Level of Education, Leadership Style and Employee Engagement

Monah Maundu[1*]   Alice N. Simiyu[2]
1.Murang'a University of Technology, PO box 75-10200, Kenya
2.School of Entrepreneurship, procurement and Management, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and
Technology, P. O. Box 6200-00200, Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract
This study sought to establish the relationship between the level of education, leadership style and teacher engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County, Kenya. A survey research design was used. A sample of 368 respondents was selected from a target population of 3,860 teachers in 306 public secondary schools using systematic random sampling followed by use of random numbers. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Descriptive statistical methods like mean and percentage, and inferential statistical methods like F-test and t-tests (at 0.05 significance level) were used for data analysis. The research findings indicated that more teachers (75.7%) were Bachelors Degree holders in relation to the principals (51.4%) while more principals (41.2%) had attained their Masters Degrees compared to teachers (12.8%). The results also revealed that there was a significant difference on the perception about employee engagement among respondents due to their level of education. The ANOVA-test results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the compared levels of education except between Diploma and Masters. The study recommended that the Teachers' Service Commission should come up with a policy that guides on brilliant ways of engaging the knowledge, skills and abilities of the teachers who had earned postgraduate education while teaching in secondary schools and also compensate them appropriately. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in drivers of employee engagement domain that are significant to school leaders.
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1. Introduction
Employee engagement is a matter that arouses concern to leaders and managers due to its influence on organizational wellbeing (Welch, 2011). It is recognized that human capital is a source of competitive advantage in many cases over and above technology and finance (Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2011). Technology has quickly reduced or eliminated many operational sources of competitive advantage because it is conveniently available to as many as can afford it. In the current environment of increasing global competition and slower growth prospects, raising employee engagement is seen as a key strategy for organizational success. This is key in enhancing employee engagement especially when trying to improve performance with fewer employees and dollars (Datche & Mukulu, 2015). As a result, suitable leadership styles that bring about employee engagement in organizations need to be practiced in order to encourage improved performance (Popli & Rizvi, 2016).

Lack of work engagement is a worldwide problem and not limited to any specific sector. It is unfortunate that globally, only 13 percent of employees are engaged, while a huge number of employees are psychologically detached from their places of work and therefore not likely to be productive (Crabtree & Robinson, 2013). This implies that a large number of employees are on the job being paid and benefits for compensation of their energy which is not available to the organization.

The traditional view of a 'job for life' has changed dramatically. Employees are now more likely to build an assortment of skills and competencies that will help them develop multiple careers. Interestingly, some teachers have higher academic qualifications than their principals. Management practices have shifted so that the old maxim: 'when an employee sells his labour, he also sells his promise to obey commands' no longer holds true (Cook, 2008). According to Shuck and Herd, (2012), to be a leader of today's dynamic workforce demands a willingness to understand and navigate the new approaches to leadership in an evolving landscape.

The Millennials or the Y generation employees have taken over the workplace in large numbers. They are often described as entitled, spoiled with poor work ethic and little respect for authority. Their styles of work are very different from that of the both X generation and the baby boomers. Employees are attaching a lot of importance to satisfying their own individual demands and being more responsible for their own futures and careers (Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane, & Ferreira, 2011). The employees of today expect that they will be involved in decision making, participate in the activities of the organization in addition to being treated with respect and fairness (Burke & Ng, 2006). As a result, one of the characteristics of today's workforce is their high level of mobility (Lumley *et al*., 2011), which results in voluntary turnover creating a major challenge in the management of talent and human capital (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010). Many employees are looking for environments where they can be engaged and feel that they are contributing in a positive way to something larger than themselves.

One of the seven principles in the ISO 9001:2015 standard is employee engagement. In the ISO 9001:2008 standard, which is the predecessor of ISO 9001:2015, the same principle was referred to as employee involvement. It implies that there is need for organizations to move from mere employee involvement and embrace employee engagement which is associated with enhanced employee outcomes for the benefit of the employees, the organization and all other stakeholders.

The teacher is a very important resource in the education system. As leaders of their schools, principals are charged with the responsibility of developing an educational environment that ensures satisfaction and raises organizational commitment (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013). Müller, Alliata, and Benninghoff (2009) argue that attracting and retaining competent teachers is a key concern when it comes to managing the supply and demand of teachers. The problem of teacher exit cannot simply be solved by training and recruiting new teachers to replace them.

Kenya recognizes the importance of education and places it under the social pillar as one of its most important aspects as expressed in Kenya vision 2030. Achievement of this vision 2030 is highly pegged on good leadership and management of human resources who in turn effectively make use of other organizational resources for optimum productivity through work engagement and commitment to their work institutions.

2. Statement of the Problem

School leadership quality is among the biggest factors ensuring high-quality student learning worldwide. School leaders should always work consciously toward creating congruency between organizational and individual needs fulfillment for improved productivity (Woestman & Wasonga, 2015) in an effort to increase the level of teacher engagement.

Disengaged teachers will produce a low number of matriculation grades and high numbers of form four graduates who are not able to further their education given the current Commission for University Education (CUE) entry requirements to colleges and universities, implying a high wastage rate. This is likely increase the level of unemployment in Kenya due to lack of necessary and relevant education and skills. Unemployment is likely to lead to increased levels of crime, drug abuse and slow economic growth.

With the many learning opportunities that have opened up in Kenya in the last two decades, many teachers have taken the initiative to further their education with a great zeal. According to the researcher, not much has been done to study teacher engagement in public schools in Kenya in relation to their level of education and that of their principals. The purpose of this study therefore was to establish the relationship between the level of education, leadership style, and employee engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County, Kenya

3. Literature Review

3.1 Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leaders portray a genuine concern in the wellbeing of their followers, which means that this form of leadership entails the development of an emotional connection between the leaders and their employees (Men & Stacks, 2013).

According to Bass (1990), transformational leadership takes place when leaders broaden and lift the concerns of their followers to higher levels, make them understand and be willing to agree with and welcome the reason why their organization exists. Transformational leadership promotes capacity development for the employees and brings higher levels of personal commitment amongst them to their jobs and organization goals. Transformational leadership characterized by four elements namely; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Such leaders devote a lot of energy to leading their employees and also value and respect the gifts and abilities of their workers. As a result, transformational leaders earn trust, respect and admiration from their followers.

3.2 Transactional Leadership Style

Transactional leaders reward or punish followers in order to achieve organizational goals (Hoy & Miskel, 2010 as cited by (Zeinabadi & Salehi, 2011)and for leaders to receive compliance from them (Burns, 1978). Such leaders are action oriented and results focused (Batista-Taran *et al.*, 2013) and emphasis on planned and scheduled work.

Transactional leadership is founded on the traditional, bureaucratic authority and legitimacy where followers get certain valued outcomes upon acting in accordance with the wishes of their leader. These exchanges allow leaders to accomplish their performance objectives, complete required tasks, maintain the current organizational situation, motivate followers through contractual agreement, direct behavior of followers toward achievement of established goals, emphasize extrinsic rewards, avoid unnecessary risks, and focus on improve organizational efficiency (McCleskey, 2014). Burns (1978) first carried out a study on transactional leadership which indicated that transactional leaders are those who want to motivate followers through processes and actions that attract or appeal to their self-interests. Bass (1985) conceptualized that transactional leadership results in followers meeting expectations placed on them, upon which their end of bargain is fulfilled leading to their being rewarded

accordingly.

3.3 Authentic Leadership Style

Authentic leadership is inspirational, motivational, visionary, and unshakably moral, compassionate, and service-oriented because it applies the qualities of both ethical and transformational leadership (de Mello e Souza Wildermuth & Pauken, 2008). Because they are wholeheartedly concerned about the well-being of the employees, authentic leaders are able to appreciate the differences among individual employees, spot matching talents, and assist employees to capitalize on their strengths (Wildermuth & Pauken, 2008).

3.3 Dark Leadership Style

Dark leadership is characterized by, manipulation, dominance, and coercion, rather than influence, persuasion, and commitment. Rosenthal, & Pittinskya (as cited in (Pryor, Odom, &Toombs, 2014) indicate that dark leadership has a selfish orientation, implying that it is focused more on the leader's needs than the needs of the larger social group. Dark leadership often involves imposing goals on constituents without their agreement or regard for their long-term welfare (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

The impact of dark leadership tends to be felt in the longer term as evidenced by the weakening effect on morale and motivation of employees. Benson and Hogan (2008) support this argument by pointing out that the toxic behavior of dark leaders tears down the ability of people to work together productively in an organization over the long term. Higgs (2009) agrees with this view point when he makes the observation that the behaviours of dark leadership eventually impact negatively on individual, group and the organization performance through the work climate that such leaders create, which unfortunately can lead to employee disengagement. Based on employee engagement literature, leadership involves courteous treatment of employees, understandable company values and company's standards of ethical behavior (Andrew & Sofian, 2011) which dark leadership conspicuously lacks.

3.5 Employee Engagement

Engagement takes place when employees are provided with the resources that will help them achieve their targets, and believe that they are needed, valued and respected in their work place. This could result in an improved individual or group performance and a firm background on which organizational sustainability can take place (Kim, Kolb, & Kim, 2013). Engaged employees work harder for longer stretches of time; take action proactively to budding threats and challenges; expand their roles at work, and; adapt more readily to change (Macey *et al.*, 2011) and thus have high chances of contributing positively by attracting and retaining new clients, as well as infecting their colleagues with their positive attitude (Crabtree & Robison, 2013). On the other hand, disengaged employees are unhappy at work and also actively show their unhappiness by action (Attridge, 2009). Leaders therefore have a choice to either stimulate their followers through material rewards and also inspire them to work for a cause beyond themselves (Khan et al., 2016).

4. Methodology

This study adopted a survey design. A quantitative approach was applied because the data collected through questionnaires from respondents was analyzable using the standard statistical tools. Multistage sampling design was applied so as to first sample schools (clusters). Cluster sampling technique guarantees that each cluster is represented in the sample and thus reflects the characteristics of the population with some level of accuracy. The study population was 3860 teachers in 306 schools out of which 92 schools were selected, representing the 30% recommended by Hill (1998). Random numbers were then used to sample 368 respondents. An independent sample t-test was performed to test if there is any significant difference of the respondents' perception of leadership style due to their (the principles') gender at a level of significance of 0.05.

Transactional and transformational leadership were measured using 20 items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X rater form) on a Likert 5 point scale. Authentic leadership was measured using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), which is a 16-item theory-driven survey instrument developed by Walumbwa *et al.* (2008)using five separate samples obtained from China, Kenya, and the United States. Dark leadership was measured using questions developed based on the main features of the leadership practices namely; dominance, coercion, manipulation and selfish orientation. Employee engagement was measured using a self-report questionnaire containing 9 items from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) on a Likert 5-point scale.

5. Research Findings and Discussion

The research findings indicated that majority of the respondents were Bachelor's degree graduates (75.7%) although a reasonable number had attained their Masters degrees (12.8%). This finding is in agreement with the finding of a research by Ratego (2015) that showed that a very low percentage of teachers and principals had a Master of Education degree. This could be a reflection of the high school teacher population which is said to be

about 90% Bachelors Degree holders. Teaching in secondary schools in Kenya does not require qualifications higher than a Bachelors degree in a teacher's area of specialization, and hence the reason why a high percentage of teachers who attain higher levels of education usually end up quitting secondary school teaching in favour of jobs that will utilize their advanced knowledge in a better way. This makes them more useful to the society, and thus delivers a sense of fulfillment. A large number of such teachers usually join teaching in Universities where they end up furthering their education to earn a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD), which is the minimum level of education required for a person to become a Don. They tend to show signs of disengagement if they remain in secondary schools. Metzler (2006) explains this behavior by saying that people who are not able to make use of their skills on the job are dissatisfied and as a consequence, their rate of turnover and absenteeism may rise; and they may get involved in counterproductive behaviours such as sabotage so as to make use of their skills and competencies.

The research findings also revealed that the principals were either Bachelor's degree holders (51.4%) or Masters Degree holders (41.2%). Diploma, Higher Diploma and Doctorate formed very low percentages. Few Doctorate owners could also be due to teachers moving to work in higher institutions of learning upon acquiring Masters and Doctorate Degrees. However, having 41.2% principals with Masters Degrees compared to 12.8% teachers with Masters Degrees shows that teachers with a higher level of education are more comfortable when their skills are utilized in a better way in leadership positions, thus agreeing with Metzler (2006).

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents and their Principals by Level of Education

Demographic Characteristic	Category	Respondents'		Principals'	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Level of Education	Diploma	29	9.8	6	2.0
	Higher Diploma	5	1.7	1	.3
	Bachelor's	224	75.7	152	51.4
	Masters	38	12.8	122	41.2
	Doctorate	0	0	15	5.1

ANOVA test was carried out to check if there was any significant difference of the respondents' perception of leadership style and employee engagement due to their level of education for the categories: Diploma, Higher Diploma, Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate.

From the results in Table 2, it can be deduced that respondents' views on transformational leadership, transactional leadership authentic leadership and dark leadership were not statistically significant. However, employee engagement had a p-value lower than the significance level ($\alpha=0.05$), implying that there was a significant difference on the perception about employee engagement among respondents due to their level of education.

Table 2: ANOVA-Level of Education

Leadership Styles	F-value	p-value(Sig.)
Transformational Leadership	0.173	0.678
Transactional Leadership	0.461	0.498
Authentic Leadership	0.028	0.867
Dark Leadership	0.280	0.597
Employee Engagement	4.314	0.039*

*The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level

Because the ANOVA-test showed employee engagement was statistically significant, multiple comparisons were performed to check where these differences. The results in Table 3 showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the compared levels of education except between Diploma and Masters. It therefore implies that the perception on employee engagement differed between Diploma holders and Masters Degree holders due to a statistically significant difference between the two levels of education being compared.

This observation may be linked to the fact that a better educated staff that is enthusiastic to make use of and grow his/her abilities on a job would most likely flourish under a leader who conveys a sense of mission to the workforce, arouses learning experiences, and stimulates new ways of thinking (Metzler, 2006). This means that a more educated workforce will not be engaged or will even be disengaged under a leadership that suffocates their knowledge and abilities. Such a situation is dangerous for the survival of an organization because employees who are not engaged tend to feel their contributions are being overlooked, and their potential is not being tapped. They often feel this way because they do not have productive relationships with their managers or with their co-workers (Gurmessa & Bayissa, 2015), who either overlook, ignore or even trash their skills, knowledge and abilities willfully. Such employees tend to concentrate on tasks rather than the goals and outcomes they are expected to accomplish. They are the kind of employees who are aloof, just want to be told what to do just so they can do it and say they have finished. Their focus is on accomplishing tasks as opposed to achieving an outcome (Gurmessa & Bayissa, 2015).

The worst scenario is when the better educated employees choose to become disengaged. Disengaged

employees are just deflated at work and actively display their unhappiness in their daily activities through the way they talk and act. They are time and again against practically everything and ensure that they propagate contempt and negativity at every time they get an opportunity to do so. Worse still, disengaged employees water down what their engaged colleagues achieve. They also generate problems and tensions that put off the spirit of teamwork and thus cause a lot of harm to an organizations function (Gurmessa & Bayissa, 2015).

A high level of education is likely to result in better comprehension of information and a greater ability to analyze multifaceted and complex problems thoroughly (Calori et al., 1994) in the teaching team which would be an expression of their varying levels of knowledge and skill. To achieve vision 2030, such knowledge and skills are necessary in the education sector so as to provide an education that is relevant in meeting the socio-economic needs of the 21st century and better still be in a position to attain and sustain a competitive edge in the global market in industrialization and the big four agenda. Any institution that wants to achieve great performance outcomes from its employees must embrace employee engagement as this is what will make it possible.

Table 3: Scheffe's Test- Level of Education

(I) Level of Education	(J) Level of Education	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Diploma	Higher Diploma	.14330	.971
	Bachelors	.14955	.668
	Masters	.41873*	.001
Higher Diploma	Diploma	-.14330	.971
	Bachelors	.00625	1.000
	Masters	.27544	.822
Bachelors	Diploma	-.14955	.668
	Higher Diploma	-.00625	1.000
	Masters	.26919	.095
Masters	Diploma	-.41873*	.001
	Higher Diploma	-.27544	.822
	Bachelors	-.26919	.095

*The mean difference is significant at 0.05 l

6. Conclusion
The research findings indicated that majority of the respondents were Bachelor's degree graduates (75.7%) although a reasonable number had attained their Masters degrees (12.8%). The research findings also revealed that the principals were either Bachelor's degree holders (51.4%) or Masters Degree holders (41.2%). There was a significant difference on the perception about employee engagement among respondents due to their level of education. The ANOVA-test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the compared levels of education except between Diploma and Masters.

7. Recommendation
The study recommended that the Teachers' Service Commission should come up with implementable policies that guides on brilliant ways of engaging the knowledge, skills and abilities of the teachers who have earned postgraduate education while teaching in secondary schools and also compensate them appropriately. Otherwise, such teachers are likely to gradually join the class of disengaged teachers because they are likely to feel wasted as a result of not being able to make use of their skills and knowledge. They also spend a lot of time looking for jobs that would utilize their skills and knowledge resulting in increased turnover and absenteeism. Such teachers will be either disengaged or not engaged at all.

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