

The purpose of the study was to find out the constraints experienced by the public secondary schools in the procurement process and recommend ways of tackling them. The study was carried out in Kiambu West District. The study sought to find out the extent to which the procurement policy of the Ministry of Education was understood by the schools' managements and to what extent the principals adhered to the procurement guidelines provided by the MOE. The study also sought to find out how effectively the principles of budgeting were followed in the schools, the major constraints experienced by the schools in the process of public procurement and how procurement procedures could be strengthened to minimize the challenges. A descriptive survey research design was employed in carrying out the study. Simple random sampling was used to select seventeen principals and seventeen deputy principals. Data were collected using questionnaires for the principals and deputy principals. The collected data were analysed using statistical package for social sciences and reported using frequency distributions, means and percentages. The analysis of the data and discussion were done along the research questions. The major findings of the study were that there were malpractices in the carrying out the public procurement in regard to procurement methods, procurement plans and budgets that were not strictly followed. On the extent to which the policy of the MOE on procurement was understood by the schools' managements, the study found that the principals and their deputies had reasonable academic background, administrative experience and had received some training courses on procurement. The willingness of most of the respondents to attend any future course on procurement was interpreted to mean either the course they had attended was too short or the content was not fully understood. On how the principals adhered to the procurement guidelines provided by the MOE, the study found that in compliance with the public procurement Act (2005), all the schools in the sample had tender committees which were operational. However, the study found there were some procurement malpractices in the methods of awarding tenders, approval of procurement plans and methods where the approval was done by the principals or BOGS instead of the tender committees. Lack of involvement of the teachers and HODs in the preparation of the procurement plans was found to be a procurement malpractice. On the adherence to the principles of budgeting, the study found that the majority of schools indicated that they did not follow the annual budgets arduously. On the major constraints experienced by the schools in the process of public procurement, the study found inflation; urgent services not budgeted for and underestimated expenditures as factors which were limiting the prudent administration of the budgets. Conflicts between principals and tender committees due to vested interests in the procurement process by the tender committee or the principal or when the guidelines on procurement were not followed were found to be challenging. The following conclusions were made from the study: empowerment of principals, their deputies and the tender committees through in servicing so as capacitate them to be effective in financial management. The various procurement malpractices in the approval of the budgets, procurement plans and procurement methods should be rectified with immediacy. Income generating projects should be enhanced so as to cushion the schools against inflation and unbudgeted for expenditures. To minimize the challenges, the study recommended that there should be transparency among the tender committees, the deputy principals should be given full authority over procurement processes in their institutions, those involved in procurement should be empowered through training and that procurement process committees should be reduced to one i.e. the tender committee as some institutions do not have the required personnel to man all the committees.