

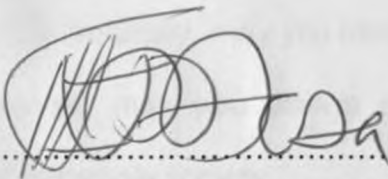
DECLARATION

**DECLARATION**

This project is my own original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

Signed .....  ..... Date 02-11-2001

The project has been submitted with my approval as the university supervisor.

Signed .....  ..... Date 5/11/01

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In loving memory of my late mother, Mary Atieno Onyuna, a woman with the capacity to endure in adversity, and encourage others to live on. In essence a practical teacher. And to my father, Joshua Oluoch Awuor, an expression of admiration for his sense of excellence when it came to learning, is in order.

This work is also dedicated to my daughter, Sharon Elsie Akinyi, who was a source of inspiration during my time of study. Her desire being, for me, to pursue a Ph.D. Degree Course. Hopefully one day this will become a reality.

To my sisters, Grace Awuor, Dorine Achieng and to Dorine Akinyi, I also pay tribute for being mothers to my daughter during my many absences in the course of my studies. To them I wish well in future years.

To the academic fraternity, may you always continue to impart knowledge in a way that inspires, may you always seek to learn and to grow for the betterment of the whole society.

Last but not least, to God be the glory, he leads us into triumph. Only God can make a dream come true.

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## ACRONYMS

AGM	-	Annual General Meeting	Page
INSET	-	In-service Training	
KCPE	-	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education	30
KNEC	-	Kenya National Examination Council	30
O/C	-	Opportunity divided by capacity	33
OE	-	Operational Effectiveness	40
PTA	-	Parents, Teachers Association	40
TSC	-	Teachers Service Commission	41
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To the heads interviewed, thank you very much, without you there would be no findings

## ABSTRACT

Various excellence studies have been conducted in the developed world however most of the studies have tended to focus on manufacturing industries. The researchers suggested further studies in the service industry. It is due to this that I chose to research in the education industry. This is because the output of this industry becomes the input in other industries as far as labour and managerial skills are concerned. Primary education was particularly of interest because it forms the basis for higher learning.

The population was of 30 schools that met the criteria of being consistently in the top in national examinations for the years 1997, 1998 and 1999 based in Nairobi. Since the population was small, all the schools were sampled. The effective sample was 23, the ones who responded. A questionnaire was personally administered. Observation was also used.

SPSS was used to develop data sets and for analysis. There were cross tabulations, use of percentages, means frequencies, bar charts and pie charts.

The study revealed that there was use of teams in problem solving and facilitation of communication in the schools. Regular communication was encouraged. There were various ways of ensuring the satisfaction of the

customer through participatory decision making, commitment to excellence and continuous training of staff.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

There was motivation and rewarding of effort, tolerance for failure and learning from the result. Both formal and informal communication was used within the schools, but communication was mostly informal.

Face to face communication was the norm to a large and very large extent. Focus on individual respect and learning from others was found to be critical. 95.7% of the schools had well defined inspirational, guiding beliefs, expressed as a motto.

All schools revealed that they diversified internally, but confirmed that they tended to stay close to their core competencies and set targets. The study also revealed that all the schools had relatively simple basic structure. Most of the structures devolved authority to the lower cadres. The heads were co-workers, the hands-on, living by example types. The top was thus very lean. There was tight control that allowed for creativity, experimentation and innovation. This was done through effective delegation.

Factors that may threaten performance were exactly a lack of the above practices. Even when a factor was not mentioned, it could be inferred from other responses. By and large the findings seem to concur with those of other excellence studies.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Formal education in Kenya dates back to the colonial times with the establishment of a school in Rabai near Mombasa, in 1846 by the Church Missionary Society. Education in the colonial times was racially stratified. Curricula and schools were separate, with superior resources for the Europeans. Great disparities existed in the educational opportunities up till independence, not only between races but also between regions. During colonial times emphasis was laid on technical and vocational education for Africans (*Source: World Bank, Kenyaweb*)

As a result of this kind of education, at independence the colonial educational legacy posed many problems of quantity and relevance. Since then the Government and the people of Kenya have made enormous investment in education. The justification of this has been made by various studies that show that the rates of return on educational and training expenditure in developing countries are very high. Formal and informal sector workers in Kenya with primary education are one-third more productive than workers who did not have this education.

It is said that education transforms people and their quality of life by making them more receptive to the applications of science and technology in



agriculture, industry, the services and daily life. Towards the end of acquiring the right kind of education, the government at independence had the enormous task of re-orienting educational policy. This was in order to make education more relevant to the needs of the new nation, but also to expand the education system in order to produce the skilled and high-level manpower that was needed to facilitate, initially, the urgent process of *Kenyanisation*. This process has seen Kenya's education system go through various developments and restructuring.

In 1985 a major restructuring of the school system took place. Changing from the 7-4-2-3 (7 years' primary, 4 years ordinary level secondary, 2 years advanced level secondary and 3 years University level schooling) to the 8-4-4 (8 years primary, 4 years secondary and 4 years University schooling as a minimum) formal education (Kamunge 1988). The Koech Commission has only recently handed in a report to restructure education system yet again (Government of Kenya, Ministry of Education).

The Kamunge report recommended that the government allow private individuals to establish primary schools to supplement the government supported ones. This is because the educational expenditures were becoming burdensome to the government. Even with the introduction of cost sharing initiatives, the government is still unable to fill the gap in education and enrolment rates.

As a result of the recommendation, currently there are two types of schools, public (receive funding from the public budget) and private (non-public) that do not receive any public funding. This is except in as far as they benefit directly from treasury subventions for curriculum development, teacher training, examinations and inspection, (Deolalikar 1999). Nairobi has by far the greatest proportion of private schools. As indicated by examination performance, both types of schools have those that perform well and those that do not, making the ones that perform well very competitive, with everyone seeking their children to join these high performing schools.

Usually, the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) issues two types of information. First, together with the results of individual candidates, using the standardised scores, performance orders of merit showing the position of the schools, districts and provinces are prepared and distributed. Secondly absolute performance analysed on the basis of raw scores is published in the annual KCPE Newsletter which schools and teachers are encouraged to use in their efforts to improve pupils' learning. To this extent it should be assumed that national examination rankings are a fairly accurate measure of the schools' performance. In terms of inputs into the learning process, management has been listed as contributory to good performance (Deolalikar 1999).

And now more than ever before, primary schooling is essential as the provision of basic education for all, has been recommended as one of the

strategies in alleviating poverty (Government of Kenya, 1999). Basic education is seen as a critical social service in the development of the skills and human capital of low-income groups.

Given the importance associated with education in poverty eradication, it would be important to try and find out what makes the primary schools that perform well in national examinations do so. In this study performance will be equated to competitive advantage or what others want to call corporate advantage (Collis & Montgomery, 1998).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The performance goal of educational organisations is educating students and this holds true for both the private and public schools. In an article in the East African Standard (September 23, 2000), it was stated that our kind of education system is one in which examinations form a watershed between who can join a "good school" or be admitted to a competitive faculty at the University. This makes passing national examinations a very important element of schooling.

In addition to this, it is usually the pride of most head teachers in both public and private schools when their institutions are ranked highly in national examinations, because chances of promotion will be high. For school entrepreneurs, high ranking will attract more students to their schools and

therefore increase their profits. In view of this, it would be of interest to many to identify through empirical evidence attributes that are associated with high performance. It is clear that it is more than just coaching and drilling that makes certain schools perform better than others. In my view, these activities can be imitated, and were it that these are the ones giving competitive advantage, everyone would adopt them. From observation, almost all the schools undertake these activities, but not all are excelling. This seems to indicate that to excel it takes more than just doing what others are doing.

Previous researchers of *excellence* have also identified gaps in the search. Gephart (1995) suggests that research has not validated any single, clear set of high performance practices, but some guiding principles would set one in the right direction. She further says that most of the existing research on the topic has focused on manufacturing firms. Research is needed that focuses on service-sector establishments and on white-collar and professional workers. Thus my choice of top ranking primary schools in Nairobi. The researcher wishes to explore the concept of excellence further in the education sector.

The same view is expressed by (Roberts et al, 1998), who have conducted an *excellence* study in sports and sports organisations. It would, therefore, be interesting to find out if what various researchers in search of excellence have found as attributes of excellence hold true even for such organisations as primary schools.

It is common knowledge that most parents seek to have their children admitted to the top performing schools. There is usually a rush and an over full demand for these schools as opposed to the others. It is my belief that trying to determine the characteristics of this top performing schools would lead to a better understanding of excellence.

In the light of the above a question that could be asked is how do the top ranking schools sustain high/peak performance? In other words how do they gain sustainable competitive advantage? In this case competitive advantage is equated to performance in national examinations.

### **1.3 Objectives of Study**

To identify attributes that are consistently present in high performance primary schools

To identify factors that would be a threat to good performance in schools.

### **1.4 Importance of the Study**

Given the kind of investment made in education, and the concern of management with the effective utilisation of resources, if a study could identify attributes that would ensure high performance then it would be worth the while. To add to this, according to a World Bank Annual Report 1996, education is a particularly important investment because it affects the health



and life expectancy of people and equips them with the knowledge to live healthier lives. The report further states that education is a critical factor for a country's sustained economic growth and no country in this information age can compete in the world markets if it neglects education.

The Bank's education strategy supports enhancing the productive use of labour, which is the poor's main asset. In a book, *Priorities and Strategies for Education: A Review*; emphasises the need for quality education systems as one of the keys to progress and economic growth. Public spending on education remains inefficient and inequitable in many cases. It states that in Africa; for example, spending per student in higher education is about 44 times that of expenditures per student in primary education. Yet, one half of Africa's primary school-age children are not enrolled in school.

The World Bank proposes that primary education deserve high priority for four reasons:

1. It is the foundation on which higher education must build;
2. The returns, as measured by individual wage gains, tend to be largest for primary education;
3. The poor, in particular, benefit from public spending on primary education;
4. Primary education brings broad additional benefits such as lower mortality and fertility, and better health, nutrition and literacy.



It is in the light of the foregoing justification of primary education that I chose to conduct my research in this area. Secondly, the excellence studies have been conducted in the developed worlds and it would be interesting to see if the attributes hold in the developing world and in an industry that does not get the attention of many business school students. The researcher wishes to contribute to the search of excellence.

Primary education is deemed as critical all over the world, and if the study could help improve their management, this would be a service to mankind. The magnitude in terms of number of primary schools alludes to huge resources and it is important to seek to understand attributes that could lead to better management of the same.

## **1.5 Structure of the Paper**

The final document will consist of five chapters. Chapter one will include the background, statement of the problem, objectives and importance of the study. Literature review will form the chapter two. Chapter three will be composed of the various components of research methodology, while chapter four will present the research findings. Finally chapter five will be composed of the research findings and conclusions, recommendations, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research. Next will come the appendices and the references.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher explores primary education in the context of Kenya and how schools are similar or different from other organisations and by so doing justifies the study through exploring similar studies undertaken elsewhere. This is because there is no documentation of *Excellence* studies locally. It is also in this chapter that the researcher defines the concepts of Strategy, strategic management and excellence. Most of the excellence literature is mostly cited from the developed world. Concern for excellence is only picking momentum in Kenya now, due to the liberalisation of most of the sectors of the economy.

### 2.2 An Overview of Strategy and Strategic Management

Strategy authors argue that strategy is a multidimensional concept that embraces all the critical activities of the firm, providing it with a sense of unity, direction and purpose, as well as facilitating the necessary changes induced by its environment (Hax & Majluf 1996). They further propose that it is an expression of strategic intent, where strategic intent may be defined as the desired future state. This entails stretching the organisation – unleashing creativity to move the organisation towards a new state of excellence. In my

view, this is asking what else an organisation can do with the capabilities and resources that already exist.

According to Hamel & Prahalad (1994) – strategic intent encompasses an active management process that creates a sense of urgency, focuses the organisation on the essence of winning. It motivates people through actions such as, developing a competitor focus at every level through widespread use of competitive intelligence and providing employees with the skills they need to work effectively, leaving room for individual and team contribution.

Butler (1998), sees strategy as understanding the environment and developing models of the future based on environment scanning and using a sophisticated world view to seize opportunity and making the most of a dynamic, unpredictable environment. In his view a strategic approach is not only essential, it is actually sufficient; all you need to do!

According to Brown (1997), the essence of strategy is much simpler than many organisations seem to believe. It can be represented, at heart, by the formula O/C: Opportunity divided by capacity... there are those who insist that it's flexibility, not strategy, which ought to be revered and studied ... "Just keep moving".

In common parlance, the term strategy can be defined as a consciously intended course of action to achieve some goal or objective. A strategy is

made in advance of the actions to which it applies and is often stated explicitly in a formal document known as a plan (Mintzberg, 1996). He further suggested four other contexts in which the term strategy may be applied - plan, ploy, position, pattern and perspective.

Strategy as...	Description
Plan	[a] consciously intended course of action made in advance of the actions to which they apply – often stated explicitly in formal documents known as plans
Ploy	A specific manoeuvre intended to outwit an opponent or competitor
Position	Strategy is any viable position, whether or not directly competitive, i.e. occupying a niche in the environment.
Pattern	A pattern in a stream of actions – consistency in behaviour whether or not intended
Perspective	Commitments to a way of acting and responding.

To the extent that a strategy is an intended set of actions, the strategy as ploy and position definitions can be seen to be complementary to the definition of strategy as plan, rather than as alternative definitions. Both definitions imply an action or set of actions to achieve an objective (whether that objective is to outwit an opponent or occupy a niche position). Thus, a strategy or plan may consist of a series of ploys, or possibly an intention to attain a given position in the market.

Strategy as a pattern definition is more problematic. In this Mintzberg creates a distinction between deliberate and emergent strategies. He argues that strategy may be a product of a deliberate set of actions or a result of actions taken without reference to an intended plan.

Strategists have identified three levels of strategy - corporate, business and functional strategies. Corporate strategy, according to (Hax & Majluf, 1996) has to do with decisions that, by their natures, should be addressed with fullest scope encompassing the overall firm. Usually these decisions cannot be decentralised without running the risk of committing sub-optimisation errors. Further Johnson & Scholes (1999), say the concern at this level is with the overall purpose of the organisation to meet the expectations of owners or major stakeholders and add value to different parts of the enterprise. In my view, it calls for being on top of everything and setting the beacons.

Business strategy level has to do with the firm seeking to have sustainable advantage over competitors. Business managers are supposed to formulate and implement strategic actions congruent with the general corporate direction, constrained by the overall resources assigned to the particular business unit (Hax & Majluf 1996). Johnson and Scholes (1999) reiterate the same by saying that strategy at this level is about how to compete successfully in a particular market.



Functional strategies are concerned with how the component parts of the organisation in terms of resources, processes, people and skills effectively deliver the corporate and business level strategic direction (Johnson & Scholes 1999).

Having looked at the various definitions of strategy, Johnson & Scholes' (1999) definition of strategic management will be adopted - strategic management includes strategic analysis, strategic choice and strategy implementation and evaluation. Strategic management is therefore concerned with complexity arising out of ambiguous and non-routine situations with the organisation-wide rather than operation specific implications.

From the foregoing, the search for excellence in schools thus locates us within the business level strategy as the concern is with how schools compete successfully on the basis of the national examinations.

### **2.3 Competitive Advantage**

According to Collis and Montgomery (1998), the essence of corporate advantage is core competencies, restructuring portfolio and building a learning organisation. They however propose that what is lacking is the insight that turns the mentioned elements into an integrated whole. They suggest that this insight is the essence of corporate advantage. They further



propose that an outstanding corporate advantage is not a random collection of individual building blocks but a carefully constructed system of interdependent parts. Resources that provide advantage range along a continuum from highly specialised at one end to the very general on the other end. And therefore the location of a corporation on the continuum constraints the set of businesses it should compete in and limits its choices about the design of its organisation along the other dimensions. Companies with narrower resources will compete in a narrower range of businesses than companies with more general resources.

Prahalad & Hamel (1990) argue that core competence is the foundation on which competitive advantage is built in the market. Where core competence is defined by Collis (1991) as a shorthand summary of the firm's asset investments, which, in the aggregate, are the fundamental determinants of its strategic position.

The assertion by Hamel & Prahalad (1994) that competitiveness is born in the gap between a company's resources and its managers' goals has also entered the mainstream of strategy thinking. This is based on the notion that long-term competitive success depends on the manager's willingness to continually challenge their frames of references. Their own and their firm's established wisdom, acquired from business schools, peers, consultants, the business press and their own career experiences – this view looks at strategy as stretch and leverage.

The above view is the balanced view to the view of strategy as a fit. The fit view sees the relationship between the company and its competitive environment; the allocation of resources among competing investment opportunities; and a long-term perspective in which 'patient money' figures prominently ... 'being strategic' implies a willingness to take the long view, and 'strategic investments mean ... betting bigger and betting earlier.

Porter (1996) noted that improved operational effectiveness (OE) means performing business activities better than rival organisations, including but not being limited to efficiency. Strategic positioning however involves performing different activities or similar activities in different ways. Constant improvements in OE are necessary to achieve superior profitability – but not sufficient for organisational success – they are not 'strategic'.

According to Porter (1996), few companies have competed successfully on the basis of OE over extended periods, "...staying ahead gets harder every day". OE-based competition "... raises the bar for everyone" as competitors become more alike – through the deployment of an increasingly sophisticated array of management tools. Hamel (1996) also makes the point that corporations around the world are reaching the limits of incrementalism.

In Porter's view (1996), competitive strategies "...deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of values" (Hamel's "strategy is revolution; everything else tactics") emerges from three distinct sources:

1. variety-based positioning, producing a subset of an industry's products or services;
2. needs-based positioning, serving most or all the needs of a particular group of customers; and
3. Access-based positioning, segmenting customers who are accessible in different ways.

Whatever the basis – variety, needs, access, or some combination of the three – positioning requires a tailored set of activities because it is always a function of differences on the supply side – of differences in activities. Having defined positioning, Porter went on to answer his central question – “What is strategy? It is, he wrote” ... the creation of a unique and valuable position, involving a different set of activities.” It is important to note that a unique position is not enough to guarantee a sustainable advantage. Sustainability requires trade-off with other possible positions. This is in order to eliminate or minimise inconsistencies, maximise and concentrate the benefits of a chosen position and to recognise and accept limits of co-ordination and control. The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do. Without trade-off there would be no need for choice, and thus no need for strategy.

In his view, ‘strategic fit’ is the way various components of a strategy interlock, or fit together. Fit therefore locks out imitators by creating a value chain that is as strong as its strongest link, and is a more potent, and central strategic concept than the more common idea that strategy comprises the

'core competencies', 'critical resources' and 'key success factors' mantras of much modern management.

It is believed that since all capabilities have a finite life span, the pursuit of new sources of competitive advantage is a crucial strategic task (Rumelt 1984). Previous research on genesis of capabilities largely has concentrated on sources internal to the firm (e.g. Clark and Fujimoto, 1991; Henderson and Cockburn, 1994). Eitan Naveh, Alfred Marcus, Hyoung Koo Moon (2000), in their paper adopt the argument that managerial capabilities arise out of the competitive dynamics of first and second movers, and that these competitive dynamics often are played out in rich networks of embedded ties. Results of the research showed that capability is gained as a result of learning and therefore advantage is more likely, regardless of whether the organisation is a first or second mover.

Despite the debate on how organisations acquire competitive advantage, one thing is pretty clear that organisations that seem to excel in their industries exist. Studies have been conducted to identify attributes of excellence with Peters & Waterman (1982) being the forerunners in this area. The debate only serves to confirm that there are organisations that are justifying their sustainable existence and as such having competitive advantage; they are performing better than their peers are. It would therefore be interesting to identify their characteristics as a starting point.

## 2.4 Primary Education

Many of the postgraduate studies undertaken have concentrated on secondary and tertiary level education at the expense of Primary education. This is because the graduate teachers are trained mainly to take up positions in secondary and tertiary levels. Further the studies have concentrated on content and actual delivery of the same, neglecting the management of schools as business organisations. This could be detrimental as the government and the society spend so much in terms of scarce resources on schools.

Kenya spends more than most African countries on education if expenditure is expressed as a percentage of GDP. As a proportion of discretionary expenditures, education consumes 35%. It is believed that this is higher than almost all other comparable countries, Ghana being the only exception. Primary education is said to be receiving 55% of the sector's recurrent budget, which is around 3.8% of GDP (Government of Kenya, Ministry of Education, 1988).

Before independence primary school education was almost entirely the responsibility of the communities concerned or non-governmental agencies such as church groups. However since independence the government gradually took over the administration of primary education from local authorities and assumed a greater share of the financial cost in line with the



political commitment to provide equal educational opportunities to all through the provision of free primary education. Most of the primary schools in the country are in the public sector with most of their operational expenses taken care of by the government.

Primary education is essentially the first phase of the Kenyan education system. It usually begins at the age of six years and continues for eight years. The main purpose of primary education is to prepare children to participate fully in the social, political and economic wellbeing of the nation. The curriculum is therefore designed in such a way that it is functional and practical to cater for those children who end their education at the primary school level and also for those who wish to continue with secondary education.

Usually most children are not able to continue their education for one reason or the other – lack of school fees for further education or being unable to acquire good examination results to enter into national or good provincial schools. At times the parents need the children to engage in income generating activities to supplement the families income due to poverty.

Kenya has witnessed remarkable expansion in primary education, both in terms of the number of schools established and in the enrolment, over the past decades. At independence there were 6,056 primary schools with a total enrolment of 891,600 children at the same time the number of trained



teachers was 92,000. By 1990 there were over 14,690 primary schools with an enrolment of slightly over 5 million children and nearly 200,000 trained teachers respectively. At independence only one-third of the enrolment were girls, but by 1990 the proportion of girls had risen to nearly 50% (Government of Kenya, Ministry of Education).

It is important to note that the location of primary schools is usually influenced by various factors. As Wambua & Namaswa (1988) noted, the number of primary schools varies from one region to another. For example, whereas there are hundreds of them in Kiambu there could be less than 10 in Mandera District. Factors that influence location include, land, topography, demography, pressure groups, infrastructure, financial resources and others. These factors could probably also influence performance, but that is beyond the scope of this paper, that will only focus on identifying the attributes of excellence in the already high performance primary schools.

According to the Kamunge (1988), the national educational objectives are:

1. Education must serve to foster national unity;
2. Education must prepare and equip the youth with knowledge, skills and expertise to enable them to play an effective role in the life of the nation;
3. Education must serve the needs of national development;
4. Education must provide for the full development of talents and personality;
5. Education must promote social justice and morality, social obligations and responsibilities and

6. Education must foster positive attitudes and consciousness towards other nations.

Educational organisations' goals give them direction.

## **2.5 Similarities between educational organisation and other organisations**

“Organisation” has been defined in various ways by different authors – Chester Barnard's (1938) is one of the earliest definitions. He defines it as a system of consciously co-ordinated activities of two or more persons. Etzioni (1964) defines it as planned units deliberately structured for the purpose of attaining specific goals. In view of these definitions, educational organisation can be defined as a group of individuals, in a given place, whose efforts are deliberately co-ordinated for the purpose of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes to students or pupils with the aim of achieving predetermined educational objectives or goals (Okumbe 1998).

Educational institutions include schools, colleges, training institutions and universities. Educational organisations therefore have similar characteristics to those of other organisations – goals, technology, division of labour, power centres and environment dependency.

## 2.6 Differences Between Educational organisations and other organisations

According to Wambua & Namaswa (1988), over the years industry has developed management models and techniques designed to ensure effective management. And though education has made attempts to borrow these models and techniques they have met with partial success. Both Umans (1972) and Coombs (1976) agree that for effective management there must be clearly stated objectives. In other industries this has been possible but not in education where success has eluded those who set educational objectives. This is because educational aims are multifarious making it difficult to be specific without in some way violating or even contradicting another. Bearing in mind the fact that national goals for education are political, social, cultural, humanistic, economic and so on it is difficult to be dogmatic.

Education is supposed to mould a whole individual to contribute to a profitable society. Society being heterogeneous, education cannot hope to produce the perfect individual, in a way that manufacturing industries can, over time, produce the perfect product.

Difference also exists in inputs. While other industries invest in producing specific products or services, and the production process is geared towards this, in education one cannot be quite sure of what the final product is going to be due to the intervening factors. While industry can strive to achieve an

absolute in the product, education can only hope for a relative in a 'better' society. This is made worse by the fact that the 'better' society is open to many different interpretations; e.g. depending on whether it is an economist, or educationalist and so on looking at it.

All these notwithstanding, education has been termed the greatest industry, servicing other industries as well as consuming its products. And though it may have defied management models and techniques, it does not mean we abandon trying. Even if they were only halfway successful, they would be of great benefit and would help better manage the educational organisations.

In education the external interference are known, expected and yet uncontrollable, in industry cost-effectiveness is applied in industry and targets set with some degree of certainty of their achievement, even though turbulence would reduce the certainty.

## 2.7 Peak Performance (Excellence)

Eighteen years ago the word excellence entered the business lexicon with the publication of Peters & Waterman book, *In Search of Excellence*. Since then, excellence has been a kind of organisational holy ritual object that has generated "*in search of*" studies in just every area of the organisational endeavour from government administration to environmental program to non-profit.

Lawler, (1996) and Kaplan and Norton's (1996) Balanced Scorecard provided a starting point in terms of literature on high performance organisations. However, (Roberts et al, 1998), argue that the literature lacked sufficient richness, holism, dynamism and creativity for a knowledge based company. They therefore undertook a search for a richer attention-grabbing model of organisational effectiveness. They built on the tradition of the new paradigm management (Bartlett and Ghosal, 1995; Galbraith and Lawler III, 1993; Halal, 1996; Hamel, 1996; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1996; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Porter, 1996; Prahalad and Hamel, 1991; Senge, 1990).

Notably, difference between defining excellence and achieving it exist, Tebbe (1996) – there is a difference between standards or conditions present when an organisation has achieved excellence and how one goes about moving the organisation toward those standards or conditions. According to him defining excellence is an outside-in task, while achieving it is inside out. To define excellence we must understand the customers, needs and expectations. To achieve excellence we ought to go back inside the organisation and use what we learned from our customers to move the organisation toward a state that our customers would recognise as “excellent”.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, excellence is to go beyond a limit or standard, usually in the sense of being superior. This suggests that excellence involve some form of a limit or standard. It also suggests that some evaluating agent is making a judgement. And, that the thing being



evaluated has "gone beyond a limit or standard", or that the evaluator detects that the thing being evaluated exhibits quality of "being superior". Applied to the organisation the following questions should be asked:

Who or what is the evaluating agent?

How is this judgement being made?

What are the standards?

Various literatures proved the following as the answers to the above questions.

1. The evaluator is the customer.
2. The judgement is based on the customer's perception of performance of the organisation compared with their performance perceptions of other organisations.
3. The standards are the customer's sense of the performance of other organisations. Literature on the study of excellence reinforces stakeholder satisfaction as the core of excellence.

High performance or excellence discussions often focus on self-managing teams, quality circles, flatter organisational structures, new flexible technologies, innovative compensation schemes, training, and continuous improvement, (Gephart 1995). She further argues that various approaches have been used to achieve performance, but effectively managing people is

the key to all of them. According to her the following are the core principles of high performance work systems:

- They are linked to an organisation's competitive strategy.
- Clear goals and outcomes are customer driven; individual, team and organisational goals and outcomes are aligned.
- Work is organised around processes that create products and services.
- They included process-oriented tracking and management of results.
- Organisation is by work units that are lined to processes, which enhances ownership, problem solving and learning.
- Workplace structures and systems facilitate focus, accountability, cycle time and responsiveness.
- Collaboration, trust and mutual support characterise them.
- Strategic change management is key.

In the private sector, high-performance organisations tend to be characterised by extreme stability at the top, while in most government organisations; the stability is at the level of the mid-management group (Hartung 1996).

From the various authors, apparently, what some call practices or principles of excellence only seem to be worded differently. To an extent the attributes seem to be consistent. What they all seem to agree on is that the excellence studies offer an unpretentious focus on customers, service, quality, workers and informality.

The works of the new paradigm management authors seem to confirm that excellence principles do indeed appear to be reasonably robust. Roberts et al (1998) however recognise that 15 years later, considerable disagreement still remains and acknowledge that the picture concerning excellence is partial. They indicate that the new paradigm literature is based on normative or anecdotal assertion rather than by systematic empirical evidence and this forms the basis of an empirical study.

## 2.8 Summary

Undeniably, the top-down, authoritarian management styles of many managers has led to an alienation of employees thus severely damaging internal communications. Punishment-oriented disciplinary systems have led employees to fear making mistakes more than they fear providing poor service. In this era of globalisation, it is now critical to institutionalise excellence – formalising the practice of outstanding performance if any institution, organisation and government are to remain relevant.

Reinventing, reengineering or performance based budgeting, are good techniques that yield positive benefits, but it is important to note that these do not pass the test of providing a formal system to establish excellence as a part of an organisation. In most cases they are implemented in an authoritarian manner with little employee participation, thus compounding the level of mistrust between employees and management. This does not help

develop the independent ability of employees to perform at a high level. It is definitely of importance for the employees to perform at high levels for any organisation or institution to remain competitive.

Given the preceding facts, it is even more critical for education the greatest industry's output to be of high calibre. The products of the education industry are in turn the input to other industries in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes. It is therefore of necessity that the institutionalisation of excellence begins from the schooling system to be infused into the other industries.

As noted by Gephart (1995), organisations that exhibit high performance use all their resources--human, material, and technological—to achieve and sustain competitive advantage. According to her a systems approach is key. High performance emerges out of the links formed on how work is organised, how people are managed, how technology is used, and how all of these are linked to an organisation's competitive strategy and culture. Gephart further notes that new research provides systematic evidence that adopting high performance practices can dramatically improve an organisation's performance. This being true then it is of importance to find out whether a critical industry such as education also benefits from adopting high performance practices.

Further Peters and Waterman (1982) note that success today is based more on intangibles like customer loyalty, customer services, market image and

many others. Schools use their names to attract a certain calibre of pupils or students, thus ensuring their success. Literature on excellence further confirms that high performance organisations are not afraid to make mistakes. They believe that like learning to ride a bicycle, one ought to be getting up on it again and again after falling off.

High performance work places are cool places to work. In other words there are restaurants that people like to wait table at and others that people don't. This further reveals to us that the high performance organisations do not have problems with attracting dedicated employees, as they prefer to be associated with excellence. Once again showing that image is something. These organisations do not have labour shortages – there is no talent shortage if you are a great place to work (Rosner 2000). In these organisations the leaders lead by walking the message.

With globalisation, what would be more important than to be assured of being able to be a cool place to work in? So as to be able to attract the best talent to ensure success. To remain relevant even with the changing times? I bet if institutionalising excellence is it, everyone would try to do exactly this.



## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the various steps for executing the study are set out, in order to achieve the study objectives. These steps include, research design, population, sampling criteria, data collection instruments, data collection procedures and finally data analysis.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The researcher used a survey, to explore the practices of high performance Primary Schools in Nairobi. This kind of research methodology is usually used to study the general conditions of people and organisations. It investigates the behaviour and opinions of people usually through questioning them. A general review, examination and description of findings is usually undertaken and the results reported.

### **3.3 Population**

The population of the study constituted of all Primary Schools that are ranked in the Kenya National Examination urban ranking – top 30 in three ranking categories – Public over 100 students, public 51 – 100, and the private. The study covered three consecutive periods, 1997, 1998 and 1999. This is

because for a school to qualify as a peak performer, the performance must have been consistent over a period of time. Given the nature of strategic management planning, most organisations are adopting a 3-year strategic planning period due to environmental turbulence.

### **3.4 Sample**

The sample of the constituent schools in the ranking was selected based on the following criteria:

1. The schools had to be based in Nairobi, due to resource constraints – time and funding.
2. The selected schools must have consistently remained in the same ranking category for the last 3 years (1997, 1998 and 1999)
3. All schools meeting the above criteria all formed part of the sample.

The number of schools in the population was small and as such all the 30 schools were sampled. When all the schools were contacted only 23 responded. This thus became the effective sample.

### **3.5 Data Description and Collection Method**

Primary data was collected through the use of a questionnaire that contained both open and closed-ended questions. Personal interviews were conducted

with the heads or directors of schools. The researcher conducted the interview based on a schedule of questions. The schedule was based on knowledge obtained through literature study, which provided some of the attributes found to be present in high performance organisations. Part of the data was collected in October 2000 but due to the nature of schools (this was an examination period), it was not possible to collect all the data and this was extended to the early months of 2001.

Although questionnaires were used, observations were made too during the personal interview sessions. At times when some of the answers were not forthcoming secondary data from school magazines was used. General information on the schools was collected. Data on management practices of the schools was. Data was largely qualitative with minimal quantitative.

### **3.6 Data Compilation and Analysis**

Completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency. Data was tabulated and classified into sub-samples according to common characteristics. Responses were coded to facilitate basic statistical analysis and descriptive statistics. Tables, frequencies, percentages, means, bar charts and bar graphs were used to present the data. Open-ended questions were coded by grouping responses according to recurring themes and SPSS was used to analyse data. Cross tabulation was performed on some of the questions and responses.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

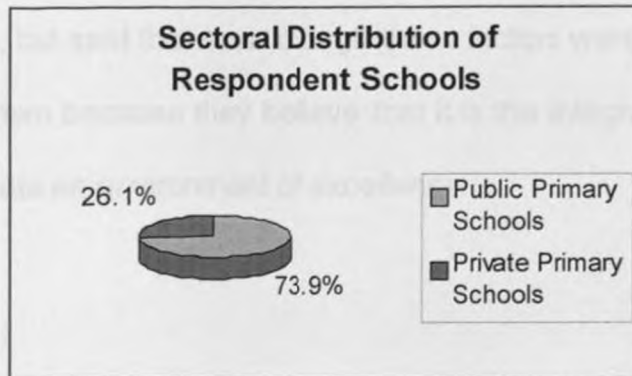
The data in the study was summarised and presented in the form of tables, percentages, frequency distribution, graphs and pie charts. Cross-tabulation was also performed on some of the questions.

### 4.2 Sectoral Distribution of respondent Schools

Table 1: Sectoral Distribution of Respondent Schools

Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Public Primary Schools	17	73.91%
Private Primary Schools	5	26.09%
TOTAL	23	100%

As shown in Table 1 above, a total of 23 interviews took place successfully. These interviews



represent 76.66% of the schools sampled. 73.91% of the respondents were public schools and 26.09% private schools.

It is important to make a note here, that the public schools are more than the private ones. This is not by design, but by default. Given that the private schools are a recent phenomenon, the public schools by far still outnumber the private ones. By 1999 there were 248 primary schools in Nairobi (Government of Kenya, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Statistics Section). It is documented that by 1994 only 2% of the schools were private. It therefore follows that public schools far outnumber the private ones, and even though most of the private schools are in Nairobi, they could not be that many. Out of these, some do not follow the Kenyan school system, thus further reducing the number. And finally only a few are high performing.

The questions in the study questionnaire sought to establish what factors had contributed to the good performance of the schools. The questions also were designed to find out if any of the factors ranked higher in importance than others. Most of the schools admitted that some of the factors were more important than others, but said that even though these factors were important, they could not rank them because they believe that it is the integration of the factors that would create an environment of excellence.



The above statement, perhaps, confirms Porter's view (1996) that fit is a more central component of competitive advantage than most realise. He believes that strategic fit among many activities is fundamental not only to competitive advantage but also to sustainability of that advantage. It is harder for a rival to match an array of interlocked activities than it is merely to imitate a particular sales-force approach, match a process technology, or replicate a set of product features. Porter says that positions built on activity systems are more sustainable than those built on individual activities, in this case we could say factors or practices.

Activity	Cost	Quality	Speed	Flexibility	Customer Service
Research & Development	High	High	Low	Low	Low
Manufacturing	Low	High	High	Low	Low
Sales & Marketing	Low	Low	High	High	High
Customer Support	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Logistics	Low	Low	High	Low	Low
Human Resources	Low	Low	Low	High	Low
Finance	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Information Systems	Low	Low	Low	High	Low
Legal	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Procurement	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Manufacturing	Low	High	High	Low	Low
Distribution	Low	Low	High	Low	Low
Customer Service	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Product Development	High	High	Low	Low	Low
Manufacturing	Low	High	High	Low	Low
Sales & Marketing	Low	Low	High	High	High
Customer Support	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Logistics	Low	Low	High	Low	Low
Human Resources	Low	Low	Low	High	Low
Finance	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Information Systems	Low	Low	Low	High	Low
Legal	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Procurement	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

### 4.3 Factors of Good Performance and those that would hurt Performance

Table 2(a): Factors of Good Performance by Type of School

Factors of Good Performance	Public Schools		Private Schools		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1. Good management and Leadership	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
2. Support from critical stakeholders	16	88.9%	5	100%	21	91.3%
3. Teamwork in various forms	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
4. Adequate resources through improvisation	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
5. Delegation	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
6. Motivation/Rewarding effort	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
7. Participatory Decision Making	17	94.4%	5	100%	22	100%
8. Culture – Discipline/Competition	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
9. Positive Community Attitude	6	33.3%	1	20%	7	30.4%
10. Pleasant Learning Environment	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
11. Commitment to Excellence	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
12. Individual respect and learning from others	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
13. Small class size	1	5.6%	4	80%	5	21.7%
14. Good planning	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
15. Continuous training of staff	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
16. Catchment area	3	16.7%	0	0	3	13%
17. Acknowledging failure/use of results to improve	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
18. Regular communication	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%

In responding to the question of what contributed to the good performance of the schools, 18 factors were cited. However, only factors that have a response rate of over 80% to 100% for both public and private schools will be considered. Having said this, from Table 2(a) the following factors seem to be the factors of good performance:

Factors with a response rate of 100% for both types of schools were

1. Good management and leadership.
2. Teamwork in various forms.
3. Adequate resources through improvisation.
4. Delegation.
5. Motivation and rewarding effort.
6. Participatory Decision making.
7. Culture of discipline and competition.
8. Pleasant learning environment.
9. Commitment to excellence.
10. Individual respect and learning from others.
11. Good planning.
12. Continuous training of staff.
13. Acknowledging failure and using results to improve.
14. Regular communication.

The one other significant factor was the support from critical stakeholders with a response rate of 88.9% by public schools and 100% private schools.

Although small class size was cited by 80% of private schools, only 5.6% of the public schools cited it as a factor of good performance. This is probably because majority of the public schools that perform well usually have large class sizes but still perform well. As for the private schools, this may be one way of differentiating themselves from the public schools in a bid to be seen as to be offering superior service and taking into account customer preferences.

KCPE examination has been subjected to considerable research attention, in one such study, class size was found to have no effect on KCPE performance (Appleton 1995). Empirical results indicated that, controlling for other factors (such as socio-economic status of the pupils and availability of textbooks in the school) class size did not have a significant effect on examination performance.

Table 2(b): Factors That Harm the Performance of Schools by Type of School

Factors that would threaten performance	Public Schools		Private Schools		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1. Class Size	1	5.6%	4	80%	5	21.7%
2. Lack of discipline	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
3. Lack of teamwork	16	88.9%	5	100%	21	91.3%
4. Lack of basic learning material/Financial Resources	16	88.9%	5	100%	21	91.3%
5. Unpleasant learning environment	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
6. Lack of teachers	1	5.6%			1	4.3%
7. Lack of support from critical stakeholders	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
8. Frequent Administrative changes	5	27.8%			5	21.7%
9. Lack of devolution of authority	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
10. Poor leadership and management	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
11. Lack of motivation	18	100%	5	100%	23	100%
12. Bad home environment	1	5.6%			1	4.3%

The same basis of over 80% to 100% response rate by both types of schools was applied. As such the following were found to be likely to hurt the performance of a school:

1. Lack of discipline.
2. Lack of teamwork.
3. Lack of basic learning material and financial resources.
4. Unpleasant learning environment.



5. Lack of support from critical stakeholders.
6. Lack of devolution of authority.
7. Poor leadership and management.
8. Lack of motivation and rewarding effort.

#### 4.4 Bias For Action – Getting Things Done and Learning from Results

As far as having a bias for action – getting things done and learning from results, the schools were ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 on the following aspects:

Table 3(a): Rank – The participation of teachers/pupils in decision making

	Frequency	Percentage
Moderate	1	4.3
High	22	95.7
TOTAL	23	100.0

1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high

From the responses in table 3(a), a majority of the schools (95.7%) do involve both teachers and pupils in decision making.

Table 3(b): Rank – Problem Solving Outside of Formal Authority Lines

	Frequency	Percentage
Moderate	1	4.3
High	22	95.7
TOTAL	23	100.0

1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high

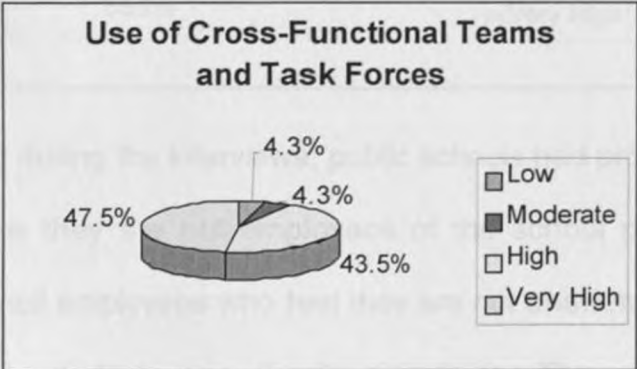
Problem solving outside formal authority lines was also ranked high by 95.7% of the schools. This seems to be a normal practice in most of the schools.

Table 3(c): Rank – Use of Cross-Functional Teams and Task Forces

	Frequency	Percentage
Low	1	4.3
Moderate	1	4.3
High	10	43.5
Very High	11	47.5
TOTAL	23	100.0

1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high

Most schools did rank their schools on the use of cross-functional teams as high and very high, giving 91% of the schools. It seems that these teams are widely used in high performing schools. From the



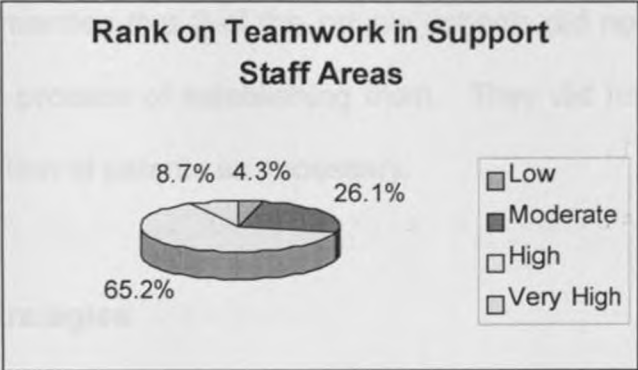
interviews schools indicated that they had subject panels, pupil subject leaders and many others. This seems to align with other discussions of excellence, Gephart (1995), she says that high performance often focuses on self-managing teams, quality circles and many others. Teamwork in support staff areas was also ranked and below are the results:

Table 3(d): Rank – Teamwork in Support Staff Areas

	Frequency	Percentage
Low	1	4.3
Moderate	5	26.1
High	15	65.2
Very High	2	8.7
TOTAL	23	100.0

1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high

The ranking of teamwork in support staff areas seems more varied, although 73.9% still ranked this aspect as high or very high.



From information gathered during the interviews, public schools had problems with support staff because they are not employees of the school per se. Usually they are City Council employees who feel they are not answerable to anyone in the schools. Heads have no authority over them. They are not able to discipline them.

Table 3(e): Rank – TSC/PTA-Management Partnership

	Frequency	Percentage
Low	1	4.3
Moderate	3	13.0
High	19	82.6
TOTAL	23	100.0

1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high

The partnership with the PTA/TSC was ranked high by 82.6% of the schools. It is indeed necessary to mention that 2 of the private schools did not have PTA and were only in the process of establishing them. They did however acknowledge the collaboration of parents as necessary.

#### 4.5 Communication Strategies

A question was asked to the schools' heads to rank their schools on the use of structured communication plan. They were to rank this as very low, low, moderate, high and very high. All the 23 schools ranked the use of structured communication plan as moderate.

Table 4(a): Rank – Regular State-of-Business Meetings

	Frequency	Percentage
Moderate	1	4.3
High	14	60.9
Very High	8	34.8
TOTAL	23	100.0

1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high

State of the business meetings was ranked high, meaning that the meetings were frequent or very frequent. Indeed 95.7% of the schools said the meetings were either frequent or very frequent.

Table 4(b): Rank – Integration of Technology & People by Type of School

	Public School		Private School		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Low	12	66.7	1	20	13	56.5
Moderate	6	33.3			6	26.1
High			4	80	4	17.4
Total	18	100	5	100	23	100

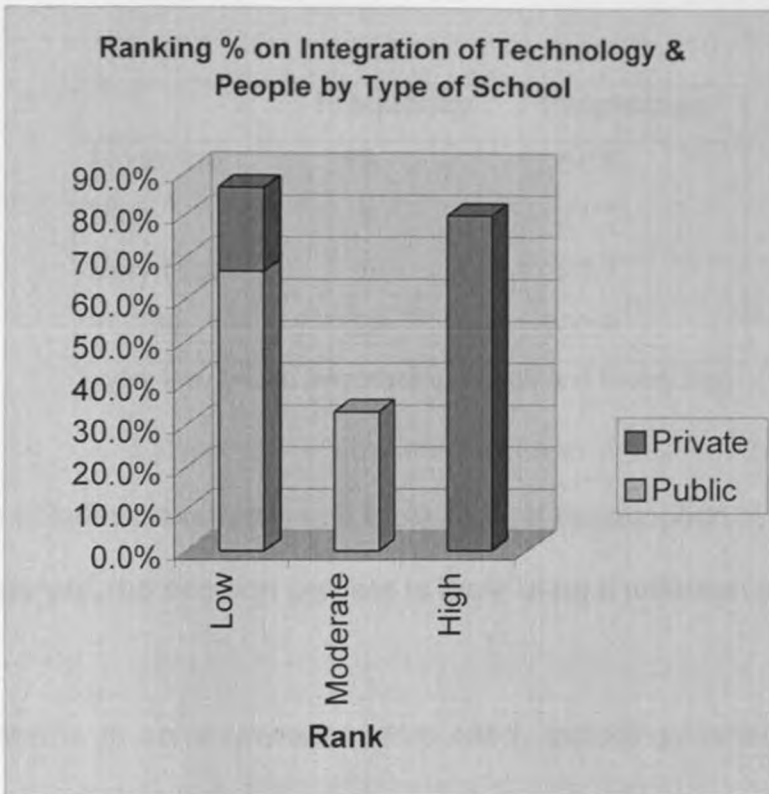
1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high



On the issue of integration of technology and people the majority ranked their

schools

low or



moderate (82.6%). A majority of these schools were public schools, only one private school ranked low on this. This could be attributed to the fact that developing countries, Kenya included have been lagging behind in computer technology and access. The private schools are faster to adopt technology as a way of value adding to their services. They seek to justify their existence, along with the public schools. The public schools that were already adopting technology, were those that had PTA support to hire a teacher, parents had to pay extra for this.

Table 4(c): Rank – Teachers/Parents Involvement in New Technology

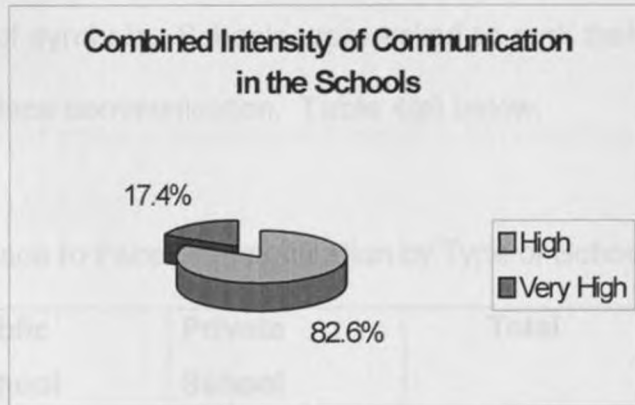
Decisions

	Public School	Private School	Total
Moderate	13	0	13
High	5	0	5
Very High	5	0	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>

1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high

Table 4(c) is indeed a reflection of Table 4(b). If the adoption of technology is low or moderate, the decision process is likely to be a reflection of the fact.

Various means of communication were cited, including verbal, written and symbols. All the schools said they used a combination of the three. Asked to rank the intensity of communication with



teachers, pupils, parents and support staff, all the schools ranked it as high or very high. Table 4(d) below illustrates the same.

Table 4(d): Intensity of Communication by Type of School

	Public School		Private School		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
High	17	94.4	2	40.0	19	82.6
Very High	1	5.6	3	60.0	4	17.4
Total	18	100	5	100	23	100

1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high and 5=very high

A question further sought to find out whether communication within the school was face to face. Indeed all the schools' response was yes. Then the question was taken further to find out to what extent the communication was face to face. This was in recognition that not all communication could be face to face. We earlier noted that there were various forms of communication, verbal, written and use of symbols. Schools were asked to rank their school on the aspect of face to face communication. Table 4(e) below:

Table 4(e): Ranking of Face to Face Communication by Type of School

	Public School		Private School		Total	
	Cases	%	Cases	%	Cases	%
To some extent			1	20	1	4.3
To a large extent	14	77.8	2	40.0	16	69.6
To a very large extent	4	22.2	2	40.0	6	26.1
Total	18	100	5	100	23	100

Another question on communication further sought to classify communication within the schools as formal or informal. All the schools said that both types of communication were used but it was largely informal. This is in line with Peters and Waterman's (1982) findings that organisations have to avoid too rigid a structure. According to them, if an organisation is to work effectively, communication should be through the most effective channel regardless of the organisation chart.

#### 4.6 Close to the Customer

Literature on the study of excellence reiterates stakeholders as the core of excellence. Peak performing organisations present themselves as problem solvers. To find out whether this was true, schools were asked to enumerate ways in which they seek to solve customer problems. The table below is an indication of some of the ways cited.

Table 5: Ways of Solving Customer Problems

	Frequency	Percentage
1. Free discussion of problem and information gathering	22	95.7
2. Making rules known and understood by all	9	39.1
3. Remedial teaching and special support to those in need	23	100.0
4. Firmness in enforcing rules	8	34.8
5. Guidance and Counselling	23	100.0
6. Peer Support	12	52.2
7. Delegation of tasks	23	100.0
8. Welfare group for teachers	5	21.7
9. Diaries and report books to communicate problems and progress	23	100.0
10. Open days to discuss issues of learning	23	100.0

N=23

In other industries, no matter what they produce, excellent companies define themselves as being in the service business. These companies listen well to the customers and are actively involved in customer contact and follow-through. Companies are customer and market driven, not technology driven. They perceive their professional staff to be customer problem solvers. This then is even more critical in schools since the pupils are both the products to be and at the same time the customers together with their parents. Ed (1997) says that people always were important and the most important asset. This indeed makes the business of education more complex, since one has to deal with employees and pupils as the customers and at the same time as assets that may lead to the success of the school. This is why we see schools abound in ways of seeking to solve customer problems as indicated above.



## 4.7 Autonomy and Entrepreneurship

High performance organisations usually create an almost radical decentralisation and autonomy, a breeding ground for the entrepreneurial spirit. The organisations are usually willing to and acting outside the norm, with a substantial tolerance for failure. As confirmed by findings on the classification of communication in schools as largely informal, and intensity of communication, is extraordinary, (Clark 1998).

The schools were asked whether they rewarded their employees for thinking and acting outside the norm. All the schools' (100%) response was yes. They confirmed that employees were rewarded through material and financial incentives, verbal appreciation, celebration of success in various forms – parties, luncheons and trips, giving more responsibility and through document appreciation such as certificates and letters. In practically all the schools there was pro-action and practical problem solving. In scheduling classes arrangements were made to schedule free teachers to take a class, in a case where a teacher is not able to take a class for one reason or the other. At any given time the teachers that are free are known and documented. Makini School did take this concept further by training teacher assistants as a service to the community. The schools were flexible in shifting people around. The schools' structures were accommodating and supportive. The teachers were willing to be rescheduled.

On the issue of failure among teachers, pupils and support staff, a question was asked to find out how failure is handled. Various ways of handling failure were cited. These were:

- ◆ Clarification of problem through discussion and counselling.
- ◆ Using failure as a learning opportunity.
- ◆ Mentoring through successful peers by encouraging and not laying blame.
- ◆ Teamwork as far as failure is concerned. Failure was seen as a collective responsibility.
- ◆ Clear setting of targets and making these known to everyone.
- ◆ Individuals had the freedom to choose what they did best. This was more so with the teachers. In primary schools teachers are supposed to teach all subjects, but they were given the option to choose the subject they were comfortable teaching.
- ◆ Others punished or reprimanded, this was in extreme cases.
- ◆ Recognising and acknowledging work well done and improvement.
- ◆ Data collection to enable evaluation.

From the responses above it is easy to see a tolerance for failure. Failure was seen as an opportunity to learn. Failure breaks the tension; thus creating a learning environment and resumption of winning (Waterman et al). The responses actually indicate an acknowledgement that failure will occur from time to time. Ed (1997), writes that people should be fired for not making mistakes, since we learn to ride a bike by getting up on it again and again after we fall off. According Peters & Waterman (1982), one has got to be

willing to fail. One cannot innovate unless they are willing to accept mistakes. He further says that champions don't automatically emerge. They emerge because history and numerous supports encourage them to nurture them through trying times, celebrate their successes, and nurse them through occasional failures. This nurturing process can be seen from the responses.

#### **4.8 Productivity through People – The School as an Extended Family**

As seen from previous responses, the schools seem to emphasise face to face communication and people are given the freedom to work towards overall objectives in ways they determine best. As such when the question was asked as to whether schools focus on individual respect and success, the answer was yes (100%) for all the schools. This calls for a people orientation. In support of this the schools enumerated various ways of doing this, as follows:

1. Individual contribution was valued and this was made known.
2. Even when individuals failed, they were encouraged to perform better.
3. Personal concern was shown in individual matters.
4. Individuals were encouraged to pursue personal development and were even trained or sponsored in areas of interests. In most of the schools teachers were pursue degree courses on the parallel programme.
5. Teachers were released for/or recommended for promotion.

6. Competition was encouraged between individuals to release their potentials. This was in terms of subjects and even house competitions, streams vs. streams.
7. There were individual awards for excelling or improving.
8. Tasks were delegated with authority to individuals.

It is evident from the above responses that most of the schools treat their people as partners, with dignity and respect. In these schools the head was referred to as Head-teacher as opposed to Headmaster/mistress. This conveys the sense that teachers and the head are peers and co-workers. This gives a sense of belonging to a family and recognising personal achievement. In all the schools a people orientation was evident in the way the teachers, pupils and the head teacher related. Teachers were allowed to choose the subjects to teach and there was an open door policy for both teachers and pupils. Often a pupil or teacher walked or peeped into the Head-teachers office in the course of our interviews.

In a nutshell face to face communication involves people, sustains credibility and generates enthusiasm. Incentives, training allows for people to be themselves and for individuals to stand out as adults. In most of these schools monetary rewards were given individually to teachers who subjects came tops in the examinations. The rewards were based on merit.

#### 4.9 Hands-on, Value driven – Well Defined Set of Inspirational, Guiding beliefs

Peak performing organisations usually have a well-defined set of inspirational guiding beliefs. Their leaders are said to practice management by walking around (MBWA), and they create exciting environments through personal attention, persistence and direct intervention throughout the organisation levels. This kind of management is not to spy on people but to make the head more accessible and approachable. Schools were asked whether they had a motto. See an illustration of the responses below:

Table 6 (a): Presence of School Motto by Type of School

	Public School		Private School		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	18	100.0	4	80.0	22	95.7
No			1	20.0	1	4.3
Total	18	100.0	5	100.0	23	100.0

This confirms the findings of other excellence studies. 95.7% of schools had a school motto. The only private school that did not have a motto (Kilimani Junior) had a mission statement. All the other schools had both, but felt the motto was simple and easy to recall and entrench in the pupils' minds. Some examples include:

1. Excellence our commitment.
2. Forward Ever, Backwards Never.



3. Abundant Life – this one with a spiritual under tone to express a religious culture.
4. Better your best – also expressing a characteristic of excellent companies that believe in seeking to exceed personal best – hating to come second best to themselves.
5. Hard work is the key to success – expressing action as the key to excelling.
6. United and confident of success – this also emphasising teamwork for success
7. Fanya Kwa Makini – Swahili for Do diligently.

The schools took the process of value shaping seriously, in order to create a culture of discipline and winning. They had various ways of entrenching the values in the minds of those concerned. Most of the teachers lived the motto. In one particular school a teacher said, “when a new teacher joins this school they either tow the line or quit, since we do not entertain idlers, we act as role models to the pupils”. There was pressure from peers to perform. In almost all the schools, the teachers said the head-teacher lived by example, and usually the subject taught by her/him, was usually the best performed in the examinations. This usually brought great energies and talents out of the other teachers.

In most of the schools the head-teachers were seen to be sincere, had sustained personal commitment to the values the leaders sought to implant,



coupled with extraordinary persistence in reinforcing those values. As an illustration, in one particular school where doing the right thing in the right way was stressed, the head-teacher set a particular day for checking handwritings in the various classes. She would check each pupil's book personally and demonstrate what she expected.

Usually the head-teachers have set and demand standards of excellence, like Emerson's Charles Knight says, "Set and demand standards of excellence. Anybody who accepts mediocrity – in school, in job, in life – is a guy who compromises. And when the leader compromises, the whole damn organisation compromises."

As found out by Peters & Waterman (1982), the specific content of the dominant beliefs of the excellent companies is narrow in scope, including just a few basic values:

1. A belief in being the "best"
2. A belief in the importance of the details of execution, the nuts and bolts of doing the job well
3. A belief in the importance of people
4. A belief in superior quality service
5. A belief that most members of the organisation should be innovators, and its corollary, the willingness to support failure
6. A belief in the importance of informality to enhance communication

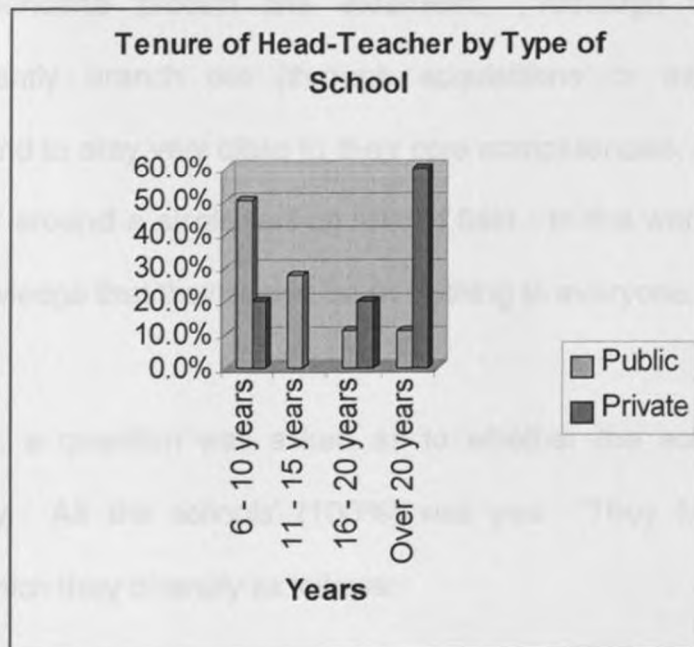
7. Explicit belief in and recognition of the importance of economic growth and importance.

Just from the few examples of some of the beliefs (motto), we can see most of these beliefs.

Table 6(b): Tenure of Head-teacher by Type of School

	Public School		Private School		Total	
	Case	%	Case	%	Case	%
6 – 10 years	9	50.0	1	20.0	10	43.5
11 – 15 years	5	27.8			5	21.7
16 – 20 years	2	11.1	1	20.0	3	13.0
Over 20 years	2	11.1	3	60.0	5	21.7
Total	18	100.0	5	100.0	23	100.0

A question on how long the head-teacher had been at the top of the school revealed the results in Table 6(b). If the strategic planning cycle were put at 5 years, the table



reveals that at least the heads would be able to complete the period in the same school. Perhaps it could be suggested that duration of the head in a school has a part to play in achieving good performance, since a head has the time to plan and implement the strategies for result. However, research should be undertaken to prove this empirically.

As far as leadership style is concerned all the heads believed that the style varied depending on situations but the fundamental one was largely democratic. This is confirmed by the ranking on involving pupils and teachers in decision making (Table 3(a)).

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#### **4.10 Stick to the Knitting**

Peters & Waterman (1982) propose that sticking to the central discipline does not mean having mundane product line extension. Although these organisations consistently branch out (through acquisitions or internal diversification), they tend to stay very close to their core competencies, Scott (1998). They diversify around a single skill or related field. In the words of Bob Fluor, they acknowledge that they cannot be everything to everyone.

In view of the above, a question was asked as to whether the schools diversified in any way. All the schools' (100%) was yes. They further enumerated ways in which they diversify as follows:

1. Income generating activities, such as pig keeping, lunch programmes and school transport.
2. The schools engage in co-curricula activities such as public speaking, games, essay writing and promotional competitions on behalf of the schools.
3. The schools also sought to update knowledge, skills and attitudes, by getting involved with experts in various fields. Health talks on AIDS/HIV, drugs and drug abuse. This is done together with parents to help the pupils come to terms with life issues.
4. Peer learning – schools acknowledge that though teachers are there to impart knowledge, pupils are more able to support each other in enhancing learning. Time is created and pupils given the opportunity to support one another.
5. Public relations/social responsibility – various schools are involved in community business. Though this may not bring tangible profit. Ed (1997) says that success today is based more on intangibles like customer loyalty, customer service and market image. Private schools engage in social responsibility efforts to give back something to the community. The public schools as a public relations venture, communicating with the various publics. They get involved in charity walks for the elderly (Help Age), Freedom from Hunger walk, Hear Run. Some private schools train teacher assistants to help with managing classes. Other activities are just to create awareness concerning our environment.
6. Guidance and counselling

7. The business of setting internal /divisional examinations. Schools do this to contain the risk of the pupils failing due to lack of adequate exposure to examinations.

It is clear that the high performing schools are no different from other excellent companies. They do not want to be involved in anything major that may require changing their character. All the schools acknowledged the fact that they had different capabilities and they tend to work around these. Even though they do engage in other activities they stay close to their knitting, their core business being academics and bringing up a rounded individual. Most schools stressed that they aimed at developing the whole person without compromising academic excellence. Others did not engage in games to competitive level but did internally.

All the schools said they stayed close to set targets. In all these schools internal targets were set. Usually the targets were in relation to the last mean score they attained in the national examinations. Even the individual classes set their targets, the subject teachers also set their own targets. These targets were kept visible on the notice boards. There were graphs indicating the trends over the years too. Results were not kept secret. This confirms the fact that excellent performing companies keep their goals visible as this helps them to always confront them, Mackenzie (1989). Goals provide benchmarks of success that is why they motivate, and help keep track of



progress. Mackenzie further says that studies of peak performers have consistently shown the importance of targeting goals that demand our best.

The findings that these high performing schools strive to beat their own results. Confirms Peters & Austin's (1997) findings that excellent performers seek to exceed their personal best. They hate to come second best to themselves. The knowledge of always being in contention has been a driving force for the high performing schools. It induces excitement and a passion to win.

Asked how they find out about their competitors, the schools indicated that this was done through discussions, collaboration, socialising and borrowing from each other. It was also done indirectly through parents, pupils and teachers, cluster meetings, through documented City Council analyses and school open days. It is clear that like other businesses the schools are aware they have competitors and they ought to know about them.

It is said that excellence has a price, and the price is time, energy, attention and focus. In a bid to confirm this, a question was asked as to how activities were harmonised. All the schools responded that this was done through record keeping of activities and this involves time, and energy. There was time tabling of activities and co-ordination of the same. There was conscious management of time through use of the bell, delegation of tasks and this call for coaching for effective delivery. This indeed requires time, energy,



attention and focus on people. Delegation actually extends what one can do, to what one can get done through others. This helped the schools' heads avoid doing everything alone thus bringing in some order. It also released time for more important work (long term or priority matters) thus bringing in focus. At the same time it allows for decision making to take place at the lowest levels thus consolidating people's energies.

#### 4.11 Simple Form, Lean Staff

Table 7(a): Number of Pupils by type of School

	Public School		Private School		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
100 – 500	1	5.6			1	4.3
Over 500 – 1000	8	44.4	5	100.0	13	56.5
Over 1000	9	50.0			9	39.1
Total	18	100.0	5	100.0	23	100.0

As indicated in the Table &, 95.6% of the total of both schools had over 500 to over 1000 pupils. Even the private schools have a number of pupils. In the excellent companies it is believed that small is beautiful. The private schools divided their schools into small units by dividing the schools as Lower Primary, Middle Primary and Upper Primary. Each of these divisions had a head. In addition to this the classes tended to be smaller.

In the public schools, they were divided into Lower and Upper Primary only. The systems were kept simple. This was done in order for them to re-organise more flexibly, frequently and fluidly. Usually both types of schools used better temporary forms, such as task forces, streams, houses and subjects. There were class teachers, house teachers, subject panel heads, heads of departments and subject panels. Authority was pushed further down the line to prefects and pupils' representatives. The basic structural arrangement was thus very simple. Since this was clear, flexibility was facilitated around this. It was even easy to re-schedule teachers and reallocate duties given the existing structure. Staff was lean at the top. There was the head, deputy head and the senior teacher in public schools. In private schools there was a head and deputy for lower, middle and upper primary or an overall administrator in addition to the Director(s) – usually the proprietor. In others, the owner ran the school. The administrators were thus fewer than the operators, the actual doers.

Just to be clear how schools would make sure decision making was not delayed due to numbers, a question was asked to find out how they deal with the issue. The table below gives us an indication to this.

Table 7(b): How Schools ensure that Numbers do not delay decision making by type of School

	Public School		Private School		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1. Communication top-bottom for both directional and operational decisions	1	5.6	4	80.0	5	21.7
2. Directional communication top-down directional consultative	17	94.4	1	20.0	18	78.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

80% of the private schools' communication tend to be top-bottom this is probably a reflection of ownership. Indeed 94.4% of the public schools communication as far as directional communication is concerned it is also top-down because they are under the authority of a government ministry. The directional decisions however tend to be participatory.

On the resolution of issues, a question was asked as to whether procedures existed for this that could not be violated. Schools admitted having procedures that were flexible. The teachers and prefects were empowered to resolve issues to some extent – within some guidelines. All the schools said that their issues' resolution was flexible. Each case was looked at on an

individual basis. It was obvious that most of the heads are disciplinarians yet human and very tolerant. There is a balance between the two.

#### 4.12 Simultaneous Loose-Tight Properties

Excellent companies strive for rigid controls yet they zealously insist on autonomy, entrepreneurship and innovation. Usually the company rules have a positive tone, dealing with quality, service, innovation and experimentation, with focus on building and expanding rather than on restraining. To find out about this practice in schools, a question was asked as to whether the school rules had a negative or a positive tone. All the schools' response was positive. This was explained thus, they reinforce positive behaviour, no trivialities are included. The rules are explained and not imposed. Pupils do not resist the rules, the rules help move towards the accomplishment of overall objectives, they are not enforced by punishment and finally there are no sanctions.

Time was managed consciously in these schools and usually the homework was handed in and graded. In private schools, the use of diaries was a must. Every parent had to sign that they had checked the homework. At the end of the term parents had to check the report book, give comments and sign. On open days parents had to come and check the children's work. The schools are strict on this and parents are telephoned when they do not turn up. Good work was commended, there was positive feedback and exemplary work was

put up on the notice boards. Whenever necessary there was coaching. Everything was done within the rules.

Simultaneous loose-tight properties being concerned with quality we also looked at the schooling inputs. The schools were asked what they did to ensure delivery of quality learning. Schools hired qualified teachers some non-professional trained for special subjects such as music, arts and computers. Most believed that some teachers were naturally gifted. They also ensured that teachers underwent in-service training courses (INSETS). Other times they used consultants to update the teachers on changing trends. Teachers were motivated through incentives and even sponsored for personal development training. Most of the teachers were pursuing further education at the universities on a part time basis. Teachers were encouraged to seek promotion and were recommended for the same.

Researches have found out that instructional materials are key ingredients in learning. Textbook and reading material being among the most important (Benhow, 1980, Farrell, 1993). The schools had ways of providing these through the support of PTA, some schools simply provided additional material for teachers and encouraged them to buy and put in a request for refund. Even seminar reports were provided. Pupils were encouraged to provide at least a story books for exchange with other pupils. There were class libraries where there was no main library. In St. Hannah's there was a strategic partnership with the British Council Library to assist. Most of the public



schools also had a book fund to provide communal textbooks that keep being handed down.

On physical facilities and equipment the schools improvised a lot and in private schools they tried to provide as much as possible. Most of the public schools were able to manage with the little they had through improvisation – experimentation and creativity on the part of the pupils and teachers.

As far as the pupils were concerned a good relationship was forged with them to encourage openness and to seek help. They were also given guidance and counselling. Personal attention was given to weak pupils through remedial classes. Competition between individuals and groups was encouraged. An atmosphere of winning for everybody was created. There were prizes for outstanding performers, for those who improved in performance, those good in particular subjects and so forth. There were prizes for the most responsible, neatest pupil and even in games. Everyone was thus made to feel they were winners if they could only try. Peers became the standard on which to measure up, the pressure put on others by exemplary performance created a sense of wanting to belong.

The people aspect was taken seriously because the raw material in the school system is animate. Pastoral care was accorded to pupils and in these schools pupils were not allowed to repeat, unless the parent insisted through a written request and the school committee agreed to the decision. This is to avoid



demoralising pupils and making them feel failures. A culture of discipline prevailed through the value system in place.

Teachers were not just content to give service within official working hours. The teachers were committed to providing over and above the call of duties. In most of the schools visited. The teachers were in school as early as 6.30 a.m. and as late as 7.00 p.m. They were involved in games and other co-curricula activities, public speaking, debate, music festivals to encourage talent in the pupils.

The kind of dedication in teachers and staff in these schools confirm that people who seek excellence step out for love, because of a burning desire to be the best. To make a difference, or perhaps, as one person put it, "because the thought of being average scares the hell out of me". The teachers in these schools are diligent on the details, the little things that prove that their environment is one in which things happen. In most of these schools I had to sometimes wait for hours because the head could not miss a class, because it would be a bad example to others.

The optimism in these schools was something to marvel at. The same words were heard over and over again. "We know we can do it". "Our pupils and teachers are hardworking". In Utawala for example, the head-teacher said, "having indeed ended the reign of Olympic we can only work to beat our own record and we know we can do it".

In most of the public schools the transparency as far as finances was concerned was amazing. Usually a budget was presented at the AGM. The parents approved this for the next calendar year. A decision was made on what was to be contributed per parent per child. This ranged from 1,000 to 3,000 Kenya shillings per year for the day schools. Financial management was the responsibility of a committee, consisting of three people. The Chairman a parent, Treasurer a parent too and Secretary (head-teacher). The head-teacher was not a signatory. This could not be said of the private schools. Some were even unwilling to say the number of pupils in the school, perhaps in a bid to avoid paying huge taxes. Perhaps private schools should be required to make public their accounts. Usually owners of the school wish to enjoy huge profits to make their investment worthwhile.

Finally they were asked what kind of changes they have undergone over the years. The responses indicated character, administrative, physical, type of pupils in attending, and population growth. They were asked how they introduced and managed change. Again the responses included school wide communication, gradual introduction of changes and gathering of information and changes. Everyone was kept informed and someone acted as the champion of change.

Excellent organisations believe that practice makes perfect. A general question sought the opinion of heads on drilling. One would have probably expected that there would be denial of the existence of the same. But sorry

this was not the case. In the words of the head-teacher of Kongoni Primary School, “drilling is as old as academics”. She said drilling is necessary for recall. In all the schools drilling on its own was unacceptable. Indeed they believed that the syllabus had to be completely covered by a particular time to foster understanding, and then pupils could be exposed to various exam papers, for recall purposes. Drilling is not a method that could be used without providing the basic knowledge. It is used to enhance mastery of a subject like practising maths. However some schools felt that grading of schools was encouraging drilling.

Finally below is a table that provides some mean ranking on some of the attributes of excellence. The schools were requested to rank their schools on the subject attributes.

Attribute	Mean Ranking	Standard Deviation	Significance
Quality of Instruction	3.34	1.20	Highly Significant
Quality of Learning	3.34	1.20	Highly Significant
Quality of Assessment	3.34	1.20	Highly Significant
Quality of Resources	3.34	1.20	Highly Significant
Quality of Environment	3.34	1.20	Highly Significant
Quality of Leadership	3.34	1.20	Highly Significant
Quality of Management	3.34	1.20	Highly Significant
Quality of Governance	3.34	1.20	Highly Significant

Table 8: Mean Rank of some of the Attributes of Excellence

Excellence Attributes	Public Schools Mean Rank	Private Schools Mean Rank	Significant differences over schools
Participation in decision making	4.00	3.80	None
Problem solving outside formal authority lines	4.00	3.80	None
Use of Cross functional teams/task forces	4.39	4.20	Higher for private schools
Teamwork in support areas	3.67	4.20	Higher for private schools
Management of TSC/PTA Partnership	3.94	3.20	Higher for private schools
Use of structured communication plans	3.00	3.00	None
Regular state of business meetings	4.33	4.20	Higher for private schools
Integration of technology & people	2.33	3.60	Higher for Public schools
Intensity of communication	4.06	4.60	Higher for private schools

Mean response on a scale 1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high, 5=very high

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

The two objectives of the study were first, to identify attributes that were consistently present in high performance primary schools. Secondly, to identify factors that would be a threat to good performance.

A questionnaire based on the literature and pre-tested in a few selected schools were used to collect data. The researcher conducted personal interviews. It is however necessary to indicate that observation was also used by the interviewer. Some data was gathered through the school newsletters too. A total of 23 schools were interviewed, a 76.7% representation of the total sample of 30 schools.

Data was analysed using tables, frequency distributions, percentages, bar graphs, pie charts and descriptive statistics. Although it had been envisaged that the chi-square test would be performed on the sub-samples, this was not performed because the y factor – good performance was constant and not varying.

## 5.2 Research Findings

### 5.2.1 Factors that Contribute to Good Performance

Research findings show that both public and private schools found the following to be the attributes of good performance (excellence):

1. Good management and leadership.
2. Support from critical stakeholders.
3. Teamwork in various forms.
4. Adequate resources through improvisation.
5. Delegation.
6. Motivation and rewarding of effort.
7. Participatory decision making.
8. Culture of discipline and competition.
9. Pleasant learning environment.
10. Commitment to excellence.
11. Individual respect and learning from others.
12. Good planning.
13. Continuous training of staff.
14. Acknowledging failure and use of results to improve.
15. Regular communication.



As indicated by Gephart (1995) that companies that exhibit high performance use all their resources – human, material, and technological to achieve and sustain competitive advantage, the schools tend to exhibit the same tendencies. It is a systems approach. The schools confirmed that though some factors were more critical than others these alone would not provide for continued good performance. According to them, it is how the various elements are integrated. In essence it is the link on how work is organised, people managed and how these are linked to the competitive strategy and culture.

Learning, as well as performance become important drivers in high performance environments. This is seen in the fact that schools indicated that individual respect and learning from one another (100%), acknowledging failure and learning from results (100%), continuous training (100%) were important and then commitment to excellence (100%). Basically the schools were characterised by collaboration, trust and mutual support.

### **5.2.2 Factors that would Threaten Good Performance**

Another objective of the study was to identify factors that would threaten the good performance. Factors whose response rate was over 80% were considered relevant. These included:

1. Lack of culture of discipline.

2. Lack of teamwork.
3. Lack of basic learning material and financial resources.
4. Unpleasant learning environment.
5. Lack of support from critical stakeholders.
6. Lack of devolution of authority (not empowering the other cadres),
7. Poor leadership and management.
8. Lack of motivation and rewarding effort.

### 5.3 Conclusions

High performance workplaces often focus on self-managing teams, quality circles, flatter organisational structures, new flexible technologies, innovative compensation schemes, increased training, and continuous improvement. A variety of approaches has been used to achieve high performance, but effective management of people is key to all of them.

The survey also reveals that high performance schools are aware that change is inevitable and once again people have to be handled carefully during the change process. They communicate widely to the lowest level. Although the communication strategy does vary from public schools to private schools. This is only an indication of ownership structure. In fact all the 18 (100%) public schools' communication tends to be participatory for operational decisions as opposed to those of the private schools. Only one private school tended towards the same.

Results of the study seem to corroborate findings of other excellence studies. However a word of caution is necessary. Organisations and schools should not imagine that there is a checklist approach to achieving excellence. There is not just one right way. High performance work systems include a variety of specific innovations and practices that draw on a common set of principles or practices.

#### 5.4 Recommendations

Every school or organisation should determine how to be creative with their practices to create a unique system, leading to a high performance environment. This is because just taking a checklist approach may not achieve the desired results. This may mean the dismantling of the system in place through radical change, restructuring to enable transformation. Change management is a necessary component in an effort to move to excellence. This means challenging the points of reference for the leader and everyone else within the system. An already inefficient organisation even if subdivided into smaller units may not provide the desired outcomes.

It is said that dividing an elephant in half does not produce two small elephants. Every organisation should be seen as a whole. The use of teams or small division and departments must be rationalised in relation to the bigger picture.

It is recommended that high performance schools need to let every member of the school have a clear idea of what the school is trying to achieve. It is even more critical that the members see the vision in very vivid concrete terms. This is necessary because the envisioned results serve to energise people to strive for higher performance in their own domains, and this energising will only work when employees see the connection between their own needs and the dreams of the organisation. Undertaking a strategic planning process and having a role and mission statement is not enough. Bacal (1998) suggests that a strategic planning process should kick off with a visioning process which is concrete, colourful and engaging, resulting in a narrative about the organisation and its future and the results sought.

Further recommendation is that schools should assess their core capabilities and strategic intent for corporate success. The strategic intent (desired future state) should be expressed through ambitious goals that both challenge and focus resources and core capabilities of the organisation. As shown from other findings, the goals and core capabilities need not necessarily be aligned. The tenet of strategy as a stretch should come into play. According to Hamilton et al (1998) optimally the misalignment of core capabilities and the desired future state helps to energise the organisation to strive for what may not be obvious to the outsider. Schools should thus seek misalignment of today's resources with tomorrow's goals. Schools should realise that they need not have all the resources they need tomorrow to progress. They can strive to use what they have today to create something for the future.

Leaders and managers should use their ability to prepare and rehearse for the future. This is through anticipating events, conditions and opportunities and preparing for them just like athletes prepare for competitive events. Peak organisations should respond quickly and correctly to changing contexts. They can do this by playing “what if” scenarios before the fact. Leaders have contingency planning and the employees consider their reactions to challenging situations and are prepared with proper responses and actions.

Enhancement of employees’ talents and skills is a must. An environment that promotes this is critical. This need not necessarily be through formal training, but employees can learn from their leaders, peers and from their clients. Schools and other organisations should realise that there is no substitute for knowledge and skills.

Focus is critical and schools and organisations should not neglect to undertake small focused actions. This can produce significant, enduring improvements, if they are in the right place – what system thinkers refer to a leverage. A focused organisation keeps in mind the fact that how it does things, is important, but not the critical component of success. The important thing is producing result, the service or the product, and that the procedures to create the results are subordinate to this goal. Indeed regular state of business meetings is a feature of excellent companies but these tend to be informal. But unfocused organisations meet to discuss how to have meetings.



Those charged with running organisations should seek to lead and not just to manage. To be a leader one has to inspire the organisation members to peak performance. A leader should set the tone and climate that supports the building of real visions, the notion of planning and preparedness and continuous skill building and learning, and constantly helps employees focus on what is important. Without leadership, an organisation may be able to function adequately, but will not be able to move with changing contexts, or to excel in its endeavours.

Organisations should not shun doing simple things for more complex ones. This is because it should not be assumed that doing the obvious thing does not produce favourable results. Instead organisations should realise that it is the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their obvious desired outcomes, (Senge 1990).

Organisations should foster feedback both formally and informally, because this can show how actions can reinforce or balance each other. This is where open communication channels and regular communication come in.

Finally organisations should realise that everyone within the system is responsible for any problems generated by the system. For teamwork to be a reality, the ownership of the system is critical. Systems approach therefore requires that people get empowered through training and updating knowledge, skills and attitudes. Rewarding effort is also necessary to make



individuals stand out. Having attained excellence, organisations should not become complacent. There is a need to continue justifying one's existence in relation to changing customer demand, external environmental trends and stakeholders' expectations.

## 5.5 Limitations to the Study

It is important to note that there were limitations as far as this study was concerned. Due to cost and time constraints, it was not possible to cover all high performance schools in the republic. Such coverage would have yielded a relatively bigger sample of private schools

This being a virgin area of research in Kenya, there was a limitation of indigenous literature in excellence studies. The study was thus a starting point for documentation of excellence studies. The study being a first in Kenya, there is a limitation as to how far the findings can be generalised to other industries in Kenya.

Another limitation to the study was the unwillingness of some private and even public schools to provide information on some questions. This was more so with the private schools. This could have therefore introduced some bias in the study.

Given the nature of competition between high performing schools, there is a possibility that respondents may have withheld some vital information.

## 5.6 Suggestions for further Research

A study should be conducted that covers the whole republic, to provide a bigger sample of private schools, to enable one to perform further statistical analysis, such as factor analysis to determine to what extent the factors of good performance and those that threaten performance are significant. This is to enable one to establish for a fact how the factors relate to performance.

A comparative study would also be useful. One should undertake to look at schools that perform the poorest and compare these with those that excel, to establish whether the excellence practices would still be cited.

Excellence studies should be conducted in other industries in Kenya to further build knowledge in this area.

APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

Year Started: \_\_\_\_\_

- Type of School: 1. Public Mixed Day                      2. Private mixed Day  
3. Public Girls Only Day                      4. Private Boys only Day  
5. Public Mixed Day/Boarding                      6. Private Mixed Day/Boarding

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Head Teacher      1. Female                      2. Male  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. a) Your school is rated as one of the excellent schools, in your view, what are the factors that have contributed to the good performance of your school? Please discuss and rank the factors in order of importance.

b) Having discussed the success factors, could you explain what hurts the performance of a school

\_\_\_\_\_

## 1A. BIAS FOR ACTION - GETTING THINGS DONE AND LEARNING FROM RESULTS

Kindly rank your school on a scale of 1-5 on the following aspects

### a) Participation - Teacher/pupils Involvement in decision making -

1	2	3	4	5
Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

### b) Problem solving outside the hierarchical lines (formal authority lines)

1	2	3	4	5
Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

### c) Use of cross-functional teams/task forces

1	2	3	4	5
Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

### d) Team work in support staff areas

1	2	3	4	5
Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

### e) TSC/PTA/ Management Partnership

1	2	3	4	5
Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

## 1B. COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

### a) Use of structured communication plan

1	2	3	4	5
Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

### b) Regular state-of-business meetings

1	2	3	4	5
Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

c) Integration of technology and people

1	2	3	4	5
Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

d) Teachers/parents/pupils involvement in new technology decisions

1	2	3	4	5
Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

e) Are there any other means of communication used? Please enumerate

---

f) Please rank the intensity (amount) of communication with teachers/pupils/parents and support staff

1	2	3	4	5
Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

g) Would you classify your communication as formal or informal? Please explain [**Probe**]

---

h) Would you say that communication within the school is face to face?  
Yes/No

If yes kindly rank your school on this aspect.

1	2	3	4	5
To a very small extent	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent

**2. CLOSE TO THE CUSTOMER - CUSTOMER PROBLEM SOLVERS**

Kindly enumerate ways in which you seek to solve customer problems - pupils/parents?

---

**3. AUTONOMY & ENTREPRENEURSHIP - DECENTRALIZATION AND AUTONOMY**

a) To encourage autonomy and entrepreneurship do you reward employees for thinking and acting outside the norm (initiative)? Yes/No

If yes, enumerate how you reward

---

b) How do you handle issues of failure among teachers/pupils/support staff? Please explain

---

**4. PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH PEOPLE - THE SCHOOL AS AN EXTENDED FAMILY**

a) Do you focus on individual respect and success? Yes/No

If yes please explain in what ways and if no, why not?

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c) Do you have mechanisms in place to encourage teachers/pupils/support staff to work toward overall objectives in ways they determine best?

Yes/No

If yes please explain how

---

**5. HANDS-ON, VALUE DRIVEN - WELL DEFINED SET OF INSPIRATIONAL, GUIDING BELIEFS**

a) Do you have a school motto? Yes/No

If yes, what is the motto?

---

b) How do you undertake to entrench the motto in the minds of both staff and pupils to make it more than just a statement? Explain.

---

c) How long have you been the H/M of this school? \_\_\_\_\_

d) How would you characterise your leadership style? Explain

---

**6. STICK TO THE KNITTING**

- a) Do you consistently seek to branch out through internal diversification (How else the skills, knowledge, attitudes and resources are used - improvisation)? Yes/No

If yes, explain in what ways

---

- b) What do you do better than your rivals (core competencies)?
- 

- c) Do you always stay close to what you do best? Yes/No. If yes, explain how
- 

- c) How do you find out about your competitors and what they are doing? Explain.
- 

- d) How do you make sure that all your activities are harmonised? Please explain
-

**7. SIMPLE FORM, LEAN STAFF - BASIC, UNENCUMBERED COMPANY FORM (MINIMIZED SIMPLE INTERFACES - STRIVING TO STREAMLINE AND SIMPLIFY)**

a) How many of the following do you have?

Pupils \_\_\_\_\_

Teaching staff \_\_\_\_\_

Support staff \_\_\_\_\_

Pupils per class (class size) \_\_\_\_\_

How do you ensure that numbers do not hinder or delay decision-making? Explain.

b) Do you have established procedures that must be followed to resolve issues (*that cannot be violated*)? Yes/No.

c) Are teachers/prefects empowered to resolve issues without consultation? Yes/No.

If either answer to (b) or (c), is yes. Please rank the school's issues resolution.

1	2	3	4	5
Very rigid	Rigid	A bit rigid	Flexible	Very Flexible

8. **SIMULTANEOUS, LOOSE-TIGHT PROPERTIES - STRIVING FOR RIGID CONTROLS YET ZEALOUSLY INSIST ON AUTONOMY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION.**

a) Would you say that your school rules have a positive or negative tone? Please explain.

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b) Please explain what is done in the following areas to ensure quality in the delivery of learning.

1. Qualification of teachers

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2. Curriculum support guide - extra teaching material

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3. Equipment

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4. Time

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5. Textbooks - Library

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6. Training

---

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7. Promotion

---

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8. Pupils

---

---

9. Finances

---

---

c) Please comment on the kind of service provided by teachers and support staff (*Over and above-the-call of duty*)

---

d) How is innovation (creativity) and experimentation encouraged in the school for both staff and pupils? Please explain.

---

e) Do you compete internally? Yes/No

If yes, explain in what ways/If no explain why not

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## 9. CHANGE MANAGEMENT

a) How has this school evolved over the years? Kindly Explain

---

b) When new changes have to be introduced, how do you go about them?  
Kindly Explain

---

What do you have to say about drilling?

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