

A Theoretical and Empirical Review of the Relationship between Head Teachers' Leadership Styles and KCPE Performance in Public Primary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract

The quality of education depicted in any school is largely influenced by the quality of leadership exhibited by the school administrator in that institution. Effective teamwork and networking among stakeholders in a school is a source of motivation that drives all people involved to work towards the achievement of the goals of that institution. It is the obligation of the institution leader to influence those workers under him or her to strive to achieve the institutional goals through the application of appropriate leadership skills. In this article, the authors discuss the findings from the study carried out on the relationship between headteachers' leadership styles on KCPE performance in public primary schools in central region of Kenya. The study is based on normative decision theory by Vroom and Yetton (1973). The study adopted mixed methods and applied sequential exploratory design which involved quantitative and qualitative procedures in data collection and analysis. The study adopted purposive and stratified simple random sampling and data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis for the secondary data. The instruments' validity was established through the guidance of the experts in the department of management, administration and leadership of Mount Kenya University. The researchers established instrument reliability by using split half technique which involved calculating the Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) between the two halves of the tests. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 21 and qualitative data was analyzed thematically according to the objectives. The findings of the study indicated that pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education corresponded to leadership styles to a very great extent. The study also found out that there was laxity by the headteachers in delegating power and duties to their teaching staff and lack of participation of all stakeholders in the welfare of the school thus affecting the pupils' performance. The findings of this study drew conclusion that would assist education policy makers and implementers to formulate strategies that could be used to improve leadership styles that would promote better examination performance at primary school level.

Keywords: Leadership, leadership styles, performance

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

This study shares our research on the effects of headteachers' leadership styles on Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in central region, Kenya. The researchers have also incorporated the findings of other researchers who conducted studies in this area at PhD and master levels. The school administrator holds the mantle of ensuring that all stakeholders strive to achieve the institutional goals. The quality of education depicted in any school is largely influenced by the quality of leadership exhibited by the school administrator in that institution. Effective teamwork and networking among stakeholders in a school is a source of motivation that drives all people involved to work towards the achievement of the goals of that institution. It is the obligation of the institution leader to influence those teachers under him or her to strive to achieve the institutional goals through the application of appropriate leadership skills.

To achieve the objectives of quality education to all learners, institutions leaders should acquire the appropriate skills to enable them exploit their potentials to their fullest. Effective audit system such as monitoring of learners achievement is necessary to ensure the quality and scope of service delivery hinged on

such leadership effectiveness. Intended leadership needs knowing what to do, when, how and why to do it as well as pushing for change while at the same time safeguarding aspects of culture, values, and rules worthy preserving. Institutional managers should also know and see the benefit of the people in their organization. Knowledge and skills contribute to balanced leadership (Marzano, 1995). This study theoretically and empirically examines the relationship between headteachers leadership styles and pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education.

2.0. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this article is to analyse the relationship between headteachers' leadership styles and Kenya Certificate of Primary Education performance in public primary schools in Kenya. The findings of the study would be used by the Ministry of Education in formulating capacity building programmes to empower head teachers with appropriate leadership styles for better school management. For example, the Kenya Educational Management Institute (KEMI) can use the results of this study to enrich leadership courses they offer to school head teachers through in-service training.

3.0. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 Importance of Education

A strong belief on education is to create individuals who are innovative and, not simply repeating what generations have done – men and women who are inventive and discoverers. Educating a nation is an avenue for developing the entire society in the developing countries of the world. (Aikman & Unternahhter 2005). Education is an investment and hence quality learning and training contributes greatly to economic growth and creation of employment opportunities (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

An education system in any country is established as a result of the determination of the broader goals of education which are in time with the aspirations of the country. To put to effect these aspirations, school split to the long-term aims into more specific short term objectives. To achieve this, a school implement an appropriate curriculum whose objectives ensure the attainment of goals aspired by a society.

3.2 The Role of the School

A school is the functional unit of the education system. In economic terms, a school is an industry which transforms a given quality of inputs into required outputs. A school is a unique industry in the sense that its raw materials, who are the students, have to be transformed into appropriate products. The product of a school is judged by the way its past students perform in society.

The efficiency of a school is divided into internal and external efficiencies. The internal efficiency is determined by how a school transforms its inputs into outputs. The external efficiency of schools is determined by how well schools prepare pupils for their expected roles in society (Okumbe, 1999). In order to accomplish its role effectively, a school must be able to afford a focused educational leadership which is based on good management principles and techniques.

3.3 Leadership Styles

A leadership style can be defined as behaviour used by a leader to motivate the subordinates to strive to achieve the organizational objectives. Leadership styles are usually identified as points on a continuum. Okumbe (1999) outlines various leadership styles such as democratic, autocratic, laissez faire, nomothetic, ideographic and transactional leadership styles.

The democratic style also referred to as consultative leadership, decentralizes power and authority. Decisions about the organization are reached through consultations. Autocratic leadership style centralizes power, authority and decision making. In laissez faire style, leaders have the tendency of avoiding power and authority. The leader allows the group to come up with the organizational goals and the various ways of attaining success. In the nomothetic leadership style, the leader emphasizes the objectives of the organization and the role of the workers position. The workers are strictly controlled through the application of rules and regulations stipulated by the organization structure. It is a task centered approach to leadership.

The ideographic leadership style is worker-centered and applies the human relations approach to management. This style emphasizes the human dimension of the organization and is sensitive to the worker's individual needs. The transactional leadership style is a mixture of nomothetic and the ideographic leadership styles. Transactional leadership style varies emphasis of the two as the situation demands (Okumbe, 1999).

3.4 The effects of leadership styles on students' performance

Okoth (2000) conducted a study on the effects of leadership styles on students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Nairobi County, Kenya and found out that headteachers merited as being consultative

achieved higher mean standard score index than the authoritative headteachers. This concurs with Kimacia (2007), and Mwalala (2008), who found out that there is a connection between principals' leadership styles and overall students' performance in K.C.S.E and noted that democratic and consultative headteachers had higher performance index in K.C.S.E than autocratic headteachers.

The findings contradict Njuguna (1998) who found out that there is no significant connection between principals' leadership styles and students' K.C.S.E performance. Huka (2003), brings a point of contrast by asserting that headteachers who were merited as consultative had lower mean scores, while authoritative headteachers achieved higher mean scores. The same findings featured in Muli (2005), and Wangui (2007). This contradiction could arise as a result of different head teachers' working environment.

Muchira (1998), conducted a study on leadership effectiveness in primary teachers colleges in Kenya with an emphasis on leadership styles, job satisfaction and students' achievement. The study aimed at determining and describing the nature of the principals' leadership styles, job satisfaction and students' performance. The study focused on the nature of the principals' leadership styles, students' performance and to investigate the extent of the relationship of these variables. The findings showed that there were no significant differences between task-oriented principals and relationship-oriented principals with regards to students' achievement. These findings were contrary to Wanjiru (1997) who had observed that there was a significant relationship between, perceived Leadership styles, size of the school and non-institutional time on teachers, hence there was need for further investigations amidst these contradictions.

3.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the normative decision theory by Vroom & Yetton (1973), which attempt to connect the gap between leadership theory and managerial practice using empirical research in management decision making process (Lussier, 2002). This theory of leadership focuses on decision making by managers with a defined group of subordinates and consists of procedures for determining the extent to which leaders should involve subordinates in the process.

The theory identifies the following five leadership styles each with independent effect on the subordinate and organizations performance:

- i. Highly Autocratic I (AI): In this style, the manager makes the decision alone using information at hand.
- ii. Less Autocratic II (AII): The leader asks for information from junior staff but makes the decision alone. Subordinates may or may not be told what the problem was. They are not involved in making the final resolution.
- iii. Consultative I (CI): The leader shares the problems with the subordinates and asks for their ideas and evaluation on how to address the problem. However, the final decision is made by the leader.
- iv. Consultative II (CII): The leader and the subordinates meets as a group to discuss the problem but he makes the decision after getting ideas and information on how to address or alleviate the problem. The input of the subordinates may or may not be used by the leader.
- v. Highly Consultative Group II (GII): The leader come together with the subordinates as a group to discuss the problem and the group makes the decision.

Normative theory is suitable for this study because it outlines some leadership styles that a head teacher would choose to apply to influence members of his staff to achieve the institution goals depending on the situation at hand. This model would enable any school manager to be flexible in administrative duties.

3.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

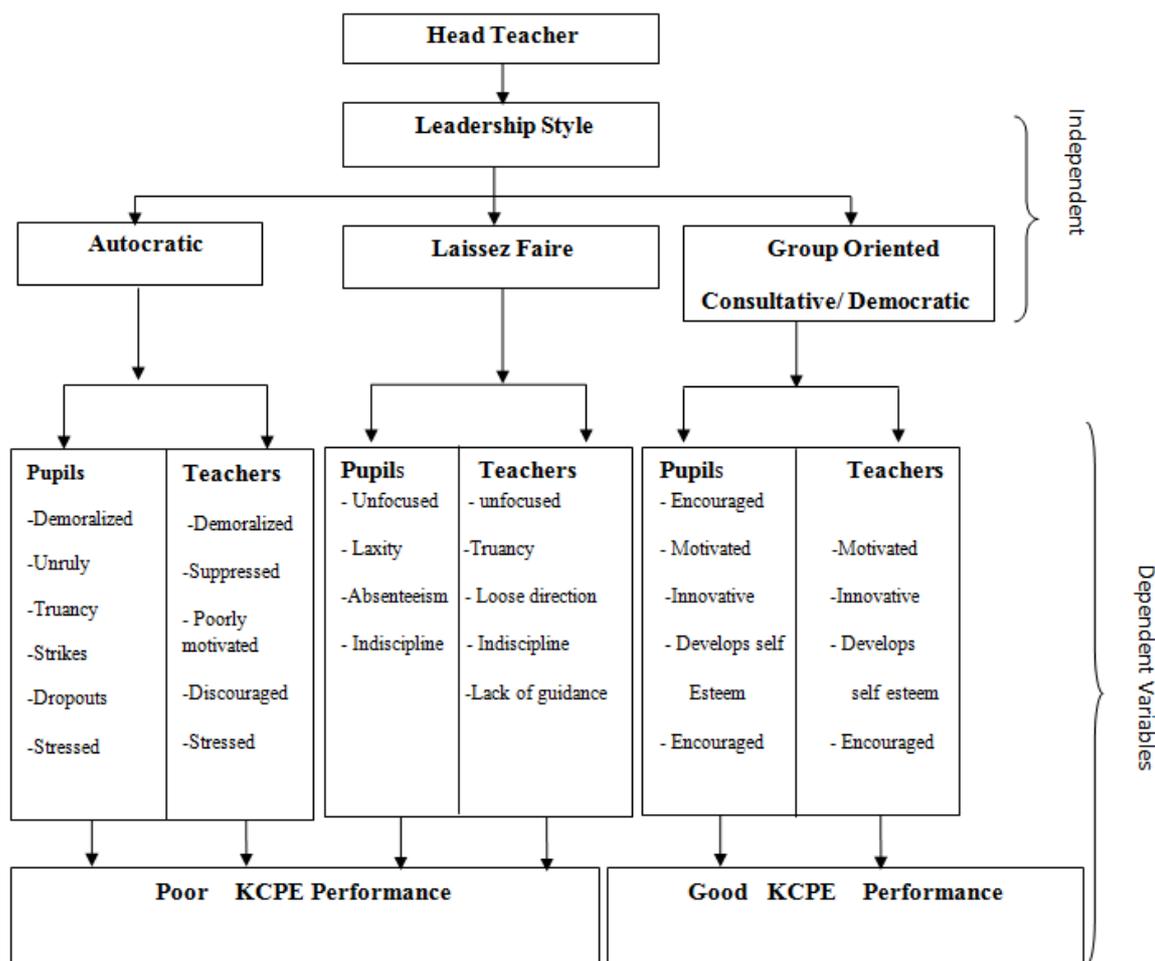


Figure 1.1 Head Teachers’ Leadership Styles relationship on Pupils’ Performance in KCPE

4.0. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopted mixed methods and applied sequential exploratory design which involved quantitative and qualitative procedures in data collection and analysis. The study targeted all the public primary schools in Ruiru Sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya. A total of 8 schools were included in the sample which was 28% of the total number of public primary schools in the sub-county. The study adopted purposive and stratified simple random sampling and data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis for the secondary data.

The instruments’ validity was established through the guidance of the experts in the department of management, administration and leadership of Mount Kenya University. The researchers established instrument reliability by using split half technique which involved calculating the Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r) between the two halves of the tests. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 21 and qualitative data was analyzed thematically according to the objectives.

5.0. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 KCPE Performance of Public Primary Schools in Ruiru Municipality

Table 1 KCPE Performance

Mean score range	2007		2008		2009		2010	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
100-200	6	75	5	62.5	7	87.5	7	87.5
201-300	2	25	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5
Totals	8	100	8	100	8	100	8	100

Key: F = Frequency

The above (table 1) shows that in 2007, 75% of the respondents indicated that they had a mean score of the range of 100-200 while 25% stated that their mean score ranged from 201-300. In 2008, majority of the respondents (62.5%) stated that their mean score ranged from 100-200 while 37.5% indicated that their mean score was between 201-300. On the other hand in 2009, 87.5% indicated that their mean score was on the range of 100 and 200 while 12.5%, said that their mean score was between 201 and 300. Lastly in 2010, 87.5% majority of the respondents indicated that they had a mean score of 100-200 while 12.5% had a mean score ranging from 201-300. The data displayed in table 1 above shows that the KCPE performance of public primary schools in Ruiru Sub- County, Kiambu County, was below average in the years 2007 to 2010.

5.2 Effect of head teachers' leadership Styles on KCPE performance

Table 2 Head teachers' perception on leadership styles effect on KCPE performance

Leadership styles	Frequency	Percentage
Enhances understanding and hard work	2	25
Motivate teachers	2	25
Involve stakeholders in decision making	1	12.5
Lack of frequent consultation with teachers	3	37.5
Total	8	100

Table 2, illustrates the percentages of head teachers perception on leadership styles and KCPE performance. Twenty five percent (25%) of the respondents were for the opinion that head teachers leadership styles enhanced understanding and hard work among the subordinates and pupils. Further 25 % of the respondents stated that leadership styles motivated and encouraged teachers hence improving pupils' performance in KCPE. Twelve point five percent (12.5%) of the head teachers suggested that if stakeholders were involved in decision making there would be improvement in KCPE performance. Thirty seven point five percent (37.5 %) of the respondents stated that lack of frequent consultation with teachers greatly affected KCPE performance. The findings of this study concurs with Kimacia (2007) and Mwalala (2008) who observed that there was a connection between leadership styles and students' performance in KCSE by noting that democratic and consultative principals exhibited higher performance index in KCSE than autocratic head teachers.

5.3. Table 3 Perception of PTA chairpersons on how head teachers' leadership styles influence KCPE performance

Leadership styles influence	Frequency	Percentage
Ability to allow dialogue and consultation with stakeholders.	3	37.5
Motivate and encouraging teachers and pupils.	3	37.5
Effectiveness of head teacher in administrative roles.	1	12.5
Involvement of stakeholders in decision making process.	1	12.5
Total	8	100

According to table 3, 37.5% of the respondents were for the opinion that the degree to which head teachers consulted the stakeholders, the ability of the head teachers to motivate and encourage teachers and pupils in their schools influenced pupils' performance in KCPE. Finally, 12.5% of the respondents indicated that involvement of stakeholders in decision making and the effectiveness of the head teacher corresponded with the pupils' performance in KCPE.

5.4 Head Teachers' Leadership Styles

Table 4 Perceptions of Teachers on head teachers' leadership styles

Teachers Perception attributes	Never		Very Little		Sometimes		Considerable		Very great		No response		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Appreciate ideas and abilities of teachers and support staff	2	2.2	10	10.9	10	10.9	41	44.6	28	30.4	1	1.1	100
Consultative in decision making	2	2.2	11	12.0	19	20.7	24	26.1	35	38.0	1	1.1	100
Delegate power responsibility to teachers and support staff	3	3.3	7	7.6	16	17.4	30	32.6	35	38.0	1	1.1	100
Initiates and directs goals for the staff to support and accomplice	4	4.3	5	5.4	26	28.3	38	41.3	18	19.6	1	1.1	100
Allows teachers and support staff to function freely as they wish	14	15.2	15	16.3	9	9.8	28	30.4	25	27.2	1	1.1	100
Share success and failures with other school stakeholders	5	5.4	11	12.0	14	15.2	27	29.3	34	37.0	1	1.1	100
Encourages performance standard as a mutual agreement to all stakeholders	3	3.3	7	7.6	11	12.0	29	31.5	41	44.6	1	1.1	100

Key: F = Frequency

Table 4 shows the perception of teachers on head teacher's leadership styles. Forty four point six percent (44.6%) indicated that most of the head teachers appreciated ideas and abilities of teachers and support staff to a considerable extent. It was also noted that 38% of the respondents felt that head teachers delegated duties and responsibility to teachers. Thirty point four percent (30.4%) indicated that leadership roles corresponded with allowing teachers and support staff to function freely as they wish to a considerable extent. Mean while 44.6% stated that leadership styles encouraged performance standard with other school stakeholders to a very great extent. Table 4.11 shows that most teachers viewed their head teachers as consultative and democratic. Some teachers rated their head teachers as laissez faire leaders. These views agree with Duening (2003) who grouped institutional leaders as those who apply initiating structures and those who apply consideration structure.

6.0. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the finding, the study concluded that performance of K.C.P.E candidates in public primary schools in Ruiru Sub-County, Kiambu County is low due to leadership styles practiced by head teachers in their schools. Teachers' views on their head teachers' leadership styles indicated that there were more of laissez fare leaders in public primary schools. This would have resulted to poor K.C.P.E performance in the county. The study concludes that head teachers should be more consultative and involve stakeholders in decision making on matters affecting their schools. Head teachers allowed their teachers to function freely as they wished thus consequently affecting the KCPE performance.

There was a large connection between head teachers' leadership styles and KCPE performance in public primary schools in Kiambu County. Head teachers who practiced consultative and democratic leadership styles motivated and encouraged their teachers, who in return worked hard to improve pupils' performance in KCPE. On the other hand, head teachers who did not adequately involve their teachers and other stakeholders in decision making process made their school to decline in KCPE performance.

7.0. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study advocates that head teachers should practise leadership styles that facilitate collaborative responsibility and consultative decision making with all stakeholders in their institutions. They should also involve teachers in decision making process. This would enhance participative leadership and hence improve KCPE performance.

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