

## **Effective Heads of Department Professional Development on their Role Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Heads of Departments' in Public secondary schools are required to lead, manage and develop standards of excellence in curriculum delivery in their areas of specialization. Effective Professional Development is needed to enhance their knowledge, skills and the right attitude for performance of their roles and responsibilities in their departments. It is one way of supporting Heads of Department instill complex skills students need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This paper seeks to address the following question: What is the effectiveness of HODs professional development on their role performance in secondary schools in Kenya? This research will review literature on the importance of HODs professional development on their role performance, the challenges of Heads of Department Professional Development in Kenya and the characteristics of effective Heads of Department Professional Development. This will enhance Heads of Departments preparation and help them perform their roles and responsibilities effectively. The findings will form a basis to make recommendations on policy formulation by the Ministry of Education on effective Heads of Departments Professional Development. Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) will gain insights in restructuring training and development of Heads of Departments.

**Key words: Job training, development, Job Performance, Non-teaching staff**

### **Introduction**

Heads of departments' PD is of increasing interest as one way to support the increasingly complex skills students need to learn in preparation for further education and work in the 21st century. However, research has shown that many PD initiatives appear ineffective in supporting changes in HODs practices and their role performance in the departments. This research paper explores the importance of HODs professional development, the challenges of Heads of Department Professional Development in Kenya and the characteristics of effective Heads of Department Professional Development. This study investigates the effectiveness of Professional Development offered to Heads of Departments. It seeks to fill a gap that exists due to limited research in the area of Heads of Department Professional Development in Kenya. Though research has been done regarding heads of departments there is little written about the effectiveness of Professional Development of HODs on their role performance. The study seeks to determine the effectiveness of Heads of Department Professional Development in enhancing their Departmental roles.

## Statement of the Problem

Despite the numerous calls and recommendations for professional development of Heads of Department, none of the researches has looked at effectiveness of professional development of Heads of Department. A bias towards the teachers and head teachers has been witnessed in researches done earlier. This paper will identify the importance of Heads of Departments PD on their role performance. It will look at the challenges of Heads of Department Professional Development in Kenya. In addition highlight the characteristics of effective Heads of Department Professional Development. This paper seeks to address the following main question: What is the effectiveness of HODs professional development on their role performance in secondary schools in Kenya? To answer the main question the paper will focus on the following specific questions:

- i). What is the Importance of HODs professional development on their role performance?
- ii). what are the challenges of HODs professional development in secondary schools in Kenya?
- iii). what are the characteristics of effective of heads of department professional development?

## Background of the study

Globally studies have shown that Heads of departments' professional development is crucial in enhancing role performance. Gordon (2013) reporting on Heads of Department professional development in United States of America says that they are expected to lead by example on the current educational issues, enforce on any appropriate change, market any new policy or practice, and act as the critical middle person working out how to implement these educational priorities within the busy world of a secondary department and school. He further states that Heads of Departments are charged with establishing the appropriate links between their department members and the upper executive of their schools.

Professional development of heads of departments' has continued to elicit a lot of discussion globally (Gordon 2013). However most of the studies tend to focus on whether professional development of heads of departments' has resulted to an improvement in student performance without much attention on effectiveness of Heads of Departments' professional development on their role performance (Zapeda, 2015). There is increasing evidence that Heads of Department in secondary schools in the world continue to experience challenges in executing their roles (Hargreaves & Fullan 2012).

Zapeda (2015) reporting on professional development in United States of America indicated that the Head of Department is presumed to lead and to contribute to the whole school leadership. This could lead to improved educational leadership that will result in the quality of what happens in the classroom. The report acknowledged that for coherent education reforms and school improvement Professional Development is critical for impactful learning outcomes for all learners in the public education system.

Hargreaves & Fullan, (2012) reporting on Professional Development for Heads of Department in United Kingdom says that it aims at developing their capacity to handle the day to day roles and challenges that face them. This entails empowering Heads of Department "to develop, voice and to act on their sense of purpose". According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), improvement of learning outcomes is dependent upon the change of practices, knowledge, and attitudes through staff development. Teacher Professional Development is an essential factor of teacher education, and as Gordon (2012) elaborates, teacher development, in particular, is essential to validate the quality of education in United States of America. Professional Development can lead to critical qualitative

results such as the formation of a positive culture, improvement in individual teachers' skills and development of prospects for peer learning. Gordon 2012 further asserts that teachers acquire the tools they need to handle classroom challenges with confidence through professional capacity building in United States of America.

Generally, education today is demanding a highly skilled teaching profession. Hargreaves and Fullan 2012 in United Kingdom noted that capacity development in education setting need to be innovative, not only continuous during execution but also involve a variety of components both formal and informal. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) in United States of America clarifies that purposed capacity development of staff in an educational setting is a coherent attempt to change classroom practice, change educators' beliefs and perceptions thus bringing about a change in students learning outcomes. Heads of Department Professional Development is an important component of teacher education. This research focuses on importance of capacity development while the current study will focus on the effectiveness of professional development.

In Africa, most of the researches related to Heads of Department professional development suggest that the quality of instructional supervision remain poor. A research carried out in Ghanaian basic schools it was reported that professional development of school leaders has appeared on education agendas of most African countries and has been a central point of discussion. In Ghana, though school leaders in basic schools are appointed without any formal preparation, research carried out by Donkoh (2015), affirms that they benefit from a wide range of in service professional learning programmes which aims at increasing capacity of leaders with an aim of improving students learning outcome. A research done in Namibia by Mushaandja (2013), found that the predominant self-development strategies employed by the principals were independent that included reading of government policy documents and manuals, learning from doing their work and interacting informally with visitors and their superiors. There were no reports on effectiveness of professional development on their role performance.

A research done in Kenya by Gichobi 2012, reported that HODs are increasingly expected to take up new roles and responsibilities. For instance, they are now required to sit on teacher recruitment and teacher disciplinary panels. The policy decision has vested HODS with additional administrative and financial responsibilities. However, HODS have not been prepared or trained to equip them with the necessary skills to handle the added responsibilities and management challenges arising from these changes. This has resulted in role ambiguities, role conflicts, tension and sometimes stress.

A research in Kenya by Karisa 2015 on effect of managerial competencies on heads on student academic performance sought to examine the impact of managerial competences of Heads of department on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Magarini Sub-county, Kilifi County. This research found out that there is a relationship between the managerial competencies of heads and student academic performance. The current study will focus on effectiveness of HODS professional development on their role performance.

### **Literature Review Methodology**

The research methodology involved Review of previous literature on Heads of Department professional development, journal articles, Books and website. This research paper identified the importance of Heads of Departments PD on their role performance. It looked at the challenges of Heads of Department Professional Development in Kenya. It examined the characteristics of

effective Heads of Department Professional Development. In conclusion discussed the characteristics of effective heads of department PD. The findings could be incorporated in proposals for training and developing Heads of Departments PD of secondary schools. Proposal for further research has been highlighted.

## **Findings and Discussions**

### **Challenges of Heads of Department Professional Development in Kenya**

Heads of departments in Secondary Schools in Kenya are appointed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and some are appointed internally by head teachers. They are appointed as a result of their good performance in teaching subjects and a lot of experience in teaching. As noted by MOEST 2011, HODs require effective professional development to be able to perform their roles. They require competencies, skills and attitudes to be able to perform their roles. The current research therefore aims at investigating the effectiveness of Heads of departments' professional development.

According to the Sector Review and Development Direction Report the government of Kenya, decided to decentralize the functions of the Ministry of Education up to school levels. This has resulted in vesting Heads of Departments' with the administrative and financial authority for the management of resources under their jurisdiction (Republic of Kenya, 2015). Hence the Heads of department require effective professional Development to enable them perform the roles vested on them as indicated in the Sector Review and Development Direction Report. This calls for the current research that looks into the effectiveness of professional development of HODs.

As reported in NESP 2015, Kenya's Education Sector has had challenges of governance, management and administration leading to gaps in service delivery, learning outcomes, teacher management, and competence and performance levels hindering the realization of education sector targets. Other challenges include inadequate strategies for teacher development, inefficient management and inadequate integration of ICT into the education system. It is the concern of this research to establish the state of HODs professional development so as to address these gaps that exist to be able to realize the education sector target. Achieving the NESP goals in a decentralized system requires significant capacity building at all levels of the education system. The strengthening and establishment of new ways of working through clearly defined roles, expectations, responsibilities, accountabilities and mandates are best achieved by capacity building of human resources. This research is meant to establish the effectiveness of professional development programmes for HODs on their role performance. According to NESP 2015, it is noted that there are weak training programmes, which have not been reviewed over a long time, are therefore viewed as being largely unfit for the purpose and are in need of radical reform. This research will come in handy in giving insights into the proposed reforms.

Ongoto et al 2019, reported that Heads of departments experience problems in providing direction and assistance to teachers in the department especially in area of professional documents. They strain in guiding the teachers through development of objectives consistent with the schools objectives and in evaluating progress towards achievement of these objectives. This raises concern on effectiveness of heads of departments' professional development on their role performance. This calls for the current research to establish the effectiveness of heads of department professional development and their role performance. Ongoto further notes that HoDs assist administration in supervisory process. They are required to develop a programme of instructional supervision with department members. They are supposed to provide an opportunity for members to improve their

instructional process. Department heads will need to provide support guidance and orientation of student teachers, teachers new to the department and teachers new to the profession. However he noted that these teachers experience difficulties in their schools due to lack of support.

Departmental heads are required to participate in the school budget development process, monitor requisition of supplies and equipment's. They are required to maintain an inventory control and arranging for repair and maintenance of department equipment. They advise the school administration about facility need and safety concern in the department. The current study embarks on establishing the effectiveness of professional development for HODs on enhancing the above mentioned roles. While a number of training programmes are organized to strengthen the roles of heads of departments in Kenyan schools, research suggest that the quality of Heads of Department role performance remain poor (Ataya, 2011). This makes the current study important to establish the effectiveness of Heads of Department professional development on their role performance. Over the past few decades professional development of heads of department has appeared on the education agendas of Kenya (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). This is partly due to the increasing recognition that school leaders can make a difference in both the effectiveness and efficiency of schooling as well as the rapid changes in the context within which educational leaders work. NESP (2015) reported that in Kenya the skills learned in teacher training institutions are not aligned to skill needs on the ground and some teachers do not receive adequate training. Further, the in-service of teachers were observed to be inadequate. It is therefore evident that teacher development is faced by a lot of challenges in Kenya hence the concern for the research.

According to a working document for National Forum on Education (MOEST 2001), the following were listed as factors leading to deterioration of education quality: Inadequate preparation, development, supervision, and support of teachers to cope with changes in education. The report suggested an improvement in teacher development as an adjustment on the policy to enhance quality teaching and learning at all levels (MOEST 2001). It recommended capacity building for all serving teachers, education managers and heads of departments and make teaching a competitive and attractive profession.

### **The Importance of HODS PD on their Role Performance**

In Kenya, studies have reported the role of Heads of Department as quite critical in the overall management of schools. According to the heads manual MOE (2011), it is reported that there is currently a much higher concern with Professional Development of Heads of Department due to the demands of a national curriculum and education reforms. According to a research done by Wakaba (2013), the roles of Heads of Department in Kenyan secondary schools are stipulated as management of curriculum, management of staff and students plus any other resource available in the school.

The awareness that the role of heads of department is quite critical in the overall management of schools is felt globally, however in Kenya as reported in NESP (2015), the skills learned in teacher training institutions are not aligned to skills needed on the ground, and some teachers do not receive adequate training. Also there is no specific policy on training of Heads of Department in Kenya. It is in line with this state of affairs that the study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of Heads of Department professional development on their role performance.

The School Management Guide (TSC, 2015) states that the duties of a head of a department include: curriculum and instruction management, financial management (budgetary process),

teacher personnel management and student personnel management. Further the guide outlines the functions of Heads of Department in curriculum and instruction as comprising enhancing efficiency in the teaching and learning processes in the department with regard to syllabus grasp, schemes of work formulation, records of work coverage, work plan formulation and lesson notes, maintaining records of work covered including assessment. They coordinate the teaching methods and review meetings in the departments.

A research by Bell (2011) investigating the role of Heads of Department in Kenya, confirmed that the part played by the Heads of Department is central to school educational process. Student level of achievement is determined by the quality of departmental planning implementation and appraisal. However, in many secondary schools, the full potential of the Heads of Department role has not been developed and harnessed. The research focused on the quality of department and student achievement. The current research will focus on effectiveness of professional development on the role performance.

A research by Mbamba, (2010) reported that Curriculum implementation demands that Heads of Department offer guidance to teachers on emerging curriculum issues, act as the consultant and resource person for teachers. Apart from active teaching they manage teams; hence they require leadership competences.

Further Mbamba reported that Heads of Department supervise preparation of schemes of work and lesson plans: ensuring that they reflect the intentions of the school curriculum. The Heads of Department, as the departmental instructional supervisor, ought to lead teachers in implementing teaching-learning process, be abreast with professional dynamics. The research focused on roles of Heads of Department. The current research will focus on effectiveness of professional development on their role performance.

A research by Wanjohi (2007), reported that heads of department play a role in budgeting, an aspect of financial management. Departmental meetings are held per department and the Heads of Department co-ordinate the departmental requisitions. These departments' budgets are then brought together to facilitate the drawing of the final school budget. Further Wanjohi reported that Heads of Department need to maintain textbook and equipment inventories and ledgers for the departments. The records show what the department has, and these are used to draw the departmental budget and the departmental requisitions. This requires Heads of Departments to be familiar with stores and storekeeping awareness documentation, filing and filing systems practices as well as record keeping. It is in light of the above that the current research will seek to investigate whether financial management professional development has been effective in preparing Heads of Department for this role.

A research by Okumbe (2001), reported that the success of the school depends on the success of its respective department and when one fails it affects the whole school system. First, the Heads of Department are responsible for inducting new members of the teaching staff into the department. Further he reported that the induction is a process of matching a teacher to both the art of teaching and the context of the teacher's work. The departmental head should be able to match a novice teacher to an experienced teacher for mentorship. It is also the responsibility of the Heads of Department to conduct internal inspections within the department more so for newly inducted teachers. By keeping in contact with their teachers, the Heads of Department can identify the teacher's strengths and areas of improving in a bid to enhance their work. This requires Heads of Departments to be analytical, which calls for training. Lack of people skills can limit the ability of

Heads of Department to cooperate with other teachers and thus fail to attain departmental objectives through them. Heads of Department should learn to delegate especially to subject heads as this improves performance and productivity in the department and is then reflected in the whole school system. One should also cultivate teamwork based on shared responsibility.

Okumbe (2016) argued that distributed leadership role sharing is being recognized as a means to achieving the participation and entitlement of teachers as well as to create a democratic environment in schools. It is the responsibility of the Heads of Department to build this teamwork and democracy within their respective departments. Lack of cooperation by all teachers in a department can be a significant challenge. The Heads of Department should also monitor the subject heads as well as other teachers within the department and offer help to them whenever necessary. One must also be the most accessible source of assistance for the other teachers in a department. This is because, unlike the head teachers or the deputy head teachers, Heads of Department works with the smallest possible group of teachers who share a common concern. He sees his teachers in a variety of situations as he works beside them throughout the school day, and he can offer them frequent individualized assistance and advice which can affect their total performance as a departmental team and as the school at large. The regular interaction also enables the Heads of Department to assess and appraise his teachers frequently, know their strength and weakness and out of this, understand their Professional Development needs. This is because teachers need to keep abreast with changes in curriculum changes and methodology and it is up to the Heads of Department to facilitate this.

Okumbe Further reported that management of Students is another role for Heads of Departments. Students are at the center of all the activities in the school and efforts should, therefore, be directed for the students' improvement. Heads of Departments must organize all departmental activities towards this purpose. The Heads of Department are then responsible for good students' instructional programmes, maintaining their academic records, progress and supervise the teaching-learning process within the department. When a school performs poorly in examinations, it is the head of a department who shoulders the blame. The research focused on the roles of Heads of Department and the need for professional development. The current study will focus on effectiveness of professional development on their role performance.

### **Characteristics of effective HODs professional development**

Effective HODs professional development should be Relevant. Professional development (PD) acquires relevance when it is grounded in practice and closely aligned to roles of HODs in secondary schools. Effective PD initiates and sustains changes to practice when it is clearly understood by HODs to be directly related to the needs and requirements of their work. Purposeful PD encourages enquiry and action that is related to real challenges that are relevant to different geographical, cultural and socio-economic contexts. Therefore PD programs for HODs should be content focused to be enable them accomplish their roles and responsibility.

Secondly the PD should connect HODs and leaders to their colleagues within and across schools and to external experts, its benefits are magnified and spread. For collaboration to be effective, HODs PD must actively involve both them and leaders in its design, participation and evaluation. It should also facilitate support through coaching and mentoring, observation and feedback. In

cultivating a professional community of practice, quality collaboration demands more than mere participation. It requires communities to challenge problematic beliefs and evaluate the impact PD on their role performance.

Effective HODs professional development should be Practice based. When PD focuses on both HODs practice and theory, it can lead to significant, sustained positive impacts on HODS role performance. In their meta analyses of the impact of various PD programs, Scher and O'Reilly (2009) and Blank and de las Alas (2009) found that when PD emphasised teachers' knowledge of subject matter, how to teach it and how students learn, it generated a more positive effect on student outcomes, than those that focused on other areas. This view can be applied in PD programs for HODs whereby they ought to emphasize HODs knowledge of their roles.

In addition, Heads of Departments PD should be Future Focused. Future-focused PD seeks to build HODs' capacity to adapt to the changes that arise from our rapidly changing, interconnected world. From pioneering learning models, to emerging technologies, to innovative techniques, exposure to new developments in pedagogy help teachers to deal with the challenges that these rapid changes pose. Since change of this nature can challenge current practice, effective PD provides support for this process. Effective PD helps HODs understand the new developments in Future-focused PD encourages innovation and adaptability and equips teachers with the capabilities to generate new responses to existing challenges.

Further Heads of Departments PD should be sustained. No matter how well-conceived or well-intentioned PD is, without focused and sustained implementation, it can fail to change or impact on practice and role performance. Within learning cultures that are sustainable, teachers and leaders model and nurture learning and provide time and resources to support and evaluate impact. Impactful, sustainable PD requires an ongoing commitment over time. To sustain change, Reeves (2010) recommends that Heads of Department move from superficial compliance with a myriad of sporadic PD programs towards more selective and deep implementation of a few areas of focus over an extended period of time.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The literature reviewed revealed that the role of Heads of department in schools is too demanding to be placed on any person who has not received any formal and specialized training and development. For a head of department to perform his/her tasks, there is need for a comprehensive training programme that will adequately equip him/her with necessary competencies to perform their roles well.

From the literature review various authors stated that professional development for Heads of Departments' is a crucial aspect in staff training although it does not receive sufficient attention. Effective professional development need to be relevant to the roles of HODs, practice based, future focused and sustainable.

## **Recommendations**

This study recommended that:

- a) Due to revelation that the role of Heads of department in schools is too demanding to be placed on any person who has not received any formal and specialized training and development of a clear and appropriate training policy for Heads of department in schools should be implemented and be reviewed regularly. Decision about developing a training programme should depend on the roles of Heads of Departments in schools.
- b) The school administration to provide training funds and avail scholarships to those who deserve. The training needs should be identified at departmental level and individual job level.
- c) A research should be done to investigate the effectiveness of heads of department professional development offered to HODs focusing on the areas trained and their role performance
- d) A Research should done to establish the training methods used to train Heads of departments
- e) The TNA should be conducted on Heads of department to determine the areas of professional development.

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