisangu in Mbae, 1994).

An attempt was also made to assess the students' satisfaction with the method of choosing prefects in their school. Data on the level of satisfaction of the students regarding method of choosing prefects, was obtained by asking them to report their levels of satisfaction with the method of choosing prefects in their schools. The distribution of the respondents by their levels of satisfaction with method of choosing prefects is presented in Table 11.

**Table 11: Students' reported levels of satisfaction with method of choosing prefects in their schools**

<b>Satisfaction levels</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not satisfied at all	94	19.8
Not satisfied	156	32.9
Satisfied	142	29.9
Very satisfied	82	17.3
Total	474	100.0

**NB. 4 missing observations which include those students who did not respond to this item.**

From Table 11, slightly over half of the respondents (52.7%) were at least not satisfied with the method of choosing prefects in their school. This finding supports the call to allow students elect prefects in schools. Data in Table 11, therefore concur with the cited studies, which promulgates undemocratic prefect system as a possible cause of violence in schools. These higher levels of dissatisfaction and lower levels of satisfaction can best

be explained by the trends from the previous table (Table 10). Since students have no control over the selection of prefects in their schools, their dissatisfaction in the manner in which the system functions can be explained by the complete control teachers have over prefect selection. This probably explains the notion that the prefects selected by the teachers and school principals have no alternative but to follow the administrations line (Muchelle, 1996). Consequently, an attempt by the study to ask students whether they considered prefects as their representatives had the following results: nearly three quarters of the respondents (73.5%) reported that they did not consider prefects as their representatives while only a quarter (25.8%) of the respondents revealed that they consider prefects as their representatives. This goes a long way to explain the antagonism which has been witnessed among students and prefects in schools. It suggests that if students are allowed to elect prefects, probably they would consider them as their representatives, respect and be loyal to them. Hence, the Ministry of Education officials could exploit this knowledge in enhancing harmony between students and prefects in schools.

This study also attempted to assess the students' perception on prefect powers in schools. This variable was deemed important given the recent complaints about prefects welding a lot of powers in schools as cited in the literature review. Data on students' perceptions on prefect powers in schools was obtained by asking students to rate powers conferred upon the prefects as a result of their positions. The distribution of the respondents by their perceptions of powers conferred upon prefects is presented in Table 12.

**Table 12: Students' perceptions of powers conferred upon prefects in schools**

Rating of prefects	Frequency	Percent
Not powerful at all	12	2.5
Not powerful	93	19.6
Powerful	279	58.7
Very powerful	91	19.2
Total	475	100.0

**NB: 3 missing observations which include students who did not respond to this item.**

From Table 12, it clearly emerges that over half of the respondents (58.7%) revealed that prefects were powerful in their schools. Indeed, 19.2% revealed that prefects were very powerful in the visited schools. The high percentage of students who reported that prefects were at least powerful (77.8%) in the visited schools suggest that in most of the schools in the province prefects are perceived as wielding a lot of powers by the students. According to the editor in Education and Training Vol. 3 No. 3, 1999 p. 8, "where prefects are given too much power they tend to lord it over the students. The resultant hatred can escalate into anything". This finding is indeed not peculiar to this study as it also supports the public feeling that prefects have a lot of power in schools. Prefects enjoy special privileges including caning and suspending other students in some schools (Education and Training Vol. 3 No. 3 1999). Hence, the prefect system in schools needs to be reviewed to guard against possible misuse of such power by prefects on the students.

An attempt was also made by this study to assess the way prefects are regarded by other students in the visited schools. Survey data show that

slightly more than half of the respondents (50.7%), reported that prefects are hated by other students in the visited schools. About twenty four per cent (23.8%) of the respondents reported that prefects are liked and 25.5% indicated that some prefects are liked and others hated in the visited schools. This finding can be explained by the trends the previous tables (Table 11, 12 and 13). Since students rarely have prefects of their own choice, they generally express hatred towards prefects. Indeed, further probing of the students in the visited schools revealed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (71.0%) revealed prefects were at least involved by school authorities in making major decisions that affect students in school. Hence students tend to alienate prefects from the student body and view them as representatives of the administrators rather than their own representatives.

To conclude this section on students' participation in decision making, the respondents were asked to rate their frequency of involvement in making major decisions in their schools. The study found that over three quarters of the respondents (79.1%) indicated that their involvement in major decisions in their schools was at least not frequent. Indeed, almost half of the respondents (48.5%) reported that they were not at all involved. These findings indicate that students' participation in decision making in the sampled schools appear to fall below student expectations.

Finally, the respondents were asked how willing they would be to participate in decision making processes in school. Over half of the respondents (67.6%) reported that they would be very willing to participate, 25.4% reported they would be willing, 20.0% reported they would be unwilling and only 5.0% reported that they would be very unwilling. In essence, 93.0% revealed that they would be at least willing to participate in school decision

making processes, while only a minimal 7.0% reported that they would at least be unwilling to participate. In all, therefore, the study found that students in the sampled schools were willing to be active participants in school decision making process. However as revealed by the study's data, opportunities for students' participation in decision making appear to be lacking in schools. This is incompatible with democracy and has serious implications since students are increasingly becoming aware of the right of participation in decision making (Mbae 1994). Freire (1990), argues that we must create or restore faith in our students. Instead of dictating to them, we must be open and discuss issues with them. We must allow and even encourage our students to question and test our "knowledge". It is only then, can we be said to have made strides towards the democratic culture. Otherwise, as it is now, it is paradoxical to be propagating for democratization in the society and not practicing it in the schools. As pointed out by Rutto (1994), education is central to any socio-economic or political change, it is the centre of society's culture and customs. When society is undergoing a fundamental change in terms of values and attitudes education is also bound to change. These findings suggest that the current school structure need to be reviewed to accommodate participation of students in decision making process.

### **Principals' Perception on students' participation in decision making**

Given the reported lack of students' participation in decision making, this section focuses on the school principals' perceptions on students' participation in decision making. The reason for this is to find out whether school principals are making any efforts towards participation of students in

decision making. This section also attempts to focus on school principals' attitudes towards participation of students in decision making. The rationale behind this is that many studies cited in the literature are of the view that school principals have complete control over decision making process in schools and that they are indeed autocratic. Such studies include, Mbae (1994), N.C.C.K. (1994), Muchelle (1990) and Muchiri (1998). This study attempted to assess school principals' perceptions of students' participation in decision making.

### **Principals' perception on importance of involving students in decision making**

The study found all the school principals (100.0%) in the visited schools reported that they considered it important to involve students in decision making. However, the study also found that teachers were the most frequently used members of the school community in decision making with 86.3% frequency of involvement, then parents with 76.5% frequency of involvement while the students were the least involved with only 16.0% frequency of involvement. It can therefore be argued that, school principals deem it necessary to involve students in decision making. However, there is no policy to guide them on how they should involve students and hence the principals are reluctant to involve students in decision making.

An attempt was also, made to assess the school principals' perception on various management techniques in decision making. The rationale behind this is that many of the studies cited in the literature review suggested that school principals were not democratic in their administration. Accordingly, the study considered six indicators of principals' perceptions on students'



participation in decision making to test how democratic they were. The attributes of principals' perceptions on students' participation in decision making used in this study include: allowing students to elect prefects, allowing teachers to appoint prefects, indicating how often principals showed that they understood the points of views of students even though they disagree with them, how often school principals encouraged students to express their ideas fully and frankly, how often principals encouraged students to bring new and/or creative ideas, and how often school principals allowed students to question their views.

Data on the indicators of school principals' perceptions on students participation in decision making were obtained by asking the principals of the visited schools to indicate their perceptions regarding the participation of students in decision making as measured by the aforementioned attributes. The results of the analysis are presented below.

### **School principals' perception on election of prefects by students**

Most studies cited in the literature review suggest that prefects are not democratically elected in schools. Such studies include Mbae (1994), Muchelle (1996) and Muchiri (1998). These studies suggest that the prefect system in schools is not democratic since students are not allowed to elect prefects. This study also hypothesized that undemocratic prefect system in schools could be a likely cause of school strikes. An attempt was therefore made to look for evidence to validate the above claim. The distribution of the respondents by their perceptions on allowing students to elect prefects is given in Table 13.

**Table 13: School Principals perceptions on allowing students to elect prefects**

Allowing students to elect prefects	Frequency	Percent
Not important at all	2	8.3
Not important	4	16.7
Important	15	62.5
Very important	3	12.5
Total	24	100.0

**NB: 1 missing observation which include one principal who did not respond to this item**

Of the 24 respondents, over half (62.5%) reported that they considered it important to allow students to elect prefects. Indeed 12.5% of the principals reported that they considered it very important to allow students to elect prefects. This finding is peculiar to this study in that it contradicts Mbae (1994), Muchiri (1998) and Muchelle (1996) documentation that the prefect system in schools is undemocratic since it does not allow students to elect prefects. This finding also contradicts the finding on students' data on methods used in schools to choose prefects. This can be explained by the fact that there seems to be a contradiction between theory and practice. The school principals believe that it is important to involve students in decision making, but in practice this is not what they do.

#### **Principals' reported perceptions on appointment of prefects by teachers**

School principals in Nairobi Province were asked to rate their perceptions regarding prefects' appointment by teachers. The distribution of the respondents by their rating of teachers' appointment of prefects is presented in Table 14.

**Table 14: School Principals' perceptions on allowing teachers to appoint prefects**

Allowing teachers to appoint prefects	Frequency	Percent
Not important at all	2	8.3
Not important	2	8.3
Important	11	45.8
Very important	9	37.5
Total	24	100.0

**NB: 1 missing observation which include one principal who did not respond to this item.**

From Table 14, it is evident that over three quarters of the school principals in the sampled schools (83.3%) revealed that they considered allowing teachers to appoint prefects be at least important. This finding implies that school principals seem to have double standards on the issue of involving students in making decisions that affect them. There seems to exist fear among school principals that allowing students to elect prefects is a threat to discipline. This need not be so. Indeed the reverse could be the case i.e., where students are allowed to elect their leaders, they own the leaders and feel they are their own representatives and hence will support them in enhancing discipline. Indeed, Kisangu in Mbae (1994) in the study cited earlier, indicated that, where democratization has been taken seriously, there has been improved discipline. Therefore, whatever its rationale and whatever its justification, it is important to note that not allowing prefects to elect their leaders contradicts the very principles on which democracy is founded. Given that students seem to be increasingly becoming aware of their democratic rights, as will be later revealed in this study, democratization in school ought to be taken seriously.

## Extent to which school principals enhanced student participation in decision making

This section attempts to explore the extent to which school principals made efforts to enhance student participation in decision making. The rationale behind this is that many studies cited in the literature review suggest that school principals controlled all decision making process in school with little or no student involvement. Accordingly, the study attempts to assess the extent to which the school principals applied various democratic processes of decision. The study considered four indicators of attributes of democratic processes in decision making. The attributes of democratic processes used in this study include: showing students that one agrees with their views even when you disagree with them, encouraging students to express their ideas fully and frankly, encouraging students to bring new and/or creative ideas and allowing students to question principals' view. The results of the analysis are presented in table 15.

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**Table 15: How often school principals showed they understood students' view even when they disagreed**

How often principals showed they understood students' view	Frequency	Percent
Very rarely	2	8.0
Rarely	18	72.0
Often	5	20.0
Very often	-	-
Total	25	100.0

From Table 15, it clearly emerges that over three quarters of the respondents (80.0%) reported that they showed they understood students' view even when they disagree with them at least rarely. Indeed over half of the respondents (72.0%) reported that they rarely showed that they

understood students' view when they disagreed with the students. This finding reflects the situation in schools as cited by past studies.

An attempt was also made to assess how often the principals encouraged students to express their ideas fully and frankly. The distribution of the respondents by how often they encouraged students to fully and frankly create ideas is presented in Table 16.

**Table 16: How often principals encouraged students to express their ideas**

Encouraging students to express ideas	Frequency	Percent
Very rarely		
Rarely	3	12.0
Often	13	52.0
Very often	9	36.0
Total	25	100.0

From Table 16, over half of the visited principals (52.0%) reported that they often encouraged their students to express ideas fully and frankly. This finding was not expected as it contradicts Muchiri (1998) and Asunda's contention (1983) that there is lack of dialogue in schools. The higher percentage of those who indicated they often encouraged students to express their ideas fully and frankly also contradicts views from the students on how frequently they held dialogue with school principals. It could be that school principals expect that students can express their ideas but do not provide forums where such ideas can be expressed freely given that in virtually all schools there are no student councils (Muchiri, 1998). Indeed field observations reveal that it is only in one school where students could air their views freely and frankly (see Griffin 1996 on school "baraza"). An attempt

was also made to measure how often principals allowed students to question their views. The responses given are presented in Table 17.

**Table 17: How often principals allowed students to question their views**

Students questioning the principals view	Frequency	Percent
Very rarely	11	44.0
Rarely	5	20.0
Often	5	20.0
Very often	4	16.0
Total	25	100

From Table 17, it clearly shows that over half of the visited principals (64.0%) revealed that they at least rarely allowed students to question their views. This finding further reflects the inadequate preparation in terms of school democratization. More interestingly, it is now over seven years since the introduction of multi-party politics that show greater democratization in the society and yet school principals seem poorly equipped to cope with democratization in schools. Indeed, Professor Gichaga talking to the East African Standard (22<sup>nd</sup> June 2000, p.19) revealed that the democratization taking place in the country in the 1990s has had a profound effect on educational institutions. The former principal of Kenya High School stated that a good manager of any school should use communication as a tool. She believes that students should be given a chance to air their views and the administration should explain why certain things should be the way they are. In her years as principal, she had learnt that one must be available and treat subordinates including students as important. According to her, "a lot can be saved through dialogue. You cannot be dictatorial. Put yourself in the child's shoes". These findings imply that there is an urgent need for educational

scholars, administrators and practitioners to be equipped with broad-based management skills for a dynamic environment.

Indeed, when principals in the sampled schools were asked to indicate how important they considered their retraining to acquire more suitable management skills almost all were positive. The distribution of the respondents by their acceptability of the retraining of school principals is presented in Table 18.

**Table 18: Principals' reported levels of acceptability of their retraining**

Acceptability retraining	Frequency	Percent
Not important at all		
Not important		
Important	5	20.8
Very important	19	79.2
Total	24	100

**NB: 1 missing observation which include one principal who did not respond to this item**

From Table 18, it clearly emerges that over three quarters of the school principals in the visited schools (79.2%) revealed that they considered it very important to retrain school principals to acquire more suitable management skills. It can therefore be argued that the democratization taking place in the society has affected students in schools. Students expect to be involved in decision making processes. However, as revealed by the study's data and East African Standard(22<sup>nd</sup> June 2000, p.19), school principals have to evolve with the times. Some principals have been overtaken by the democratic era. They still run their schools the way they were being run two decades ago. School principals like all institutions which must evolve with the times must

adapt or die (East African Standard, 22 June 2000, p.19). As pointed out by Mutua (1973) in a study cited earlier the traditional concepts of educational administration no longer fit the emerging demands that are placed on the administrator.

The findings of the study reveal that student participation in decision making is below students expectations. More so, most school principals acknowledge that it is important to involve students in decision making. The students need to be part of the decision making process. These findings suggest that the current status of school decision making process need to be reviewed to accommodate students.

### **AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT HAVE RESULTED IN INCREASED SECONDARY SCHOOL STRIKES**

Recent studies on the subject of school strikes suggest that strikes indicate lack of dialogue between all the stakeholders in the school. Such studies include Kinyanjui (1976) and Griffin (1996). To be sure, these studies document that student participation in decision making cannot only provide students with avenues to air their grievances, but also give school principals avenues to know students' grievances and arrest the situation before it becomes ugly. Indeed the former principal of Kenya High school talking to East African Standard (22<sup>nd</sup> June 2000, p.19) suggests that for a free flow of communication and understanding, administrations should sit together with student representatives and listen to their suggestions to avoid strikes.

Other scholars cited in the literature hold the view that the authoritarian school environment in the midst of greater democratization in society has led to increased strikes. In particular studies by Asunda (1983), Mbiti (1974), Mutua (1973), Chamberline (1989) and Muchelle (1996), all tend to shed



some light on the negative effects of an authoritarian school environment that denies students participation in decision making. Mbae (1994), for example, argues that the prefect system is undemocratic and thus could be a possible cause of problems in schools.

These views on causes of school strikes tend to differ from views of earlier studies, for example Kinyanjui (1976) in a study cited earlier observed that in one of the schools that had gone on strike in 1974, the students grievances were:

1. lack of books
2. ill-equipped laboratory
3. partition of dormitory not complete
4. no proper sanitation
5. filthy water
6. unbalanced diet
7. unpaved school paths

Indeed Kinyanjui (1976) observed that the quality and quantity of food provided in secondary schools featured as a major cause of students' protests. However, a look at some of the schools that went on strike in the 1990s indicate that the most recurring causes were lack of dialogue, authoritarianism and lack of student participation in decision making. The causes of school strikes seem to have changed over the years.

The above different views on cause of school strikes explain why the variable was included in this study for analysis. Indeed one of the study's research question is – what are the key factors that explain the increasing student strikes in secondary schools in Nairobi Province in the 1990s? An

attempt by the study to find out if school principals and students were aware of increased strikes and unrests in secondary schools revealed that 95.8% of the principals and 96.0% of the students agreed that strikes have increased in the recent past. At the same time the study found that 91.7% of the school principals revealed that 1990s have been most difficult to maintain school discipline, compared to 1980's and before. These findings are not peculiar to this study as they support other cited studies in the literature review. Such studies include Griffin (1996) and Muchelle (1996) who indicate that student strikes have been on the increase. These findings imply that democratization in society has made students more aware of their rights, hence they are demanding for more participation resulting in decision making in increased strikes/unrests, when participation is not allowed.

Attempts were made to identify causes of increased secondary school strikes from both students and school principals. The distribution of the respondents by causes of strikes is presented in Tables 19 and 20 respectively.

**Table 19: Reported factors explaining causes of increased secondary school unrests and strikes from students**

Causes of increased strikes and unrests	Frequency	Percent
Not involving students in decision making	90	23.7
Teachers harassment	56	14.8
Poor administration	54	14.2
Lack of basics e.g. food	47	12.4
Harassment by prefects	44	11.6
Drug abuse	30	7.9
Teachers not being punctual	18	4.7
Lack of representation	15	4.0
Lack of discipline	11	2.9
Corrupt administration	8	2.1
Others	6	1.6
Total	379	100.0

**NB: 99 missing observations. These include all those students who did not respond to this item. In schools that had not experienced a strike, students hesitated away from responding to this item. This explains the high number of missing observations on this item.**

From Table 19, it is clearly shown that majority of the students in the sampled schools (23.7%) revealed that lack of student involvement in decision making is a cause of increased strikes and unrests in schools. This finding supports cited studies in the literature review.

**Table 20: Reported factors explaining causes of increased secondary school strikes/unrests from principals**

Causes	Frequency	Percent
Students are more informed	6	26.1
Economic pressure	4	17.4
Students' unrealistic demands	3	13.0
Declining parental guidance	3	13.0
Lack of sense of duty and self	2	8.7
Over enrolment	2	8.7
Decay in moral values	1	4.3
Students and teachers	1	4.3
Increase in drug abuse	1	4.3
Total	23	100.0

**NB: 2 missing observations which include 2 principals who did not respond to this item**

Table 20, shows that the highest percentage of the principals (26.1%) revealed that the fact that students are more informed about their rights has led to increased secondary school strikes and unrests. This concurs with the views of Powers et al. (1984) and Mbae (1994) that democratization process had indeed affected schools. One way it has affected schools is by making students more aware of their rights to participate in decision making in schools. Indeed, as pointed out by Kinyanjui (1976) in a study cited earlier, the school is an integral part of the society and whatever takes place in society is bound to have effect in the school. These findings suggest that socio-political changes taking place in the society have affected schools making students to claim participation in decision making through strikes and unrests. Hence as efforts are put to democratize the society, the same should be done in schools. This could help bring down the increasing strikes and unrests.

An attempt was also made to get more information on the causes of strikes and unrests in schools. In this section, the students and principals' perceptions of causes of strikes and unrests as measured by some selected sub-items will be reported. Means were calculated in all the sub-items. In the sub-items, a score of 1 denotes that the respondent strongly disagrees; a score of 2 that the respondent disagrees; a score of 3 that the respondent agrees and a score of 4 denotes that the respondent strongly agrees. The higher the value of mean, the more the degree of agreement with the sub-items among the respondents. The result of the analysis are presented below.

Table 22 shows the sub-items on causes of secondary school strikes and unrests as reported by students, number of respondents and mean scores.

**Table 21: Students perceived causes of strikes and measured by various sub-items**

<b>Sub-items on Causes of Strikes</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
School strikes indicate lack of dialogue between students and school authorities	445	3.5
Strikes can be avoided if students are involved in decision making	445	3.4
Too much powers vested on prefects is a major cause school strikes	445	3.1
Lack of democratic systems in schools is a major cause of school strikes in Kenya	445	3.1
Strikes are caused by poor administration in schools	445	3.0
Drug abuse among students is a major cause of strikes	445	2.7
School strikes never succeed in solving problems in schools	445	2.6
Most school strikes are due to unrealistic demands by students	445	2.4
School strikes are due to lack of discipline among students in school	445	2.3
School strikes are due to incitement outsiders	445	1.9

**NB: 33 cases are considered as missing. They include all those students who did not respond to this item**

From Table 21, it clearly emerges that majority of the students agree that school strikes indicate lack of dialogue between students and school authorities ( $M = 3.5$ ). At the same time, majority of the students also agree that school strikes can be avoided if students are involved in decision making ( $M = 3.4$ ). In addition students agreed that too much powers vested on prefects is a major cause of school strikes ( $M = 3.1$ ). Surprisingly, students disagree that drug abuse among students is a major cause of school strikes ( $M = 2.7$ ). This finding contradicts Muchiri (1996) documentation that drug abuse is a major cause of indiscipline in schools. Education and Training

(1998) also indicated that drug abuse is the main cause of violence in Kenyan schools. The study's finding on student perception on drug abuse as a major cause of school strikes is not peculiar as it supports other cited studies which document authoritarian school structure (Muchelle, 1996) and bad methods of human management (Griffin, 1996), as major causes of school strikes. Majority of the students also agreed that lack of a democratic system in schools is a major cause of strikes in Kenya ( $M = 3.1$ ) and also cited poor administration in schools as being responsible for strikes ( $M = 3.0$ ). This concurs with Mbae's view (1994) that the school structure need to be democratized. The findings on Table 22 also indicate that students strongly disagree that school strikes are due to incitement by outsiders ( $M = 1.9$ ). Paradoxically, this finding contradicts past studies such as Daily Nation in Kinyanjui (1974) that attribute student protests to foreign influence and mass media influence.

Table 22 shows the sub-items on causes of secondary school strikes as indicated by school principals, number of respondents and mean scores.

**Table 22: Principals' perceived causes of strikes as measured by various sub-items**

<b>Sub-items on Causes of Secondary School Strikes</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Lack of dialogue between school authorities and students	24	3.5
Drug abuse by students	24	3.2
Excessive stress among students	24	3.2
Current political changes in the country prompt students to strike	24	3.1
As students increasingly become aware of their democratic rights, strikes have increased	24	2.8
High cases of labour/political unrests in the country tend to encourage students to strike	24	2.7
Antagonism between students and prefects result in strikes	24	2.6
Students often go on strike after they are incited by outsiders	24	2.5
Unrealistic demands by students is a cause of strike	24	2.5
Students often go on strike after they are incited by their teachers	24	2.5
Poor school facilities is a cause of strikes	24	2.5

**NB: 1 missing observation which include 1 principal who did not respond to this item.**

Table 22, shows that majority of the school principals agree that lack of dialogue between students and school authorities is a major cause of strikes and unrests ( $M = 3.5$ ). This finding reflects the students' perception that school strikes indicate lack of dialogue between the students and school authorities. In that case, it can be said that efforts need to be put in place to ensure that there is adequate consultations among all the stakeholders in the school. This would probably help curb the increasing school strikes. These findings suggest that there is need to evolve participatory management in schools. As pointed out earlier in the study, much will be accomplished in

adopting participatory management in the face of increasing student strikes and continued student demand for participation in decision making. Such an approach would ensure that communication networks are maintained continuously among all levels of management in school from B.O.G. to school principals, teachers, parents and students as consultations are made with each stakeholder.

As pointed out by Kinyanjui (1976), the colonial tradition which created a one-directional flow of orders and communication and provides no corresponding channels for the students to communicate with their teachers and school principals ought be done away with. The ruling body in any school should encourage the spirit of dialogue. This evokes a sense of partnership resulting in increased patriotism, discipline harmonious living and effective achievement of goals of the school as depicted in the conceptual framework given in chapter two of this study. Hence, there is need to review the power structures in schools to facilitate "open courtyard" discussions. This concurs with the views of Waithaka (1987) and Griffin (1996) cited earlier in this study.

Interestingly, unlike the students, school principals were also in agreement that drug abuse among students is a cause of strikes ( $M = 3.2$ ). This finding is not peculiar to this study as it supports other cited studies that view drug abuse as a cause of strikes and indiscipline in schools. Such studies include Muchiri (1998) and Education and Training (1998). Other scholars cited in the literature, who hold the contrary view regarding causes of strikes cite authoritarian school structure and lack of dialogue as major causes of school strikes and disregard drug abuse as a major cause. These contrasting views on the causes of school strikes explain why the variable was included in this study for analysis.



The study attempted to probe students and school principals further on school strikes so as to capture the leading causes of strikes in schools. Accordingly, students and school principals were asked to indicate who and/or what to blame for school strikes. The distribution of the respondents by who to blame and/or what to blame for secondary school strikes/unrests are presented below.

**Table 23: Students' perceptions on who and/or what to blame for secondary school strikes/unrests**

Who or What to Blame?	Frequency	Percent
Poor administration	163	45.3
Lack of student involvement	79	21.9
Student indiscipline	34	9.4
Too much power invested on prefects	28	7.8
Drug abuse	16	4.4
Government's controversy over teachers' salaries	12	3.3
Harsh rules/punishments	9	2.5
Parental negligence	8	2.2
Entire education system	6	1.7
Other	5	1.4
Total	360	100.0

**NB: 118 missing observations which include students who did not respond to this item**

Table 23 shows that a large number of students (45.3%) cited poor administration to be blamed for strikes and unrests in schools today. Further, 21.9% of the students blamed the crisis on lack of student involvement in decision making. These findings concur with past studies that cite school factors as causing school strikes. Such studies include Kinyanjui (1976), Nkinyangi (1980) and Mbae (1994). Indeed, Anderson (1971) in a study cited earlier contends that strikes are essentially symptoms of deep-seated student dissatisfaction for less tangible than the immediate and apparent causes. The

implication of this is that there is need to review the outmoded ways of school administration.

**Table 24: School principals' perceptions of who and/or what to blame for secondary school strikes and unrests**

Who or What to Blame?	Frequency	Percent
The society in general	12	50.0
Incompetent management	4	16.7
Students and teachers	3	12.5
Parents' negligence	2	8.3
Ministry of Education	2	8.3
Drug abuse/peer pressure	1	4.2
Total	24	100.0

**NB: 1 missing observation which include 1 principal who did not respond to this item**

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Table 24, clearly shows that half of the principals (50.0%) cited the society to blame for strikes in schools. Further 16.7% of the school principals cited incompetent management to blame for school strikes and only 4.2% of the principals indicated that drug abuse could be blamed for school strikes. Indeed, as indicated by some past studies in the literature review, drug abuse is not the main cause of strikes. This finding contradicts Education and Training (1998) contention that drug abuse is the main cause of violence in Kenyan schools. This finding suggests that causes of school strikes should be established beyond the drug abuse factor. Indeed drug abuse could be a cause but as indicated by the study's data, it is not the main cause of strikes in schools. The principals' view that society could be blamed for increased strikes in schools can be understood in view of the fact that on going socio-political changes in society tend to have affected schools. Indeed one of the study's research question was: have social-political changes in society had any significant influence on occurrence of strikes? Table 24 tends to answer

this question in the sense that half of the principals blamed the society for strikes and unrests in schools. Indeed, an attempt was made to find out from school principals whether increased awareness of democratic rights on students, due to the democratization process has resulted in increased strikes. The distribution of respondents on their level of agreement revealed that out of 23 sampled school principals 14 (56.0%) agreed that as students increasingly became aware of their democratic rights, strikes have increased. Twenty per cent of the principals strongly agreed to this. The situation has resulted in increased strikes and unrests as students demand participation in decision making.

To conclude this section, the study made an attempt to get views from students and school principals on how the problem of school strikes can be solved. Accordingly, students were asked to give their perceptions on what could be the principals' role in solving the problem of school strikes. The student's perceptions on principals' role in solving the problem of strikes are given in Table 26.

**Table 25: Students' perceptions on how principals could deal with the problem of school strikes**

<b>Suggested Roles of Principals</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Listen and seek students' views	218	61.8
Administer and teach	56	15.7
Encourage counselling	25	7.0
Ensure discipline	25	7.0
Relax harsh rules	14	3.9
Making themselves available	11	3.1
Curb prefect powers	5	1.4
Stop corrupt practices	3	0.8
Total	357	100.0

**NB: 121 missing observations which include those students who did not respond to this item**

From Table 25, it is clearly evident that one of the ways cited by over half of the students (61.1%) was for school principals to listen and seek students' view. Further, 15.7% of the students cited principals teaching and administering as another way through which principals could deal with strikes. The study's finding concurs with Waithaka's view (1987) that schools that encourage open courtyard discussions can be saved the agony of strikes and unrests. It is apparent that students feel that school principals are not accessible to them. Indeed, most of the schools that went on strike in Nairobi Province in the 1990s cited lack of dialogue as the cause of the strikes. As suggested earlier, there is an urgent need to review the organizational structure in schools and ensure students are availed forums through which they can air their views. At the same time, the school principals need to be alert and be active listeners. As pointed out by the former Kenya High school principal (East African Standard, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2000, p.19) a lot can be saved through dialogue.

The study also made an attempt to get suggestions on specific ways of solving the problem of school strikes and unrests from the principals. The distribution of respondents by their suggestions on how to solve the problem of school strikes is presented in Table 26.

**Table 26: Principals' suggestions on how to solve the problem of school strikes/unrests**

Suggest Solutions	Frequency	Percent
Involve all stakeholders in decision making	9	37.5
Head teachers to be present and accessible to students	6	25.0
Guidance and counselling	5	20.8
Involve parents in school administration	2	8.3
Heads not to mismanage schools	1	4.2
Revive the economy	1	4.2
Total	24	100.0

**NB: 1 missing observation which include one principal who did not respond to this item**

From Table 26, it can be deduced that out of the twenty four school principals interviewed, the biggest percentage (37.5%) revealed that involving all the stakeholders in school decision making is one way that can help in solving the problem of strikes. Further, 25.0% of the principals suggested presence and accessibility of principals in schools while 20.8% cited guidance and counselling as one way of arresting the problem of strikes in schools. Interestingly, as observed earlier, one of the major complaints amongst students in secondary schools is lack of involvement in decision making yet the school principals suggest that one of the ways of solving the problem of strikes in secondary schools is involvement of all in decision making. There seems to be a contradiction between theory and practice. Indeed, the findings of the study are that student involvement in decision making is very minimal. It is actually below the students' expectations. The school principals seem to agree but do not put what they believe could rescue the situation into practice. This paradoxical situation can be explained by the lack of policy on the issue of student participation in school decision making. There is, therefore, an

urgent need for the Ministry of Education to put in place a mechanism to accommodate students in decision making.

### **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT HAVE RESULTED IN INCREASED SECONDARY SCHOOL STRIKES**

This section attempts to identify the nature of relationship between selected independent variables and occurrence of school strikes. More precisely, inferential statistical tools are used to test the relationship between the independent variables (i.e. type of school whether boarding or day, method of choosing prefects in school, satisfaction with method of choosing prefects, powers conferred upon prefects, dialogue in school, student involvement in the formulation and revision of school rules, teacher-student conferences and satisfaction with student involvement in decision making. This analysis is presented in the next sections.

#### **Type of School and Occurrence of Strikes and Unrests**

Studies by Anderson (1971) and Kinyanjui (1976) succinctly demonstrate that type of school influences occurrence of strikes. Indeed, Anderson in his study indicated that strikers are predominantly boys. In the study carried out by Kinyanjui cited earlier, 54.0% of the schools that had gone on strike in 1974 were boys' schools, 6.0% were girls' schools and 20.0% were mixed. At the same time, Kinyanjui indicated that out of the 62 striking schools, 39 were boarding, 11 were day and 12 were combined day boarding schools. Anderson (1971) also made a similar observation that Uganda strikers were mainly boarders.

The aim of the study's first hypothesis therefore, was to establish whether type of school determines occurrence of strikes and unrests.

### H1: Type of school attended determines occurrence of strikes and unrests

In this hypothesis, the dependent variable is occurrence of strikes and unrests. The study attempted to measure whether it was determined by type of school attended whether boys', girls or mixed and whether boarding, day or a combination of boarding and day. This was established by asking respondents whether their school is boys', girls', mixed, day, boarding or both. The findings are presented in Tables 27 and 28.

**Table 27: School type and occurrence of school strikes and unrests**

School Type	Occurrence of Strikes/Unrests		
	Yes	No	Total
Boys	180 (70.0%)	62 (32.0%)	242 (53.6%)
Girls	39 (15.2)	61 (31.4%)	100 (22.2%)
Mixed	38 (14.8)	71 (36.6%)	109 (24.2%)
Total	257 (57.0%)	194 (43.0%)	451 (100.0%)

**NB: 27 observations were missing**

**These include those students who did not respond to this item**

**Figures in brackets indicate column percentages**

**$\chi^2 = 68.3$  with 4 df. Significant at 95.0% confidence level**

**Contingency Coefficient = 0.4**

From Table 27, it clearly emerges that of the 257 respondents confirming strikes in their school, 70.0% was reported by students from boys' schools, 15.0% by students from girls and another 15.0% from mixed schools. In general, of the 451 students responding to this issue, 57.0% confirmed the occurrence of strikes in their school. Slightly more than half of the students responding, confirmed the occurrence of strikes in their schools. This shows

that strikes are now a common phenomenon in schools. A comparison of the responses by school shows that the occurrence of strikes appear to be highest in boys' schools and lowest in girls and mixed schools. This finding is not unique to this study as it supports observations made by Anderson (1971) and Kinyanjui (1976). It could be that the cultural socialization in the society tend to make boys more aggressive and politically aware than girls, hence incidences of strikes are higher in boys' schools. Indeed most of the horrible incidents in schools occur in boys' schools. The Nyeri high school incidence is a case in point and the St. Kizito incidence which was perpetrated by boys in the school.

The relationship between occurrence of strikes and type of school attended was statistically significant at 95.0% confidence level. Hence type of secondary school attended significantly determine occurrence of strikes. The association between occurrence of strike and type of school attended was found to be moderate as indicated by the value of  $C(0.4)$ . This shows that the relationship between the two variables is not only statistically significant but also moderate.

This study also attempted to find out whether or not the status of a school, boarding, day or both influenced occurrence of strikes and unrests. The findings are presented on Table 28.



**Table 28: Variations of school strikes/unrests by boarding status  
(boarding, day or mixed)**

Status of School	Occurrence of strikes/unrests		
	Yes	No	Row Total
Boarding	65 (25.3%)	34 (17.5%)	99 (21.9%)
Day	183 (71.2%)	137 (70.6%)	320 (70.9%)
Both	9 (3.5%)	23 (11.9%)	32 (7.1%)
Column Total	257 (57.0%)	194 (43.0%)	451 (100.0%)

**NB: 27 observations were missing which include those respondents who may not have responded to this variable. Figures in brackets indicate column percentages**

**$X^2 = 20.7$  with 6df. Significant at 95.0% confidence level**

**C = 0.2**

Table 27 sheds light on the relationship between type of a school, as measured by whether boarding, day or both and occurrence of strikes. The data show that occurrence of strikes is lowest among mixed day and boarding (3.5%) followed by boarding schools (25.3%) and the highest percentage of occurrence of strikes was among day schools (71.5%). Table 27 reveals that most strikes therefore, occur among the day schools. This finding contradicts Anderson's (1971) and Kinyanjui's (1976) observation that most strikers are boarders. This finding could be because of high number of day schools in Nairobi. It could also probably be because of the influence that students get from the political on-goings in the society. This makes them to become more aggressive and agitated to demand for their rights. Students from boarding schools are not as exposed as those in day schools. Accordingly, the study's findings concur with the views of Powers et al (1984), D'aeth (1973), Mbae

(1993) and Muchiri (1996). These studies see democratization influencing students to desire participation in school administration. The study's findings indicate that school strikes and unrests could perhaps be explained by the process of democratization taking place in our political arena. Students could be learning how to fight for more democratic space in schools. The data on Table supports this thesis by showing that students who are likely to be exposed to the current political on-goings i.e. the day students, are more likely to participate in strikes and unrests. The relationship between status of school: boarding, day or both and occurrence of strikes was found to be significant at 95.0% confidence level. The relationship between the two variables was found to be weak as indicated by value of  $C(0.2)$ . From the foregoing, it is apparent that type of school, whether boys', girls', mixed day, boarding or both determines occurrence of strikes.

### **Limited and/or lack of students' participation in decision making**

Many studies cited in chapter two of this study, indicated minimum students' participation in decision making, in the fact of democratization process in society could have led to increased strikes. This study attempts to establish whether or not limited and/or lack of students' participation in decision making determines occurrence of strikes by testing the second hypothesis:

### **H<sub>2</sub> : limited and/or lack of students' participation in decision making determines occurrence of strikes/unrests.**

The second hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) is tested in this study using the following indicators of students' participation on the independent variable in the second hypothesis.

- (i) Frequency of students' involvement in major decision making
- (ii) Students' satisfaction that they are adequately involved in decision making
- (iii) Frequency of students' dialogue with school principal.

The distribution of students by their responses on, students' frequency of involvement in major decisions, students' satisfaction that they are adequately involved in decision making and frequency of students dialogue with school principal are presented in Tables 29, 30 and 31 respectively.

**Table 29: Variations of occurrence of school strikes/unrests with frequency of involvement in major decisions**

Frequency of students' involvement in major decision making	Occurrence of strikes and unrests		
	Yes	No	Row Total
Not at all	140 (56.9%)	63 (35.8%)	203 (48.1%)
Not frequent	70 (28.5%)	63 (35.8%)	133 (31.4%)
Frequent	17 (6.9%)	33 (18.7%)	50 (11.8%)
Very frequent	9 (3.7%)	6 (3.4%)	15 (3.5%)
Don't know	10 (4.1%)	11 (6.3%)	21 (4.9%)
Column Total	246 (58.3%)	176 (41.7%)	422 (100.0%)

**NB: There were 56 missing observations which include non-responses**

to this item. Figures in brackets indicate column percentages.

$X^2 = 25.5$  with 8df. Significant at 95.0% confidence level

$C = 0.2$

Table 28 sheds some light on the relationship between frequency of students' involvement in major decision and occurrence of school unrests and strikes. Studies by Muchelle (1996) and Muchiri (1998) depict students as the least involved members of the school community in decision making. The

implication is that student' involvement in decision making is below their expectations. Consequently, students do not own the decisions so made. Limited students' participation in decision making may have resulted in increased school strikes and unrests. Also Asunda (1983) and Muchiri (1998) clearly demonstrate that school strikes could be interpreted as a reaction of students to the authoritarian nature of schools that deny them participation in decision making in a changing society advocating democratic governance. It is in this regard that this study an attempt to find out whether or not frequency of students' involvement in made decision making determine occurrence of strikes and unrests. Data are presented on Table 29.

The data shows that occurrence of strikes is lowest (3.7%) among students who are very frequently involved in making major decisions in their school. To put it differently, 56.9% of those students whose school had experienced a strike also stated that they were not at all involved in major decisions in their schools – the highest percentage in the five categories. This finding concurs with Lee's view (1971) cited earlier that student strikes are largely motivated by a lack of student participation in decision making. It can therefore be argued that, lack of student participation is a major cause of school strikes. This may be explained by the fact that where students are involved in decision making they own the decisions made and feel part and parcel of them hence support the implementation of such decisions. On the other hand, where students are not involved in decision making they feel alienated from the school. They feel disconnected from meaningful involvement and this leads to experience strong feelings of anxiety resulting in deviant behaviour. According to Johnson (1992) violence can result if people feel lack of connection between themselves and their communication. Hence,

school strikes could be a manifest of students' frustration resulting from lack of opportunities to effect decisions. The situation is probably worsened by the increasing agitation for democratization in society, which tends to influence students to pressurise for reforms in schools.

The second indicator used in testing the second hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) was students' level of satisfaction that they are adequately involved in decision making. Some studies cited in chapter two of this study indicate that students' participation in decision making fall below their satisfaction. Such studies include Muchiri (1998), Muchelle (1996) and Mbae (1994). The situation could therefore result in students' dissatisfaction, frustration and eventually strikes and unrests. It is in this respect that this study sought to find out whether or not occurrence of strikes is determined by students' satisfaction that they are adequately involved in decision making. The findings are presented in Table 30.

**Table 30: Occurrence of strikes and students' satisfaction that they are adequately involved in decision making**

Students' satisfaction level	Occurrence of strikes/unrests				
	Yes		No		Row Total
Very dissatisfied	90	(36.0%)	42	(22.2%)	132 (30.0%)
Dissatisfied	107	(42.8%)	60	(31.7%)	167 (38.0%)
Satisfied	36	(14.4%)	68	(36.0%)	104 (23.7%)
Very satisfied	17	(6.8%)	19	(10.1%)	36 (8.2%)
Total	250	(56.9%)	189	(43.0%)	439 (100.0%)

**NB: Number of missing observation = 39. Figures in brackets indicate column percentages.**

**This includes all those students who may not have responded to this variable**

**$\chi^2 = 35.9$  with 6df. Significant at 95.5% confidence level  
C = 0.3**

Table 30 sheds some light on the relationship between students' satisfaction that they were adequately involved in decision making and occurrence of strikes in their school. In other words, an attempt is made to show whether students' satisfaction that they were adequately involved in decision making determine occurrence of school strikes. Data in Table 30 show that occurrence of strikes is highest among students who were at least dissatisfied that they were adequately involved in decision making. More specifically the data show that over three quarters (78.8%) of the students who confirmed occurrence of strikes were at least dissatisfied that they were adequately involved in decision making. The data clearly shows that the higher the students' level of satisfaction that they are adequately involved in decision making, the lower the frequency of strikes and unrests in their school. Indeed, for those who were very satisfied that they were involved in decision making, only 6.8% reported that there were strikes and unrests in their school. This finding implies that the higher the level of student involvement in decision making, the lower the occurrence of strikes and unrests. This finding is not peculiar to this study as it concurs with that of Muchelle (1996) that lack of student participation in decision making could be a cause of strikes. Field observations also reveal the same. For instance, the case of Starehe Boys' Centre where there is adequate student involvement but which has never experienced a strike or an unrest. The above findings indicate a relationship between occurrence of strikes and students' satisfaction that they are adequately involved in decision making. In addition, the  $X^2$  test was significant at 95.0% confidence level. However, the relationship between the two variables was found to be weak as indicated by the low value of C (0.3).

This implies that, other than satisfaction with involvement in decision making, there are other factors that influence occurrence of strikes and unrests.

Finally, to test the second hypothesis, school principal – students' dialogue was used as an indicator of students' participation in decision making. Recent years have increasingly witnesses school strikes and unrests associated with lack of dialogue. There has been increasing cases of student strikes as they demand dialogue with school principals (Nation Correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1995, p.5). Students have frequently blamed school authorities for not listening to their grievances (see Nation Correspondent, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1997, p.36). Asunda (1983) in a study cited earlier indicated that the most recurrent complaint in many schools that suffered strikes was the inaccessibility of the school principals to the students. It is in this respect that this study sought to find out whether or not occurrence of strikes and unrests is determined by students' frequency of dialogue with school principals. This was established by asking respondents to indicate frequency of dialogue with the principal in their school. The findings are presented in Table 31.

**Table 31: Relationship between occurrence of strikes and frequency of students' dialogue with school principal as indicated by students**

Frequency of students' dialogue with school principal	Occurrence of strikes/unrests		
	Yes	No	Row Total
Never	95 (37.3%)	39 (20.2%)	134 (29.9%)
Rarely	99 (38.8%)	80 (41.5%)	179 (39.9%)
Often	47 (18.4%)	56 (29.0%)	103 (22.9%)
Very often	14 (5.5%)	18 (9.3%)	32 (7.1%)
Column Total	255 (56.9%)	193 (43.1%)	448 (100.0%)

**NB: Number of missing observations = 30**

**$\chi^2 = 20.8$  with 6 df. Significant at 95.0% confidence level**

**C = 0.2**

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Table 30 shows that occurrence of strikes was lowest (5.5%) among students who hold dialogue very often with the principals followed by those who hold dialogue often (18.4%). Indeed 37.3% of students who indicate occurrence of strikes in their schools, also admitted that dialogue was never held in their schools with the principals. It can therefore be argued that lack of dialogue between students and principals enhance occurrence of strikes/unrests in schools. From the foregoing, it is apparent that students feel they have been denied adequate dialogue in schools. The current agitation for democracy in the country may have made the students more aware of their democratic rights to participate in consultations on school management and therefore their continued denial to participate has resulted in strikes. The relationship between frequency of students' dialogue with school principals and occurrence of strikes/unrests was found to be statistically significant at 95.0% confidence level. The association between the two variables was



found to be weak as indicated by the low value of C (0.2). This finding implies that other factors exist that determine occurrence of strikes and unrests other than just frequency of students' dialogue with principals. In all, the three indicators of student participation in the study revealed that limited and/or lack of students participation in decision making is one of the major causes of strikes/unrests.

### **Undemocratic Methods of Choosing Prefects**

Some studies cited in the literature review indicate that undemocratic method of choosing prefects in schools could be a possible cause of strikes and unrests. Such studies include Mbae (1994), Muchelle (1996) and Education and Training (1998). These studies suggest that since prefects are appointed by teachers and not elected by students they are viewed as representatives of the administrators. This results in antagonism between students and prefects. The situation is made worse if the prefects are conferred a lot of powers by administrators. Education and Training (1998) suggests that the principals of secondary schools should look for ways of balancing the powers and duties of prefects in respect to discipline in schools. Hence this study attempted to test the third hypothesis to validate the above claims.

### **H3: Undemocratic method of choosing prefects in school determines occurrence of strikes/unrests.**

The third hypothesis ( $H_3$ ) is tested in this study using the following indicators:

- (i) method of choosing prefects
- (ii) powers of prefects in school

## Methods of Choosing Prefects

Studies by Mbae (1994), Muchiri (1998) and Muchelle (1996) succinctly demonstrate that the prefect system in Kenyan schools is not democratic. This is because in most schools, prefects are not democratically elected but appointed. Consequently, prefects get more interested in gaining the approval of the school authorities than in serving their fellow students. Students therefore may tend to alienate prefects from the student body resulting in antagonism that may lead to strikes and unrests. In a society where there is advocacy for democratic practice, students feel they should also practice democracy by electing their leaders. Indeed, Muchelle in the study cited earlier found that 80.0% of the school principals did not allow students to elect prefects, yet electoral process may be seen as most appropriate for student involvement. This may result in student strikes and unrests. This section attempts to establish the relation between method of choosing prefects and occurrence of strikes. In this regard, data are contained in Table 32.

**Table 32: Occurrence of strikes and teacher-student conferences as indicated by students**

Method of choosing prefects	Occurrence of strikes and unrests		
	Yes	No	Row Total
Appointed by teachers	163 (64.7%)	124 (64.9%)	287 (64.7%)
Elected by students	6 (2.4%)	12 (6.3%)	18 (4.6%)
Identified by out-going prefects	63 (25.0%)	42 (22.0%)	105 (23.7%)
Proposed by other students	11 (4.4%)	1 (0.5%)	12 (2.7%)
Other	9 (3.6%)	12 (6.3%)	21 (4.7%)
Column Total	252 (56.9%)	191 (43.1%)	443 (100.0%)

Figures in brackets indicate column percentages.

**NB: Number of missing observations = 35. This include all those who did not respond to this variable**

**$X^2 = 12.7$  with 8 df. Significant at 95.0% confidence level**

**C = 0.2**

From Table 31, it is evident that those who perceived their schools as allowing students to elect prefects had the lowest percentage (2.4%) of occurrence of strikes. To put it differently, (6.3%) of the students who perceived their schools as allowing students to elect prefects indicated non-occurrence of strikes – suggesting that election of prefects by students enhances students satisfaction with the school administration hence minimizes occurrence of strikes. As argued by Mbae (1994) and Muchelle (1996) lack of involvement of students in election of prefects negates the ideal of participatory governance. This makes the students view the school as being authoritarian resulting in violent reactions.

Indeed, the relationship between method of choosing prefects and occurrence of strikes was found to be statistically significant at 95.0% confidence level. This implies that the method of choosing prefects in school has a significant bearing on occurrence of strikes of the schools studied. The value of the contingency coefficient (0.2) indicates that the relationship between method of choosing prefects and occurrence of strikes is weak – suggesting that other factors exist that are strongly associated with occurrence of strikes.

### **Variations of Powers of Prefects and Occurrence of School Strikes and Unrests**

Recent years have increasingly witnessed hue and cry over powers of prefects in schools. There has been indications that prefects in most schools act as watchdogs for school principals (Education and Training, 1998). Prefects are conferred a lot of powers which they lord over the other students. In some cases prefects literary run the schools and can cane or suspend other students. Indeed the study's data indicated that over three quarters of students out of 475 (77.7%) feel that prefects are at least powerful in their schools. Consequently, there have been unrests in schools related to prefects misuse of such powers. Thus, the study sought to establish the influence of prefect powers on occurrence of strikes/unrests. The results are contained in Table 32. The students in the sampled schools were asked to rate the powers of prefects in their schools. A four point scale was used to rate prefect powers from the lowest end (Not powerful at all) to very powerful. The results are presented in Table 33.

**Table 33: Variations of powers of prefects and occurrence of school strikes and unrests**

Rating powers of prefects	Occurrence of strikes and unrests		
	Yes	No	Row Total
Not powerful at all	8 (3.1%)	3 (1.5%)	11 2.4%
Not powerful	60 (23.5%)	30 (15.5%)	90 (20%)
Powerful	131 (51.4%)	133 (68.6%)	264 (58.8%)
Very powerful	56 (21.9%)	28 (14.4%)	84 (18.7%)
Column Total	255 (56.8%)	194 (43.2%)	449 (100.0%)

**NB: Figures in brackets indicate column percentages**

**29 missing observations which include all those who did not respond to this variable**

**$X^2 = 18.7$  with 8 df. Significant at 95.0% confidence level**

**C = 0.2**

Certain pertinent information can be deduced from Table 33. It is clear that most (51.4%) of the total number of respondents who rated prefects in their schools as powerful also admitted occurrence of strikes. In total, 73.4% of the total number of respondents who rated prefects in their schools as at least powerful also admitted occurrence of strikes. Further, only 26.6% of the total number of respondents who rated prefects in their schools as at least not powerful admitted occurrence of strikes/unrests. The above findings indicate that there is a covariational relationship between powers of prefects and occurrence of strikes/unrests. Hence it is clear from the above findings that the more powerful prefects are in a school, the stronger the likelihood of occurrence of strike/unrests. Furthermore, the relationship between the two variables was found to be statistically significant at 95.0% confidence level. The value of contingency coefficient (C= 0.2) portrays a weak association.

It suggests that other factors exist that influence occurrence of strikes/unrests. The respondents were asked to indicate their levels of satisfaction with method of choosing prefects on a four point scale from the lowest (Not satisfied at all) to the highest (very satisfied). The results are presented on Table 34.

**Table 34 Occurrence of strikes and satisfaction with method of choosing prefects as indicated by students.**

Satisfaction with Method of Choosing Prefects	Occurrence of Strikes and Unrests		
	Yes	No	Row Total
Not satisfied at all	68 (26.7%)	21 (10.8%)	89 (19.8%)
Not satisfied	94 (26.7%)	53 (27.2%)	147 (32.7%)
Satisfied	60 (23.5%)	76 (39.0%)	136 (30.3%)
Very satisfied	33 (12.9%)	44 (22.6%)	77 (17.1%)
Column Total	255 56.8%	194 43.2%	449 (100.0%)

**nb:** Number of missing observations = 29. Figures in brackets indicate column percentages. This includes all those whose schools had not experienced a strike.

$\chi^2 = 33.4$  with 8 df. Significant at 95.0% confidence level

$\alpha = 0.05$

From Table 33, it is evident that the majority (52.5%) of students covered revealed that they were at least not satisfied with the method of choosing prefects in their school. This finding may explain why students are always dissenting the prefect system. Further, 61.6% who reported that they were at least satisfied with the method of choosing prefects in their school also

admitted no occurrence of strikes and unrests. Hence students satisfaction with the method of choosing prefects tend to significantly influence occurrence of strikes and unrests. The relationship between satisfaction with method of choosing prefects was found to be statistically significant at 95.0% confidence level. The association between the two variables was found to be low as indicated by  $C = 0.3$ . Hence though satisfaction with method of choosing prefects could influence occurrence of strikes other factors also prevail. This implies that causes of school strikes and unrests, cannot be attributed to one factor. It is a culmination of many factors.

In conclusion, though prefect participation in school management is commendable, the methods of choosing prefects and powers conferred upon them need some modicum of change. It is evident that where students feel that the prefect system is undemocratic strikes have resulted. At the same time, too much powers conferred upon prefects could escalate into strikes and unrests. Hypothesis 3 gives credence to lack of a democratic prefect system in schools in Nairobi Province.

## **SUMMARY**

This study has attempted to show some of the main causes of student strikes and unrests in secondary schools. All the eight independent variables that the study considered, type of school, status of school, frequency of students involvement in the decision making, students satisfaction that they are adequately involved in decision making, frequently of students' dialogue with school principals, methods of choosing prefects, powers of prefects and students' satisfaction with method of choosing prefects in schools were found to enhance occurrence of strikes/unrests.

The section therefore, provides some of the key factors, which have resulted in strikes/unrests. From the foregoing, the causes of student strikes and unrests can be divided into two broad categories. The first category comprise of grievances, which have their source in the wider society and the way the school system is organised and managed. Since schools are part and parcel of the society, the democratization process has indeed affected schools. However, very little seems to have been done to democratise schools. The school principals have their hands tied since they have not been given the mandate by all the stakeholders to democratise schools. Hence even though they consider it important to involve students in decision making, they lack the structures and frame work within which to introduce such radical changes in schools. In other words, there is lack of policy on how students should be involved in decision making. Consequently, problems have resulted. These relate to the structure of authority, centralized decision making, inadequate student participation in decision making, harsh rules and lack of dialogue.

The second category of causes of students' strikes/unrests originated from specific situations within each school. These causes are related to method of choosing prefects, powers conferred upon prefects, the communication between students and school principals and the leadership style.

The analysis of the causes of student strikes and unrests has shown that students cannot shoulder all the blame. The on-going democratization process in the society and the way the school system is organised has contributed a great deal. At the national level, there is a lot of pressure of democracy. Attempts are being put to democratize the society. But in school,



basic democratic ideals like electing of representatives, are not

It becomes very difficult for the students to deal with the  
contradicting realities. This has contributed a great deal to student  
str.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, a summary of the entire study is given, the main findings of the study are summarised and salient conclusions drawn. Recommendations and areas of further research are also pinpointed.

#### Summary of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to study how students' participation in decision making relate to strikes and unrests. Although participatory decision making has been debated on a lot, not much efforts have been expended towards enhancing it in schools. This is further aggravated by lack of policy, towards a realization of students participation in decision making. All this has happened despite the continued student agitation for their participation in decision making. However, some education systems of the world have already implemented it in their secondary school systems. Essentially, attempts at implementing and ensuring effective and efficient education systems should start with participation of all the stakeholders in decision making.

The purpose of the study therefore was to establish the extent to which student participation in decision making relate to strikes and unrests in schools. The study sought to establish causes of increased strikes and unrests in secondary schools and whether they are as a result of lack and/or limited students' participation in decision making. Further the study sought to establish whether increased strikes and unrests in secondary schools are as a

result of socio-political changes taking place in society hence making students more aware of their democratic rights.

The study attempted to measure the phenomenon of school strikes and to establish its causes. The study had three hypotheses which sought to establish whether school strikes (the study's dependent variable) were influenced by factors such as type of school, student participation in decision making and undemocratic method of choosing prefects which were the independent variables of the study. The study was conducted in Nairobi Province. Selection of Nairobi as the site of the study was based on the fact that it had a spate of indiscipline problems in the schools, which were alleged to be emanating from grievances related to lack of dialogue in schools, dictatorship and highhandedness of school principals, harsh rules and poor school administration.

In terms of methodology, a cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study. All the secondary school principals and students in the province constituted the target population. Two questionnaires were designed and used. These were the students' questionnaire and the principals' questionnaire. Validity and reliability tests of the instruments were undertaken after the pilot study. Reliability was computed using split half technique. The reliability coefficients were 0.98 for students and 0.76 for the school principals. This showed that the instruments were reliable.

The study's two questionnaires were administered through individual visits to the school by the researcher. This was followed by booking of appointments for the students' questionnaires and administering them on the appointed day. As for the school principals, the researcher left the

questionnaire with them which was collected on an agreed-upon date. Most of them took one week to fill it. In total, 25 principals filled the questionnaires.

Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The three hypotheses were tested and analysed. The chi square ( $X^2$ ) test of significance was used to test relationships between the dependent variable, occurrence of school strikes, and the three independent variables viz: type and status of school, limited and/or lack of students' participation in decision making and prefect system in schools. More specifically, the study attempted to establish how type of school, levels of students' participation and methods of choosing prefects affect the occurrence of strikes and unrests in the selected schools. The 0.05 level of confidence was used to check the significance of the relationships. The contingency coefficient (C) was used to measure the strength of the relationships. This was at 0.05 confidence level. Data analysis results were then interpreted accordingly and conclusions drawn.

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### **Summary of the Research Findings**

The research findings showed that 99.0% of the secondary school students are aged between 13-22 years. It was further found that 65.0% of the students perceived their schools as equipped. At the same time 84.0% reported that their school had adequate number of teachers, 98.0% indicated that their school had qualified teachers and 89.0% of the students indicated that their teachers were committed to work. This implies that the school strikes occurring in Nairobi in the recent past were not as a result of inadequacies of facilities and services. According to Kinyanjui (1976) causes of strikes in 1974 were related to lack of food, poor sanitation, lack of books,

lack of enough teachers, equipments etc. but the study's data found that in the 1990s, students grievances are related to lack of dialogue, harsh rules, authoritarianism etc.

Majority of students in the study (67.9%) revealed that they were not satisfied that they were adequately involved in decision making processes in the school. The study revealed that the school members mostly involved in decision making were teachers with (86.3%) frequency of involvement, parents with (76.5%) frequency of involvement while the students were the least involved members with only 16.0% frequency of involvement. Therefore, students' participation in decision making in schools fell below the students' expectations. Hence, it is not surprising that students are agitating for participatory decision making in school governance.

The least application of democratic processes in decision making was recorded in the category allowing students to question principals' view. The mean score of 2.720 shows that the principals were only slightly democratic in this category. There is an indication that principals were autocratic. The lowest means were also obtained in the sub-items of the principals allowing students to elect prefects ( $M = 2.8$ ), the principals holding dialogue with students before making a major decision ( $M = 2.1$ ) and students being involved in the formulation and revision of school rules ( $M = 1.2$ ). Majority of the students (75.1%) indicated that their school did not have teacher-student conferences. It was further found that 93.1% of the students indicated that they would be willing to participate in decision making. Unfortunately, there is high incidence of lack of students participation in decision making in schools. Students are excluded in school governance. Consequently students have resulted to strikes to demand for their rightful participation in decision making.

Majority of the students (96.0%) and school principals (95.8%) agreed to the observation that strikes have increased in the recent past.

This study confirmed the following as the reported causes of school strikes and unrests: lack of student involvement in decision making, lack of dialogue, too much powers vested on prefects, lack of democratic system in schools and drug abuse among students. The major causes of strikes and unrests among secondary school students were lack of dialogue ( $M = 3.5$ ) and lack of student involvement in decision making ( $M = 3.4$ ). The most frequently suggested methods of solving the problem of school strikes by principals were involvement of all stakeholders in decision making (37.5%); principals to be present in school and accessible to students (25.0%) and guidance and counselling (20.8%). Indeed, the findings of the study reveal that there is consensus among students and principals that lack of communication/dialogue is a leading cause of secondary school strikes.

The hypothesis testing for H:1 (Type of school attended determines occurrence of strikes and unrests) showed that there was a significant relationship between type of school and the occurrence of strikes. Mixed boys and girls schools had the lowest percentage of occurrence of strikes (34.9%), then girls' schools (39.0%) leaving the boys' schools with the highest (74.4%). The occurrence of strikes and type of school attended was statistically significant at 95.0% confidence level. Hence type of secondary school attended significantly influence occurrence of strikes. The association between occurrence of strike and type of school was found to be strong as indicated by the moderate value of C (0.4). It was further discovered that occurrence of strikes is lowest among mixed day and boarding schools (3.1%)

followed by boarding schools (25.3%). The highest occurrence of strikes was among day schools (71.5%).

The study's data tend to support H:2 that limited and/or lack of students' participation in decision making determines occurrence of school strikes and unrests. Occurrence of strikes tend to be lowest (3.7%) among students who are very frequently involved in major decisions. Indeed 56.9% of those students whose school had experienced a strike, also reported that they were not at all involved in major decisions in their schools. The more students get involved in decision making, the less the likelihood of occurrence of strikes. Lack of students' participation in decision making tend to enhance the occurrence of school strikes. For example, the study's data show that occurrence of strikes was highest (78.8%) among students who were dissatisfied that they were adequately involved in decision making, and lowest (21.2%) among students who were satisfied. The relationship between students' satisfaction that they were adequately involved and occurrence of strikes was found to be significant at 95.0% confidence level. The association between the two variables was found to be weak ( $C = 0.3$ ). Hence though lack of students' participation in decision making could be a major cause of strikes and unrests there are other factors that are also causing strikes and unrests.

Further, the study found that where students are never involved in the formulation and revision of school rules, majority of them (51.2%) indicated occurrence of strikes in their schools compared to only 1.6% of the students who were very often involved indicating occurrence of strikes. The relationship between the two variables was found to be significant. Indeed there exists a strong relationship indicated by the moderate value of  $C$  (0.3).

It was also discovered that most students (82.9%), whose school did not have teacher-student conferences admitted occurrence of strikes in their schools. This implies that absence of teacher – student conferences, influence occurrence of strikes. The higher the level of students' participating in decision making the less the likelihood of occurrence of strikes. The study also found that occurrence of strikes was lowest (5.5%) among students who hold dialogue very often with their principal. Indeed, 37.3% of the students who indicated occurrence of strikes in their schools, also admitted that dialogue was rarely held in their schools with their principal.

The study confirmed that the most widespread method of choosing prefects is "appointed by teachers". This type of method was reported by 64.0% of the students covered. It was not surprising, therefore, that only 48.0% of the students' reported to be at least satisfied with the method of choosing prefects in their schools. The study also found that students' satisfaction with the method of choosing prefects significantly influences occurrences of school strikes. The relationship between satisfaction with the method of choosing prefects and occurrence of strikes and unrests was found to be statistically significant at 95.0%. This finding supports the view that students' satisfaction with the method of governing schools influences occurrence of strikes. Where students feel that the governing method is unfair and undemocratic, strikes have resulted. According to Mbae (1994), undemocratic prefect system could be a cause of problems in schools.

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that schools are faced with a common problem of strikes and unrests. Measures suggested should therefore be able to achieve the following basic goals:



- a) Enhancing participatory decision making in schools.
- b) Availing students opportunities, however limited to make them feel that they are also participants in the school decision making processes.

### **Conclusions of the Study**

From the study, the following conclusions were arrived at:

1. Unrests and strikes are rampant among secondary school students (see Griffin, 1996). This has proved expensive to the running of educational institutions (Muchiri, 1998). Students' denial to participate in school decision-making processes was identified to be a major cause of student grievances in schools. By denying students a chance to participate, the school principals create distrust between teachers and students. This makes the students to feel alienated.
2. In terms of participation in decision making, the study realised that there is a discrepancy between what is advocated for by the principals and what they actually practice. In principle, they all agreed that it is very important to involve students in decision making because the decisions affect them. Indeed, students are the direct recipients of the decisions so made. School principals in the study agreed that all the stakeholders should be involved for effective school administration to be realized. But in practice, students' participation in decision making seems to be lacking. The study data show that 67.9% reported that they were at least not satisfied that students are adequately involved in school decision making. This indicates a vacuum, which needs to be filled. Accordingly, efforts should

be put to create new structures in schools that help to promote students' participation in decision making.

3. Most schools do not allow students to elect prefects. Out of 443 students, only 2.4% reported that prefects are elected by students in their schools. In most schools it appears that prefects are appointed by teachers. Of the 443 students 64.7% reported that prefects are appointed by teachers in their school. This further indicates that student participation in decision making is minimal. However, allowing students to elect prefects would be of great significance in allowing students to voice their views and ensure their approval of the final decisions arrived at since they will own the decisions and feel part of the decision making processes. Indeed the basic law of representation i.e. choosing representatives, should apply in schools since the school should be a reflection of the society. However, in most schools students are not satisfied that they are adequately involved in decision making. Student participation in decision making falls far below the students' expectations. Indeed, majority of the students cited non-involvement in decision making as resulting in increased strikes. In this regard, students feel that strikes can be minimised if students participate in decision making.
4. Students are never involved in the formulation and revision of school rules yet those rules are formulated to govern their behaviour. This should not be the case as students are the actual recipients of the school rules. Students can accept rules when they know they are necessary for the order and harmony in the school, when they know the rules well and when they are administered equally to everyone. When students are involved in

the formulation and revision of school rules, they are more likely to support their implementation.

5. Most schools do not hold adequate dialogue between students and the principal. The study's data show that out of 448 students only 30.0% reported that principals held dialogue with them at least often. This implies that principals make autocratic decisions without consultation which is not compatible with democracy, which advocates for effective channels of communication between students and teachers. This would make school administrators be able to understand the perceptions, needs and aspirations of students. It would also provide a regular feedback of information from the students. When dialogue is held between students and the principal, it provides a useful forum for discussion and exchange of ideas hence mutual understanding is cultivated.
6. Teacher – student conferences do not exist in most schools. The study found that out of 465 students covered three quarters (75.1%) reported that their schools did not hold teacher-student conferences. Such conferences held between teachers and students provide a useful forum for students to air their grievances, criticisms and vent out stresses. Otherwise such stresses can get multiplied and students will try to vent them in strikes and unrests. The consultations cultivated in such conferences add to the school decision making process an error – correction factor as teachers and students cross-check each other in the process. In addition, decisions that result from such conferences are likely to be supported by all the members. After all, teacher-student conferences are indeed an essential component of a democratic school governance.

7. The three best methods of dealing with the problem of school strikes and unrests reported by school principals are: involving all in decision making, school principals being present and accessible to students in schools, and guidance and counselling.
8. The relationship between occurrence of strikes and type of school attended was found to be significant at 95.0% confidence level. Type of school in terms of day, boarding or mixed was also found to influence occurrence of strikes. The relationship between occurrence of strikes and type of school, whether boarding, day or mixed was found to be significant at 95.0% confidence level. The association between type of school and occurrence of strikes and unrest was moderate ( $C = 0.4$ ). In all, Day boy's schools recorded the highest percentage of occurrence of strikes.
9. The relationship between lack and/or limited student participation in decision making and occurrence of strikes and unrests was found to be significant at 95.0% confidence level with a moderate association. So structures need to be created in schools that can help promote student participation in decision making.
10. The relationship between undemocratic method of choosing prefects and occurrence of strikes and unrests was found to be significant at 95.0% confidence level. However, the association between the two variables was found to be weak ( $C = 0.2$ ). Since students have no control over the election of prefects, their dissatisfaction in the manner in which the system functions can be explained by the complete control teachers have over the selection of prefects in schools.

### Recommendations of the Study

In view of the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations arose from the study:

1. Deliberate attempts should be made towards the establishment of elaborate policies and procedures on student participation in decision making.
2. It is recommended that deliberate attempts should be made to introduce democratic reforms in schools. Hence efforts should be put by stakeholders to provide a framework that should be used by school principals to effect the required reforms. Without such a framework to be drawn by parents, teachers and education officials, principals on their own cannot change the existing culture and structures in schools which do not accommodate students' participation in decision making.
3. It is recommended that the prefect system be reviewed in schools to allow students to elect prefects whom they will view as their representatives, hence respect and honour them to avoid the antagonism between prefects and students that seem to characterise most schools.
4. It is recommended that students' participation in decision making should be an important component in school governance. Students' features of participation need to be established and encouraged in schools instead of such features being overtly controlled by the school administration. The establishment of students' council is one body that can go a long way in facilitating participatory decision making in schools. The suggestion box if students' responses are properly

handled and adequately rewarded can also be a very effective method of obtaining students' participation in the decision making process.

5. It is recommended that frequent workshops, in-service and refresher courses on participatory decision making be availed to school principals. Such workshops, in-service and refresher courses may serve to equip principals with the necessary skills in cultivating participatory decision making in schools and may offer the necessary training in order to bridge the gap between theory and the practice of participatory decision making. In addition, this may help the school principals to be able to deal with students who are more aware of their democratic rights hence demand participation in decision making.

### **Suggestions for further Research**

The following suggestions for further research, arising from the findings and conclusions of the study need to be looked into:

1. The problem of secondary school strikes is now more than before a national problem in Kenya. As pointed out by Nkinyangi (1981), "scholars seem to have ignored student activism as a field of serious study despite many calls to do so." Time is ripe for a national study which would look at student activism as a social phenomenon. Such a study would suggest valid national strategies for controlling and preventing the problem. It would also provide much needed data on the problem of school strikes and unrests.
2. A specific study should be undertaken focusing on all schools that have gone on strike in the 1990s. Such a study would explain the causes of school strikes and unrests. In addition, such a study would help to

reveal strategies that are best suited to solve the menace of strikes in our society.

3. There is need for an extensive study to link up the upsurge of student activism and the on-going political endeavours in the country.
4. There is need for an extensive study to draw a guiding framework to facilitate the desired democratic reforms in schools that advocate for more democratic space.
5. This study needs to be replicated with the sample drawn from the rural set up to compare the results.

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## APPENDIX 1

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

This questionnaire is designed for a study on students' participation in decision making processes within public secondary schools in Nairobi. Please respond to each question by providing the appropriate responses. For questions where options are provided, circle what you consider as your appropriate answer. Please note that there is no right or wrong answers. We just want to know your thought or opinion on various issues pertaining to students' participation in decision making and strikes in public secondary schools. I would be very grateful if you please answer all the questions. The information you provide could be used to strengthen school administration and planning in Kenya. All information provided will be treated as strictly confidential.

#### PART I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. How old were you at your last birthday? Years  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Please indicate your gender below  
(1) Male           (2) Female
3. Please indicate your class/form: \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the status of your school? (1) National (2) Provincial  
(3) District
5. Indicate the type of your school: (1) Boys (2) Girls (3) Mixed
6. Is your school boarding or day? (1) Boarding (2) Day (3) Both
7. How well equipped in terms of books and other essential facilities is your school?  
(1) Poorly equipped (2) Not well equipped (3) Equipped (4) Very well equipped
8. How would you rate the adequacy of teachers (in terms of numbers) in this school?  
(1) Not adequate at all (2) Not adequate (3) Adequate

- (4) Very adequate
9. How would you describe the quality of teachers (in terms of their qualifications) in this school? (1) Not qualified at all (2) Not qualified (3) Qualified (4) Very qualified
  10. How would you rate the level of teachers' commitment to their work in this school? (1) Not committed at all (2) Not committed (3) Committed (4) Very committed
  11. How would you describe the commitment of students to their work in this school?  
(1) Not committed at all (2) Not committed (3) Committed (4) Very committed
  12. How is your school performance rated in the national examinations?  
(1) Very poor (2) Poor (3) Fair (4) Good (5) Very good
  13. What do you consider to be the major determinant of your school's performance in the national examination?  
(1) Student-related factors such as commitment to their work  
(2) Teacher-related factors such as their quality and commitment to duty  
(3) School related factors such as adequacy of essential supplies and facilities  
(4) Cordial relationship between teachers and students. Explain your answer.

## PART 2: INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

14. How would you rate student's level of participation/involvement in decision making in your school?
15. If the level of participation/involvement is low, suggest how it can be improved.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. How would you rate the following statements related to decision making in schools?

**USE THE FOLLOWING CODES:** (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5) Don't Know

(a) Teachers should plan my daily routine in school?

1 2 3 4 5

(b) Students should plan their daily routine in school?

1 2 3 4 5

(c) The school authorities should make all decisions for me?

1 2 3 4 5

(c) Students should be allowed to make decisions on issues that affect them?

1 2 3 4 5

17. How are prefects chosen in school?

(1) They are appointed by the teachers (2) They are elected by students

(3) They are identified by out-going prefects (4) They are proposed by other students (5) Other

18. How satisfied are you with the method of choosing prefects in your school?

(1) Not satisfied at all (2) Not satisfied (3) Satisfied

(4) Very satisfied

Explain your answer

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19. How would you describe the powers of prefects in this school?

(1) Not powerful at all (2) Not powerful (3) Powerful

(4) Very powerful

20. How much are school prefects involved by the school authorities in making decisions that affect students?

(1) Not involved at all (2) Not involved (3) Involved

(4) Highly involved

21. Are prefects considered as representatives of students in this school?

(1) Yes (2) No Explain in either case

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22. How do you rate the effectiveness of prefects in this school?



- (1) Not effective at all (2) Not effective (3) Effective  
(4) Very effective

23. How frequent are the following people involved in making major decisions in your school? **USE THE FOLLOWING CODES:** (1) Not at all (2) Not frequent (3) Frequent (4) Very frequent (5) Don't know

<u>People</u>	<u>Frequency of involvement in making major decisions</u>
1. Head teacher	1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers	1 2 3 4 5
3. Prefects	1 2 3 4 5
4. Students	1 2 3 4 5
5. PTA	1 2 3 4 5
6. BOG	1 2 3 4 5

24. How often does the head teacher hold dialogue with students before making a major

Decision? (1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Often (4) Very Often

25. How often are students involved in the formulation and revision of school rules?

(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Often (4) Very Often

26. Does the school hold teacher-student conferences to discuss issues before making

major decisions? (1) Yes (2) No

Explain your answer

27. How satisfied are you that students are adequately involved in decision making in your school? (1) Very dissatisfied (2) Dissatisfied

(3) Satisfied (4) Very satisfied

28. If not satisfied, what are the implications?

29. If not satisfied, suggest ways of enhancing student involvement in decision making.

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30. In your opinion, how willing would the students be in being involved in decision making in their school? (1) Very unwilling (2) Unwilling (3) Willing (5) Very willing

31. Do you think there are some decisions that the school authorities should allow you to make yourself? (1) Yes (2) No If yes, name them

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### PART 3: SCHOOL UNREST/STRIKES

32. Are you aware that in the recent past school strikes have been on the increase in Kenya? (1) Yes (2) No

If yes, explain the causes of the increase \_\_\_\_\_

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33. If yes, explain the causes of the increase.

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34. Has your school experienced any student unrests and riots in the 1990's? (1) Yes (2) No

35. If yes, when was the last time it happened?

36. If yes, how often has the problem been experienced in your school? (1) Very often (2) Often (3) Rarely (4) Once

37. What caused the school strike/unrest? Identify **both internal and external factors**. Explain.

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38. What were the consequences (internal and external) of the unrest?

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39. In general, who or what can be blamed for the present crisis of school strikes/riots among secondary school students? Explain

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40. How would you rate the following statements related to school strikes in Kenya? **USE THE FOLLOWING CODES:** (1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly agree

(1) School strikes can be avoided if students are involved in decision-making 1 2 3 4

(2) School strikes indicate lack of dialogue between students and school authority 1 2 3 4

(3) No matter what, school strikes never succeed in solving problems in schools 1 2 3 4

(3) Most school strikes are due to unrealistic demands made by students 1 2 3 4

(5) School strikes are due to discipline of students in schools 1 2 3 4

(6) School strikes are largely due to incitement by outsiders 1 2 3 4

(7) Lack of a democratic system in schools is a major cause of strikes in Kenya 1 2 3 4

(8) Drug abuse among students is a major cause of school strikes 1 2 3 4

(9) Too much powers vested on prefects is a major cause of school strikes 1 2 3 4

(10) School strikes are caused by poor administration in schools 1 2 3 4

41. Specify the role of the following people in solving the problem of school strikes in Kenya:

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(1) Head/teachers.

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(2) Students.

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(3) Prefects.

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(4) Other.

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44. What do you consider as the most appealing strategy of solving the problem of strikes in schools?

Any general comment?

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

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UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION

**PART 2: DECISION MAKING PROCEDURES**

Please respond to the following opinion questions as truthfully as possible.

8. Indicate how much you involve the following in making important decisions in your school by circling the appropriate options. **USE THE FOLLOWING CODES:** (1) Not involved at all (2) Not involved (3) Involved (4) Highly involved

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(1) Teachers 1 2 3 4 (2) Students 1 2 3 4 (3) Parents

(4) Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

9. Do you consider it important to involve students in decision making?  
(1) Yes (2) No

**Explain in either case.** \_\_\_\_\_

10. How often do you hold dialogue/meeting with the following people?  
**USE THE FOLLOWING CODES TO MEASURE THE FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS:** (1) Very rare (2) Rarely (3) Often 4. Very Often

(1) Teachers \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

(2) Heads of departments \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

(3) Students \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

(4) Prefects \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

(5) Parents \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

(6) Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

11. Using the codes provided, indicate how important the following management techniques are in ensuring discipline in schools: (1) Not important at all (2) Not important (3) Important (4) Very important.

**Circle the appropriate responses.**

(1) The school authorities making all decisions for students 1 2 3 4

(2) Involving students in decision making on issues that affect  
them \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

(3) Allowing students to elect prefects \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

(4) Allowing teachers to appoint prefects \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

(5) Delegating some duties and responsibilities to prefects \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

(6) Retaining principals to acquire more suitable management  
skills \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

12. How often do you show that you understand the points of views of your students even though you disagree with them?
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(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Often (4) Very Often

13. How often do you encourage your students to express their ideas fully and frankly?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Often (4) Very Often
14. How often do you encourage your students to bring new and/or creative ideas?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Often (4) Very Often
15. How often do you allow your students to question your views?  
(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Often (4) Very Often

### PART 3: SCHOOL UNREST/STRIKES

16. Are you aware that in the recent past school strikes/riots have been on the increase in Kenya?  
(1) Yes (2) No
17. If yes, explain why \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. Has your school experienced any student strike/riots in the 1990's?  
(1) Yes (2) No
19. If yes, when did the last strike/riot occur? \_\_\_\_\_
20. If yes, what caused the strike/riot? Internal factors? External factors?  
Explain  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
21. If yes, what were the consequences of the strike/unrest?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
22. Compare the following time periods and indicate when it was/is most difficult to maintain school discipline:  
(1) 1980s and before  
(2) 1990s/Nowadays  
(3) Has been the same in the 1980s and 1990s
-

23. Explain your answer \_\_\_\_\_
24. What do you think is the most effective way of enhancing student discipline in secondary schools today? Give reasons for your answer.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
25. What do you think are the causes of student strikes/riots in secondary schools? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
26. In general, who or what can be blamed for the present crisis of school strikes/riots among secondary school students. Explain your answer.
27. How much would you agree/disagree with the following statements explaining secondary school strikes in Kenya. **USE THE FOLLOWING CODES:** (1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree **Circle the appropriate option.**
- (1) Strikes are caused by students' unrealistic demands 1 2 3 4
- (2) Students often go on strike after they are incited by teachers 1 2 3 4
- (3) Students often go on strike after they are incited by outsiders 1 2 3 4
- (4) Strikes are caused by excessive stress among student 1 2 3 4
- (5) As students increasingly become aware of their democratic rights, strikes have increased 1 2 3 4
- (6) Lack of dialogue between school authorities and students leads to strikes 1 2 3 4
- (7) Drug abuse by students is a major cause of strikes/riots 1 2 3 4
- (8) Antagonism between students and prefects is a major cause of strikes/riots 1 2 3 4
- (9) Poor school facilities is a major cause of school strikes/riots 1 2 3 4
- (10) Current political changes in the country motivate students to strikes/riots 1 2 3 4
- (11) High cases of labour/political unrests in the country tend to encourage students to strike/riots 1 2 3 4
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- 30. What would you identify as the leading causes of school strikes in Kenya?
- 31. Please suggest specific ways of solving the problem of school strikes/riots among secondary school students in Kenya?

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Thank you for your cooperation