



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KERICHO COUNTY, KENYA

¹Dr. Mbera, Peter G. Aiko, ²Dr. Tuitoek, Joseph K. F., ³Dr. Yambo, John M. Onyango

¹Department of Educational Administration Planning and Economics, Kisii University, Kabarnet, Kenya

²Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, Moi University, Kenya

³Department of Educational Administration Planning and Economics

Kisii University, Kehancha/Isebania Campus, Kenya

Abstract: - The study sought to establish the relationship between principals, management experience and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya. Kericho County public secondary schools have had a small portion of its schools performing relatively well while some perform on the average, the majority performs poorly. The study was guided by this hypothesis: H_0 : There is no significant statistical relationship between principals' management experience and academic performance in public secondary schools in Kericho County. The study adopted survey research design as a framework for data collection. Targeted population was two thousand four hundred and ninety nine teachers posted and working in one hundred and nineteen secondary schools in Kericho County. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select fifty three secondary schools in the County. Out of this target population, one hundred and nineteen were head teachers. Simple random sampling was used to select one thousand and sixty teachers, while stratified sampling was used to select the head teachers from the targeted schools to participate in the study. The reliability of the instruments was established by computing a test re-test reliability coefficient. This was done by administering the test twice, but allowing an interval of one month between them. The pre-testing of the instrument was done in ten non-participating schools in Kipkelion Sub-county. The test yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.78 for the principals' questionnaire and 0.72 for the teachers' questionnaire. Two sets of questionnaires known as the profile of leadership behavior (form LB) and profile of own behavior (form OB) for head teachers and teachers respectively and Interview Schedule were used as the primary tools for data collection. This research embraced an eclecticism paradigm. The findings revealed that the head teachers' leadership styles had a strong relationship with the schools' K.C.S.E results. The study recommends that head teachers' training in school policy and management should be strengthened and supervision of the teachers should be objective. Head teachers should use a balance of autocratic and democratic leadership styles to achieve better K.C.S.E results. This research is vital in its contribution to understanding effective school management in the light of leadership styles and student academic performance.

Key words: Relationship, principals, management, experience, performance

Introduction: Experience in management is one of the most important human activities in any society. No institution can function effectively without an experienced leader (Dominique 2000). All societies continuously rely on group effort. Many organized groups have become large, and the task of leadership has been increasing in importance and complexity. Leadership is a social process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to achieve the organizational objectives and success (Buckmaster, 2004). Leadership also concerns the spiritual aspect of work. That is, the followers deeply believe in them and they possess a latent power in the organization. Leaders deal with mundane tasks such as location of roles, tasks and resources needed to achieve organization goals, in addition to the co-ordination of the allocation activities and processes monitoring the everyday operation of the organization. Effective leadership is required during periods of turbulence (Squire, 2001). Lamb and McKee (2004) observe that when people are at peace, happy and satisfied, there is hardly any need for leaders. However when the human condition and the situation urges someone to step forward and initiate change, develop strategies that are necessary to bring about changes other qualities are needed to achieve the desired condition. Derel (2008) argues that leadership means creating and maintaining a sense of vision culture and interpersonal relationships. Okumbe (2001) asserts that leadership is a broader concept than management. Management is sub-skill of leadership in which achieving organizational goal is of paramount importance. Leadership involves working with and through people so as

to accomplish set goals. The trait approach argues that leadership is inborn (Bryman, 2001, Beasson 2000). Leaders become good leaders because of the traits that they possess as intelligence, appearance, and language ability. In the work of Bolman, Crow, Goldring, Slater and Thurston (2000), they defined leadership as the ability to influence the opinions, attributes and behavior of others. Throughout history, theoretical explanations of leadership have been offered. Up to the late 1940's, the trait approach claimed that leadership ability is in-born.

According to Bolman and Deal (2002), they suggest that the essence of effective leadership lies in understanding which frame to apply in a particular situation. When referring to the tasks and functions of school principals, educators use the term administration. The administrator is the pivot around whom all the learning and teaching revolves (Robbin 2006). Head teachers differ in the styles they use to carry out all these tasks. Mazzarella and Smith (2000) believe that some leaders may employ an autocratic leadership style; some use a democratic style, while others use the laissez-faire leadership style.

Research by Griffin (2004) contends that the creation of any school climate starts with the head teacher and it is reflected in the relationships among teachers, between teachers and students, among the students. It is also reflected in the commitment of teachers to the achievement of school goals and objectives, and ethos of the school. In other words, the head teacher is in the position to initiate and maintain the kind of atmosphere he/she wants, through his/her own behaviour. Fondas (1993) affirms this claim by arguing that the head teacher deliberately models a positive climate in school. She explains further that the existence of quality relationships between the head teacher and teachers, among the teachers, and between the teachers and students and among students reflects a positive school climate.

Studies done in Kenya by Kindiki (2007) holds that the head teacher is significant in determining the quality of the schools. Hoy &

For Correspondence:

yambojm@gmail.com

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Di Paola, (2007) highlight various types of school climates: a school may have an open climate, an autonomous climate, a controlled climate, a familiar climate, a paternalistic climate or a closed climate. In the light of the above, it can be assumed that the head teacher's leadership style principally determines the kind of climate that prevails in the school. Ordinarily, the main task of the head teacher is to help create a healthy working environment in which pupils are happy and prepared to learn and teachers identify with the school's mission and goals.

The larger Kericho District, as posited by Koech (2004), is home to the Kipsigis people. However

other communities have come to settle in the recent past. These included the whites who occupied the white highlands and started the tea plantations in many parts of central Kericho. Other communities such as the Luo, the Abagusii, the Luhya and others later came to work for the white man in the tea plantations. Within the urban area the Indians started businesses and other factories. So in a nutshell, Kericho County has a composition of many communities living and working there. It is cosmopolitan in composition as well as multi-racial in nature. Several factors have influenced the establishment, development and performance of schools in this county.

Table 1: K.C.S.E Kericho District

YEAR	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	Possible University Admission	Entry No Of Candidates	Mean Score
1998	0	5	22	66	147	248	93	2824	4.7234
1999	0	11	31	72	139	261	114	2932	4.7027
2000	0	22	70	125	228	337	217	3270	5.1223
2001	2	15	63	118	235	335	198	3296	5.0576
2002	0	26	74	149	221	304	249	3258	5.0669
2003	2	32	82	198	278	393	314	3429	5.334
2004	1	37	153	204	313	437	395	3754	5.4240
2005	3	55	149	274	342	506	481	4489	5.3880
2006	4	54	145	190	340	433	402	4503	4.87
2007	5	66	130	205	308	385	406	5102	5.78

Source-Ministry of Education,(2008).District Education Office – Kericho

The research considered a period of ten years as a baseline for considering school performance in KCSE. Ten years was considered a fair record for the purpose of generalization of performance trends. Table 1 below illustrates the trends (1988-2007). The total average mean-grade score of 5.146 (for the ten years 1988-2007) is quite low compared to the maximum national mean score of 12 in K.C.S.E. Out of 36,757 candidates who sat during those ten years, only 2869 (7.81%) qualified for public university admission. This poor performance in K.C.S.E presented a real problem to all education stakeholders and thus required investigation.

Statement of the Problem: Employees are the most crucial asset in any organization. All organizations are started and run by people. Leadership is the most important factor in organizational success (Nzuve 2000), Koech (2004). In public secondary schools it is the task of stakeholders, particularly the head teachers to create and sustain a conducive learning environment to improve pupils' academic and behaviour standards. The head teacher, as an individual occupying the highest official position in the school, determines how the school is run. His/her expectations, values, beliefs, relationships with teachers and the examples he/she sets for the whole school shape

the learning and working climate in the school. The head teacher can promote or inhibit a positive climate through his/her leadership behaviour patterns. Kericho County have had a small portion of its schools performing relatively well, some perform on the average, while the majority are performing poorly. The study therefore sought to accept or reject the null hypothesis which was stated as:

H₀: There is no significant statistical relationship between principals' management experience and academic performance in public secondary schools in Kericho County.

Principals' Management Experience and Students' Academic Performance in Schools

In considering principals experience, Mbera (2015) and Eshiwani (1988) contended that one's leadership experience can have differential effects on one's leadership efficiency. Effectiveness is attained when principals are trained, experienced, organized and motivated. This fact was supported by the work of Yambo and Tuitok (2014) when they pointed out that improving poor performance or maintaining excellent has been the major task of an instructional and experienced leader. The principal have to employ and manifest characteristic which will help them achieve their intended objectives. It is extremely rare to find all of these qualities in ahead who have not served in substantial period of time. Elmore (2000) argued that the major influence on the type of leader one is today is the result of experience one gains in leading people. In a study by Kihara (2011) on the performances of primary school head teachers, results showed that there was a significant difference in performance between primary school head-teachers with duration of experience ranging from 4 to 11 years and those with 20 years of experience and above. One can thus infer that experience significantly contributes to difference in head -teachers' performances.

A related study by Ochieng (2001) showed that principals who completed in-service trainings were more effective than those who did not. An

important implication of his study is that professionally trained principals perform their roles better than non-professionals. Moreover, Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001) reported that teachers who complete degrees in education are more professional outputs than those who do not. It is believed that specialized training empowers and motivates such teachers for better performance. For the purpose of this study, only the number of years that the principals have worked shall constitute experience.

On the other hand, Nzuve (2000) disagree that experience prepares one for leadership pervades the business community, experience does not necessarily contribute to leadership effectiveness. In fact, studies of military officers, research and development teams, shop supervisors, post office administrators, and school principals indicate that experienced managers often do not outperform inexperienced managers. The key to these findings has been situational variability. While past behavior can predict future behavior, it is critical to consider the relevance of past experience to a new situation. When a person's leadership experience was obtained in a situation similar to the new one, then it can be a reasonably good predictor of future leadership performance. The transferability of knowledge in leaders has important consequences for leadership development and performance. Leaders need to be adaptive and continually learning so as to perform well. In fact, it is the uniqueness and adaptive nature of leadership that has led some scholars to contend that leadership occurs only in the face of adaptive challenges or problems (Okumbe 2001).

Yet surprisingly, in spite of its importance, our understanding of how leaders learn and adapt is still largely theoretical (Day *et al* 2002). Likewise, the adaptive nature of leadership is not high on one's schema of a leader across many cultures – for example, it is not listed as part of culturally implicit schemas of leadership attributes (English 2002). One therefore would expect that leaders with greater leadership

experience (in temporal terms) should be better developed leaders and perform better than leaders with less experience. The question is: better developed how and performs better in what ways? This dissertation operationalized such development and performance to be associated with leadership efficiency, psychological capital, leader self-awareness, and implicit theories of leadership all forms of leadership experiences be they positive ones or negative ones, are in some ways good experiences. It is obvious how positive experiences directly contribute to future performance. For example, positive experiences give rise to higher efficiency beliefs that in turn predict future performance (Durbin 2009). However, it is less clear how negative experiences can be processed in positive ways so that they too become good.

According to Konchar (2001) and Yambo (2014), schools are bad or good, in a healthy or unhealthy, moral and physical condition, flourishing or perishing, as the principal is capable, experienced, energetic of high ideals or the reverse. Schools rise to fame or sink to obscurity as greater or lesser principals have charge of them. It is said that the school is as great as the principal, because everything in the school, the plant, the staff, the curriculum methods and techniques of teaching...human relationships, bear the impress of his or her personality'. Schools do not become great because of magnificent buildings but because of magnificent principals' goals. Moreover, the work of Moller and Pankate (2006) hold that cognitive resources are abilities and a leader is directive or non-directive behavior. Directedness is most helpful when the leader is competent, relaxed, and supported. When the leader is under stress, experience is more important than ability. There is less leader impact when the group support is low.

Methodology: The study adopted a survey design which was a post ex-facto in nature. In such research, the investigator made inferences concerning relationship among variables without

direct control of the independent variables because the events in question have already occurred (Best and Khan, 2006). Target population is the entire set for which the survey data is to be used to make inferences Kothari (2004). The study target was 2,499 teachers consisting of 119 principals and 2380 teachers working in the 119 public secondary schools (MoE 2008). A mix of sampling techniques was used: Stratified random sampling, simple random sampling and systematic random sampling. All individuals were chosen by chance and had an equal opportunity of being included in the sample. According to Kothari (2004), probability-sampling procedures should be used as it minimizes selection bias, and estimates margins of error and govern the size design of the sample for the desired level of accuracy. Questionnaires are very convenient tools where a large numbers of subjects are to be handled. Questionnaires facilitate easy and quick responses (Dayet *al* 2002). The descriptive statistics was used to calculate totals, percentages and frequencies while inferential statistics, specifically the chi-square (X^2) was used to test relationships between the study variables. Conventional significance level at 0.05 was used. This level of significance of 0.05 is recommended in social science research (John and James 2006).

Results and Discussions: Table 1 Show the experience of principals' in relation to performance in their schools. The information showed that principals with over ten years of experience had fared well with a mean score of 6.6(55.6%) in KCSE. The study further established that 45(37.8%) of the respondents had experience of 6-10 years while 0-5 years and above 10 years of experience had equal number of responses 37 (31.7). The principals' experience was cross-tabulated with performance to establish the nature of relationship. The chi square tests shows that there was a significant relationship between principals' experience and performance. The null hypothesis was stated as:

H₀: There is no significant statistical relationship between teaching experience and academic performance in public secondary schools in Kericho County.

Table 2 Chi-Square Test on Principals' experience and academic performance

	Value	Df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.368 ^a	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	26.718	5	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.889	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	53		

From the chi-square statistics in table 2 it can be observed that the principals experience in public secondary schools played a significant role in determining academic performance, $\chi^2(5, N=53) = 24.368, p=.000$. The study revealed that $p < .05$ thus the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative claim was held true that there was a statistically significant relationship between the teaching experience and academic performance. This prompted the conclusion that the variables principals experience and the academic performance were statistically related.

The experience of a person in the field does help to improve his/her efficiency at work since ones length of service improves skills in work performance. This is consistent with Griffins, (2004) who observed that the experience of a person in the field does help to improve his/her efficiency at work since ones length of service improves skills in work performance. principals who have long experience in the profession are believed to be highly productive especially in administration.

Recommendations: Backed by the findings of the study, it was recommended that the high school principals should be given at least five years in a school for better performance especially when there is evidence of upward trend in performance. This has been prompted by the fact that public secondary schools principals' experience affects greatly students' academic performance.

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