

INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NJORO DISTRICT, NAKURU COUNTY

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A B S T R A C T

Purpose: This study investigates the influence of principals' leadership styles on students' academic performance. The study was guided by the following specific objective: identify the leadership styles used by Principals in public secondary schools in Njoro District, determine the influence of Principals' leadership on the managements of schools, establish the influence of Principals' leadership on teachers' job satisfaction in secondary schools and identify the influence of Principals' leadership on the performance of students.

Design/ Methodology/Approach: This study used descriptive survey design. Purposive sampling was used to select the school principals, while simple random sampling technique was used to sample teachers, subordinate staff and students. A total of 380 respondents were targeted by the study (constituting 20 principals, 80 teachers, 40 subordinate staff and 240 students) out of which 372 responded (20 principals, 78 teachers, 34 subordinate staff and 240 students) giving a response rate of 98%. In sampling of the students, 12 students were sampled from form three classes in the schools selected. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as instruments for data collection.

Findings: Principals' leadership style influences school management in that it affects staff morale and decision making which impacts on service delivery among the teaching and non-teaching staff. The study further concludes that leadership style affects job satisfaction among the staff through their participation in decision making.

Contribution to policy and practice: The study concluded that principals should adopt the use of leadership style such as the participative style where the staff ideas are also considered in decision making. This will improve their morale and hence job satisfaction.

Originality/Value: The study extends the literature on leadership style and management to improve performance in learning institutions.

BACKGROUND

The success of any organization solely depends upon the way and manner in which the leader operates within the organization. The style adopted in leading the group normally determines the type of a leader. Northouse (2010) defines leadership as a process of interaction between leaders and followers where the leader attempts to influence followers to achieve a common goal. According to Chen and Chen (2008), previous studies on leadership have identified different types of leadership styles which leaders adopt in managing organizations. The general assumption is that the presence or absence of effective school leaders, positive school climates, and positive attitudes of teachers can, directly or indirectly, influence school performance and student achievement (Witziers and Slegers, 2007). According to Cotton (2003), the equation of effective school leadership and improved school performance appears to be relatively simple and straightforward in theory but very complex and unpredictable in practice.

Leadership style could be described in various ways. It refers to the underlying needs of the leader that motivate his behaviour (Siskin, 1994). It is also a process through which persons or group influence others in the attainment of group goals (Adeyemi, 2006). Thus in the school context, it can be referred to the process through which principals influences teachers, subordinate staff and students to attain the institutional goals. Leadership in a formal organization is regarded as an input into the organization intended to influence the behavior of the members in order to attain the organizational objectives through initiating, motivating, directing and coordinating the functions of other members of the group. An individual is seen as a leader when he/she contributes to the formulation and attainment of group goals. A good part of what any formal organization does is dependent upon the administrative leadership given to that organization. The principal, for instance has a key role in setting the tone, establishing the conditions, and providing stimulation for the kind of teaching and learning in his school (Campel et. al, 2003).

The idiographic leadership behaviour focuses on individual needs rather than organizational needs. The leader expects subordinates to work things out for them-selves. Hence, organizational demands are minimized. Authority is delegated while the relationship to others is in line with individual's personal needs (Evan, 1998). The transactional leadership behaviour is a hybrid between the nomothetic and idiographic leadership behaviours, it is actually situation-oriented. However, unlike the idiographic leadership behaviour which emphasizes individual's needs, the transactional leadership behaviour recognizes the importance of institutional roles and expectations. The leader assumes that pursuing institutional goals could result in the fulfillment of individual personality drives. Transactional leadership allows for the practices of good human relationship (Bidwell, 2001).

Three other styles of leadership have also been identified by researchers. These include the autocratic, democratic and Laissez-faire leadership styles. The autocratic leadership style is also known as the authoritarian style of leadership. Power and decision-making reside in the autocratic leader. The autocratic leader directs group members on the way things should be done. The leader does not maintain clear channels of communication between him/her and the

subordinates. He or she does not delegate authority nor permit subordinates to participate in policy-making (Smylie and Jack, 1990).

The democratic style of leadership emphasizes group and leader participation in the making of policies. Decisions about organizational matters are arrived at after consultation and communication with various people in the organization. The leader attempts as much as possible to make each individual feel that he is an important member of the organization. Communication is multidirectional while ideas are exchanged between employees and the leader (Heenan and Bennis, 1999). In this style of leadership, a high degree of staff morale is always enhanced (Mba, 2004). Laissez-faire leadership style allows complete freedom to group decision without the leader's participation. Thus, subordinates are free to do what they like. The role of the leader is just to supply materials. The leader does not interfere with or participate in the course of events determined by the group (Talbert and Milbrey, 1994).

Different studies have been done on leadership styles in schools. Mbwiria (2010) did a study on the influence of principals' leadership on teachers' career commitment in secondary schools in Imenti South District. He found that leadership styles of secondary school principals do not influence career commitment of teachers. Demographic variables however, such as gender and working experience had an impact on career commitment of teachers. Agba et al (2010) examined the influence of teachers' leadership style and classroom variables on students' performance in secondary schools in Nigeria. They found that teachers' leadership role, teacher-students' relationship, and student-student relationship significantly influence student academic performance. A knowledge gap therefore exists in the literature on the impact of principals' leadership styles on performance of schools.

Research Problem

Leadership is deemed to be very crucial in the performance of any organization. In the school context, school principals are charged with the responsibility of managing school affairs including personnel and the students. The principal's leadership style is therefore considered to be very important as it has an influence on those charged with the responsibility of implementing curriculum and on those targeted by the curriculum which has a bearing on the academic performance of the schools in National examinations. Regular transfer of head teachers of secondary schools remains, a policy of Ministry of Education, which is aimed at effecting efficiency of administrative and academic performance of such schools. The efficiency of the school administration and performance is also affected by the different leadership styles practiced by school principals in management of the schools. In Njoro District, there have been cases of changes in performance of schools after transfer of school principals. These changes can be attributed to the leadership styles practiced by different principals. It is therefore the interest of the researcher to establish the influence of different leadership styles on the school performance. This study was therefore aimed at assessing the influence of principals' leadership styles on the academic performance of public secondary schools in Njoro District.

Study Objectives

- i) *Identify the leadership styles used by Principals in public secondary schools in Njoro District;*
- ii) *Determine the influence of Principals' leadership on the managements of schools in Njoro District;*
- iii) *Establish the influence of Principals' leadership on teachers' job satisfaction in secondary schools in Njoro District; and.*
- iv) *Identify the influence of Principals' leadership on the performance of students*

LITERATURE

Leadership styles in schools

According to Bennis (1998), effective organizational leaders are relatively consistent in the way they attempt to influence the behaviour of group members. The manager who makes all the major decisions in one situation is not likely to share decision-making in another. Also, the manager who is considerate in one situation is not likely to be insensitive in another. The relatively consistent pattern of behaviour of most managers is too complex to be described by a single style and some managers modify their styles to match a situation.

Leadership style is defined as the pattern of behaviours that leaders display during their work with and through others (Hersey and Blanchard, 1993). Miller et al. (2002) view leadership style as the pattern of interactions between leaders and subordinates. It includes controlling, directing, indeed all techniques and methods used by leaders to motivate subordinates to follow their instructions. According to Kavanaugh and Ninemeier (2001), there are three factors that determine the type of leadership style: leaders' characteristics, subordinates' characteristics and the organization environment. More specifically, the personal background of leaders such as personality, knowledge, values, and experiences shapes their feelings about appropriate leadership that determine their specific leadership style; employees also 'have different personalities, backgrounds, expectations and experiences, for example, employees who are more knowledgeable and experienced may work well under a democratic leadership style, while employees with different experiences and expectations require an autocratic leadership style.

School Leadership and teachers' job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined by Locke (1976) as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from one's job or job experiences". Later, Armstrong (2003) defined job satisfaction as the feelings and attitudes of people toward their job. He mentioned that if people have favorable and positive attitudes towards their job, this means job satisfaction, but if they have unfavorable and negative attitudes towards their job, this means job dissatisfaction. Spector (1997) stated that the antecedents of job satisfaction can be categorized into two groups. The first group includes the job environment itself and some factors related to the job. The second group includes individual factors related to the person, who will bring these factors to the job including previous

experiences and personality. Often both groups of antecedents work together to influence job satisfaction.

Teachers' job performance could be described as the duties performed by a teacher at a particular period in the school system in achieving organizational goals (Obilade, 1999). It could also be described as the ability of teachers to combine relevant inputs for the enhancement of teaching and learning processes (Okeniyi, 1995). However, Peretemode (1996) argued that job performance is determined by the worker's level of participation in the day to day running of the organization. It is noted that employees behave differently under different situations.

Principals' can therefore encourage effective performance of their teachers by identifying their needs and trying to satisfying or meeting them. Supporting this argument, Owoeye . (1999) asserted that variables of job performance such as effective teaching, lesson note preparation, effective use of scheme of work, effective supervision, monitoring of students' work and disciplinary ability are virtues which teachers should uphold effectively in the school system. In this regard, the teachers' performance could be measured through annual report of his/her activities in terms of performance in teaching, lesson preparation, lesson presentation, mastery of subject matter, competence, teachers' commitment to job and extra-curricular activities.

Leadership style and student performance

The actions of school leaders impact school capacity and may either enhance or diminish student achievement. School capacity is defined as the collective power of a school staff to raise student achievement (King & Youngs, 2002). The effective educational leader is one who has the ability to develop a school's capacity to enhance student learning through the motivation of teachers, staff and students (Daley, Guarino & Santibanez, 2006). Such leadership is determined by the followers, not the leaders (Bhindi, Hansen, Rall, Riley, & Smith, 2008). Therefore, it may be claimed that student achievement is effected by the teacher's perception of school leadership.

School administrators who build school capacity through an effective leadership style may influence student achievement through teachers (Christie, Thompson, & Whiteley, 2009). The school leader must have or be able to develop the capacity to work with staff to focus on curriculum, instruction and student learning gains (Fullen, 2001). The perception of the school administrator is often as a person who manages a school and not as a person who is an instructional leader. The leader's daily activities and decisions reflect the pervasive focus and style of the school's leadership (Noonan & Walker, 2008). A teacher-focused leader works toward the development of school capacity which builds upon positive teacher capacity with the end results increasing student achievement.

The outcome of a student's education as evidenced through test scores is often determined by the focus and effectiveness of a school's leadership (Leithwood, 2008). The educational leader's role is to hire and motivate teachers to raise student learning gains (Janzi & Leithwood, 1996). Students reveal their ability to learn through their measured achievement, attendance, and participation in school activities. However, it is the students' perception of their teachers that 'sets the daily learning process in motion. Further, it is the teacher's perception of how they are valued and supported by their school's leadership that often has an influence on their daily decisions to motivate students (Bandura, 2003, Demir, 2008).

Hallinger and Heck (1998) reviewed over 40 empirical studies conducted between 1980 and 1995 and concluded that principals exercised a measurable and statistically significant, though small, indirect impact on school effectiveness and student achievement. Similarly, Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger (2003) found that school leadership does have a positive and noteworthy effect on student achievement and Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) reported that effective school leadership substantially increases student achievement. Using a path analysis, Kruger, Witziers, and Slegers (2007) found that school leaders indirectly influence student outcomes and school culture. In the context of Cyprus, Kythreotis and Pashiardis (2006) found direct effects of the principal's leadership style on student achievement and Kythreotis, Pashiardis, and Kyriakides (2010) reached the conclusion that "the principal human leadership frame affects student achievement" (p. 232)

In his study on four schools in the United States, Weber (cited in Clark et al. 1989) found eight factors present in successful or effective schools. Among these factors were strong administrative leadership, high expectation for student achievement, positive school atmosphere and regular evaluation of student progress. The literature on *In Search of Excellence* (ISE) has shown the importance of the role of the principal as a key factor in school effectiveness (Clark et al. 1989). Principals' leadership has an effect on the school in many ways, such as on school climate, its learning situation and level of professionalism among teachers, satisfaction among teachers, mediating between school and parents, and school performance (Ogawa, 1985). Some empirical studies which found significant relationship between the effect of the principal on school performance include those done by Eberts and Stone (1988) and Heck et al. (1992). This study therefore sought to find the effect of Principal's leadership on student's performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used descriptive survey design. The District has 30 public secondary schools. The study targeted school principals, teachers, students and the subordinate staff in the schools. A total of 380 respondents were targeted by the study (constituting 20 principals, 80 teachers, 40 subordinate staff and 240 students) out of which 372 responded (20 principals, 78 teachers, 34 subordinate staff and 240 students) giving a response rate of 98%. In sampling of the students, 12 students were sampled from form three classes in the schools selected. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as instruments for data collection. Quantitative data collected was analyzed, presented and interpreted using both descriptive statistics while content analysis technique was used to analyze qualitative data collected using interview schedules. Data was

analyzed using inferential statistics namely correlation analysis and multiple linear regression models. The findings of the study were presented using tables, graphs and pie charts.

RESULTS

Correlation Analysis

Table 1 Correlation Results

Variable	Pearson r	1	2	3	4
1. Leadership style	r	1	.501**	.784**	.774**
2. School management	r	.501**	1	.778**	.856**
3. Job satisfaction	r	.784**	.778**	1	.827**
4. Students performance	r	.774**	.856**	.827**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table shows that leadership style is positively related with school management with a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient of $r = 0.501$ and that at a level of significance of 0.000, it is statistically significant at p value less than 0.05. The results also show that there is a positive correlation between the leadership style and job satisfaction with a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient of $r = 0.7854$ and a level of significance of 0.000 (statistically significance). The results finally show that leadership style have a positive relation with students performance with a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient of 0.774 and 0.000 level of coefficient. The significance values tell us that the probability of the correlation being a fluke is very low; hence the study can have confidence that the relationship between the variables is genuine.

Regression Analysis

Table 2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.902a	0.813	0.805	0.125

As shown in Table 2, The R Squared shows that the independent variables including: school management, job satisfaction and students' performance explain 81.3 percent of the variance in the leadership style. Adjusted R squared attempts to correct R squared to more closely reflect the goodness of fit of the model. Use of R Squared helps in determining the model of best fit. The results suggest that all the variables in this model are significantly determined by leadership style in secondary schools in Njoro District (at the 95 percent confidence level).

Table 3 ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.461	3	1.487	95.795	0.000a
	Residual	1.025	66	0.016		
	Total	5.486	69			

Table 3 presents the Analysis of Variance results which revealed that the significance value (p-value) of F statistics is less than 0.05 (it is actually 0.000). This implies that the independent variables (school management, job satisfaction and students' performance) explain the variation in the dependent variable (leadership style).

Table 4 Regression Results

	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.758	0.072		0.000
School management	0.425	0.059	7.252	0.000
Job Management	0.274	0.043	6.385	0.000
Student performance	0.398	0.051	7.735	0.000

As shown in Table 4 the Beta Coefficients in the regression show that school management, job satisfaction and students performance has positive relationship with leadership style. The findings show that school management, job satisfaction and students performance are statistically significant with p-values less than 0.05. Constant = 0.758, when the value of independent variables are zero, leadership style would change by 0.758. $X_1 = 0.425$; one unit change in leadership style results in 0.425 units improvement in school management. $X_2 = 0.274$; one unit change in leadership style will result into 0.274 units increase in job satisfaction among staff. $X_3 = 0.398$; one unit change In leadership style will result in 0.398 units improvement in students' performance.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the principals in Njoro District used mostly mixed leadership styles even though the dominant leadership style is participative. It can also be concluded that principals' leadership style influences school management in that it affects staff morale and decision making which impacts on service delivery among the teaching and non-teaching staff. The study further concludes that leadership style affects job satisfaction among the staff through their participation in decision making, appreciation and encouragement and that good principal leadership style help in supporting staff professionally development. The study finally concludes that leadership style affects students' performance in that it influences

students' perception and the rules used in the schools which has a bearing on the performance of students.

Areas for Further Research and recommendations

This study was carried out in public secondary schools in Njoro District. The study focused the influence of leadership style on the academic performance of public secondary schools in the district. The researcher therefore recommends that another study be done on the challenges facing the management secondary schools in other districts which were not the focus of this study. The study recommends that principals in secondary schools in Njoro should use mixed leadership styles. This is based on the fact that some principals were still using authoritarian leadership style which has negative effect of the management, job satisfaction and students' performance. ii) The study also recommends that principals should adopt the use of leadership style such as the participative style where the staff ideas are also considered in decision making. This will improve their morale and hence job satisfaction.

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