

**TEAM BUILDING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE BY  
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RARIEDA SUB-  
COUNTY, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to find out the effects of team building on academic performance by public secondary schools in Rarieda Sub-County. The objectives of the study were to: determine the team building activities used by public secondary schools in Rarieda Sub-County; determine academic performance of public secondary schools in Rarieda Sub-County and to find out the effects of team building on academic performance in National Examinations by public secondary schools in Rarieda Sub-County. The study summarized the findings in line with the objectives. The study found a significant positive relationship between team building and academic performance in National Examinations. The study concluded that high level of usage of team building positively affect academic performance in National Examinations. The study recommended emphasis on team building in the management of schools.

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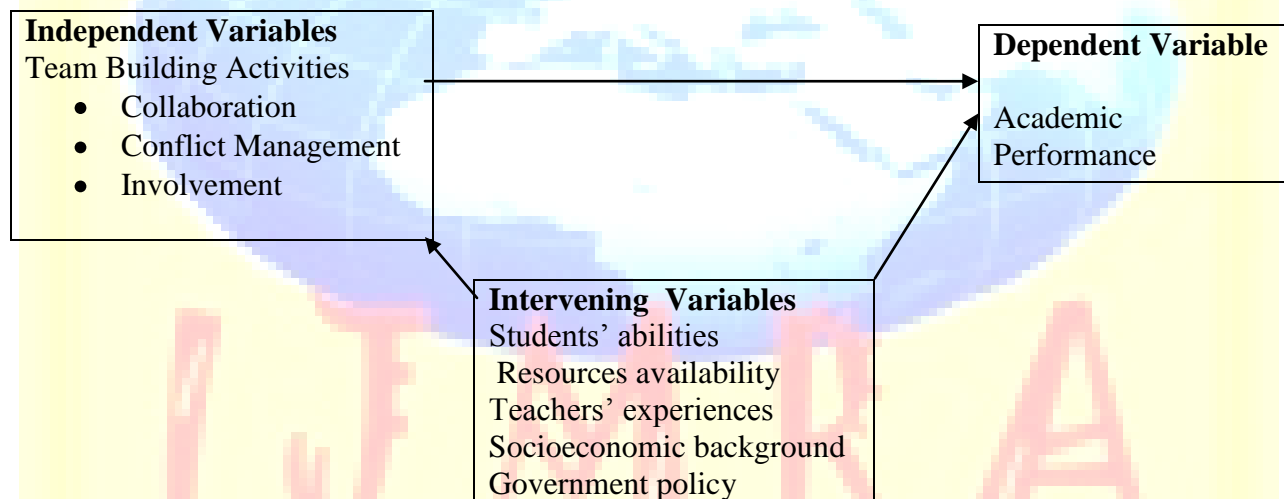
## INTRODUCTION

A study conducted by Adair (1986) observed that team building was inspired by pioneering team building activities in America during the early 1900's before breaking into United Kingdom. America was years ahead of the United Kingdom with the concept of developing teams through team exercises aimed at increasing quality and productivity. Student performance/ productivity by public schools has become a top priority for the United States Government and the 2001, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation mandated public school districts to become 100 percent proficient among all students by the year 2014 (Public Law, 2002). This increased pressure on school teachers and administrators to work as a team in order to perform well on state standardized tests. The California Executive Board (2001) showed concerns among school district personnel on whether the grading of standardized tests considered the socioeconomic status/ background of the students. In Nigeria, Ogunsaju (2004) found that the academic standard in all Nigerian educational institutions had fallen considerably below societal expectations. Student outcomes did not match the government and parental investment. Poor academic performance of students in Nigeria had been linked to poor teachers' performance in team building in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, overcoming negative attitude to work and poor teaching habits which are attributed to poor motivation (Ofoegbu, 2004). In Kenya, the National Examination Council (KNEC) has continued to raise concerns over poor performance records by some schools and regions in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations. According to Sushila (2004), the principal is the leader in a school, the pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve, and the person in charge of every detail of the running of the school, be it academic or administrative. The principal should be involved in making most of the decisions of the school. It is therefore important that the principal is a leader, a thinker and a decision maker. A discreet principal employ team building as a working strategy and that the academic performance of a school is appraised against the performance of the person who leads it. Marks and Printy (2003) pointed out that school leaders seeking to improve academic performance of their schools often involve teachers in dialogue and decision making hence fostering the concept of team building. Leadership matters when it comes to academic performance (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008), yet some scholars have questioned the validity of this claim (Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003). This study therefore sought to establish the validity of this statement by examining the relationship between academic performance and team building

in different schools, headed by different principals. From the foregoing literature, improving academic performance by public schools is of great concern to American, Nigerian and Kenyan governments. Various factors such as socioeconomic status, teachers, syllabus coverage, student ability, motivation amongst others have been highlighted as possible causes of poor/ low academic performance.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Australian learning & teaching council on graduate skills and standards of performance, team building is a process of collaborative learning in the pursuit of a common goal, which involves the minimization and management of conflict (www.graduateskills.edu.au.). More specifically, in the context of higher education and formal learning, team building is conceptualized as a team-building process; of enabling a group of students to collaborate and learn while pursuing a set of known objectives.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Team Building Activities and Academic Performance**

Team building is not merely placing students into groups for assessment purposes without scaffolding, facilitation and time. It is imperative that team building addresses the challenges, processes and performance of team-building through a number of formal and informal mechanisms either student- or instructor-led. “The idea of using team building activities has often been suggested as a way to increase the overall success of a team” (Pineda & Lerner, 2006: 19). There “is an acknowledgement that group work has long suffered as a result of inadequate epistemology, and that principles of ‘good practice’ need to be identified and adhered to if the effective group learning outcomes are to be realized” (Baskin, Barker &

Woods, 2005: 23). This conceptual framework constructed five levels of team building performances in descending order as level 4 HD, level 3 D, level 2 C, level 1 P and level 0 F. For this study, the levels were restructured as high level (level 4 HD& level 3 D), average level (level 2 C) and low level (level 1 P and level 0 F). These results were translated into a balanced team building activities (collaboration, involvement and conflict management) and academic performance conceptual framework model in the context of this study, which described the team building activities teachers needed to positively impact student performance as shown in figure 1. The study was conceptualized on team building and academic performance in National Examinations. It was conceptualized that high academic performance in National Examinations would be influenced by high level team building characterized by individuals collaborating, managing conflicts professionally and involving of others in novel ways. Average levels of team building were conceptualized to be characterized collaborative followers requiring some guidance, ability to work with others through involvement and ability to identify conflicts but did not constructively address them. Low levels of team building were conceptualized to be characterized working alone with little or no interaction/collaboration with others, inability to contribute constructively to conflict resolution and management and inability to understand the need to involve others and inability to recognize when that was appropriate or required in the work context. The students' abilities, resources availability, teaching methods, government policy, socioeconomic backgrounds and teachers' experience influenced the way in which teachers operated as teams and consequently affected academic performance and were assumed constant for the purposes of this study. Schools with students that scored high marks in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education were likely to score better grades in KCSE. Schools with adequate resources, experienced teachers using varied teaching methods as deemed fit were likely to perform better in KCSE. Students from poor families lacked various educational resources were likely to perform poorly in KCSE. Government policy like ban of holiday tuition affected day schools that needed more time for syllabus coverage hence could be a contributor to poor performance in KCSE. Finally, this conceptual framework helped to determine the level of team building and the level of the academic performance in National Examinations and also in comparing the two based on the data findings while keeping other factors constant.

**RESULTS****Team Building Activities Used by Public Secondary Schools in Rarieda Sub-County**

This study sought to determine team building activities used by public secondary schools in Rarieda Sub- County. Respondents rated the 14 specific team building activities using a 5-point rating scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The numeric values of the descriptors were 5-Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Not Sure, 2-Disagree or 1-Strongly Disagree. Likert-type scale was restructured to report percentage responses by combining the two categories: “strongly agree” and “agree” as agree, while “disagree” and “strongly disagree” as ‘disagree’ and not sure as undecided responses. Percentage agreement represented the level to which the team building activities were used in the schools in the opinion of the subjects. Table 5 presents results as was given by the participants.

**Table 5: Use of Team Building Activities**

Team Building Activities	Disagree		Undecided		Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Involvement</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>45</b>
School environment	19	22	16	19	51	59
Commitment	13	15	29	34	44	51
Empowerment	18	21	24	28	44	51
Strategy formulation	20	23	32	37	34	40
Equal opportunity	31	36	24	28	31	36
Consensus	25	29	31	36	30	35
<b>Conflict Management</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>42</b>
Fitting strategies	8	9	33	38	45	52
Services	19	22	30	35	37	43
Prompt response	15	17	34	40	37	43
Cost effects	21	24	33	38	32	37
Coaching others	23	27	33	38	30	35
<b>Collaborative</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>34</b>

Mutual consultation	17	20	34	40	35	41
Flexible rewards	25	29	27	31	34	40
Benchmarking	36	42	32	37	18	21
Overall Totals	290	24	412	34	502	42

### Source: Field Data

The results show that the overall agreement by the subjects was 42%. This could be an indication that team building was occasionally practiced by public secondary schools in Rarieda Sub-County and those important strengths and important weaknesses were observed. It was an average level of team building that could have been characterized by collaborative followers requiring some guidance, with ability to work with others through involvement and to identify conflicts but did not constructively address them. This shows that the level of participation of the teaching staff members in team building in their respective schools is minimal. This is in line with study by Bush & Middelwood (2005: 11) as they show that teaching staff members are not familiar with their team building roles as yet. Collaborative team building activities had the lowest average agreement rating by subjects at 33% implying in the effective team building (Kritsons, 2000) and in the effective purposeful interactions (Fullan, 2001). Low levels of collaboration indicated low climate of shared responsibility (Strahan and Layell, 2006) and that team members did not go beyond sharing a purpose and working together (Schmidt et al., 2005). Conflict management activities were rated with agreement responses at 42%. This was an average practice. However, according to the Australian conceptual framework, it was an indication that the teachers had the ability to identify conflicts but did not constructively address them. The implication was that conflict was not promptly and positively responded to in the best interest of the school (Schmidt et al., 2005) and that staff members did not cooperatively work as a team to solve problems, complete tasks or accomplish a common goal. Poor management of conflict showed that the principals were not proactive to root out the problems that cause conflicts within groups and between groups (Thomas & Christopher, 2001). Involvement activities were rated as agreed responses by the participants at 45%. It shows that teachers were not fully allowed to make important curriculum decisions in areas of their work resulted in a lack sense of empowerment and self-efficacy on the part of the teachers (Fullan, 2002). It further showed teachers had low sense of responsibility and commitment to the school (Carl, 2002). On

specific team building activities, it emerged that awareness of the school environment (59%), adopting internally fitting strategies (52%), commitment to the goals of the school (51%) and empowerment to make decisions in areas of work (51%) were the most frequently practiced by public secondary schools in Rarieda Sub-County. This showed that they were the most preferred team building activities in driving schools to better academic performance in National Examinations. To measure the dispersion of the team building activities, the study investigated the means to provide a measure of the central tendency and the standard deviations to offer a summary of the variability for each distribution. Table 6 shows the results.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Team Building Activities**

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Involvement</b>	516	1	5	3.32	1.074
School environment	86	1	5	3.52	1.103
Commitment	86	1	5	3.49	0.942
Empowerment	86	1	5	3.45	1.124
Strategy formulation	86	1	5	3.26	1.031
Equal opportunity	86	1	5	3.10	1.096
Consensus	86	1	5	3.10	1.148
<b>Conflict Management</b>	430	1	5	3.31	0.978
Fitting strategies	86	1	5	3.52	0.878
Services	86	1	5	3.31	0.911
Prompt response	86	1	5	3.27	1.089
Cost effects	86	1	5	3.27	1.022
Coaching others	86	1	5	3.16	0.992
<b>Collaboration</b>	258	1	5	3.07	1.069
Mutual consultation	86	1	5	3.34	1.013
Flexible rewards	86	1	5	3.14	1.097
Benchmarking	86	1	5	2.74	1.097

**Source: Field Data**

The analysis above shows that there exists a difference in terms of frequency of use of team building activities. A closer look at the analysis above indicates that majority (mean=3.52) said that they frequently adopt internally fitting strategies and always aware of their school environment. However, adopting internally fitting strategies had the majority agreeing since it had the lowest dispersion rate among all the team building activities (SD= 0.878). It is also important to note that even though a good number of the respondents (mean=3.10) argued that they build consensus on the strategic vision of the school, it is very important to note that it had the highest dispersion rate among all the team building activities (SD =1.148). This implies that even though a good number get along with the process of building consensus on the strategic vision of the school, a good number on the other hand don't get along with process of building consensus on the strategic vision of the school . This might be due to the different attitudes of the study respondents towards the process of building consensus on the strategic vision of the school and their understanding of what process of building consensus on the strategic vision of the school entails. This further shows that there was poor support by teaching staff with some experience to teaching staff with less experience (Blandford, 2006:234). The team building approach with the lowest mean (2.74) and relatively high standard deviation (1.097) was regular bench marking. In other words, the members of the teaching staffs responding indicated that bench marking was the least practiced of the 14 team building activities considered in this study. This team building approach was followed by everybody having equal opportunity to reward systems (Mean=3.10, SD=1.148) and building consensus on a clear strategic vision (Mean=3.10, SD=1.096), reward systems for individual and staff performances were flexible (Mean=3.14, SD=1.097) and coaching others to deal with their own problems (Mean=3.16, SD=0.992). Table 9 presents the descriptive statistics for the 14 team building activities identified for this study. Each team building approach was listed by descending mean score. It is important to note that the higher the mean score, the stronger the respondents agreed that the team building approach was practiced in their schools in improving academic performance in national examinations. 13 out of 14 team building activities had a mean value between 4.0 "Agree" and 3.0 "Not Sure" with only bench marking at a mean of 2.74

### *Academic Performance of Public Secondary Schools in Rarieda Sub-County in National Examinations*



The second research question sought to determine the academic performance of public secondary schools in Rarieda Sub-County. The schools' academic performance was analyzed based on the KCSE overall mean grades. The academic performance scores based on KCSE mean grades ranged between 1.0 and 12.0. The three-year (2010 – 2012) average KCSE results from each sampled school were subjected to the following categorization: schools with average mean score of 6.5 (C+) and above regarded as high performing schools while those between 5.0-6.4 grouped as averagely performing schools and those below 5.0 grouped as low performing schools. This separation was used because students applying for admission into the Universities must pass with atleast a C+ mean grade. Table 7 shows the three-year average academic performance in KCSE.

**Table 7: Academic Performance in National Examinations**

School Category	Average mean grade in kcse 2010, 2011 & 2012			Total
	Mean 1.0-4.9	Mean 5.0-6.4	Mean 5.0-12.0	
Boy's Boarding	0	0	1	1
Girl's Boarding	0	0	1	1
Mixed Day& Boarding	0	2	0	2
Mixed Day	6	3	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>

**Source: Rarieda District Result Analysis for KCSE 2010, 2011 and 2012**

Based on average KCSE mean grade for 2010, 2011 and 2012, 100% of the girls' and boys' boarding sampled schools were categorized as high performing schools, 100% of the mixed boarding and day sampled schools were classified as averagely performing schools, and 33.3% and 66.7% of the mixed day sampled schools were classified as averagely and low performing schools respectively. The study showed that single sex boarding schools were doing quite well in KCSE examinations with mean scores of above 6.5. However, the academic performances of mixed day secondary schools were not good (about 65.6% performing mean grade below 5.0). Different schools have different resources which might influence team building and consequently cause of variation in academic performance as was in Yeya (2002) research finding that observed that schools with adequate facilities perform better in National Examinations.

#### ***Team Building Activities and Academic Performance in National Examinations***

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The third research question sought to find what effects team building had on academic performance in national examinations by public secondary schools in Rarieda Sub-County. The analysis was done through a cross tabulation of academic performance and team building activities and Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. Table 8 shows the percentage agreement on the usage of team building activities by the respondents of various academically achieving school categories.

**Table 8: Team Building Activities in Different Academic School Categories (n=14)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Low performing school (Mean 1.0-4.9)</b>	<b>Averagely performing schools (Mean 5.0-6.4)</b>	<b>High performing schools (Mean 6.5-12.0)</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Involvement Activities</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>89</b>
School environment	53	52	100
Commitment	35	52	100
Consensus	28	21	92
Empowerment	43	49	85
Strategy formulation	28	39	77
Equal opportunity	25	33	77
<b>Conflict</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Management Activities</b>			
Prompt response	38	27	100
Fitting strategies	35	55	100
Cost effects	23	36	85
Coaching others	25	27	85
Services	35	39	77

<b>Collaboration Activities</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>72</b>
Flexible rewards	27.5	36	85
Mutual consultation	20.0	49	85
Benchmarking	8	27	46
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>85</b>

**Source: Field Data: percentage figures are rounded to the nearest whole number**

The findings indicate that majority of the respondents in high performing schools agree that adopting internally fitting strategies (100%), staff members being aware of school environment (100%), staff members promptly respond to requests from other staff members (100%), members of staff are highly committed (100%) and staff members building consensus on a clear strategic vision of the school (92%) are vital in contributing to academic performance in National Examinations. In addition, 89% of the respondents in high performing schools said that they frequently or always use involvement and conflict management activities. This can be interpreted to mean that the study respondents emphasize on a team-approach to resolving a team conflict so to as further cohesion as the team moves towards performance of higher academic performance in National Examinations. It was found that 13 out of the 14 team building activities under the study were rated above 75% in high performing schools with only regular bench marking rated below average at 46%. This showed that there were important strengths and important weaknesses observed in the use of bench marking as a team building approach. It was being occasionally practiced even in high performing schools.

The average practice of team building activities in high performing schools was rated at 85% which signifies there are major strengths/very good outcomes/all expected indicators were there. This was an indicator of excellence, very positive and always use of team building activities in general. This was a high level of team work performance in accordance with the conceptual framework adopted for the study.

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