

# A Critical Analysis of Leadership Strategies Enhancing School Management in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to critically analyze leadership and management strategies in public secondary schools in Kenya. The specific objectives were to; critically determine personal attributes of the school leader in public secondary schools, critically establish on Principals Instructional and Managerial Leadership in Public Secondary Schools, Critically analysis on the principal's management and collegial leadership skills. This study would develop new knowledge about the leadership skills and management strategies that would lead to enhancing the achievement of students in public secondary schools through sustained and progressive school effectiveness. This study employed a qualitative research approach while adopting document analysis design to gather information. The study found out that most of public secondary schools leaders lack good personal attributes which is one the qualities of an effective leader. On instructional and managerial roles the study found that a lot of emphasis is given to the teachers and students as opposed to the school principals who are supposed to be the ones assigning instructional roles. The study also found that most principals are appointed from within the teachers which are based on the academic qualification and teaching as opposed consideration of qualifications in management and experience. The study recommends that; the government of Kenya should introduce compulsory management courses for school principals to ensure the ones appointed to head schools are qualified .That the government should consider appointing persons with vast experience to ensure that the schools are headed by the right people. The ministry of education should consider implementing leadership and management policies to ensure that school principals are well acquainted with the current management issues in the education sector

**Key Words:** Instructional Leadership, Collegial Leadership, Personal Attributes.

## 1.0 Introduction

Teachers supported by effective management and leadership are widely held as one of the keys to education quality and change (Chapman & Adams, 2002). At the same time, the school improvement literature internationally affirms that effective school leadership is an important

condition for a successful school, but not in isolation of other contributing factors (Bryk et al, 2010; Day and Sammons, 2013). There are two relevant bodies of knowledge on school management and leadership that frame this rapid review: (a) the characteristics of effective school managers and leaders; (b) the development of effective school managers and leaders. Within the scope of school management this review also includes two sub-themes related to school governance that are of particular relevance in the developing world: (a) decentralization as translated into different types of School-Based Management (SBM); and (2) privatization. Changes in school governance associated with decentralization of education to local authorities and with privatization in many developing countries involve significant change in expectations and in the prominence of head teachers and communities in improving schools (Chapman & Adams, 2002; Oduro, Fertig & Raviera, 2007).

Basic education in the Republic of Kenya , in East Africa, comprises 12 years of schooling; eight years of primary and four years of secondary schools. It culminates in the (K.C.P.E) which determines the eligibility of the pupil to enter secondary schools . The Government of Kenya in East Africa (Government of Kenya , 2004; Ministry of Education, 1951, 1987a), like UNESCO (2000) and other scholars (Akyeampong, 2007; Anamuah-Mensah, Koomson, & Godwyll, 1996; Banya, 1993; Foster, 1965; Godwyll, 2008; McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975), recognises that high-quality basic education is the essential goal of formal education as it enhances the development and well-being of the individual and society. To promote quality education and to resolve the poor academic achievement of students from low performing schools, the Government, through its Ministry of Education and the Kenya Education Service (KES), implemented a series of education reform schemes. Notable among these reforms were the 1987 education reform (Ministry of Education, 1987b) to improve access to basic and secondary education, and the introduction in 2003 of the *Free Primary Education* (FPE) policy to address access to education and quality concerns in basic education (Ministry of Education, 2003).

In spite of these educational reforms, Kenya 's deprived primary schools regularly fail to produce knowledgeable graduates, capable of pursuing further education (Akyeampong, 2007; Donge, 2003; Karikari-Ababio, 2003; Nsowah, 2003). A skilled human resource base for the social and economic development of a nation depends on a highly educated citizenry (Atta-

Quayson, 2007). Therefore it is important to critically analyze the leadership and management strategies in public secondary schools in Kenya.

## **2.0 Statement of the Problem**

There is evidence of declining academic performance in secondary schools, in Kenya. The zero per cent score in the quotation refers to the fact that no individual student from the schools mentioned had an aggregate score of C or lower in the six core and elective subjects at the K.C.S.E. A student needs to obtain that aggregate score to be eligible to enter tertiary institution.. The significant decline in the academic performance of students (Ministry of Education Science and Sports, 2007b) from public secondary schools in Kenya during the past two decades has been well documented (KNEC , 2013; Ministry of Education).

The literature on school managers and leaders, particularly in developing world contexts, focuses attention primarily on school principals. Studies across North America and Northern Europe increasingly recognize that school principals often accomplish their school leadership work in collaboration with other formal and informal leaders (assistant principals, teachers in leadership roles) through different forms of shared and distributed leadership. Research on school management leadership practice in developing world contexts has not explored the practice and potential for shared and distributed school leadership to accomplish school goals. Therefore this study sought to fill this gap by raising the question; what is the effectiveness of leadership and management strategies in public secondary schools in Kenya?

## **3.0 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to critically analyze leadership strategies that enhance school management in public secondary schools in Kenya.

## **4.0 Research Objectives**

1. To critically determine personal attributes of the school leaders that enhance school management in public secondary schools
2. To critically establish the Principals' Instructional and Managerial Leadership that enhance school management In Public Secondary Schools

3. To critically determine the principals' management and collegial leadership skills that enhance school management in Public Secondary Schools.

## **5.0 Research Questions**

1. What are the personal attributes of the school leader that enhance school management in public secondary schools?
2. What is the Principals' Instructional and Managerial Leadership that enhance school management in Public Secondary Schools?
3. What are the principals' management and collegial leadership skills that enhance school management in Public Secondary Schools?

## **6.0 Significance of the study**

This study will develop new knowledge about the leadership skills and management strategies that enhance school management in public secondary schools through sustained and progressive school effectiveness. Furthermore, the educational model that exemplifies effective school leadership in deprived, Public Schools in, Kenya could be used by education authorities in Kenya and elsewhere to inform the development of new policies and professional learning programs for school principals. This study is a pioneering educational investigation of strategies and skills for improving academic achievement of public secondary schools in Kenya.

## **7.0 Critique Literature Review**

### **7.1 Critical analysis on personal attributes of the school leader that enhance school management in public secondary schools**

Values are important, accepted principles or standards of an individual or a group of people and often, have positive influence on the individual, the group and on humanity at large. In a school context, values and norms are in fact, the heart of the school culture. Greenfield (1986) asserted that many parents would love to see the schools of their children reflect the same values and aspirations that the parents cherish. Similarly, MacNeil and Maclin (2005), further described as an essential function of the successful school leader, the development with and among his or her collaborators: teachers, students and parents a set of values that unites all. This is what naturally nurtures the development of a common purpose with and for the entire school community.

Sergiovanni (2001) on the other hand, saw shared school values as a powerful socialiser of thought and behaviour. As a result, these values and norms must be a negotiated product of the shared aspirations, sentiments and principles of the community. As shared school values and norms are a useful unifying component of the school community, no other individual than the school leader carries the onus of exemplifying these values and positive attributes. Scholars attested that the beliefs, attitudes and conduct of those being led are influenced by the personal qualities or attributes of their leaders. This is the view of Berson, Oreg and Dvir (2008), and also of Schein (1992) as well as Schneider (1987).

Other Researchers such as Carpenter, Geletkanycz and Sanders (2004) also confirmed this in their extensive work on the influence of leaders' personal attributes on their decisions, options and choices in exercising their leading roles. In other words, the school leader's personal character and values play a role in the school's effectiveness as these influence the attitude and cooperation of the school staff and students. as emphasised by Hambrick and Mason (1984). These scholars did not emphasize, for example, a specific list of attributes of the successful school leader. Another author Guruchandran (2009) was more specific and explained at length the specific attributes that usually characterize effective leaders. What are some of these specific attributes which are identified with a successful leader? Guruchandran (2009) attempted to answer this when he explained that all effective leaders are characterised by certain key attributes.

## **7.2 Critical Analysis on Principals Instructional and Managerial Leadership that enhance school management in Public Secondary Schools**

Instructional leadership provides direction, coordination, supervision (Crowther, Kaagan, & Ferguson, 2002; Glatthorn, 1990) and resourcing for improving teaching and learning. Whatever the school principal does in the school, to help change or sustain practices that would improve student learning is referred to as instructional leadership by Halverson, Grig, Prichet and Thomas (2005). Instructional leadership is intertwined with managerial leadership. Whereas instructional leadership focuses mainly on direct initiatives that would directly influence teaching and students learning, the managerial leadership rather emphasizes the responsibilities of maintaining facilities, ensuring student discipline and the usual running of school administrative affairs. This is the view of Jazzar (Jazzar, 2004 ). Hoyle (2006), whose work complements that of Jazzar,

further explained the managerial role of the school leader as that which inspires and empowers the personnel through the appropriate use of resources for the welfare of all. Both Jazzar and Hoyle agreed that the managerial functions of the school leader must serve or enhance his or her instructional role. In fact, they emphasized the instructional leadership role of the school leader, and saw it as a major determining factor of academic improvement. Not all scholars concentrated extensively on the instructional role of the school leader as a significant factor of effective student learning and achievement.

Hardré (2009; Hardré, Sullivan, & Roberts, 2008) proposed that the support of teachers and their families and teachers' efforts at both school and community levels are essential for improving achievement in Public School. Hattie (2009), another scholar who has written extensively on academic achievement of students, rather emphasized more the roles played by responsible teachers and students than that of the principal, in improving teaching and learning and obtaining good learning outcomes. Hattie gave more emphasis to the roles played by responsible teachers and students than to the role of the principal, in improving teaching and learning and obtaining good learning outcomes. In his meta-analysis on academic achievement, however, he mentioned the significance of the instructional role of the school leader through management of teachers and students

Despite Hattie's strong emphasis on the teachers' role in student academic achievement he, nevertheless acknowledged, to some extent the instructional and community leadership role of the effective principal in school achievement. Hattie stated that the effective principal is the one who creates "... a climate of psychological safety to learn ... a focus of discussion on student learning ..." (2003, p. 5). Thus, Hattie believed that the effective principal is the one whose leadership influences a healthy school climate; including cultural responsiveness for enhancing efficient teaching through the expert teacher, and harnessing the students' prior knowledge for effective learning and achievement.

### **7.3 Critical analysis on the principal's management and collegial leadership skills that enhance school management in Public Secondary Schools**

The personal, managerial leadership skills of the principal can promote the achievement of students. Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) specifically examined the place of the

principals' leadership in students' learning and claimed: Price water house Cooper (2007) provided an overview of the research of Marzano and others and reported that high-quality leadership "... has a significant impact on both pupil academic and non-academic outcomes. In other words, good leadership and management lead to good teaching and learning, which in turn leads to higher standards for all students" (p. 1). PricewaterhouseCooper (2007) quoted Leithwood and his colleague who reported that: "... as far as we are aware, there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its student achievement directly in the absence of talented leadership" (p. 1). Leithwood and Mascall (2008) found that: "The influence of collective leadership was most strongly linked to student achievement through teacher motivation" (p. 554). It is the principal's leadership, identified as his or her corporate managerial and administrative expertise in engaging and motivating students, teachers and community that promoted students achievement.

This position is consistent with Leithwood's (2007) earlier work on educational leadership. Managerial leadership of the principal also comprises physical and human resourcing. The successful leader is the one who ensures that he or she employs the right, qualified personnel who assist and cooperate to make things happen in productive manner in order to achieve the goals of the institution. Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2005) reported that the successful leader knows how to balance meeting human aspirations of the personnel and achieving set strategic goals of the institution. These intellectuals believed that all efficient leaders are effective human resource managers. Despite the significance of the principal's role of physical and human resource management in achieving the school's set goals, most scholars commented more extensively on the principal's ability to blend this role with his or her collegial and instructional leadership. Successful school leaders share responsibility of instructional leadership with their teachers through teamwork, and mutual cooperation, which is an exercise of collegial leadership. Hoerr (1996) explained that it is when the principals share their authority, power and some responsibilities with staff that they gain the support of the teachers and other staff.

In order to prevent school leaders from stifling progress and collegiality, principals should be appointed from among those who have received prior training school leadership and/or organizational management. This echoes the work of Kars and Webber (2008) on essential signposts that must characterize the training and formation of principals in Eastern Europe. Their

work, which stipulated, for example specific topics which should be included in training modules for the preparation of principals remains a worthy source of practical clues for the effective future school leader. An earlier work by Burger, Webber and Klinck (2007) which focused on essentials of an effective educational leader from the perspective of several educationists from varying backgrounds is another complementary work on the specific training preparation of school principals. In Kenya and many other developing African countries, school principals are regularly recruited from among teachers. The major criterion employed to appoint principals is teaching experience and good conduct with no reference to a prior preparation or training in management of schools or organizations.

## **8.0 Research Methodology**

Qualitative research is one credible methodology in constructing meaning from the perspectives of the actors (Flick, 2009; Huberman & Miles, 2002). As explained by Marshall and Rossman (2006): “Human actions are significantly influenced by the setting in which they occur” (p. 53). In fact, human experiences (activities, events, and processes) will not be understood, unless the meaning of those humans assign to them is understood. What people experience, and how they interpret those experiences is the objective of a qualitative methodology (Patton, 2002, 2008). Therefore this study employed a qualitative research approach while adopting document analysis design to gather information.

## **9.0 Conclusion**

The study found out that most of public secondary schools leaders lack good personal attributes which is one of the qualities of an effective leader. On instructional and managerial roles the study found that a lot of emphasis is given to the teachers and students as opposed to the school principals who are supposed to be the ones assigning instructional roles. The study also found that most principals are appointed from within the teachers which are based on the academic qualification and teaching as opposed to consideration of qualifications in management and experience.

## **10. Recommendations**

The study made the following recommendations;

1. That the government of Kenya school introduce compulsory management courses for school principals to ensure the ones appointed to head schools are qualified
2. That the government should consider appointing persons with vast experience to ensure that the schools are headed by the right people.
3. The ministry of education should consider implementing leadership and management policies to ensure that school principals are well acquainted with the current management issues in the education sector.

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