

# **Influence Of Participatory Decision Making In Promotion Of Child-Friendly Learning Environment In Rural Public Primary Schools In Meru County, Kenya**

Kihara, Daniel Wambugu<sup>1</sup>. Prof. Kimiti Richard Peter<sup>2</sup> Prof. David Mulwa<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Department Of Educational Management And Curriculum Studies  
Machakos University, Kenya

---

## **Abstract**

*Participatory decision making is a fundamental practice for promoting right based and child-centered learning through involvement and bridging of communication between schools, learners, parents and the community. Such involvement can be important in improving the quality of decision-making processes, as well as receptiveness of the decisions made towards improving the learning environment and quality of learning. The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of participatory decision-making in promotion of child-friendly learning environment in rural public primary schools in Meru County, Kenya. A descriptive survey design was employed. One hundred and fifty-five teachers were selected through simple random procedure from a target population of 775 teachers. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied for data analysis. The findings revealed a positive but non-significant correlation between participatory decision-making and promotion of child-friendly learning environment ( $r(146) = .15, p = .06$ ). The participatory decision-making practices in this study were: encouraging community partnerships; supporting consultative processes; and parental involvement. Based on the reported findings, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education needs to create more awareness on children's rights through orhanised campaigns, specialised training of trainers, teachers, and education managers. There is need for review of policies on participatory-decision making to give children greater voice about their learning environment, as well as greater parental involvement.*

**Keywords:** *Child-friendly school, Participatory decision-making, Quality learning environment, Parental involvement, School consultative process*

---

Date of Submission: 29-01-2024

Date of Acceptance: 09-02-2024

---

## **I. Introduction**

The concept of child-friendly learning environment is based on the principles of child-friendly schools (CFS) framework as developed by UNICEF and partner agencies advocating for quality education. The principles of CFS include involvement, inclusivity, safety and protection, gender sensitivity, and effectiveness (UNICEF, 2009). School-based managers, such as headteachers have the responsibility of promoting strategies and practices that can enhance child-centered and tight based learning environment (Cunha & Magano, 2019).

School based strategies for promoting child-friendly leaning environment include involvement of stakeholders, such as teachers, learners, and parents in decision making processes (Çobanoğlu, Ayvaz-Tuncel, & Ordu, 2018). This resonates with the UNICEF (2009) CFS framework that advocated for educational systems that are designed in the best interest of children, healthy and protective for all children, and involving both families and communities. The principles of CFS were also integrated with those of the convention on the rights of the child (CRC), which advocated for the best interest of children, right of life and non-discrimination, as well as inclusion (CRC, 1990).

According to a report by Education Bureau of the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (2010) school principals and headteachers must be guided by a set of principles that take into consideration the wellbeing of learners in the learning environment. Such principles were itemized as encouraging collective stakeholder participation, creating strong foundation for lasting school development as the foundation of quality education, and prudent resource management in the best interest of children.

The literature has shown that schooling is not always a pleasant experience due to many negative incidents that children in different parts of the world have had to endure. These include learning in poor conditions, anger, and being subjected to punishment (Thomas, Alphonsa & Aneesh, 2018). It is imperative for schools to establish management practices that allow involvement and deliberations from children and other stakeholders including teachers and parents. Participatory decision making has proven to be important in improving children's

learning experience (Ayeni, 2018; Tijani, 2020). The study therefore explored on the influence of participatory decision-making in promotion of CFLE in rural public primary schools in Meru county.

## **II. Literature Review**

Community and stakeholder involvement as well as obligation to the right of children to participate in decisions that affect their lives are some of the major characteristics of child-friendly schools (UNICEF, 2009). School participatory decision making is a core CFS concept that recognizes children as “rights holders and those who facilitate their rights as duty bearers,” each having a role in the form and substance of their education (UNICEF, 2009). As managers, school heads are obligated to provide strategic direction within the school system in order to create an enabling environment for teaching and learning (Dowd, 2018). This is achieved through various strategies, such as establishing mechanisms for community and other stakeholder decision making processes, as well as establishing approaches that empower children participation (Kagawa & Selby, 2014; UNICEF, 2009).

Learning in a participatory environment should be available for every child because it promotes equality and justice and instills into young people skills and critical thinking that can help them build more just and equitable society (Constantina, 2018). There is abundance of research expressing the significance of participatory decision making. Some studies from the United States show that participatory decision making in organizations enhances staff commitment, job attachment, and organizational culture, thus enhancing productivity. According to Somech (2010) the increasing urgency for participatory decision making in schools is based on the widely shared belief that decentralized authority carries enormous potential for advancing school effectiveness. However, more research was required so as to establish the relationship between participatory decision making in promotion of child-friendly learning environment.

In India, Hogenhout (2018) sought to investigate the importance of parental involvement in education of their children. The study used a qualitative method and focused on the benefits of participatory practices in primary schools. The results indicated that parental involvement was championed at school level, and although many participants differed on the importance of the initiative, others found it to enhance learners’ safety since parents started escorting their children to school. However, the study only assessed parental involvement and more research was necessary to look into the holistic stakeholder participation on promotion of CFS.

Nonetheless research has shown that participatory decision making that incorporates parents, teachers, and communities to exchange information and experiences about school activities and programmes as well as empowering children to participate in decisions that affect their lives can have numerous benefits in learners’ lives. According to Patroi (2016) in Romania, creating a child friendly school substantially depends on developing strong partnerships between the teachers, children, parents and experts. The author however argued that such partnerships must be based on exact needs of children as every child’s needs are unique and that serious transformation must be based on specific needs and characteristics of each school.

Conversely, Mannion (2012) in Scotland, United Kingdom, in a desktop study that scrutinized ten frameworks of children participation argued that inclusive learning seemed to focus on an inward emphasis of children participation in terms of exclusion rates, school culture, truancy, school leaving age and underachievement. The study however did not report the relationships between the management practice of children participation in promotion of child-friendly school, a gap that the present study sought to address.

Following the adoption of the CRC by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1989, a wide range of research has emerged about the necessity of children participation and why it should be observed in schools. Mager and Nowak (2012) in a systematic review and synthesis of research established that children participation in decision making led to personal and social development. However, there was little evidence about the effect of participation on promotion of child-friendly school principles. The review found no positive effects on school facilities, learners’ health or learning quality and thus recommended a more quality and comprehensive research. These findings were in support of Irida and Anna (2018) in Greece, that children participation led to improvement of school grounds.

According to the National Education Association (NEA) (2019) school heads and managers who encourage community involvement enhance solving school problems within the school community. Similarly, Brough (2012) in New Zealand also indicated that student participation impacts on various realms of school life, including curriculum choices, classroom environment, school governance, improving school facilities, reducing violence and bullying as well as improving school safety. These studies were however conducted in secondary schools and their findings may not be generalized for primary schools or in a setting such as Meru County. The studies also fell short of showing the role of the headteacher in fostering participatory decision making or the relationship between participatory decision making and other aspects of child-friendly schools such as gender responsiveness, health, safety, sanitation and hygiene.

In Indonesia, Fitriani (2020) explored on the role of parents’ involvement through school committees in implementation of CFS policy. The comparative case study employed a qualitative approach and involved one

private primary and one public primary school. The findings revealed that participation of parents through school committees was important for enhanced monitoring of learning processes, and promoting communication between parents and schools.

Similarly, Hajaroh, Rukiyati, Purwastuti, and Saptono (2020) explored on the significance of parents and community involvement in implementation of CFS in Indonesian in a tourist region of Gunungkidul. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach and targeted 3 elementary schools from the region. The results indicated that parental involvement helps parents to gain deeper understanding about their children's education, and creates synergy through consultation, cooperation and coordination between students, parents and schools for enhanced quality of learning. Despite the positive impact of parental involvement, there was need for more investigation given the small samples that the results were derived from.

Studies carried out in Africa show that schools have strived to allow participatory decision making as one of the practices of accelerating implementation of CFS models. According to UNICEF (2009) report, in Gambia, school heads worked with communities through initiatives such as mothers' clubs, which focused on income-generating activities, mother to mother counseling and drama activities as well as social mobilizations. The profits raised from the activities were used to meet the basic needs and the cost of learning materials to support education for girls. The funds were directed to meeting costs such as uniforms, writing materials and supplementing daily meals for the girls. The review established that the participatory initiative enhanced retention rate and lowered dropout rate for girls.

Similarly, Adu (2016) in Ghana found that headteachers' initiatives to engage parents and members of the community in all spheres of school development was associated with improved school conditions such as safe and protective classrooms and improved school performance. However, the study found that headteachers lacked competencies about school improvement strategies and it was not clear how the initiatives impacted on the other indicators of child-friendly schools.

According to Meintjes (2018), in Johannesburg, South Africa, school heads who fostered sound participatory practices were found to have enhanced teachers' commitment and a climate of trust. Conversely Elmeski (2011) found that school heads and teachers worked in collaboration with student leaders to enhance safety and stamp out the culture of bullying and violence by creating forums to sensitize students about how to get along with others. However, more research was necessary to assess how other subdomains of participatory decision-making, such as parental involvement and consultative processes with other stakeholders including teachers and boards of management might impact on promotion of CFS model.

Studies done in other areas indicate that school heads and teachers have encouraged students to work in pairs or groups as ways of promoting safety in school. Such collaborative practices were found to support regular attendance and create an environment where children felt safe to learn effectively (Elmeski, 2011; UNICEF, 2009). In Tanzania, Ngussa and Gabriel (2017) found significant relationship between school heads collaborative practices with teachers on decision making and teachers' commitment. The study however found teachers' commitment based on participation to be higher in private schools compared to public schools. It would be interesting to see how these studies would compare with the findings of the present study, whose focus was on rural public primary schools in Meru County.

In Kenya Kinyanjui (2019) in a study that was done in Nairobi and Kajiado counties, found that school heads encouraged parents to participate in school improvement projects, through which they contributed resources to improve school safety, water and sanitation and helped in maintaining learners' discipline. The results corroborated the existing research that families and communities play a key role in collaborating with teachers in classroom and through provision of additional resources for improving school facilities, water and hygiene (AIR, 2009; UNICEF, 2009).

A study by Kanamba (2014) in Igembe, Meru County also reported that families and community involvement enhanced pupils' discipline and learning outcomes. Kinyanjui (2019) also found that learners were involved in school decision making through children's governments, which acted as vehicles for consultation about their welfare and rights. These studies however contradicted Noor (2017) study conducted in Turkana County, which established that headteachers were not keen in allowing student representatives to participate in school decision making. Thus, the present study was important as it aimed at addressing these knowledge gaps.

### **III. Materials and Methods**

The objective of the study was to determine the influence of participatory decision making in promotion child-friendly learning environment in rural public primary schools in Meru county, Kenya. Theoretical orientation was based on Locke's (1968) Goal setting theory, and Transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1998).

A descriptive survey design was used. The study involved 155 teachers (52.7% female and 47.3% male) from a target population of 775 teachers in rural public primary schools. Simple random procedure was applied to select the participants. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaire.

Cronbach’s alpha was used to establish the reliability of instrument, where an alpha value of .90 was obtained. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Frequency counts, central tendency, and symmetrical distribution were the specific descriptive statistics, while Pearson correlation coefficient *r* was used for inferential statistics and hypothesis testing.

#### IV. Results

##### Description of Participatory Decision Making and Promotion of CFLE

The study sought to establish the participants’ ratings on various forms of decision-making practices. Data was computed and analysed so as to establish the frequencies and mean scores of each of the measures on the scale. The scores were obtained through a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represented the lowest agreement and 5 highest agreement level as demonstrated in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Means and Standard Deviations of Measures of Participatory Decision-Making Scores

Description	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree	M	SD
Headteacher has well established interactive collaboration with community members	64 43.2%	67 45.3%	16 10.8%	-	1 0.7%	4.30	.71
Collaborative interactions with various community enhance safer and protective learning environment	53 35.8%	81 54.7%	11 7.4%	3 2.0%	-	4.24	.67
Headteacher holds consultation forums with teachers for more informed decision making	58 39.2%	76 51.4%	11 7.4%	3 2.0%	-	4.27	.68
Consultative decision-making processes established by the HT contribute to improved gender responsiveness	50 33.8%	81 54.7%	13 8.8%	4 2.7%	-	4.19	.70
Headteacher has working mechanisms of involving parents and families in school programmes	59 39.9%	70 47.3%	18 12.2%	1 0.7%	-	4.26	.69
Involvement of parents in school decision making enhances water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives	51 34.5%	77 52.0%	17 11.5%	2 1.4%	1 0.7%	4.18	.73
Headteacher has established effective communication strategies thus building relationships with staff.	57 38.5%	79 53.4%	10 6.8%	2 1.4%	-	4.29	.65
Communication approaches promote trust, organizational commitment, enhancing teaching quality	53 35.8%	82 55.4%	11 7.4%	2 1.4%	-	4.25	.75

*Note.* N= 148, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation.

It is observed from Table 1 that the participants mostly agreed that there was interactive collaboration between the school and community members championed by the headteachers. This is demonstrated by a high mean score of 4.30 (*SD*= .71). The results further indicate that the participants generally agreed that collaborating with various communities had enhanced safer and protective learning environment as evidenced through a high mean score of 4.24 (*SD*= .67). The participants on the most part agreed with the proposition that regular consultations between headteachers and teachers led to more informed decision making, as shown through a high mean score of 4.27 (*SD*= .67).

There was general consensus among the participants that regular consultative activities between the headteacher and teachers had enhanced gender responsiveness as demonstrated by a high mean score of 4.19 (*SD*= .70). With regard to whether there were working mechanisms established by the headteachers to involve parents in decision making, the participants responded with general consensus as evidenced by a high mean score of 4.26 (*SD*= .69).

The participants were in general agreement that parental involvement in school decision making processes enhanced water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives. This is demonstrated through a reasonable high mean score of 4.18 (*SD*= .73). In response to whether there was effective communication established by the headteacher resulting in better relationships with members of staff, the participants generally agreed with the proposition, resulting in a high mean score of 4.29 (*SD*= .65).

Lastly, the results indicate that there was general consensus among the participants that communication approaches used by the headteacher helped in promoting trust, organizational commitment, resulting in enhanced quality of teaching. This was exemplified by a high mean score of 4.25 (*SD*= .75). The results indicate that the statement that headteachers had put in place adequate interactive collaboration with community members

generated the highest mean scores of 4.30 ( $SD= .71$ ). On the other hand, the ratings on proposition that parental involvement in decision making had promoted the initiatives for water, sanitation and hygiene was the lowest rated with a mean score of 4.18 ( $SD= .73$ ).

From the results, it is apparent that various approaches of participatory decision-making, like collaboration with community, consultation with staff, and parental involvement contribute to enhancing various aspects of school environment resulting in greater safety and protection of learners. Such practices are likely to have positive impacts on quality of learning and improved rates of school attendance and completion. The results of the present study are consistent with those of Tijani (2020) that participatory decision making is an essential tool for headteachers to tap the experiences of various stakeholders resulting in improved planning, and subsequently more child-focused learning environment. Further analysis was carried out on the ratings of participatory decision making in order to obtain the descriptive statistics of all the measures, establish the lowest and highest scores as well as data distribution as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics of Participatory Decision-Making Scores**

	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Participatory Decision Making	14.00	26.00	40.00	34.01	2.93	-.52	-.05
Valid N (listwise)							

*Note.*  $N= 148$ ,  $SD=$  Standard Deviation.

As demonstrated in Table 2, the range for the scores on the ratings of participatory decision making was 14, whereas the lowest value was 26 and the highest 40. The total scores generated a high mean of 34.01 ( $SD= 2.93$ ), implying that the participants generally agreed about the influence of participatory decision making in promoting child-friendly learning environment. The scores generated a negative skewness value of  $-.52$ , suggesting that there were fewer extreme scores towards the lower side compared to the higher side of the scale. Further, a negative kurtosis value of  $-.05$  was generated, suggesting that the data distribution was neither too peaked nor too flat, given that a kurtosis values ranging from  $-3$  to  $+3$  are considered as indications for normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010).

Further analysis was carried out on the scores in order to categorise the ratings based on the participants' whose agreement levels were high or low on the scale as reported in Table 3.

**Table 3: Participants' Agreement Levels on Influence of Participatory Decision Making**

Agreement Levels		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Low	70	47.3
	High	78	52.7
	Total	148	100.0

*Note.*  $N= 148$ .

Table 3 demonstrates that a slightly more than half (52.7%) of the participants rated the measures of participatory decision making in promoting child-friendly learning environment with high agreement levels, compared to 47.3% of those who rated the same with low agreement levels. The results indicate that more participants had greater assurance about the impact of decision-making practices championed by headteachers in promoting child-friendly learning environment in their respective schools. The findings support the view by Dowd (2018) about headteachers' obligation in encouraging enabling environment for child-focused learning experiences, and that participatory decision-making is essential for enhancing equality and justice that is requisite for quality instructional processes (Constantina, 2018).

Data was also obtained on participants' ratings of the measures of promotion of child-friendly learning environment. The results were analysed and summarised in order to establish the total scores, lowest and highest values, average and data dispersion as well as symmetrical distribution as reported in the summary of descriptive analysis in Table 4.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Promotion of Child-friendly Learning Environment**

	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Promotion of Child-friendly Learning Environment	14.00	26.00	40.00	33.97	2.61	-.44	.19
Valid N (listwise)							

*Note.*  $N= 148$ ,  $SD=$  Standard Deviation.

Table 4 shows that the results on promotion of child-friendly learning environment based on headteachers' practices had a range of 14. The minimum score was 26 while the maximum was 40. The scores generated a mean of 33.97 ( $SD= 2.61$ ), implying that the participants generally rated the measures with high agreement levels. The results indicate that the scores had a negative skewness value of  $-.44$ , implying that data were slightly left skewed and that the respondents rated the test items highly, and a positive kurtosis value of  $.19$ , indicating that data were nearly normally distributed and with low level of outliers.

### **Inferential Statistics and Hypothesis Testing**

The study sought to determine if there was significant relationship between participatory decision-making and promoting child-friendly learning environment. The following null hypothesis was advanced for the purpose of testing if such relationship existed between the two variables:

$H_{03}$ : There is no significant relationship between participatory decision making and promotion of child-friendly learning environment in rural public primary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

To test the hypothesis, the mean scores for participatory decision making and promotion of child-friendly learning environment were subjected to bivariate correlation using Pearson ( $r$ ) correlation coefficient measure as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Correlation Matrix for Participatory Decision Making and Promotion of CFLE

		Promotion of CFLE	Participatory Decision Making
Promotion of CFLE	Pearson Correlation	1	.15
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.06
	N	148	148
Participatory Decision Making	Pearson Correlation	.15	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.06	
	N	148	148

*Note.*  $N= 148$ , CFLE= Child-friendly Learning Environment.

As observed from Table 5, the results indicate that a positive but non-significant relationship was established between participatory decision-making and promotion of child-friendly learning environment scores ( $r(146) = .15, p= .06$ ). Since the  $p$  value ( $p=.06$ ) was greater than 0.05 as the level of significance, the null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between participatory decision making and promotion of child-friendly learning environment in rural public primary schools in Meru County, Kenya failed to be rejected.

The results however indicate that a positive relationship was established between the two variables even though such association was not statistically significant, implying that there was no strong statistical power to detect the significance. The findings largely support the view by Ebunu (2020) that involving stakeholders, such as teachers in decision making provides opportunities for them to share their experiences on policy issues affecting instructional delivery. On the other hand, parental involvement in decision making provided a platform for this category of stakeholders to share important insights on how to improve the quality of instructional processes.

The results from descriptive and inferential analyses demonstrated that various forms of participatory decision making in the schools that were being studied played an important role in enhancing child-friendly learning environment. The descriptive statistics indicated that participative approaches like consultation with staff, collaboration with community and parental involvement through which stakeholders are afforded opportunities to be part of decision making enhanced various aspects of school environment. The results indicated that active involvement of teachers, pupils, parents and the local community enhanced the quality of decision making, and prioritization of development infrastructure, resulting in improved safety and protection of learners. The results showed that such strategies have the potential of stimulating positive impacts on instructional processes, learning experiences, and school climate resulting in a learning environment where children feel emotionally and physically safe and free to learn.

The results from descriptive analysis were moderately supported by inferential analysis, which showed that although there was no statistically significant relationship between participatory decision making and promotion of child-friendly learning environment, the two variables were positively correlated.

The results demonstrated that incorporating parents in school decision-making processes improved not only the quality of decision making, but also led to supplementation of school resources, resulting in timely completion of school infrastructure, and additional instructional materials. This implies that such participatory activities are likely to fortify the tenets of child-friendly learning environment spelt out in CFS framework, including creation of a healthy and protective learning spaces, and establishment of child-seeking, child-centered, effective, and inclusive learning environment (UNICEF, 2009).

The results of the present study lend credence to Dowd's (2018) views that through their leadership practices, head teachers have a role of promoting partnerships among educational stakeholders at school level, and fostering positive relationships for the purpose of establishing safety protocols and effective learning

environment. This implies that involving various stakeholders in school decision making enhances social capital in terms of bolstering partnerships, positive relationships among teachers, learners, parents and communities. Such partnerships can lead to shared goals among the stakeholders, resulting in quality decisions and expeditious implementation of school programs, and subsequently improved learning that addresses children's diverse needs. The findings however differ with those of Kipkemoi and Kipkorir (2022) who established a gap in terms of school stakeholder involvement and the quality of learning as well as learning outcomes of learners in Kericho county, Kenya.

The results nonetheless agree to a large extent with those of Fitriani (2020) from Indonesia that participatory decision making processes through various strategies established by head teachers are essential enhancing teaching and learning processes. In essence, the study found that strategies put in place to incorporate parents in decision making, such as through school committee meetings were essential for improving the quality of instructional processes. The positive relationship between parents, local community and schools reinforced communication among the stakeholders resulting in enhanced monitoring of learning processes and subsequently improved quality of learning.

The findings of the present study support those of Patroi (2016) in Romania that development of child-friendly learning environment depends on strong partnership among stakeholders. From the study, it is observed that the focus of the stakeholders should be trained on transformation of learning spaces and school environment in a manner that addresses children's diverse learning needs. Suffice to say that while stakeholders may have different interests, head teachers should strive towards forging a common goal in order to champion development plans that can transform schools into safe, protective and healthy learning environments.

The findings of the present study established that involvement of parents in decision making enhanced safety of children. It was established from the findings that parental involvement presents opportunities for parents to give their input in terms of ideas as well as resource mobilization. This also nurtures in them a sense of ownership of decision making process, which is key to efficient implementation of school development plans and programmes including those aimed at creating child-friendly learning environments such as spacious and safe learning spaces, maintained playgrounds, gender sensitive facilities and accessible infrastructures for learners with special needs.

The findings support those of Hogenhout (2018) who in an Indian based study found that involvement of parents as key educational stakeholders enhanced safety of children. Parents grew the sense of responsibility and would actively take part in ensuring safety and protection of children with measures such as escorting and picking up their children from school. This is also consistent with Hajaroh et al. (2020) findings from an Indonesian based study in which it was established that parental involvement creates positive relationships and collaboration between parents, teachers and learners resulting in enhanced quality of learning and positive learning environment. Nonetheless, the results are inconsistent with those of Noor (2017) from a study carried out in Turkana, Kenya, which found that head teachers did not involve learners in decision making.

The results support those of Adu (2016) from a Ghanaian based study in which it was observed that participatory decision making through initiatives such as consultative meetings with parents and members of the local community stirred positive relationship and among the stakeholders. The collaborative activities established by headteachers such as consultative meetings, parents-teachers' meetings and annual general meetings through which members would be appraised about the progress of school programmes led to improved conditions of school facilities resulting in safer and healthier learning environment.

The findings of the present study showed that participatory decision making, through which various stakeholders like parents, teachers and communities were engaged in sharing their perspectives in school management led to more children staying in school. In particular, the findings revealed that involvement of parents enhanced establishment of water and sanitation facilities. Such initiatives led to reduction of sicknesses and diseases associated with poor sanitation and unhealthy hygiene behaviours, resulting in more children remaining healthy and able to attend school. This is consistent with Kinyanjui (2019) findings in a study carried out in Nairobi and Kajiado counties, which established that parental involvement augmented resource acquisition, resulting in improved water and sanitation facilities, and subsequently safer and healthier learning environment. This however is inconsistent with the outcomes of a study by Ngussa and Gabriel (2017) that found teachers' commitment and quality of instructional processes as a result of participatory decision making to have been lower in public schools compared to private schools in Tanzania.

The results further correspond to the precepts of Transformational leadership theory, upon which this study is founded. Bass (1998) views transformational leadership as a set of behaviour and activities established by leaders in organisations with the aim of improving such organisations and their performances. In essence, as transformational leaders, head teachers foster positive interactions, relationships and collaboration by encouraging participatory decision making.

Through various strategies such as parents and teachers meetings, collaboration with the local community, holding consultative meetings with teachers and heads of department, as well as involving learners

through their representatives results in such groups feeling that they are part of decision making process. Such collaborative processes are likely to lead to more informed and improved deliberations and subsequent quality decisions owing to deep insights from diverse stakeholders' perspectives.

The findings are consistent with Burns' (1978) ideology of Transformational leadership that leaders motivate their teams towards achieving goals that represent value, purpose and meaning. By fostering participatory decision making through consultations, stakeholder engagement and collaboration, head teachers focus on concepts of value, purpose and meaning towards establishment of learning environment that supports quality learning and general well-being of all learners.

## **V. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study concluded that a positive but non-significant relationship was found between participatory decision making and promotion of child-friendly learning environment. Classroom consultations as well as holding meetings with prefects were used as strategies for involvement of learners in decision making. Such opportunities gave a voice to learners to air their grievances and suggestions on improvement of learning environment. It was found that participatory decision-making aided resolutions against discrimination, gender biases and violation of children's rights in the learning environment.

Annual general meetings, academic clinics, and parents' meetings were used to encourage participatory decision making between schools and communities. The study concluded that involvement of stakeholders in decision-making enhanced safety and well-being of learners. It was found that communication approaches used between headteachers and staff like holding consultative forums helped school administrations in understanding the progress made regarding teaching, school attendance, discipline and welfare of children.

The practices established by headteachers to involve teachers, parents and community enhanced positive learning environment. The study however found that some collaborative approaches established by head teachers towards participatory decision making fell short in expansion and improvement of water, hygiene, and sanitation facilities. The study concluded that more needed to be done in relation to strategies used for engaging parents in decision making.

The education ministry should create greater awareness on children's rights through organised campaigns and specialised training of trainers, teachers and education managers in order to ensure various rights requisite for supporting a child-focused learning environment is achieved. There is need for policy review on participatory decision-making to ensure that children have a greater voice regarding their learning environment, as well as greater participation among parents and the community.

## **References**

- [1]. Adu, S. (2016). The Role Of Headteacher Leadership And Community Participation In Public School Improvement In Ghana. Doctoral Thesis (Edd), University Of Sussex. Available At: [Http://Sro.Sussex.Ac.Uk/Id/Eprint/59614/](http://Sro.Sussex.Ac.Uk/Id/Eprint/59614/)
- [2]. Air. (2009). Unicef's Child-Friendly Schools Programming: Global Evaluation Final Report. New York.
- [3]. Ayeni, A. J. (2018). Principals' Decision Making Strategies And Teachers' Productivity In Secondary Schools In Ondo Central Senatorial District Of Ondo State, Nigeria. *Global Journal Of Management And Business Research: Administration And Management*, 18(10), 18-30.
- [4]. Bass, B. M. (1998). *Transformational Leadership: Industrial, Military, And Educational Impact*. Mahwah, Nj: Erlbaum
- [5]. Brough, C. J. (2012). Implementing The Democratic Principles And Practices Of Student-Centred Curriculum Integration In Primary Schools. *The Curriculum Journal* 23(3), 345-369.
- [6]. Burns, J. (1978). *Leadership*. (1st Ed.). Harper & Row.
- [7]. Çobanoğlu, F., Ayvaz-Tuncel, Z., & Ordu, A. (2018). Child-Friendly Schools: An Assessment Of Secondary Schools. *Universal Journal Of Educational Research*, 6(3), 466 - 477. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2018.060313>
- [8]. Constantina, S. (2018). Best Practices Manual On Democratic Key Competencies For Teacher Professionalism. Directorate Of Secondary Education In Piraeus. <http://dide-peiraia.att.sch.gr/Eir/Demokleios/O20/Ebook/Index.Html#P=270>
- [9]. Crc, (1990). Convention On The Rights Of The Child. United Nations, Human Rights. Retrieved From: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Professionalinterest/Crc.Pdf>
- [10]. Cunha, M. & Magano, J. (2019). Principal's Management Strategy. *Journal Of Education And Human Development* September 2019, Vol. 8, No. 3, Pp. 126-132 <https://doi.org/10.15640/Jehd.V8n3a14>
- [11]. Dowd, M. (2018). Duties And Responsibilities Of School Principals. *Chron*. Retrieved From: <https://work.chron.com/duties-responsibilities-school-principals-7885.html>
- [12]. Ebinu, A. A. (2020). Participatory Management For Enhancing Students' Academic Performance In Public Secondary Schools In Rivers State. *Advances In Social Sciences Research Journal*, 7(5), 145-156.
- [13]. Education Bureau Of The Government Of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (2010). Good Governance, Quality Education. <https://www.edb.gov.hk/Attachment/En/Sch-Admin/Sbm/Corner-Imc-Sch/Good%20governance.Pdf>
- [14]. Elmeski, M. (2011). Democratic Participation And Child-Friendly Schools. Cfs Dimension Brief: Democratic Participation. Miske Witt & Associates Inc.
- [15]. Fitriani, S. (2020). Promoting Child-Friendly School Model Through School Committee As Parents' Participation. *International Journal Of Evaluation And Research In Education* 9(4), 1025-1034. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v9i4.20615>
- [16]. George, D. & Mallery, M. (2010). *Spss For Windows Step By Step: A Simple Guide And Reference*, 17.0 Update (10a Ed.) Boston: Pearson.



- [17]. Hajaroh, M., Rukiyati, R., Purwastuti, L., & Saptono, B. (2020). The Implementation Of Indonesia's Child Friendly School Policy Based On Environment In The Coastal Tourist Area Of Gunungkidul, Indonesia. *Geo Journal Of Tourism And Geosites*, 31(1), 1010-1018.
- [18]. Hogenhout, A. M. (2018). Parental Involvement In Indian Education: An Exploratory Study Of Parents' And Teachers' Perceptions And Practices Towards Parental Involvement In Edukans' World Teacher Program And Star-School Program. Master's Thesis, Utrecht University
- [19]. Irida, T., & Anna T. (2018). Young Children Claiming Their Connection With Nonhuman Nature In Their Schoolground. *Children, Youth And Environments*, 28(1), 119-127. [Http://Www.Jstor.Org/Stable/10.7721/Chilyoutenvi.28.1.0119](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7721/Chilyoutenvi.28.1.0119)
- [20]. Kagawa, F. & Selby, D. (2014). Child-Friendly Schools For Peace Building. *Learning For Peace*, Unicef. [Https://Www.Edu-Links.Org/Sites/Default/Files/Media/File/Cfs-And-Peacebuilding.Pdf](https://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/cfs-and-peacebuilding.pdf)
- [21]. Kanamba, G. (2014). School Factors Influencing Provision Of Child Friendly School Environment In Public Primary Schools In Igembe North District, Meru County, Kenya. Master's Thesis, University Of Nairobi. [Http://Erepository.Uonbi.Ac.Ke/Bitstream/Handle/11295/77725/](http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/77725/)
- [22]. Kinyanjui, G. (2019). Implementation Of Child-Friendly Schools Initiative And Its Influence On Quality Education In Primary Schools In Nairobi And Kajiado Counties, Kenya. Doctoral Thesis, Kenyatta University. [Https://Ir-Library.Ku.Ac.Ke/Handle/123456789/19660?Show=Full](https://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/handle/123456789/19660?show=full)
- [23]. Kipkemoi, E. K., Kipkorir, S. C. (2022). Stakeholders Participation And Academic Performance In Public Secondary Schools In Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County Kenya. *Journal Of Business And Management (Iosr-Jbm)*, 24(11), 30-37.
- [24]. Locke, E. A (1968). Toward A Theory Of Task Motivation And Incentives, *Organizational Behaviour And Human Performance*, 3(2), 157-189. [Https://Doi.Org/10.1016/0030-5073\(68\)90004-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(68)90004-4)
- [25]. Mager, U., & Nowak, P. (2012). Effects Of Student Participation In Decision Making At School. A Systematic Review And Synthesis Of Empirical Research. *Educational Research Review*, 7(1) 38–61. [Https://Doi.Org/Doi:10.1016/J.Edurev.2011.11.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2011.11.001)
- [26]. Mannion, G. (2012). Children's Participation In School Grounds Developments: Creating A Place For Education That Promotes Children's Social Inclusion. *International Journal Of Inclusive Education*, 7(2), 175-192 [Https://Doi.Org/10.1080/13603110304784](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110304784).
- [27]. Meintjes, S. (2018). Participatory Decision-Making In Schools: A Study Of Two Schools In Gauteng. Thesis, Wits School Of Education. Retrieved From: [Https://Pdfs.Semanticscholar.Org/3850/03bb86519db7447164fcec62a78add28841.Pdf](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3850/03bb86519db7447164fcec62a78add28841.pdf)
- [28]. Nea (2019). What Are Community Schools. National Education Association. [Https://Www.Nea.Org/Student-Success/Great-Public-Schools/Community-Schools/What-Are-They](https://www.nea.org/student-success/great-public-schools/community-schools/what-are-they)
- [29]. Ngussa, B. & Gabriel, L. (2017). Participation In Decision Making And Teachers' Commitment: A Comparative Study Between Public And Private Secondary Schools In Arusha Municipality, Tanzania. *American Journal Of Educational Research*, 5. 801-807. 10.12691/Education-5-7-17.
- [30]. Noor, E. (2017). Improving Access To Quality Education In Garissa And Turkana: Internal Document From Unicef.
- [31]. Patroi, A. (2016). Child Friendly Schools: A Design Strategy For Children's Participation, Retrieved From: [Https://Www.Childinthecity.Org/2016/06/23/Child-Friendly-Schools-A-Design-Strategy-For-Childrens-Participation/](https://www.childinthecity.org/2016/06/23/child-friendly-schools-a-design-strategy-for-childrens-participation/)
- [32]. Somech, A. (2010). Participative Decision Making In Schools: A Mediating-Moderating Analytical Framework For Understanding School And Teacher Outcomes. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(2), 174–209. [Https://Doi.Org/10.1177/1094670510361745](https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670510361745)
- [33]. Thomas S., Alphonsa J., Aneesh K. (2018) Child Friendly Schools: Challenges And Issues In Creating A Positive And Protective School Environment. In: Deb S. (Eds) *Positive Schooling And Child Development*. Springer, Singapore
- [34]. Tijani, A. A. (2020). Participatory Decision Making: An Effective Tool For School Effectiveness In Kwara State, Nigeria. *Honai: International Journal For Educational, Social, Political & Cultural Studies*, 3(1), 1-14.
- [35]. Unicef (2009). Child Friendly Schools Evaluation. Retrieved From: [Https://Www.Air.Org/Sites/Default/Files/Downloads/Report/Nigeria\\_Cfs\\_Country\\_Report\\_4\\_2\\_10\\_0.Pdf](https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Nigeria_Cfs_Country_Report_4_2_10_0.Pdf)