

ASPECTS OF HEAD TEACHERS' COMPETENCE ON PUPILS' PERFORMANCE IN KENYA CERTIFICATE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the influence of head teachers' competence on pupils' performance in KCPE. The research objectives were: to establish the extent to which head teachers' academic and professional qualifications, work experience and involvement of staff in management of school facilities influence pupils' performance in KCPE. The study employed descriptive survey design. The schools selected were 14 from Westland and Dagoretti districts and 13 from Lang'ata district through simple random sampling. The 41 head teachers and 41 senior teachers from each school were selected by census. The research instruments used were the two sets of questionnaires for the head teachers and senior teachers. Validation of both instruments was done by the expert judgement review by supervisors from the Department of Educational Administration and Planning of the University of Nairobi. The reliability coefficient of the research instruments was determined by split-half method, and was found to be 0.73 and 0.88 for the head teachers' and senior teachers' questionnaires respectively. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data which was presented in tables. The findings were: the head teachers with high academic and professional qualifications, long work experience and involvement of staff in management of school facilities enhanced positively the pupils' performance in KCPE. Therefore, the competence of head teachers influenced positively the pupils' performance in KCPE. The following recommendations were suggested: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should provide adequate funds for in-service training of head teachers to promote their competence and Kenya Education Management Institute should encourage head teachers to participate in a curriculum on management for head teachers by subsidizing costs. This will enhance head teachers' competence.

Key Words: Facility, Performance, Primary education

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Competence refers to a combination of attributes underlying some aspect of successful performance such as industry, flexibility, self confidence and thoroughness. The indicators of competence of head teachers discussed in this paper are the academic and professional qualifications, work experience and involvement of staff. The competence of a head teacher has an impact on the lives of staff and pupils (Leadwood & Jantzi, 1999). A study by Oxaal (1997), points to the greater capacity of educated employees to learn on the job and continue to improve on their productivity. Cheloti (2009), argues that the higher levels of academic qualification correlate with higher levels of productivity. Education opens the mind of an individual to strategic thinking, better problem solving approaches and planning. National Centre for Educational Statistics (2000), asserts that there is a strong relationship between the pupils' performance in examinations and the head teachers' professional qualification. Okumbe, (1999), stated that the professional qualification enhances the head teachers' expert power, credibility, confidence and decisiveness in managerial practice. Sisungu; Buhere and Sany (2011), noted that the professional qualification promotes proficiency, operational and conceptualization of an individual. Lam and Fung, (2001), indicated that the head teachers' professional qualification is a matter of developing their capacities for situational understanding as a basis for wise judgment and intelligent decisions in completely ambiguous and dynamic educational situation. Therefore, the academic and professional qualifications of head teachers may influence pupils' performance in KCPE.

Okoth (2008), noted that work experience could improve decision-making, effectiveness and efficiency. Ouru (2008), argued that head teachers' work experience plays a pivotal role in determining their attitudes, approaches and decision-making in their schools. Darling-Hammond (2000), indicated that head teachers with few work experience usually less than three years are less effective compared with those with more years of work experience. However, beyond five years of work experience the influence decreases. This may suggest that those with five years work experience may not have significant difference in performance compared with those with ten years experience. Mwendu (1995), asserts that long work experience is linked to settled families and minds hence, ability to concentrate on school matters. Mutisya (2000) and Eshiwani (1993), stated that schools that have long serving and experienced head teachers have few discipline problems. Vanderhaar, Marios and Rodosiey (2006), noted that head teachers with long work experience have time to interact and understand the needs of their teachers and are able to initiate changes for teacher growth and academic performance. Thus, the work experience of head teachers may influence pupils' performance in KCPE.

A head teacher may delegate some of her/his responsibilities to the staff but this will not absolve her/him from these responsibilities (Ministry of Education, 2009). The head teachers cannot do everything, it is necessary for them to delegate certain duties to their staff. The concept of

delegation does not mean surrender of power or control but the staff performing a particular duty does it on behalf of the authority from the head teacher. If anything went wrong the final responsibility or accountability lies with the head teacher (Mbiti, 2003). Hence, the head teachers' involvement of staff in management of school facilities may influence pupils' performance in KCPE.

Head teachers' competence has a direct effect on pupils' academic performance, the work performance of teachers and counselors, on relationship with parents, sponsors and community (Rosenblatt & Somech, 1997). Competent head teachers practice kindness and compassion while handling staff and pupils (Uchiyama & Wolf, 2002; Heller, 2002). A competent head teacher influences the staff to change by providing an inspiring vision of the future by shaping the culture and values of the school needed to attain it (Daft, 2008). A competent head teacher implements school systems and procedures in a school, takes care of pupils' welfare and provides a friendly environment for enhancing teaching and learning process (Mullins, 2005). These may enhance pupils' performance in KCPE.

The competence of a head teacher matter when it comes to pupils' performance in education and management. The way the competent head teacher structures, manages the school, relationship with subsystems, teaches and pupils has a strong effect on pupils' performance (Olembo, 1994). Competent head teachers set the pace by creating a culture that is disciplined and accommodative through organizational culture. A competent head teacher has contextual awareness that is demonstrates awareness of current educational issues, political environment, knowledge of the local community needs, awareness of issues related to ethnicity, gender and knowledge of school policies (Mullins, 2007). Therefore, head teachers' competence influences pupils' performance in KCPE.

The management of school facilities involves provision of adequate funds to procure new facilities, repair, maintain and improve facilities to enhance pupils' performance in KCPE. The management of school facilities such as equipment, play grounds, stationery and buildings enhance academic performance in the teaching and learning process. Teachers need school facilities to search, read, write, interact, confer, view, think, record, listen and experiment (Asiabaka, 2008). Management of school facilities by head teachers ensures that the school facilities support the operations of the school. The management requires conceptual and technical skills that head teachers gain through education at higher levels and professional training. The physical needs are met by the physical facilities while the emotional needs are met by creating pleasant surroundings, a child friendly stimulating atmosphere in an inspiring environment (Fenker, 2004).

There has been criticism on the way the schools are managed in Kenya by head teachers (Musera, Achoki & Mugasia, 2012). There is a relationship between a school's academic performance and the competence of a head teacher (Grift, 1990). The head teachers have to be equipped with relevant

knowledge, skills and competences to perform management duties which include planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting (Ngaroga, 2001).

Despite the heavy investment in education, management capacity remains ineffectively developed (Maranga, 1992). Successful and dynamic schools can quickly slide backwards with the departure of a competent head teacher (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). The head teachers are critical in ensuring that school management efforts in academic performance are successful (Routledge, 2009).

The pupils' performance in KCPE (Years 2008 to 2012) in Nairobi County and nationally is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Pupils' Performance in KCPE (Years 2008 to 2012) in Nairobi County and Nationally

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Nairobi County's KCPE mean (%)	45.94	46.00	46.78	46.66	47.72
National's KCPE mean (%)	51.23	53.84	54.12	41.31	53.02

Source: The year 2012 KCPE examination report (Kenya National Examinations Council, 2013; Mbunde, Nyagah, Okoth & Obae, 2015)

The data in Table 1 indicates a lower mean score in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) in Nairobi County compared to national results in the same period. The quality of education is seen in terms of pupils passing national examinations hence, examination oriented (Eshiwani, 1993). By promoting a forum for professional discourse, head teachers as instructional leaders, construct a school culture through which teachers can redefine curriculum, teaching and learning, translating it into new classroom practices (Checkley, 2000). Therefore, the paper discusses competence in terms of academic and professional qualifications, work experience, involvement of staff in management of school facilities and the influence on pupils' performance in KCPE.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Competent head teachers ensure good pupils' performance in KCPE. The Government of Kenya through the Teachers Service Commission employs professionally qualified head teachers to manage school facilities and maintain high KCPE results. Despite this, performance is still below average in Nairobi County.

Okumbe, (1999), stated that the professional qualification enhances the head teachers' expert power, credibility, confidence and decisiveness in managerial practice. Head teachers with little work experience usually less than three years are less effective compared with those with more years of work experience. (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The head teachers cannot do everything, it is necessary for them to delegate certain duties to their staff. (Mbiti, 2003). The study focuses on importance of head teacher aspects that relate to competence which affect pupils' performance in KCPE.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study addressed the following objectives:

- i. To determine the extent to which head teachers' academic qualification influences pupils' performance in KCPE.
- ii. To establish the extent to which head teachers' professional qualification influences pupils' performance in KCPE.
- iii. To assess the extent to which head teachers' work experience as head teacher influences pupils' performance in KCPE.
- iv. To examine the extent to which head teachers' involvement of staff in management of school facilities influences pupils' performance in KCPE.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey design because it allowed collection of data on head teachers' academic and professional qualifications, work experience and involvement of staff in management of school facilities. The schools selected were 14 from the Westland and Dagoretti districts and 13 from Langat district through simple random sampling. The 41 head teachers and 41 senior teachers from each school were selected by census from the selected schools. The research instruments consisted of the head teachers and senior teachers questionnaires. Validation of both instruments was done by the expert judgment review by supervisors from the Department of Educational Administration and Planning of the University of Nairobi. The reliability coefficient of the research instruments was determined by split-half method, and was found to be 0.73 and 0.88 for the head teachers' and senior teachers' questionnaire respectively. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data which was presented in tables.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question 1: To what extent does head teachers' academic qualification influences pupils' performance in KCPE?

The head teachers were asked to indicate their highest academic qualification and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Head teachers by Academic Qualification

Education level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teachers' Training College	8	20.0
University	33	80.0
Total	41	100.0

The findings in Table 2 indicate that the majority (80.0%) of the head teachers who participated in the survey were holders of university academic qualification while the rest (20.0%) had Teachers' Training College academic qualification. The head teachers involved in the study had attained adequate academic qualification therefore, competent enough to manage their schools. The higher level of academic qualification of the head teachers shows the commitment of the Teachers' Service Commission to engage highly qualified head teachers who are competent to head their schools. Cheloti (2009), argues that the higher levels of academic qualification correlate with higher levels of productivity. Thus, the academic qualification of the head teachers enhanced positively the pupils' performance in KCPE.

Research Question 2: To what extent does the head teachers' professional qualification influences pupils' performance in KCPE?

The head teachers were asked to state their highest professional qualification and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of Head teachers by Professional Qualification

Professional qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
P2	3	7.3
P1	5	12.2
Diploma	10	24.4
B.ED/BA	16	39.0
Masters	7	17.1
Total	41	100.0

The results in Table 3 show that the highest proportions of the head teachers (39.0 %) were holders of B.ED/ BA and lowest (7.3%) were holders of P2 professional qualification. Okumbe (1999), stated that the professional qualification enhances the head teachers' expert power, credibility,

confidence and decisiveness in managerial practice. Therefore, the professional qualification of the head teachers enhanced positively the pupils' performance in KCPE.

Research Question 3: To what extent does head teachers' work experience as head teacher influences pupils' performance in KCPE?

The head teachers were asked to state their work experience as head teachers and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of Head teachers by Work Experience as a Head teacher

Work experience (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5 Years	7	17.0
6-10 Years	15	37.0
11-15 Years	9	22.0
16 and above	10	24.0
Total	41	100.0

The data in Table 4 shows that the highest proportion (37.0%) of the head who participated in the survey had a work experience as head teacher for a period between 6-10 years and the lowest (17.0%) 1-5 years. Head teachers with few years of work experience usually less than three years are less effective compared with those with more years of work experience. (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Hence, the work experience in management of school facilities of the head teachers enhanced positively pupils' performance in KCPE.

Research Question 4: To what extent does head teachers' involvement of staff influences pupils' performance in KCPE?

The senior teachers were asked to rate their head teachers' involvement of staff and the results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of Head teachers by Involvement of Staff

Extent of staff involvement	f	%	KCPE mean grade (%)
Very adequate	36	87.8	46.10
Adequate	5	12.2	43.2
Total	41	100.0	

The findings in Table 5 reveal that the head teachers who had very adequate (87.8 %) involvement of staff had better KCPE mean grade than those who had adequate (12.2%) involvement of staff in management of school facilities. Therefore, involvement of staff in management of school facilities by head teachers influenced positively the pupils' performance in KCPE.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings:

The academic qualification of the head teachers enhanced positively the pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education.

The professional qualification of head teachers enhanced positively the pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education KCPE.

The work experience of head teachers enhanced positively the pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education KCPE.

The involvement of staff in management of school facilities by head teachers influenced positively the pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings of the study the following recommendations were suggested:

- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should provide adequate funds for in-service training of head teachers to promote their competence.
- Kenya Education Management Institute should encourage head teachers to participate in a curriculum on management for head teachers by subsidizing costs. This will enhance head teachers' competence.

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