

Management Constraints that hinder primary school headteachers from carrying out their duties and responsibilities in Kericho West District

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The study was conducted in Kericho West District public primary schools between January and April 2012. It sought to investigate the constraints that hinder public primary school head teachers as they manage their institutions. The aspects studied included the following aspects of school management; curriculum and instruction, physical facilities, school organization and management, staff and relationship with parents. Stratified random sampling was used to identify the schools to study. Questionnaire schedules were prepared and sent to head teachers of the sampled schools. The data was analyzed qualitatively and descriptively using frequency tables and percentages. The results from the study showed that lack of adequate instructional materials, lack of adequate physical facilities, shortage of teaching staff, poor supervision of day-to-day operations of the school and criticisms from the parents were constraints that hindered the head teachers from carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

Key words: Management, constraints, duties and responsibilities

Introduction

All primary schools are built for the sake of providing conditions and services which will enable children to learn. It is at this stage that pupils are in their formative years and they therefore need a head teacher who can make the school environment conducive to learning by shaping the growth and development of children. In order then for a school to achieve and accomplish these objectives, proper management must be stabilized. The head teacher is main instrument through which the school fulfills these objectives and therefore the success or failure of a school depends largely on the head teacher.

In the early years of independence in Kenya, it could be argued that the traditional functions of head teachers required no specialized training. This was because school systems were small and so management was relatively easy. Hence, if a teacher was competent and effective in the classroom, he could be faced with minimum constraints on being appointed a head teacher. The need for specialized preparation (training) for primary school head teachers in Kenya was then overlooked.

However, as quantitative expansion took place after the introduction of “free” primary education accompanied by a diversified educational structure of 8-4-4 system, the tasks of head

teachers became more complicated. Therefore, the assumption that a good teacher makes an effective head teacher could no longer hold. In order to cope with these new challenges, primary schools need progressive and dynamic head teachers who are firmly interested in and committed to the education of children. This therefore, calls for the need for proper preparation of head teachers or rather a different preparation than they had as classroom teachers. Such professional training will improve the methods and techniques of handling management tasks so as to bring about greater efficiency and effectiveness in running primary schools.

In Kenya, any person aspiring for headship in primary schools does not require any professional qualifications other than those required of teachers. As a matter of fact, teaching experience has been the only emphasized requirement. Hence, due to lots of management tasks coupled with lack of relevant professional competence, most head teachers are faced with crucial constraints. This point has been stressed by Mbiti (1974) when he declared that many teachers have been and will be given a headmastership without any formal preparation for it. When a teacher is picked out to be a head teacher, he will find himself in a different world altogether with new responsibilities, commitments, new problems and in most cases less free time.

Therefore, apart from the head teacher's professional training, he should seek for guidance and advice from the field officers of the Ministry of Education concerning the constraints that he faces in striving to accomplish the objectives of his school and the ministry concerned. Curriculum and instruction involve giving guidance to teachers so as to develop greater competence in teaching as well as procurement of sufficient instructional equipment and supplies in schools. Most head teachers lack appropriate knowledge pertaining to these areas. Olembo (1975) while focusing on this point stressed that without proper guidance from the head teachers who are at the strategic position in the administrative structure there is no assurance that any sound policies and recommendations concerning instructions in Kenya schools will be effectively implemented.

Most primary schools are subjected to serious shortage of essential instructional and learning materials which is a great injustice not only to the pupils and dedicated teachers, but also to the curriculum planners. This is because the curriculum cannot be properly taught and evaluated without supporting equipment. The District Education Officer (2008) while stressing the importance of classroom supplies in Nandi District mentioned that only 25 percent of the total textbooks expected to be used by the pupils were available, making it impossible for the teachers to execute their duties effectively.

It usually takes a long time to convince the parents to purchase these books for their children because they argue that primary education is nowadays free.

High pupil enrolment which resulted from free primary education has forced many schools to expand their physical facilities. This has brought a lot of challenges to school heads in that they lack both the space and funds for expansion. Hence, there is lack of classrooms and teachers' houses. Professor George Saitoti (2000) while stressing the importance of teachers' houses in Kajiado District emphasized that good teachers' houses acted as incentives and helped retain staff in schools.

Education in any society is a communal affair, a vital matter in which each and every one should be involved. Though this is a noble idea, both the community and parents do not contribute sufficient funds to expand their schools. Hon. Mwai Kibaki (2004) while emphasizing the role of parents in the provision of physical facilities stressed that it was government policy that parents should continue constructing schools without depending solely on the government.

Though in some schools the buildings are available, they lack the necessary equipment such as desks.

Unless a head teacher can organize his management work to allow himself time to deal with staff business and general organization of the school duties, he will find himself in a perpetual muddle of unfinished work. Unfortunately, this state of affairs first affects the staff, which becomes discontented and uncooperative. This feeling is quickly passed on to the pupils and results in disciplinary difficulties.

A head teacher needs to plan his work appropriately so as to attend to most of his duties and responsibilities.

A teacher is not simply a number among many employees but one with his own unique needs which should be satisfied. It is within a group of teachers that some of them have very negative attitude towards work, others lack commitment and dedication towards their profession. These differences among teaching staff have made head teachers work difficult in dealing with the staff personnel. The head teacher is challenged with a difficult role of creating harmony, promoting good staff morale and a climate conducive to good teaching and learning process within the school.

Some primary school head teachers are faced with problems of lack of adequate qualified teaching staff. This is usually very serious in schools with high pupil enrolment. Therefore, this will lead to overloading the few teachers.

It is the duty of the head teacher to enhance harmonious relationships among members of the school community for successful innovation of new projects. Mbiti (1974) while focusing on this point stressed that a school is not an island but part of the community in which it is located. Funds for such projects are contributed by the school community. However, Odali (1984) and Mbaabu (1983) agree that though the head teacher is striving to have good relationship with the community, some community members spread malicious talks against the head teacher or his staff. Others go to the extent of rejecting a head teacher resulting in divisions which creates disunity among the staff members hence making it difficult for the head teacher to run the school effectively.

Research Design and Methodology

Simple survey method was used in conducting this study. This was fitting to the study as it intended to collect information from head teachers of public primary schools on the management constraints that hinder them from carrying out their duties and responsibilities in Kericho West District. This study adopted cross-sectional survey as it involved the collection of data at one point in time from a random sample representing some given population at a time (Jurs and Wiersma, 2005).

Kericho West District is made up of three divisions namely; Kabianga, Sigowet and Belgut with a population of 118 public primary schools. Stratified sampling was used to select the schools to be included in the study so that both the overall population and subgroups (divisions) of the population were represented. This was crucial in this study where the population was spread in the three divisions of Kericho West District. To obtain the desired sample, the researcher got a list of all schools in Kericho West District from the District Education Officer's office in Sosiot Centre.

Fourteen schools were sampled according to a method by Peter (1994) who points out that 11% is considered sufficient a sample. Eleven percent of the total number of schools in each

stratum (division) was therefore calculated based on the principle of proportionate stratified sampling. The total number of schools were 14 (11.9% of the population) thus fulfilling Gay and Ariasan's (2003) requirement that the sample must be 10 to 20% of the population. The sample sizes are shown on Table I below.

Table I: Sample sizes from the divisions

Division	Number of Schools	Sample
Kabianga	39	5
Sigowet	44	5
Belgut	35	4

Random sample were obtained from each stratum and questionnaires were sent to the head teachers of each of the sampled schools. The questionnaires were collected after two weeks for analysis and interpretation of the data.

Results and Discussions

Data was analyzed to determine the leading constraints. This was done by using a frequency count of those constraints ranked as number one. That is, the number of respondents who identified a constraint as number one divided by the total number of respondents (14) multiplied by 100%. This then enabled the ranking of constraints in order of their degree of seriousness.

Table II: Headteachers responses in the area of curriculum and instruction

Rank	Leading Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
1	Obtaining adequate instructional materials	9	64.3
2	Teaching overcrowded classes	8	57.1
3	Supervision of instruction	5	35.7

As shown in Table II, the leading constraint in the area of curriculum and instruction was obtaining adequate instructional materials which included textbooks, exercise books and science apparatus. This was the most serious constraint as those who ranked it as number one constituted the largest percentage which was 64.3 %. Public primary schools receive grants from the government to buy these materials; however, the amount is not adequate to purchase enough books for all the children in school. This is made worse because most schools are overenrolled

due to free primary education. It has not also been easy for head teachers to convince parents to buy these books for their children as they argue that primary education is free.

Teaching over crowded classes was the second most serious constraint. Teachers are not in a position to understand the needs of each child as they are many in a class hence poor academic performance and many cases of indiscipline.

Some head teachers viewed supervision of instruction as a constraint. The majority of them felt that they were overloaded with both administrative and teaching duties while others felt it was due to uncooperative staff that looked down upon the head teacher.

Table III: Headteachers responses in the area of physical facilities

Rank	Leading Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
1	Availability of adequate classrooms	10	71.4
2	Obtaining adequate space for school physical plans	7	50

The leading constraint was availability of adequate classroom as shown in Table III. This was caused by over-enrolment in several schools.

Expansion of these physical facilities has not been successful in most schools due to lack of finances. Parents have not been willing to contribute arguing that the government through Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is supposed to construct physical facilities in public primary schools.

The researcher noted that some schools lacked space for expansion. At the moment, every community is using the political leadership to put up a public primary school within their reach using the little space available. Occupants of land neighbouring the affected schools were not willing to part with their plots even after being promised full compensation.

Table IV: Headteachers responses in the area of staff personnel

Rank	Leading Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
1	Frequent shortage of teaching staff	11	78.6
2	Dealing with teachers who are drunk or late for duty	4	28.6

The leading constraint in the above table was frequent shortage of teaching staff. This became worse with schools that had high enrolment. Head teachers had a task in convincing the available teachers to teach extra lessons. Some head teachers felt that the situation was made worse when the same few teachers came to school late or drunk.

Table V: Headteachers responses in the area of school organization and management

Rank	Leading Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
1	Keeping all types of school records, inventories and reports	7	50
2	Supervising day-to-day operations of the school	6	42.9

Keeping all types of schools records, inventories and reports was a leading constraint in this area as shown in Table V. Most head teachers had no knowledge on how to keep school records and inventories. Headteachers were faced with constraints while endeavouring to plan, coordinate and direct day-to-day running of the school.

Table VI: Head teachers responses in the area of school-community relationship

Rank	Leading Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
1	Public criticisms	6	42.9
2	Parents are difficult in providing for the welfare of their children	5	35.7
2	Attendance of PTA meetings	5	35.7

The leading constraint in Table VI was public criticisms which were done through public meetings and mass media. At times it was done through informal discussions even in the presence of the children. This made the community to lose confidence in the headteacher hence becoming uncooperative. Running of the school was affected since no more help was forth coming from the community. Some community members created disunity among the staff hence making it difficult for the head teacher to run the school effectively.

There were parents who believed that their duty was to send their children to school even if they were lacking the necessary writing materials and school uniforms. Such children were not comfortable in school as they were being teased by the rest of the children. The same parents failed to turn up for Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings. This therefore made it difficult for the head teacher to provide a sound communication system between the school and the community.

Conclusion

From the analysis of data, the researcher was able to identify the type of constraints which caused the greatest difficulty to head teachers as they manage their schools. These constraints lay in the areas of obtaining adequate instructional materials, teaching overcrowded classes,

supervision of instruction, availability of adequate classrooms, space for school expansion, shortage of teaching staff, dealing with drunk or late teachers, keeping of school records, inventories and reports, public criticisms, provision for the welfare of children and attendance of PTA meetings.

All these constraints differed in magnitude from school to school. Head teachers experienced constraints irrespective of their age, sex or qualifications. Therefore, the head teachers should be well trained and competent to be able to handle their ever demanding duties and responsibilities. They should also cooperate with their staff, pupils, community and particularly parents as well as field officers from the Ministry of Education.

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