

EFFECT OF PRINCIPALS' DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP ON SCHOLARS' ACADEMICS ACHIEVEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE NYAMIRA SOUTH SUB- COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

The research sought to evaluate how a democratic managerial style influences students' academic results. A survey methodology was used to gather data regarding the influence of managerial styles on educational outcomes. The research population consisted of 42 school principals, 42 deputy principals, and 675 educators within the Nyamira south sub-County, as they possess valuable insights on the leadership behaviors of principals and their impact on students' academic outcomes. For the purpose of this study, a sample size incorporating 30% of the total population was selected, resulting in 14 principals, 14 deputy principals, and 227 teachers, creating a total sample size of 255 respondents. The study employed a simple random sampling method to select participants. Both questionnaires and interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. The validity and reliability of these tools were confirmed prior to the initiation of the data collection process, achieving a reliability coefficient of 0.852. Quantitative data were tabulated using frequency tables and analyzed through descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were sorted into distinct thematic categories. The study concludes that principals should be encouraged to utilize a balanced array of managerial styles to maximize academic performance. Specifically, the study advocates for the deployment of democratic leadership for optimal scholastic achievement.

Keywords: *Principals' Democratic Leadership, Academics Achievement, Secondary Schools*

INTRODUCTION

The influence and accountability bestowed to an individual or group of individuals in deciding the way ahead for the success or failure of attaining the agreed set objectives is what is identified as leadership. The manager's score can be arbitrated on the level of management leadership they exhibit. The significance of leadership in contemporary management practices has escalated, especially given the dynamic shifts in social, economic, and technological landscapes. Whereas managerial tasks traditionally focus on resource allocation, strategy formulation, and operational control to fulfill pre-set objectives, leadership serves as the vital element that amplifies the impact of these managerial functions. Reed (2005) contends that effective leadership enhances not only the efficiency of management processes but also promotes long-term performance and successful resource management.

Due to the accelerated pace of change in both organizations and their environments in recent years, there has been a growing need for a more adaptive form of leadership. This modern leadership paradigm tends to be more democratic in nature, aiming to ensure the long-term viability of the organization (Johnson, 1995). Maicibi (2005) posits that the apt deployment of leadership strategies can substantially contribute to high performance within educational institutions. As such, leadership effectiveness is best measured through the lens of its influence on managerial outcomes.

There is enough of evidence which suggests that management is among important issues in promoting and improving the outcome after the usage of independent teams is linked. According to Johnson and Hackman (2003), a style of leadership described as a method of giving direction, implementing strategy and inspiring people. There is number of leadership that different leaders use which includes: authoritarian, paternalistic, democratic, laissez-faire, transactional and transformational. This research examined a variety of styles of leadership being implemented in secondary schools within nyamira south sub County, Kenya, by principals. The contemporary international focus on achieving high standards in education has sparked rigorous discussions concerning the qualifications and skills required by school administrators, educators, and Board of Management members to effectively implement curriculum and secure superior educational results (Ibrahim & Orodho, 2022).

Fasasi et al., (2022), argue that quality is a peculiar and essential character of an inherent feature; a gradation of excellence and a distinguished attribute. In a research researched by Clement (2010), it shows that male principals are less innovative, caring and democratic, while female principals were found less autonomous and decisive in their administration. However, Cunningham and Paul(2009) argue that there are several parameters that impact the educations' quality and competencies of principals of schools. The components involved in educational delivery include the subject matter, the instructors responsible for curriculum dissemination, and a select group of leaders who collaborate with teachers, students, and the broader community. Research largely indicates that initiatives focusing exclusively on governance and leadership struggle to effect more than a broad impact on student learning. The role of school principals has been notably transformed due to unforeseen shifts in economic, demographic, technological, and international landscapes (Levine, 2005).

Although principals serve a critical role in establishing the trajectory for successful educational institutions, they face numerous challenges in the contemporary operational context of public schools.

Effective principals who excel in creating and maintaining competitive schools must develop and execute strategic plans for school improvement, while also offering pedagogical leadership to enhance the educational setting. The model of competitive leadership requires that both teachers and students are active participants in decision-making processes related to school policies, guidelines, and programs. This participatory approach is often facilitated through various institutional mechanisms such as staff meetings, student councils, extracurricular clubs, and committees, as well as other organizations that contribute to the school's operation (Wango, 2006). Principal's competence can be regarded into five major roles which attribute the duties of principal of a school both globally and in Kenya. These includes administering school curriculum, school finances, and business, administering human resource including students discipline, school physical facilities, and the community surrounding school. Wango (2006) and Saitoti (2003) propose that the focus of quality education should extend beyond simple credentialing to include the development of an individual's analytical and cognitive abilities, motivational drive, and creative potential. This broader perspective on education also incorporates fostering imagination, spirituality, and

ethical values. This suggests that competence of principals should be aimed at improving value of education centered on the mentioned characteristics.

To achieve quality education, the school manager must be competent in his mastery of the teacher's role and must always be ready and keen to work with the teacher. The principal must be highly competent and skilled person, human relations, a delegation of responsibility and communication (Fasasi et al., 2022). These are the main gears towards quality education. As late as 1980, no nation possessed a clearly defined national policy on the training standards for heads of schools. The only century that several countries have become aware of the significance of self-training for school leaders (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2019; Bush, 2008) is the 21st century. In before there have been many transformations in the society which has brought significant change is in the education structure (Warfield, 2009). Now the school's principal must possess multiple forms of expertise to advance their effectiveness.

Harris (2005) contends that a nation's educational quality and school performance are influenced by internal mechanisms aimed at continual enhancement. Leadership is one such internal process, with the school principal serving as a pivotal figure in steering the institution. Various leadership styles, such as democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire (as cited in Yuk, 2005), play a significant role. It is essential for current and aspiring school administrators to familiarize themselves with the field of leadership as an academic discipline. This will help them tailor their leadership approaches to specific situations, as well as develop and implement organizational cultures that foster improvement.

Kenya is also engaged in the global pursuit of educational goals, as outlined in its Vision 2030 and the universal Education for All (EFA) initiative (as referenced in the World's Competitiveness Report, 2009). The effectiveness of educational institutions in Kenya in reaching these goals is strongly influenced by the governance structures in place. It is worth noting that several schools continue to underperform due to ineffective leadership, in addition to factors like insufficient funding and subpar infrastructure.

In this context, the present study aims to examine the impact of principal leadership on students' performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) in Nyamira County, Kenya. According to data from the office of the County Education Officer in Nyamira South Sub-County for the years 2021-2015, there has been a modest positive trend in KCSE results, indicated by an index of +1.356. This research seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by investigating the types of leadership exercised by school principals and the strategies they adopt to enhance the quality of education in secondary schools within Nyamira South Sub-County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

The responsibility for the daily operations of a public school falls primarily on the principal, who oversees the implementation, supervision, and evaluation of the curriculum at the institutional level. To effectively manage these duties, the principal can adopt a variety of leadership styles. These leadership approaches may range from autocratic and centralized decision-making to democratic and participatory models, or even to laissez-faire styles that allow for more autonomous functioning by staff and faculty. The chosen style often influences the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and, consequently, the overall quality of education provided by the institution. In a bid to increase performance, some principals become too firm in the applications on leadership while some become less strict. This has effects on the schooling atmosphere that will finally affect performance. Reports from the county director education office indicate that in most institutes, the principals use force and dictatorial tactics in the daily running of the schools. This has triggered many students opposed to the institute leadership, thus leading to strikes and subsequently spreads out to academic performance. The Nyamira South Sub County, Kenya, for ten years has been

lowly ranked nationally in KCSE performance. Following the above scenario, the researcher wanted to identify if the low performance of the public schools in the Nyamira South Sub County, Kenya, is linked to the method used by principals run the schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Literature Review

Coordination, cooperation, and collaboration are the defining characteristics of a democratic mode of operation. (Yuk (2005) made the discovery that subordinates are given the authority to minister with freedom and free will when the leader exercises a laissez-faire style of leadership, also known as free rein leadership. Sammons and colleagues carried out the study. (2019) came to the conclusion that leadership has an influence, both directly and indirectly, on a difference in the processes that take place in schools and classrooms, as well as effects that are indirect on an improvement in academic learning outcomes. According to Weihrich and Koontz (2007), this kind of leadership is a participatory one. Followers or subordinates are consulted by the leader on decisions and activities that are being suggested. The leader is involved in the process of formulating policies, but they do not dominate the actions of the organization. The supporters are motivated once again to take part, and it is forbidden to take any action that interferes with their comfort, or decisions may only be made after they have been discussed with them first. The democratic form of leadership entails the frontrunner actively participating in the decision-making processes of the members of the group. This is accomplished by actively fostering social equality and fostering the interests of the members of the group. The limits of democratic participation are often confined to the requirements of the organization or the requirements of the group as a whole, as well as the influencing value of individuals' characteristics (skills, attitudes, etc.). According to Woods (2010), democratic leadership comprises the concept that everyone, owing to the fact that they are human, should have some input into the choices that the group makes as a whole.

According to the findings of a study that was conducted in Uganda by Nsubuga (2009), the consultative or democratic type of leadership is the one that is most often utilized in government schools throughout the nation, and it has been proven to be successful. In addition to this, it was discovered that the majority of head teachers in Uganda made use of this leadership to foster ownership. The outcomes of the research also indicated that one leadership was used in the schools that were investigated. Even though the democratic style was the one that was chosen most often, it was discovered that leaders typically employ a variety of leadership styles at the same time and frequently utilize other leadership styles. This was the case even though the democratic style was the one that was chosen most frequently. It was discovered that schools with democratic leadership were more likely to have high overall school performance. This was based on the fact that democratic leadership was implemented in such schools.

In government A level institutions in the Kiambu District of Kenya, Ngugi (2006) revealed that head teachers who applied democratic leadership had good exam results, but there was no significant link observed between autocratic leadership and academic score. According to Onyango (2008), schools with head teachers whose behaviors were a combination of task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors had the best academic performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). Based on the research described above, it was not yet evident whether kind of leadership led to the most efficient style of organizational behavior. As a result of the incorporation of the employees into the decision-making process that took place under the relationship-oriented behavior leadership style, good morale was seen among the workers.

Research conducted by Okoth (2000) in Nairobi sub-county, Kenya, on the influence of leadership on students' scores on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE)

indicated that principals who were seen as democratic had a higher mean score index than authoritarian principals did. Huka (2003) brings up an interesting point of contention when he points out that the democratic principles that were ranked the highest had the lowest mean scores, while the autocratic principles had higher mean scores.

According to Njuguna (1998), democratic head teachers are more likely to be seen as having great academic achievement than authoritarian head teachers. However, despite the fact that Democratic leadership is considered to be the most effective leadership style, it does have some potential drawbacks. In circumstances in which duties are not clearly defined or when time is an essential consideration, democratic leadership may result in projects that are not finished and communication breakdowns. It's possible that some or most of the members of the group don't have the necessary amount of knowledge or experience to make valuable contributions to the decision-making process. When there is sufficient time, as well as individuals who are knowledgeable and willing to contribute both their expertise and their thoughts, democratic leadership functions more effectively.

Theoretical Literature Review

Institutional theory

The work of theorists from thousands of years ago served as the foundation for the modern theory. According to Covalleski et al. (2003), the institutionalization of habits was considered both a product and a process reflecting the strength of organized interests and the individuals who mobilized those interests. The theory examined the mechanisms via which structures, such as schemes, rules, norms, and routines, are established as authoritative standards for social behavior. Additionally, the theory expanded to explain economic connections across many units of analysis. Various aspects of institutional theory detailed how different parts came to be, how they spread, how they were accepted and altered through time and place, and how they eventually became obsolete and fell out of usage. Schools are considered to be institutions, and as such, they are expected to responsibly account for the resources they use. The key parties, such as boards of management and the ministry of education, set regulations that serve as official guidelines for the school, which are followed while acquiring and using these resources. It is necessary to direct all of these resources in order to improve the academic performance of the kids.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the mixed methods approach. The research was situated within secondary educational institutions in Nyamira South Sub-County, located in the Western Region of Kenya. According to data obtained from the County Director of Education's Office in Nyamira (CDEO, 2015) .There were 42 principals, 42 deputy principals, and 675 teachers. Therefore, the target sample size for the study was established to be 759 respondents, capturing a diverse and comprehensive view of educational leadership within the county. The study utilized a simple random sampling technique to select the secondary schools, principals, assistant principals, and senior teachers who were included in the research sample. The sample therefore comprised of 14 principals, 14 deputy principal and 227 teachers giving an accessible sample size of 255 respondents. This research employed questionnaires and interviews. The paired sample t-test was used to do the analysis on the quantitative data that was supplied. The qualitative data were reviewed, organized into separate themes based on the replies of the respondents. Tables were used to display the results of the study.

FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION

Questionnaire Return Rate

The respondents were given an inquiry form and interview programs, which allowed for the collection of primary data that was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The

respondents were given a combined total of 87 different interview sessions and 168 different questions. The questionnaires and preparation materials for the interviews have all been returned. This resulted in a return rate of one hundred percent, which was sufficient for the analysis. This is consistent with the findings of Nachmias and Nachmias (2005), who state that it is appropriate for any academic survey study to have a response rate that is higher than 75%.

Effect of Principals' Democratic styles of leadership on Academic Performance

To address this research question, principal assistants and the senior teachers were asked to state the percentage to which they agreed disagreed with the suggested leadership indicator in their institutions. The management style indicators were phrased in a way that agree to the leadership indicator implied a high likelihood of use of democratic leadership while disagree implied the low likelihood of use of democratic leadership. The responses from the respondents were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Effect of Democratic style of leadership in Secondary Schools

Statement	Teachers				Deputy Principals			
	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD
	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
In your institutional, you work together to develop and articulate a shared aim and a clear educational vision focused on learning	07 (50)	04 (28.6)	02 (14.3)	01 (7.14)	07 (50)	04 (28.6)	03 (21.4)	-
The principal takes collective responsibility for institute practices and outcomes	06 (42.9)	05 (35.7)	02 (14.3)	01 (7.2)	02 (14.3)	11 (78.5)	01 (7.1)	-
The principal highpoints power through people rather than power over people	07 (50)	04 (28.6)	02 (14.3)	01 (7.14)	08 (57.1)	03 (21.4)	02 (14.3)	01 (7.2)
The principal allows his Staff to have considerable autonomy and discretion to plan curriculum and organize instruction within an overall framework	02 (14.3)	10 (71.4)	01 (7.2)	01 (7.2)	06 (42.9)	07 (50)	01 (7.2)	-
In your school you share info and make decisions together	02 (14.3)	06 (42.9)	05 (35.7)	01 (7.2)	02 (14.3)	06 (42.9)	05 (35.7)	01 (7.2)
Most of the resolutions settled in the staff meetings	07 (50)	04 (28.6)	02 (14.3)	01 (7.2)	02 (14.3)	10 (71.4)	01 (7.2)	01 (7.2)

Source: Field Data (2023)

Data from Table 1 reveals that 11 (78.7%) of the instructors said that their schools work together to advance and express a unified purpose and a clear set of learning-focused educational objectives. 03 (21.3%) of them disagreed, though. Only three (21.4%) of the deputy principals disagreed with the majority of 11 (78.6%) who shared the same

perspective. This suggests that principals employ collaboration and shared purpose among the staff in the majority of secondary educational institutions in the Nyamira South Sub- County, Kenya, which is an indicator of democratic style of leadership.

The majority of 11 teachers (78.6%) agreed that the principals accept collective responsibility for school procedures and results, while 03 teachers (21.4%) disagreed. This speaks to the fact that the leaders share responsibility for both. 13 deputy principals (92.9%) agreed that the principals shoulder joint responsibility for school policies and performance, while just 1 (7.1%) disagreed.

Further research revealed that some 03 (21.5%) teachers disagreed, the majority of 11 (78.6%) teachers said the principle promotes power through people rather than power over people. The majority of the deputy principals, 11, (78.5%) agreed that their leaders prioritize power over people above power through people, with just three (21.5%) opposing. This suggests that the majority of principals in Kenya's Nyamira South Sub-County public educational schools.

Use the staff and even the student council to emphasize authority. This is consistent with what democratic leadership demands. The performance at their various secondary schools is likely to be impacted by the small minority who do not support democracy, nevertheless.

A majority of 12 teachers (85.7%) agreed that principals give teachers a lot of freedom and discretion to plan curriculum and organize lessons within a general framework, while only two (14.4%) did not. The majority of the deputy principals—13 (92.9%)—agreed that principals should provide staff members considerable autonomy and authority to create curriculum and arrange teaching within a broad framework. Only one (7.2%) deputy principal disagreed. This suggests that the majority of secondary school principals in Kenya's Nyamira South Sub- County let their staff members to arrange lessons and prepare the curriculum while working under their supervision. This gives the instructors a great deal of latitude in carrying out their responsibilities for curriculum implementation. An essential quality of democratic leadership is this.

It was discovered that slightly more than half 8 (57.2%) instructors agreed to the concept that teachers communicate information and make choices together in their particular schools while 14 (42.9%) disagreed. The majority of the deputy principals (85.7%) agreed that their staffs at their schools exchange information and make decisions collectively, while just 6 (42.9%) did not. This suggests that secondary school administrators in Kenya's Nyamira South Sub- County do, to some degree, openly exchange information with the employees and include them in decision-making. There are certain standards, nevertheless, that exclude staff employees from participating in decision-making. This inhibits taking responsibility for choices made, which is likely to have a detrimental impact on academic success.

Finally, the results indicated that 11 teachers, or 78.6% of them, agreed that most decisions are agreed upon in staff meetings, while 3 teachers, or 21.5% of them, disagreed.

Only a handful 02 (14.4%) of the senior assistants disagreed with the majority 12 (85.7%) who felt that most decisions are decided upon at staff meetings. This suggests that the majority of secondary school principals in the Nyamira South Sub-County of Kenya let tutors to thoroughly discuss the issue in staff meetings and come to a decision together. This is good for the performance of the students and the expansion of the institution across all domains.

Principals who believe in consensual decision-making and democratic leadership in decision-making promote group discussion. Only after carefully weighing the opinions of the other group members do they decide. The majority usually agrees with their choice. Before making any decisions, school administrators must contact the board of management, directors, instructors, and sometimes student leaders. Although this approach is seen to be beneficial, the length of time it takes to get to an agreement may be disastrous for a project. The

conversation might go on for a very long time before everyone in the group has a chance to speak. Especially in situations when there is a need for haste, this may be frustrating.

CONCLUSION

The schools work as one to develop and articulate a shared purpose and a clear educational vision focused on learning. Concerning the reality that the principals take shared responsibility for school practices and outcomes, the principals take shared responsibility for school practices and outcomes. It was further established the principals emphasize power through people rather than power over people. the principals allow tutors to have substantial autonomy and discretion to strategies curriculum and organize learning instruction within an overall framework.

Recommendations

The principals should be sensitized to employ all the leadership with equal measure to for greater academic performance. Sensitization should be done through the County Education Directorate of the Nyamira South Sub- County, Kenya. Given that the principals' leadership affects academic performance, there is need of application of the leadership that lead to maximum academic achievement in secondary learning institutions within the Nyamira South Sub- County, Kenya.

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