Original Article

Relationship between Democratic Leadership Style and Students' Academic Performance in Garissa Township, Garissa County

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ABSTRACT

Most parents tend to attribute the poor performance of their children to the head teacher's leadership style. The study sought to find out the relationship between democratic leadership style and students' academic performance in Garissa township, Garissa County. This study was guided by Contingency and performance theory based on quantitative approach to collect data. The study adopted a correlational research design that sought to measure the relationship between the variables. The study targeted a population of 750 teachers and head teachers from 30 public secondary schools in Garissa Sub County. The sample was 200 participants consisting of 192 teachers and 8 head teachers. The sample was obtained through stratified sampling to establish the number of head teachers and teachers to be included in the study sample. Simple random sampling was used to select 8 head teachers from 30 schools and 192 teachers from 720 teachers. Questionnaires were used; one for teachers and another for head teachers to collect data. Pilot study was carried out in two neighbouring schools which were not included in the study. The data was analyzed quantitatively using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study established that leadership styles of Headteachers will influence performance of teachers. The data further shows that many teachers in the current schools have not stay long also these may be to some extent contributing to in experience to handle learning hence low academic performance. The study recommended that head teachers ought to be given refresher courses on appropriate leadership styles to be applied in their institutions. Sensitization is essential on mutual participation by all to meet the organizational targets. More so headteachers need to be aware of participatory leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies focusing on leadership in schools have also been conducted in Africa, further highlighting the concern shown over the issue of leadership. In a recent study conducted in Uganda, Nsubuga (2008) established that there is a relationship between leadership styles and school performance and goes on to recommend that if schools hope to operate successfully, the leadership should adopt approaches that take cognizance of the diverse needs of all stakeholders.

In Kenya, a study conducted by the ILO international programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC, 2003), through a team of consultants to undertake a situation analysis on conducive learning for children withdrawn and prevented from child labour in primary schools in the then Garissa district, also highlighted the issue of leadership. It was noted that there were weak mechanisms that could ensure that children withdrawn and prevented from child labour cope with school environment. Much of the challenges these children face are not adequately addressed, hence putting them at extremely high risks of dropping out. This was evidenced by the situations where schools that purportedly indicate high re-enrollment rates counter productively tended to have high rates of dropouts.

Several studies have narrowed down the issue of leadership to head teachers' leadership styles. According to Adeoti (2012), efficiency and effectiveness of a school is influenced by the head teacher's leadership styles. These views are further supported by Chaplain (2003, cited in Byron, 2007) who notes that the head teacher has

a very important role to play in maintaining discipline in the school.

The importance of head teacher's leadership capability cannot be underestimated. Several recommendations have been made by various stakeholders particularly with regards to expectations of head teachers in their administrative roles. In its report of 2001/2002, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST, 2001/2002) recommends that qualified and competent personnel should be appointed as administrators and managers of schools, and this should be based on a clear criterion.

In its report of 2004, the Kenya Educational Staff Institute ((KESI) recommends that those appointed head teachers should have the required skills and where necessary be given an induction course on management before they assume office (KESI, 2004). According to Kubai (2004), head teachers should make schools better places in the way they treat staff and students. This mirror on the recommendations that head teachers should be tolerant and accommodating and be ready to lead by example and motivate (MOEST, 2001).

The success of head teachers can therefore be attributed to their leadership styles in among others, motivating teachers and assuring discipline within and outside the school. It is reported that through appropriate leadership styles, "Effective school leaders will know how to focus the work of the school on the essential. They will have a clear mission or purpose for the school and identify goals that align with that mission. They will communicate the purpose and goals in a meaningful way such that all stakeholders understand what they need to do" (McIver,

Kearns, Lyons & Sussman, 2009). The bottom line then is that leadership entails giving direction towards team efforts targeted at specific achievements. This may call for an array of leadership styles.

Different leadership styles have been identified by several scholars (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Yulk, 2005). Through their leadership theory, Avolio and Bass (2004) identify transactional, transformational and Laissez-faire leadership styles. Yulk (2005) weighs in this discussion by observing that while the democratic style is characterized by co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration, the autocratic style does not allow for participation in decision making and laissez-faire tends to empower others to participate freely.

The style of leadership head teachers adopt may impact on several aspects of pupil learning. According to Henry (2009), "School leadership was the most important condition affecting teachers' willingness to remain teaching at their school". Nsubunga (2008) in supporting this view observes that students hate harsh administrators who make their academic record decline. According to Mumbe (2005, cited in Keith, 2007), democratic leadership styles affect students' academic achievement and general school performance positively through motivating teachers to work with principals towards desired goals. While research focuses mostly on what students can achieve directly from the motivational approach attributed to the head teacher, there is a need to examine leadership styles from the perspective of students' summative evaluation.

Statement of the Problem

The Government of Kenya through policy frameworks underscores the need for provision of basic education to children. The children's Act (2001) and the Basic Education Act (2012) provide for compulsory basic education to children. Despite these initiatives, students in parts of the country such as Garissa County continue to score poorly in National examinations compared to students in other parts such as Makueni County (Mwatsuma & Silvester, 2012).

The poor performance is consistently blamed on head teacher's leadership styles without pointing out appropriate leadership styles that can significantly impact on academic achievements of students. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to establish the leadership style that can be suitable to improve pupil's academic performance (measured by pupil's academic achievement) in Garissa County.

Purpose of the study

To find out the relationship between democratic leadership style on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Garissa Township, Garissa County

Research Methodology

Research methodology involves plans and procedures in a study which facilitates the smooth sailing of various research operations, therefore making research as efficient as possible hence yielding maximum information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money (Kothari, 2003). A quantitative method will be used in this study. Quantitative data will be obtained through close-ended items from the questionnaires. Hence both discrete and continuous data will enable leading to enhancement of the quality of the study.

Research Design

The research employed correlational research design because of its appropriateness to the research findings that generated numerical data from the research instruments and assess the relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and students' academic performance public secondary schools. Numerical data was used to describe and analyze the findings of the research by computing them using the SPSS Version 21 computer programme and the use of tables of figures.

Target Population

The target population for the study was teachers and head teachers of public Secondary schools. The study targeted a population of 680 teachers and 30 head teachers from 30 public Secondary schools in Garissa Township Sub County.

Table 3. 1: Showing target population

Population	Number	
Teachers	720	
Headteachers	30	
Total	**750**	

Source: Researcher (2024)

Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Table 3. 2: Study Sample

Subject	Study Population	Sample Size
Head teachers	30	8
Teachers	720	192
Total	**750**	**200**

Research Instruments

Questionnaires for Headteachers and Teachers

There was a questionnaire for head teachers and another one for teachers at public Secondary schools in Garissa Township Sub County. The researcher collected data using questionnaires for teachers and head teachers because they were more efficient in collecting data. They were also less expensive and will allow collection of information from a large population (Orodho, 2009).

Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. First the questionnaire items were subjected to factor analysis to help extract factors that identify leadership styles exhibited by head teachers, means and standard deviations used to examine prevailing levels of the identified leadership styles. In order to test the formulated hypotheses postulating relationships among variables.

Research findings & Discussions

Relationship between Democratic Leadership Style and Students' Academic Performance

The independent variable in the study is leadership styles of head teachers measured using below items. The leadership styles which were measured include, democratic, autocratic, transformative and Transactional. The items to measure it in the questionnaire with each Likert scaled between one and four (1 to 4), where 1=strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. The following were the findings.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3: Leadership Styles Employed by the Head Teachers

Item	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
All Powers are centralized to me	2.38	Disagree	1
I leave my staff to make decision on school programmes and activities without prior intervention.	2.86	Agree	2
I often invite teachers to engage in addressing administrative problems.	2.83	Agree	3
I consult teachers before making decisions pertaining academic progress	2.82	Agree	4
Teachers have freedom to do as they think best in the interest of promoting academic progress in this school.	2.38	Disagree	5
The system of administration is top-down	2.80	Agree	6
The staff is involved in making school programme	2.59	Agree	7
Solving administrative problems with fellow staff improves pupil academic progress.	2.38	Disagree	8
Teachers are not interfered with when making decisions that promote progress in this school	2.23	Disagree	9

Item	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Prefer authoritarian decision making	2.54	Agree	10
Academic excellence is through consensus building	2.58	Agree	11
I share school leadership roles with my teaching staff	2.59	Agree	12
Decision are made from down and they come later to the top.	2.12	Disagree	13
It is enjoyable having teacher's count, on me for ideas and suggestions regarding progress in this school.	3.06	Agree	14
There is free delegation of responsibilities and duties for academic progress in this school.	2.41	Disagree	15
Respect for teachers opinions regarding school improvement exist in this school.	2.92	Agree	16
You prefer collective decision-making in the school	2.85	Agree	17
Teachers participate determining school resource allocation and utilization in this school	2.61	Agree	18
In terms of school activities do you go beyond self-interest for the good of the school?	2.70	Agree	19
When making decisions do you consider moral and ethical consequences of your decisions?	2.87	Agree	20
Do you give hope in your talk/discussion to the teachers and students on the prevailing circumstances	2.81	Agree	21
How often do you re-examine the decisions made to ascertain whether they are appropriate/correct as per the prevailing conditions.	2.02	Disagree	22
Do you play a role in the development of the strengths of the teachers and students in the school?	2.58	Agree	23
Do you keep records of mistakes committed by teachers and students in your school?	2.33	Disagree	24
Do you have a clear reward system for those who achieve their targets as expected or even surpass the targets?	2.30	Disagree	25

Source: Primary data 2024

Table 4.2 reveals that leadership style was rated using the questionnaires and summarized in the Table. In the democratic leadership style the teachers were involved in decision making and this promoted high morale among the teachers. From the Table it was rated average of 2.83 making it fall under scale agree when rounded off 2.83 =3 which is agree while item ranked 13 about decision from down to top it was rated 2.12 which in the scale they disagree.

Table 4.2 further indicated that Autocratic style was measured using Centralized powers which rated 2.38 making it fall under scale disagree, while System top-down was rated 2.80 which agree. Transformational leadership style was also measured and summarized in the Table, question ranked 14 about teacher's count was rated 3.06, which agree that the teachers were involved regarding progress in the school. Transactional leadership style was also summarized in the Table

above, the item about records of teachers' mistake was rated 2.33 which falls as disagree, means the head teacher of some other schools they were not keeping records of mistakes committed by teachers and students. On Democratic style Table 4.3 clearly indicates the mean of the respondents on each of the 10 items to range from 2.70 to 2.98, showing a measure that falls on agree. The total mean is 2.79 implying general agreement.

In summary Table 4.3 indicates that most of the respondents agreed with democratic statements to be practiced in their schools as 2.79 agreement rating indicated, while Autocratic, transformational and transactional each received rating scale of 2.58 indicating the presents of such leadership styles are still strongly applied in Garissa Township.

Inferential Statistics on Democratic Leadership Style Employed by Head Teachers

In inferential statistics, some 9 participants were sampled and correlated using Pearson. The table below indicated their relationships.

Correlations

		Those Who Agreed	Those Who Disagreed
Those who agreed	Pearson Correlation	1	.423
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.257
	N	9	9
Those who disagreed	Pearson Correlation	.423	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.257	
	N	9	9

There was a weak correlation of .423 between the variables. This showed that those who agreed and those who disagreed were not near each other due to the fact that some teachers may not have understood the questions properly since they were not in administration yet. The 2-tailed significance reflected .257 which is far more than the significance level of .01. Therefore the relationship between the two groups was not significant at all.

Recommendations for the study

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- Head teachers ought to be given refresher courses on appropriate leadership styles to be applied in their institutions. Sensitization is essential on mutual participation by all to meet the organizational targets. More so headteachers needs to be aware of participatory leadership.

- Headteachers should be trained in order to have higher academic qualification than their teaching staff so as to be in position of handling and working with teaching staff harmoniously.

- Teachers too ought to be sensitized on their moral duties and advised to carry their professional ethics as trained in the teacher colleges rather than relying on headteachers leadership. The ministry of education should allow teachers to teach in one school for at most 10 years so as to gain experience before transferring to another school.

- Knowledge is power hence ministry of Education ought to consider giving scholarship to head teachers and after the training they are taken back to head their primary schools.

- Ministry of Education need to be appraising head teachers regularly to enhance their competency rather than being competent and stagnated there with the old knowledge, while the world is expanding day after day with the new information on leadership, so the Ministry ought to breastfeed the head teachers on quarterly basis with the new skills of leadership.

- Quality assurance officers need to be visiting schools regularly to establish level of performance and offer necessary intervention where things are not in order.

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