

Influence Of Principals' Autocratic Leadership Style On Students' academic Achievement In Kenya Certificate Of Public Secondary Education Examinations In Awendo Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya

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Abstract: Ordinarily, every educational institutional leaders, especially the principals are called upon to exercise strong instructional leadership in their schools. They are faced with the task of increasing student achievement while maintaining order through acceptable student behaviour which may require changing school performance. The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of principals' autocratic leadership styles on students' academic achievement in KCSE in Awendo Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya. This study was anchored on the contingency theory of leadership suitable for assessing the leader according to underlying traits; situations faced by the leader and construct a proper match between the two. This model was used to determine principals' styles effectiveness in schools. The study was conducted using a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study consisted of 42 principals and 547 teachers, in public secondary schools in Awendo Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya. The researcher used purposive sampling technique to get 42 principals and 5 Zonal Quality Assurance and Standard Officers (ZQASOs) because they are the only ones who existed in the study area. The target population of teachers was 547 and 30 percent of this was 164 teachers sampled. Questionnaires were used as the tools for collecting the data from both the teachers and principals. The researcher used the test retest method to enhance instrument reliability which yielded .078. The results of data analysis were presented in mainly tables, and pie-charts. The study found out that 69.9 percent often drive hard when there is a job to be done and easily get recognized as the leader of the group. Another 83.3 percent often act without consultations. The study recommended that Principals need to involve all stakeholders in decision making and running of the schools. The researchers endeavored to adhere to all ethical requirements including plagiarism and confidentiality among others.

Keywords: Kenya, principals, autocratic, leadership, styles, students, achievement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, it has been found out that effective leaders develop school climates and cultures. Studies done by Ross and Gray (2006) in Canada opined that they help motivate both the students and teachers leading to the creation of better teaching and learning environments which are more conducive to higher levels of student achievements. Besides, in most school systems, school principal is required by the systemic authorities to improve student learning and is held accountable

for it by building commitments in developing a shared vision for motivating and energizing the teachers and students (Mulford 2003).

According to Cotton (2003), governments of the world have found that types of behavior by principals have a significant impact on student's achievements, establishment of a clear focus on student learning by having a vision, clear learning goals, and high expectations for learning for all students. Similarly work done in India by Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian (2008) also noted that principals' behaviour

and leadership styles influences interactions and cordial relationships with relevant stakeholders in terms of communication and interaction, emotional and interpersonal support, visibility and accessibility. The same also contributes to developing a school culture conducive to teaching and learning through shared leadership and decision-making, collaboration. Specifically, autocratic leadership style as put forward by Bennis (2013) involve a lot of risk taking, leading to continuous improvements; providing instructional leadership through discussions of instructional issues, observing classroom teaching and giving feedback, supporting teacher autonomy and protecting instructional time; and being accountable for affecting and supporting continuous improvements through monitoring progress and using student progress data for program improvements (Cotton, 2003).

In other parts of Africa, like Uganda where a study was done by Maicibi (2013) postulated that particular leadership styles of school leaders could have either positive or negative impact on teaching and learning environments and processes leading to improvements in students performance in co-curricular activities and academic achievements (Russell & Stone 2002). Thus, it is clear that the school leadership provided or shared by a school administrator is one of the key factors in enhancing school performances and student achievements.

The work of Rutondoki (2000) also posited that the quality of the school in any given nation is affected by how the internal processes work to constantly improve its performance. As its basic purpose, leadership designates the school principal as the central school figure to continuously articulate the school's mission and vision to the school's staff and community. The school principal oversees curriculum and instruction management and facilitates teachers' professional development that is supportive of best practice. This sentiment got wide support from the studies done by Ojera and Yambo (2014) when they opined that the school principal monitors student progress to provide individual attention for specific students and to identify areas of curriculum and instruction in need of change or improvement in the school (Hale & Rollins, 2006).

The school principal is also tasked with promoting a positive learning environment. However, there is question regarding the leadership and school administration in general. Leadership, in education, is an evolving discipline. School principals and aspiring administrators need to become familiar with leadership as a discipline to practice, learn their strengths and weaknesses infuse themselves with best practice so they can provide leadership that best fits their circumstances, and work diligently to perfect and implement the behaviours that will enable deep sustained improvement in schools.

Ordinarily, principals have great influence in pertinent decisions made in schools and charting way forward. The work of Yambo and Tuitoek (2014) and Reed (2005) prescribed that effective leadership increases the effectiveness and proficiency of management and sustainable performance and effective management of resources. Organizations and environment have changed rapidly over the past years and as a result a new type of leadership that is less and more democratic is needed in order to ensure survival of the organization. When considering styles of leadership, Maicibi

(2005) observed that proper leadership style leads to effective performance in learning institutions. Leadership effectiveness is most conveniently quantified by organizational outcomes (Yambo 2012). Further research by Tuitoek, Yambo and Adhanja (2015) noted that school systems around the globe are focusing on student achievements empowering school leaders along with curriculum and accountability frameworks. Improvements in student achievements are recognized as the foremost objective of school leadership.

Kenya is ranked 17th out of 54 countries in terms of efficiency in education sector based on students' performance, staff turnover, motivation and managerial competence (World's Competitiveness Report, 2009). Performance of the academic institutions in meeting the goals and objectives of education in Kenya relies heavily on the type of leadership that prevails in the institutions.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Secondary schools in Kenya are headed by qualified and competent principals. The country still continue to face pressure to attain set international and national goals, among them the educational MDGs and Kenya's Vision 2030 (World Bank, 2008). Secondary schools in Kenya, however, continue to face a myriad of management problems. Various stake holders have continued to raise accusing fingers on the management styles used by secondary school principals. Despite the government effort to train and provide policies concerning principleship, their leadership styles still impede students academic achievement. Several reports from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) have indicated that principals' leadership styles have direct bearing on the overall effectiveness of school because both the teacher and student perform under the leadership of school principal (UNESCO 2012). However, for the past four years there has been slight positive trend in KCSE results in Awendo district as shown in Table 1. This means there is a room for improvement, and still full potential for better mean score as compared to the neighbouring Rongo district where the mean score has been deteriorating for the past five years as indicated in table 1.

Year	Awendo S/County	Rongo S/County
2012	4.46	5.15
2013	4.88	5.08
2014	4.93	5.32
2015	5.77	4.83

Table 1: Awendo and Rongo Sub-Counties KCSE mean score from 2012-2015

The present trend made it imperative to find out whether the principals' leadership styles influence students' achievement in K.C.S.E performance. Awendo sub-county which has 42 secondary schools has at least recorded a positive index in the mean score as compared to Rongo sub-county which has 47 schools but has continued to record a negative index for the past five years.

AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT

On leadership styles, Russell and Stone (2002) basing on a global perspective asserted that autocratic leadership style which is also referred to as authoritative leadership is the leadership style where by the leader either gives no explanation when giving an order. Okumbe (1998) says that a principal using this kind of leadership allows for no participation at all in decision making. In this leadership style the leader unilaterally makes decision and is task oriented, hard on workers, is keen on schedules and expects people to do what they are told without much questioning or debate. The principals who subscribe to this style are influenced by the scientific management approach and succumb to McGregor's theory x which presume people are naturally lazy and need close supervision. In schools where this style is used, the staff, students or subordinate lack motivation and they show less involvement in their work.

According to Bennis (2013) one merit of autocratic leadership was that the workers are compelled to work quickly for high production. Okumbe also states a demerit of this leadership style which was the work being strictly structured and was always done following certain set of procedures. Hence it may be assumed that head teachers who employ autocratic leadership style get high performance in their schools since there was close supervision of teachers and students. Deadlines may also be met at appropriate time. Additionally, Tuitok et al. (2015) contended that the schools headed by autocratic principals, teachers may have no time for decision making.

Research by Yambo (2012) prescribed that heads of institutions were central to successful management of educational institutions and the implementation of the curriculum in totality. Examination performance has aroused great interest among researchers who have tried to look at the factors that influence performance of students. Maicibi (2005) and Eshiwani (1983) on policy study on factors enhancing poor performance among Primary and Secondary Schools found out that lack of competence, dedication and commitment of heads of institutions contributed to poor performance of students in National Examination. The leadership style issued by principals in their management determines how well administrative factors influencing performance in examination are. Most of the studies done on leadership styles on KCSE performance have different opinions either in agreement or disagreement on the various leadership styles employed by various managers. The work of Huka (2003) and Ojera and Yambo (2014) concluded that the autocratic leadership style had higher mean score than democratic leadership style while Okoth (2002) indicated that democratic leadership style had higher mean scores compared to autocratic leadership style on student KCSE performance while Manguu (2010) noted that principals in Kitui District used both autocratic and democratic leadership styles and performance in KCSE indirectly depends on leadership styles of the principals.

Mohammed (2012) studied the impact of head teachers' leadership styles on KCSE performance in Mombasa District, Kenya. The results indicated the most used styles were

democratic and autocratic or dictatorial. The results also indicated that the principal did not involve all stake holders in decision making and running of the schools and that no relationship existed between principal's leadership styles and the student's performance in KCSE; all stakeholders to be involved in decision making for better performance

Another study by Obama (2009) on how leadership styles affect performance in KCSE in public Secondary Schools in Homabay District, Kenya indicated that there was a significant relationship between leadership styles and performance at KCSE. The studies done by both Okoth, (2000) and Kimacia, (2007) indicated that principals' democratic leadership style had high means performance index than those who practiced autocratic leadership styles. Huka, (2003), Muli (2005) and Wangui (2007) on the other hand indicated that autocratic leadership styles influenced students KCSE performance as there was higher mean score in KCSE compared to the democratic leadership style

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), descriptive survey design was used in the preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers gather information, summarize, present and interpreted for the purpose of clarification. The target population for this study consisted of 42 principals and 544 teachers, in public secondary schools in Awendo Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya. The researcher used purposive sampling technique to get 42 principals and 5 Zonal Quality Assurance and Standard Officers (ZQASOs) because they are the only ones who existed in the study area. The target population of teachers was 547 and 30 percent of this was 164 teachers. According Best and Kahn (2006) 30 percent has been considered statistically representative enough. The main instruments of data collection for this study were questionnaires, interview schedules. Pilot questionnaires were divided into two equivalent halves and their correlation confident for the two halves computed using the Spearman Brown prophecy formula, describing the internal consistency of the test then it shows that the instrument is reliable, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) minimum correlation coefficient of 0.65 was recommended reliable. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies counts, percentages, and means were used (Robson 2002). Ethically, researchers assured the respondents of the confidentiality. The researchers endeavored to cite ever source referred to so as to avoid plagiarism of any kind.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PRINCIPALS' AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE ON STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT

Principals' autocratic leadership style has a significant impact on students' achievements in KCSE examinations. The study considered it necessary to collect data on autocratic leadership style exhibited by school principals in public

secondary schools in Awendo Sub-County, Migori County Kenya.

PRINCIPALS' RESPONSE ON AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE

Principals responded to the questionnaire items on autocratic leadership styles to indicate if they do apply it in some situations in school. Their responses are tabulated in Table 2.

Leadership style	Always	%	Often	%	Occasionally	%	Seldom	%	Never	%
Reluctant to allow members any freedom of action	23	54.7	2	4.7	7	16.6	10	23.8		
Taking full charge when emergencies arise	3	7.14	28	66.6	11	26.1	-	-	-	-
My word carries weight with my supervision	2	4.7	29	69.1	11	26.1	-	-	-	-
Driving hard when there is a job to be done	11	26.1	26	61.9	2	15.4	5	11.9	-	-
Persuading others that my ideas are to their advantage	2	4.7	10	23.8	30	71.4	-	-	-	-
Refusing to explain my actions	-	-	31	73.8	11	26.1	-	-	-	-
Getting confused when too many demands are made of me	2	4.7	7	16.6	33	78.5	-	-	-	-
Easily recognized as the leader of the group	34	80.9	8	19.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Acting without consulting the group	35	83.3	5	11.9	2	4.7	-	-	-	-
Keeping the group working up to capacity	13	30.9	27	64.2	2	4.7	-	-	-	-

Table 2: Principals' response on autocratic leadership style

From the Table, principals' response to autocratic leadership style in school indicates that a fair percentage of the principals often exercised autocratic leadership style in school. For instance, 69.9 percent often drive hard when there is a job to be done and easily get recognized as the leader of the group. Another 83.3 percent often act without consultations. The research by Tuitoek et al. (2015) hinted that autocratic leaders consult very little or none at all. Besides, 64.2 percent often kept their group working up to capacity and often took full charge when emergencies would arise. In this regard, Bennis (2013) and Mohammed (2012) supported it as one merit of autocratic leadership which had it that the workers are compelled to work quickly for high production.

V. TEACHERS' RESPONSE ON PRINCIPALS' AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE

To gather more information on principals' autocratic leadership style in school, teachers gave their response basing on the statements provided in the questionnaire. Data are as tabulated in table 3.

Statement	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	U	%
Principals dominate and are spokesmen in staff meetings	37	22.5	98	59.7	1	6.7	9	5.5	9	5.5
Principals sometimes see themselves as the only one maintaining definite standards of school performance	104	64.4	43	26.2	-	-	-	-	17	10.4
Principals at times refuse to explain their actions to teachers and students	111	67.7	51	31.1	2	1.2	-	-	-	-
Principals are slow to change	16	9.8	122	74.3	5	3.1	-	-	21	12.9

Table 3: Teachers' response on principals' autocratic leadership style

From Table 3, the results indicate that the majority of the teachers, 64.4 percent stated that principals sometimes regarded themselves as the only ones who maintain definite standards of school performance, while 67.7 percent, refuse to explain their actions to teachers and students. These findings concurred with the work of Rutondoki (2000) who indicated that the quality of the school in any given nation is affected by how the internal processes work to constantly improve its performance. As its basic purpose, leadership designates the school principal as the central school figure to continuously articulate the school's mission and vision to the school's staff and community. More findings revealed that 74.3 percent agreed that the principals are slow to change. Other previous studies by Wangui (2007) Huka (2003) and Ojera and Yambo (2014) concluded that the autocratic leadership style had higher mean score than democratic leadership style.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Principals need to involve all stakeholders in decision making and running of the schools and there has to be a cordial relationship between principals' leadership styles and the students' performance in KCSE. Teachers, students and subordinate members have to be involved in decision making for better performance.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing on the already stated findings and conclusions, the study recommends the following:

Principals should adopt democratic and transformational leadership styles that involve all other parties in the school in making decisions and thus creating a better environment for teachers to work well, and enhance higher academic performance in K.C.S.E.

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Factors On Students' Academic Performance In Public Secondary Schools In Eldoret West Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences* 3 (1) 1-7 ISSN 2056-5852

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