

The Paradox of Institutional Leadership: A Critical Analysis of Myriad Predicaments Plaguing The School Leadership In Kenya

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Abstract

School leaders are expected to provide vision for their schools with inspiration and support for students and faculty. However, they are also responsible for student and faculty discipline management, instructional management, financial management, and much more. As leaders and managers, school leaders must continually blend the technical and symbolic aspects of their role, embracing each intricacy with confidence, enthusiasm, and skill. This call for specialized leadership training in all areas of school management like finance, procurement, human resource, discipline and others. Stability in terms of remuneration and duration of service play a critical role in effective leadership. Equally important to the balancing act of school leadership, is the understanding of the complexity and influence of the internal and external variables to the school outcomes as measures of leadership performance. In pursuit of school leadership excellence, improved institutional performance and quality achievement, the ministry of education in Kenya stays challenged to polish and refine the current school leadership infrastructure in pre-new office training programs, teacher transfer systems, incentive versus outcome leader service and leadership service domains.

Key words: Institutional Leadership, Pre-New Office Training, Teachers Service Commission, Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, Kenya Certificate of Primary Education

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary objectives of executive school leadership is to lubricate the framework for achieving excellence and success in any contemporary institution. Advanced management programs, strategic leadership courses and theoretical leadership models provide a broad range of skills and experiences for the empowerment of senior institutional managers. School principals, deputy principals, deans of students and heads of departments enjoy the top leadership privileges as key instigators of success in modern schools.

In this article, the researchers demonstrate that while appointments of new institutional executive leadership have continued to be pegged upon qualification and experience, prevailing wisdom dictates that they be preceded by formal training tailored specifically to empower the fresh client for the new office duties.

The researchers affiliate to the advocacy of the constitution of a standard framework that clearly defines reasons for transfers of principals and deputies devoid of manipulation, safeguarded from leadership fraud, as borrowed from the principal-agent theory. They consider stringent remuneration measures for executive leadership recruited in quadrupled streams and above boarding school based on quality outcome-oriented service. They show that excess adoration of national examinations outcomes may not only breed executive academic fraud but can also serve as architecture for leadership misconduct.

OBJECTIVES

1. To critically analyze the leadership training and capacity building dilemma in Kenya's education system
2. To critically analyze the selfish-driven transfers quagmire in Kenya's education system
3. To critically analyze the leadership remuneration paradox in Kenya's education system
4. To critically analyze the adoration and glorification of national exams, a factory for leadership lapse in Kenya's education system
5. To critically analyze a dosage of leadership indiscipline in institutional resource management in Kenya's education system
6. To critically analyze duration of service in leadership office in Kenya's education system

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a qualitative study based on a critical method design. Through this method, researchers extend their critique as a positive evaluation of a variety of educational leadership issues as a healthy judgment but rapidly offer therapeutic measures perpetuated as managerial recommendations. The critical method facilitates the resolution of educational leadership challenges against a conflicting leadership background. The researchers attempt to seek justification of educational leadership approaches, questionable practices and

problematic managerial strategies with a view to broaden the scope of understanding and provide reasonable remedial suggestions.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING DILEMMA

In his book, *The Heart of a Leader*, Blanchard Ken, (1999) strongly advocates for servant leadership which “is more about character than style” where leaders use directive, supportive or some combination of leadership styles “to best serve the needs of those they lead”. Such significant strategies used by successful global leaders have demonstrated that extensive investment in developing teachers’ morale and attitude change is of great value and benefit for victorious school management. Winning leaders concentrate on the creation and sustenance of quality performance teams which possess managerial skills necessary for contemporary institutional change. Modern institutional leaders invest in developing relationships within the teaching force that positively influence teaching and learning. This argument is based on the rationale that happier employees become extra productive within an organization. Within the general Kenyan educational scenario, newly appointed school leaders who include head teachers, deputy head teachers, dean of students, and head of department (HOD) amongst others ordinarily land in a fresh office within the same school environment or a totally new school environment. In the understanding that such school leaders are sometimes appointed after being subjected to an interview and after serving for some considerable period of time within in an educational environment, it is within the expectation of their employer that they perform exemplary in their new capacities. They may also be appointed after demonstrating and exhibiting excellent competencies in their areas of teaching consequently winning the attention of higher authorities.

The search for thorough pre-new office training for specific duties and responsibilities is a strategy for sealing tragic leadership lapses which may easily culminate into undesirable consequences with real school challenges. Take an example of a newly appointed deputy principal who lands into new office work and the next minute he/she receives a serious case of learner indiscipline. Amidst the complexity of modern changing lifestyles, contemporary social demands, dynamic institutional policies and varying parenting styles, modern schools face a disciplinary turbulence with worrying packages of challenges in the face of limited and unclear remedial measures. Nevertheless, such a new deputy is mandated to take corrective action within the sphere of laid down guidelines and policies. In a bout of confusion due to malnourished training skill and shortage of experience, the deputy may only consult higher authority in a bid to forge the way forward to tackle such a case.

In the deputy’s capacity, school tendering procedures are supposed to be effectively managed, efficiency of curriculum implementation maintained, effective teacher management amongst other duties without formal induction and training. How is such a deputy supposed to behave? In any case, such leaders only receive patches and bits of training in their earlier University training programs that deal with schools practical issues experienced on a day-to-day basis. Pragmatically speaking, newly appointed deputy head teachers are usually invited for a few-days induction/training session sometimes after serving in new office for a while which makes It difficult for them to demonstrate efficiency and affectivity in the duties and responsibilities within the contemporary competitive world of quality performance. Relevant educational stakeholders are challenged to create and strengthen legal structures and clear framework that stipulate the appointments of such leaders and subject them to formal training before taking office. Such endeavor would ensure acquisition of relevant skills in their area of operation with an increase in affectivity and efficiency in their work before handing them letters of appointments.

SELFISH-DRIVEN TRANSFERS QUAGMIRE

Undoubtedly, there is no clearly constituted framework that defines mission, goals and procedure of birth and execution of certain transfers of principals and their deputies. Apparently, particular educational officers can easily manipulate and decide when to execute transfers of certain school leaders and where to transfer them consequently breeding and perpetuating a culture of fear, uncertainty and unguaranteed performance amongst school leaders. Prevailing wisdom demands that effective school leadership, enshrined within quality management, be safeguarded by the ministry of education from such malpractices which contaminates the leadership purity and integrity of principals and their deputies. It is paramount that key institutional leaders be safeguarded from leadership fraud, manipulation and unnecessary transfer fever that normally affect them at unknown times of institutional calendars. Such includes the threat of shameless injection of malicious gossip to education offices about certain school leaders purporting their malfunction, alleged weakness and disuse in modern schools.

Examine a scenario where a one stream day school head teacher toils and moils, making a single stream school grow and expand in physical infrastructure, student and teacher population, quality academic achievement, which may even be converted into a boarding institution. It takes a day to transfer him/her to a remote mushrooming small school to start from the scratch after a brief misunderstanding with an influential senior officer who decides to settle score through such a barbaric approach. Within such a scenario, the educational officers appear to operate at a truth disadvantage subsequently subjecting themselves into

misconstrued and poorly baked decisions as demonstrated by the principal-agent theory. This results into untimely conviction that such leaders deserve immediate transfers. The process of sourcing, interviewing, appointing, remunerating, transferring and disciplining school leadership agents must be fair and transparent promptly translating into accountability, professionalism and integrity as enshrined in the Teachers Service Commission(TSC) core values as the country embrace the tenets of vision-2030 in education. It is imperative, that the ministry of education moves with urgency, and constitute an agreed structure that clearly outlines the procedure for transfer and discipline of principals or deputies.

LEADERSHIP REMUNERATION PARADOX

The fundamental goal of a well designed pay package for employees is majorly to create attraction, retention and motivation more so to the senior management team in contemporary institutions as borrowed from the principal-agent model. Head teachers and their deputies who manage four and more streams are compelled by internal and external forces to meet extra demands in the era of competitive quality educational achievements. Deputies of such schools for example, add extra sacrifice, determination and perseverance in a bid to meet the demands which revolve around students' health, academics, discipline amongst others. In contrast, a similar deputy of a single day school literary "switches off" from school work around 5.00pm till the following morning at around 7.00am.to jam-start the institutional program. The long term translation of hours worked by the two institutional leaders cannot be at par yet the ministry of education comfortably remunerates the two deputies at the same scale.

In a bid to explain the phenomenon under which extra allowances for deputies should be set, a broader and conclusive consideration should be guided and influenced by the contextual outcomes within their institutional environment. To incorporate such a consideration would extensively accommodate a great move to motivate school leaders and enhance their retention in large boarding schools. Again, the institution charged with the responsibility teacher remuneration should fervently pursue such a noble goal and ensure proper provision of satisfactory incentives to such school servants. The education stakeholders need to urgently constitute a clear framework on such institutional incentives to eliminate the possibility of school executive leadership misusing their authority to over-award themselves thus propagating executive fraud.

ADORATION AND GLORIFICATION OF NATIONAL EXAMS A FACTORY FOR LEADERSHIP LAPSE

A perfection framework that firmly clings on excellent national exams outcomes has given birth to a persistent headship paradox that strongly disregards background variables that oscillate around poor performance. Charismatic and transformational principals heading institutions governed by enabling environments only manage to manufacture low academic achievements. In contemporary institutions under intense pressure to cut a niche in the national Kenya certificate of secondary education (K.C.S.E.) and Kenya certificate of primary education (K.C.P.E.) performance, some head teachers or deputies dwell under constant fear of demotion or transfer. It is quite de-motivating that the rationale for such motives of transferring and pushing such leaders into full classroom teaching is registering a drop in the school national examination results.

Modern institutional practices and approaches appear to operate under the control of an invisible monster demanding compulsory academic excellence. The authorities bluntly ignore the fact that quality performance revolves around strong teamwork, members driven by virtues which include passion, sacrifice and determination amongst others. A complexity of both internal and external factors may heavily influence performance of a school. Without denial that the head teacher of any institution remains the captain of the school sailing towards academic excellence, other factors may certainly knock down academic performance of an institution.

Serious glorification and adoration of very high KCSE and KCPE achievements may naturally ferment certain institutional vices in a bid to join the category of performers. This is why some schools have turned into cheating and corruption chambers in a bid to create a "performing" impression. Why should the society be so keen on academic performance per se and forget other fundamental areas of school members' performance? A variety of other prevailing factors can negatively influence performance of a school consequently bringing the graph down. It appears absurd that the fingers of the society swiftly point only to the head of an institution and turn a blind eye to any other contributing factor to poor performance.

A DOSAGE OF LEADERSHIP INDISCIPLINE IN INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCE-MISMANAGEMENT

The global leadership advocacies have constantly prevailed upon deliberate changes geared towards the continuous improvement of administrative and managerial organizational systems for more efficiency and effectiveness. Similarly, internal school leadership domains ought to fervently press upon excellent resource management mechanisms that effectively cushion school leadership personnel against the intricacies of potential

problems of mismanaging school resources. Jim Rohn, (2007) strongly advocates for discipline as “the foundation on which all success is built” and condemns indiscipline which “inevitably leads to failure”. Executive leadership in any organization must display excellent standards of institutional resource governance knowledge, be glued to integrity, tact and admirable reputation. School leadership personnel must exhibit the potential to accurately monitor and comprehensively administer their expertise on school resources to avoid any human resource wastage, fraudulent claims, financial mismanagement or prevalence of incidents that can easily damage public trust and confidence upon school leadership.

School leaders are bound to pursue excellent approaches that unlock their potential to higher visions, increased strength and admirable character to effectively drive their school resource operating environment to inspired victory. From one perspective, resource mismanagement can be perceived as a symptom of deeper individual leadership lapses that continuously push some school institutional executive leaders into the jaws of poverty leading to a school tumble-misery environment. Selfish interests, wealth adoration culture, sharp hyena appetites money, prone-to-abuse school resource environments are tasty ingredients that lure mature professionals into the administration of mismanagement strategies.

It is a mind-boggling phenomenon that dignified school graduates of excellence, who spent years in Universities, acquiring, perfecting, sharpening, refining and polishing skills of school leadership, can voluntarily suffocate modern schools in ruinous, pathetic and disgusting resource mismanagement decadence. A higher percentage of school resource abusers exhibit concrete symptoms that they have nothing to live or die for in the advocacy of modern transformational and visionary leadership. Such leaders willingly execute greedy mismanagement mechanisms upon institutional resources knowing very well that they can swallow an interdiction dose or face the law. Substandard school administrators and selfish institutional managers may easily get driven into lethal fraudulent resource mismanagement deals, integrity contaminating approaches, wasteful and unnecessary school operations that only deny learners to access quality education. Such are the ugly school scenarios that should make superior officers from the ministry of education heave and sigh in discomfort and thus breathe fire and brimstone to their junior school policy-implementers.

In pursuance of visionary, transformational and inspirational school leadership with the potential to prudently manage institutional resources, it is imperative that educational stakeholders closely associate themselves with the formation and constant review of policies and individual strategies that govern institutional resources management. Such strategic measures would go a long way in aligning the dynamic complexities and changing intricacies associated with human resource and other school resource management.

DURATION OF SERVICE IN LEADERSHIP OFFICE

Duration of service in new office has not been clearly stipulated in the employer’s recruitment terms of service. For a new dean of student, head of department, deputy principal or principal who serves for a considerable duration of time, it is not clearly stipulated for how long such a leader remains in current position awaiting promotion to the next level. It is such a scenario that opens an avenue of leadership uncertainty turbulence and confusion.

In cognizance of the fact that such a school manager is expected to be aggressive in applying for the next available higher post, there has been distasteful cases of some teachers mark timing and stagnating for ages in one position raising the question; for how long is one supposed to serve in his/her new appointment? For the social and communal advantage, coupled with individual gain and interest, relevant stakeholders ought to constitute a consensus-based structure that strengthens a framework which advocates for specifications in matters of teacher service in a given position.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education stakeholders should prevail and act upon the urgency of formulating and strengthening structures that result into;

1. Formal framework or structure for the appointment of institutional leaders.
2. Formal training programs and experience-guided courses for newly appointed leader as pertains duties.
3. Clearly set out qualifications for the appointment of a given leadership position.
4. Clearly defined period of service in a given leadership position.
5. Agreed framework on school leaders’ transfers.
6. A constituted structure of remuneration for leaders managing institutions of different calibers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as researchers refrain from the mechanisms of inventing a standard complainant, it is appreciated that the Kenyan government has embraced commitment in strong support of a leadership framework for the management of modern institutions. In pursuit of school leadership excellence, improved institutional performance and quality achievement, the ministry of education stays challenged to polish and refine the current school leadership infrastructure in pre-new office training programs, teacher-transfer systems, incentive versus outcome leader service and leadership service domains. We therefore strongly advocate for extra chiseling of the current leadership framework to shape it in line with contemporary dynamic institutional demands, guided by a passion-driven endeavor, to pursue the key tenets for educational goals of Vision 2030.

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