



## RETHINKING EFFECTIVE RESOURCE UTILIZATION IN URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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### Abstract:

In light of the assertion by Alvin Toffler that “*The illiterates of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and re-learn*”, the aim of this paper is to encourage educational planners, managers and scholars to re-think and adopt school management practices towards effective resource utilization in urban schools. While many scholars have written on effective resource utilization in schools, this paper examines the relationship between school management practices and effective utilization of resources in urban schools. The main educational resources under focus in this study include physical facilities, financial and human resources. These resources are managed in a manner beneficial to a single-owning school yet other schools within the neighborhood experience severe shortages. Like in most areas of the world, Kenya encounters a steady rise in student enrolment in urban schools due to the ever-growing population. This is compounded by the government’s policies of 100% transition to secondary education and Tuition-Free Secondary Education (TFSE). Resource constraints and misuse threaten the quest for improved access, quality and equity in education in Kenyan urban secondary schools. This paper uses a review of available literature and empirical studies, from which authors discuss, make conclusions and give recommendations to inform policy on management practices towards effective resource utilization in urban schools.

**Keywords:** resource utilization, school management practices, urban schools

### 1. Introduction

Secondary education is the springboard upon which the transition to higher levels of education is built. It is thus a critical link between primary and tertiary and or university education. Obi and Ogbuagu (2020) observe that it serves both as a ‘producer’ (input for

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the tertiary level of education) and a 'consumer' (absorbs the output from the primary level of education).

It lays the basis for the acquisition of basic skills and competencies at higher levels of education and the world of work and predispositions towards a culture of life-long learning. These call for proper management to ensure all learners receive a quality education.

Utilization of educational resources is a key determinant of the quality of education offered in learning institutions. Persistent inadequacies of resources in schools have negative implications on the quality of education (Akomolafe and Adesua, 2016; Mayake, 2019). In the case of secondary education in Kenya under the 8-4-4 system this is manifested in low student performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Examinations. While these inadequacies are observed across the levels of education, they are more pronounced in secondary schools where there are higher enrolments in the recent past following the TSF Secondary education and the 100% transition policy. While this increase was both in rural and urban secondary schools, those in urban areas have witnessed a more robust and astronomical increase in enrolment. It is on the basis of these results that in line with Alvin Toffler's perspective about learning the utilization of educational resources should be questioned alongside the academic performance of the students. To address this, school administrators should be concerned with policies and management practices that promote the provision and effective utilization of these resources in a way that enhances the quality and equity of education.

Most studies have focused on the impact of school management practices on students' academic performance. Other studies have focused on the impact of resources on student performance. The results of these studies imply that sound school management practices lead to effective utilization of resources which contributes to improved student performance. However, no study has focused on the relationship between school management practices and utilization of resources in schools a gap this study fills. The focus is on the management practices for effective utilization of physical, human and financial resources in urban secondary schools.

Resource availability and management is crucial for maintaining quality and improved standard in every educational sector for the goals of education to be achieved (Obi and Ogbuagu, 2020). Effective management of resources in schools is a critical responsibility of school administrators. They need to efficiently manage and make use of these often-scarce resources using a resource management strategy aligned with the mission and vision of the entire school community. This is quite challenging, especially in urban secondary schools characterized by high numbers, increasing cultural diversity of students, household income disparities and their unique learning needs and abilities. For instance, students from the Islamic or Hindu community may need special prayer rooms to support their spiritual growth, while those with special needs may need teachers trained in special needs. Some students' families may afford after-school tutoring, while others may need additional support from their school to meet or exceed

educational benchmarks. To successfully address these needs, school administrators must find ways to provide and manage necessary resources for the benefit of all students.

## **2. Utilization of School Physical Resources**

Physical resources are elements or structures in the school environment. School administrators have a mandate to manage these resources and they can contribute to their effective utilization. The availability and utilization of physical resources in an educational institution are vital to the achievement of goals and objectives. School physical resource management practices should thus align with the school improvement plan by linking school assets to basic education service delivery standards and strategies. Facility maintenance entails providing a clean and safe environment for teaching and learning. It also involves the provision of adequate facilities for teaching and learning (Usman, 2016).

In her study, Mayaka (2019) established that the least available physical resources in most schools include school halls, computer laboratories, home science facilities, chapels or mosques, laundry facilities, health facilities, gymnasiums and agricultural rooms. Similar findings had been found by Mugure (2012). These are basic facilities in the disciplines of study they support. In Mayaka's study, the Curriculum Support Officers confirmed that since these resources are not available in most schools they are not utilized. Even in those schools where these resources were available, they were hardly used due to a lack of necessary support equipment. For instance, school laboratories were only used by form four classes during mock examinations and national examinations due to a lack of chemicals, specimens, models and apparatus. This denies students in lower classes exposure to practical lessons in sciences. The study further attributed the low level of utilization of physical resources to among other reasons the lack of electricity, high cost of maintenance, the unavailability of specialized equipment and the lack of enough teachers handling the subject. For instance, school computer laboratories lacked expert teachers to guide the students to utilize the few available computers (ibid). While this study established a positive correlation between the utilization of physical resources and performance in KCSE it did little in recommending specific management practices to ensure the availability, maintenance and effective utilization of these resources for the benefit of all students in learning institutions.

In a study by Ngare (2020), students reported fears of insecurity in some schools even during day time and challenges of infrastructure. Insecurity was manifested by fights between hawkers and city council security officers that sometimes extended into the school's compound, loss of students' books and schools' computers through breaks in by thieves, insecurity along the paths of the schools, lack of perimeter walls and lack of enough security guards. On the part of school infrastructure, there were schools in which students used pit latrines due to lack of piped water and those that had toilets experienced water shortages for flushing and cleaning. Although all schools had playgrounds that they shared with primary school sections, they had potholes, bushy fields, and dumped waste from neighbourhoods. The study linked these conditions to

the low internal efficiency of these schools. The findings agree with a review by Obi and Ogbuagu (2020) who reported differences in resource utilization between public schools and private schools in Rivers State. Unlike public schools, private schools were more adequately equipped with all the resources that are required to expand the quality of education. The private secondary schools were well fenced with security men at the gate and at strategic parts of the school. This implies that maintaining and improving these resources can generate positive attitudes of the students towards education in these very schools, inspire their learning and thus boost progression and completion rates as well as their performance.

Misuse of physical and material resources is also reported in schools. With well-educated people in schools, this demands an explanation. According to Usman (2016), school personnel could misuse the physical and material facilities in the school either intentionally, ignorantly, or due to a lack of technical know-how. There could also be neglect and overuse of school facilities due to improper planning. Since planning is a management function then this problem can be resolved through changes in resource management policy and effective leadership (ibid).

### **3. Utilization of Human Resources in Schools**

School principals implement some functions of human resource management at the school level. Human resource management practices describe the way managers set about achieving results through people (Njuguna, 2010). Human resources are people who constitute the workforce in an organization. In schools, these include the teachers, administrative staff and non-academic staff.

Teachers being the greatest aid to learning and the most indispensable entity in the school should be supported to flawlessly and proficiently perform the teaching duty. A study by Chikwature, et al. (2016) revealed teacher management challenges which included a negative approach by school administration officers, frequent quarrels between administration officers and teachers, and fear to meet school administration officers due to lack of preparation and insufficient teaching materials and professional documents. School heads indicated problems of insufficient materials and lack of enough time for interaction, lack of friendly environment, lack of trust by teachers, teachers' absenteeism and lack of preparation of schemes of work. This implies that school administrative officers and teachers faced many problems like high teacher-pupil ratio, hostile environment and poor communication.

According to Usman (2016), the utilization of teachers to achieve maximum results is dependent on the availability and accessibility of school materials. The school head must make it possible for staff to have access to suitable facilities of all kinds in order to discharge fully their responsibilities in achieving the educational objectives (Chikwature, et al. 2016).

While researchers agree that the motivation of teachers had a positive impact on student achievement, studies have established that at least 50% of school principals did not have any motivational programmes for teachers (Mugure, 2012; Muiruri, 2019). Those

who motivate the teachers apply mostly the modes of oral praise at 66.7%, those who gave material rewards at 13.3% and those who issued recognition certificates to motivate the teachers at 6.7%. There were no other motivation styles such as through training or any tours (Muiruri, 2019). The teachers must be well supervised and motivated in order to sustain their interest and make them dedicated, committed, willing, enthusiastic and inspiring teachers. The quality of the supervision of teachers' instructional tasks by the head teacher is an index of effective school management (Chikwature, et al. 2016). In addition, to aid the utilization of teachers, they should be availed of the opportunity for in-service training for career improvement and development. Such in-service training will enable teachers to renew their knowledge for effectiveness in their jobs and enable teachers to be efficient and properly utilized in the school system to fast-track the achievement of educational goals (Usman, 2016).

Njuguna (2010) found that public secondary schools in Kiambu East have utilized innovative human resource management practices such as training, recruitment/selection, and compensation. However other practices like employee participation in decision making and performance appraisals were not utilized. The school head, being the driving force behind school programmes needs to proactively mobilize all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, the governing board, parents, and the community towards identifying the schools' strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate decisions on the type of follow-up action required to improve teachers' inputs and pupils' learning outcomes in the school (ibid).

The appraisal of teachers' pedagogical practices safeguards quality standards in schools. In pursuit of these goals, the school head must make use of supervisory techniques that include clinical supervision/classroom observation, microteaching, seminar/workshop and research to improve the conceptual knowledge, skills, and competence of teachers and pupils' learning. While monitoring is done the areas that usually attract the attention of secondary school heads include the availability of schemes of work and effective delivery of lessons, providing regular feedback on pupils' performance, adequate keeping of records of work done, records of attendance registers, and appropriate discipline of pupils. There's no evidence of monitoring the utilization of resources in teaching and learning. For instance, there are no records of the use of the science laboratories for practicals except for double lessons on the timetable. The Ministry of Education policy requires that students use the laboratory for practical lessons but you still find teachers ignoring this or teaching theoretical content while in the laboratory. There are equally no records of library visits by teachers and students for reading. A well-planned instructional supervision enhances teaching and learning effectiveness in schools.

#### **4. Utilization of Financial Resources**

Financial resources are the economic inputs available for and consumed in the education system (Asodike & Adieme, 2014). Financial resources are of critical importance to making available, utilization, maintenance, and improvement of other school resources.

Due to their importance, they are thus key determinants in the success of any school. As suggested by Eyasu and Berhanu (2019) there is a positive relationship between the efficient utilization of school finance and the success of the education system.

At the core of school financial management is the budget. According to Nwankwo (2014), budgeting is the identification, determination, allocation of, and accountability of the funds available for running the school programmes and services in accordance with the school's objectives. It's, in essence, an educational programme expressed in financial terms. It's an educational plan showing an estimate of the amount of money received and the amount of money to be spent to facilitate the realization of the objectives of education. A well-planned and executed budget enables schools to be managed in an economic manner. This requires competent financial managers in schools. Unfortunately, a study by Lagat (2014) established that half of the schools do not have competent personnel in their school institutions as regards effective utilization of school funds (Lagat, 2014). This leads to wastage. Wastage in financial management overestimates the costs of education undermining the overall provision of educational services. For efficient service delivery, a budget plan should ensure prudent financial management.

A study by Eyasu and Berhanu (2019) established a myriad of challenges related to budgeting and financial management in the secondary schools in Dawro zone. Among these challenges include:

- Failure by schools to supplement government and donors' funding.
- Failure of schools to utilize and spend their budget based on the plan.
- Use of school finance for non-educational objectives thus wastage of scarce resources.
- Failure to follow financial rules and regulations as school committee and principals lack appropriate knowledge thus possible cause for misuse, wastage and corruption.
- Lack of skilled manpower to conduct effective budget utilization.
- Unknown degree of stakeholders' participation and low participation of school committee on the budgetary issue thus the absence of integration, cooperation, and common decision among schools and school committees.

These challenges demonstrate improper utilization of financial resources and imply that physical and human resources in the schools suffer provision, utilization, maintenance and improvement. As such the quality of education is compromised affecting the realization of the objectives of secondary education.

In the above study, the authors further give reasons for ineffective budget utilization as follows:

- Principals have a lot of activities to do rather than following the budgetary process.
- Principals' lack of the skill to manage the budget issue is also a challenge.
- Lack of commitment of financial workers to perform their duties and responsibilities
- Lack of commitment of the school committee to mobilize financial resources.
- Untimely disbursement of school budget from the government to schools.
- Purchasing goods and materials without following financial rules and regulations.

- Lack of transparency during the implementation of school.
  - Lack of needs prioritization during budget plan at school.
  - Higher schools' financial needs than the allocated budget due to scarce resources.
- (Adapted from Eyasu and Berhanu, 2019)

## **5. Leadership Practices for Effective Resource Utilization**

Schools as of today have exclusive authority over the uses of the resources within their premises (Fomiškina, et al., 2021). School principals can determine the type of leadership style that can promote the effective utilization of resources. Urban schools are challenged to find the resources necessary to maintain high-quality education for their students. The principals of these schools have a more urgent need to learn about these challenges and adopt leadership practices favourable to effective utilization of resources.

Most principals are accustomed to the traditional authoritarian top-down organizational models in which a small group of executives controls the flow of information. Such leadership practices in an environment with many stakeholders, disparities in learners, complex social fabric, and resource constraints common in urban schools are bound to affect information flow and resource utilization to deliver quality education to all students. There is a need to embrace collaborative team leadership.

Collaborative leadership is a management practice that brings managers, executives, and staff to work together. It entails leaders regularly seeking a diversity of opinions and ideas among teammates to build strategies and solve problems. It's a form of working partnership by all stakeholders for the attainment of educational objectives. Today partnerships are an unavoidable way of cooperation between all relevant parties, within or outside the formal system of education (Wafula, et al., 2019). Collaborative leadership includes the purposeful actions by leaders to enhance the instruction of teachers, build deep relationships with all stakeholders through understanding self-efficacy, and build collective efficacy, to deepen group learning (Dewitt, 2017). As a result, employees are more engaged, feel trusted, and are more likely to take ownership of their work.

Through collaborative leadership, managers and executives can create an inclusive environment that energizes teams, releases creativity, and cultivates a work culture that is both productive and joyful. When a school community respects each other and acknowledges individual skills and participation, all staff can move forward in a positive environment while also becoming learners.

Research suggests that collaborative leadership can have a positive effect on student learning and achievement (Dewitt, 2017). Effective collaborative leadership provides teachers with opportunities for improved practices through increased leadership opportunities and a feeling of being valued in a school environment. It also suggests that there are three important elements of collaborative leadership to assist in its success. According to Hallinger and Heck (2010) cited in Dewitt (2017), those elements include:

- **Vision:** Making decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energy of the school on improving student outcomes and fostering commitment;
- **Governance:** Empowering staff and encouraging participation;
- **Resource allocation:** Obtaining and allocating resources to support teaching and learning (ibid).

Sarason (2003), cited in Nation et al. (2019), stated that less advantaged parents and communities are too often ignored by schools and other government officials and bureaucracies. He encouraged teachers, parents, and community advocates to recognize their collective power and strive to work together to influence local, state, and national education policies rather than simply allow school boards and administrators to make decisions in isolation from individual, classroom, family, and local community needs and concerns (Nation et al., 2019).

Once an effective school head establishes clearly defined goals for academic achievement, he/she concentrates on available resources and operations on attaining them, provides adequate time-table for teaching, routinely checks of lesson notes and subject dairies, observation of classroom instruction, continuously monitors pupils' progress to determine whether their instructional goals are being met, provide feedback on pupil performance, motivation of teachers for improved performance, reinforcement of pupils for excellent performance, maintenance and appropriate usage of physical facilities, enforcement of discipline to ensure peaceful atmosphere, capacity building of teachers for effective service delivery and provision of instructional facilities and materials to enhance quality teaching-learning processes (Lawrence, 2005)

A study by Salfi (2011) revealed that according to the majority of the principals whose schools were successful, the principals involved the community and parents in the school improvement process, emphasized their self-professional development as well as that of their teachers, developed and maintained rapport among the school community personnel and involved various stakeholders in the decision-making process. In addition, the principals empowered others to lead by distributing leadership responsibilities through delegation in the entire school, promoting a culture of trust, support, and collaboration. The principals also developed a shared and common school vision. This study finding imply that principals may adopt leadership qualities that are effective for school improvement.

The practice of collaborative leadership must be emphasized as a moral sense of leaders. Dewitt (2017) argues, *"I believe that our moral purpose as leaders is to challenge our long-held beliefs, build the collective efficacy of staff, help raise the self-efficacy of students and families, and create opportunities in which we learn together through collaboration and a stronger school climate."* This call is particularly important for secondary schools in urban settlements. The authors of this article strongly advocate for school heads to leverage this collaborative leadership in addressing the challenge of resource utilization in schools.



## 6. How School Administrators Can Adopt Collaborative Leadership

To effect change from the isolated, authoritarian and bureaucratic or top-down leadership towards successful all-encompassing collaborative leadership practices the school principals can adopt the following actions in the management and utilization of resources within reach in urban schools.

1. Establish group goals and norms. The school principals should establish high-quality interactions among all school stakeholders such as the immediate community, board of management, parent association, teachers, administrative staff, nonacademic staff and students. This requires a safe environment where individual accountability combines with group outcomes. The group should commit to a purpose and norms. For example, consistent, positive and timely communication with one another, regular reflection on own and each other's productivity and well-being, finishing each meeting with action items and deadlines for future work; being responsible, accountable, and direct.
2. Develop Partnerships with other schools and the community. Beyond the team established at a particular school, the principals in an urban setting can develop partnerships with other schools and institutions in the community to reap maximum benefits from utilizing the existing resources. For instance, the few qualified teachers in subjects like fine arts, computer studies, home science, and foreign languages can teach students beyond one school. Similarly, teachers should be encouraged to form/join professional learning communities and collaborate with their peers from other schools.
3. Encourage participation through discussion and dialogue. The collaborative team(s) may have needed to communicate. This may include a need to mobilize funds, selection of learning resources, analysis of the budget data, or use of physical resources in the school/community. A discussion enhances a conversation and allows group members to state their thoughts or ideas as leaders build consensus or make decisions. Moving from discussion to dialogue allows the team to broaden individual knowledge, incorporate multiple perspectives, listen actively, and stay focused. A collaborative leader facilitates participation from all staff and welcomes new participants. Soliciting the opinions of many builds trust and inclusiveness from the start. Trust is the belief or confidence that the leaders are reliable and have the best interest of the school at the core. It is the glue that holds together collaborative leadership.
4. Design mechanisms to resolve conflict. In a school climate of increased collaboration conflict due to divergence of opinion may arise. This calls for strategies by the leadership team to monitor conflict as it arises to support individuals.
5. Develop problem-solving and decision-making strategies. In collaborative leadership, the principal does not decide alone what to do and then tells the group. The team considers the issues, decide the direction and then counts on the principal to support. Although problem-solving and decision-making strategies

vary in different situations, developing a consistent plan on how to solve problems and support decisions leads to the success of collaborative leadership.

6. Allow open communication channels. Once decisions are made, the principal should communicate them openly to staff either through email, small group meetings, or full staff meetings. This ensures transparency and reduces any misinformation about what was decided, why, and by whom.

## 7. Skills and Qualities of Effective Collaborative Administrators

To attain effective resource utilization for student success in urban secondary schools through collaborative leadership, administrators need to cultivate a range of skills:

- **People-centred skills:** Work effectively with and show a genuine interest in students, parents and guardians, teachers, board of management, administrative staff, non-academic staff among others.
- **Relationship building:** Leverage relationships within the school and with the entire school system in order to advocate for the needs of the students.
- **Interpersonal communication:** Communicate and effectively with all stakeholders.
- **Commitment to professional development:** Recruit teachers, administrative and non-academic staff members who can contribute to the goals of the school. Also, one should provide sufficient motivation, mentorship and training to foster quality teaching.
- **Decision making:** Make decisions that prioritize educational goals, teacher needs, and student outcomes. Offer support to teachers and other specialists to ensure high-quality education, and a safe and positive learning environment.
- **Budgeting:** Draw credible budgets and oversee spending according to the budgets to ensure the long-term sustainability of programs. One should seek expert support in budgeting; ensure stakeholder participation to ensure it serves all the educational services in the school.
- **Creativity:** Be innovative in sourcing and utilizing limited resources for maximum potential. One should focus on the local environment and leverage local resources.

## 8. Conclusion

The literature reviewed indicates that there are challenges with resource utilization in urban secondary schools in Kenya. The challenges include unavailability and underutilization of physical resources, poor human resource management leading to a lack of motivation of teachers hence their low productivity, and lack of prudent utilization of school financial resources. There is a positive relationship between school leadership practices and utilization of resources. The principals enjoy autonomous control and influence over the use of school resources. We recommend the adoption of a collaborative team leadership style to ensure prudent utilization of school resources particularly in urban areas. Collaborative leadership can go beyond the borders of the

school and link with resources outside the school. Fortunately, urban areas have other several other institutions which share the mission of providing quality education to citizens. These include museums, game parks, conservation organizations, scientific societies, and government agencies. This will improve the quality of education received by learners in schools.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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