Effect of Teacher Empowerment on Public Secondary School Performance in Nakuru Town East Constituency, Kenya

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Abstract: *The study sought to find out the effect of empowerment of teachers on school performance among teachers in secondary schools in Kenya. The purpose of the study was to specifically to find out the whether or not teachers' participation in decision making affects the performance of secondary schools. The study took place in Nakuru Town East Constituency. Descriptive survey was used to carry out the research. The target population comprised of 464 public secondary school teachers drawn from schools within Nakuru Town East Constituency. A sample of 83 respondents was drawn using simple random sampling method from the target population. A structured questionnaire was employed to collect data. A pilot study was undertaken prior to the main study in order to determine both the reliability and validity of the research instrument. The Cronbach alpha was used to test instrument reliability while content validity of the same was realized through seeking opinion from the University's supervisors. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences tool was used to process and analyze the collected data. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Study findings were presented in form of tables. It was established that there exists a positive and moderately strong correlation between "decision making" and "schools' performance". It was concluded that decision making is moderately and positively consequential to performance of secondary schools. . In the light of the study findings, it is recommended that the secondary school heads should increase the teachers' involvement level in decision making, by consulting them whenever crucial matters concerning performance of schools arise. Being implementers of any decisions or policies formulated, it ought to be ensured that teachers participate in every stage of decision making.*

Key words: Empowerment, Involvement, Decision making, Performance, Motivation

1. Introduction

The concept of employee empowerment has seen a growing interest from different scholars and Human Resource Management [20]. Many organizations face challenges of managing and empowering their employees to actively participate in decision making. In this current tumultuous economic environment, organizations require creative and innovative employees who can take initiative, embrace change, stimulate innovation and cope with high uncertainty in the market [4]. Empowerment is derived from diverse perspectives which include education, industrial and organizational psychology, service perspectives etc. From a service perspective, empowerment gives employees the authority to make decisions about customer service [17]. The concept of employee empowerment gained immense popularity in the 1990's and is set to continue as a popular organizational initiative. The key to Japanese success was the involvement of employees in work groups such as quality circles.

In two recent studies [3] and [7] combined information from surveys about teachers' working conditions with data about their performance.. The researchers found that, in addition to salaries and benefits, favorable working conditions substantially influence teachers' output. Working conditions are important predictors of New York City teachers' decisions to change schools or leave the profession, even after accounting for differences in student demographic characteristics across schools [3]. In particular, they suggested that school administration is the most important determinant of teachers' career decisions. Similarly, using statewide data from North Carolina, it was found strong evidence that working conditions and particularly the quality

of a school's leadership, are related to teachers' stated career intentions [7]. These studies guide our work in two ways. First, it was recognized the potential challenge that arises when teachers report on their own working conditions [3]. Dissatisfied teachers who intend to leave a school may be more likely to report performances than teachers who plan to stay. To account for this potential bias, a survey of responses of one group of teachers was used to predict the outcomes of another group within the same school. Second, it was found that teachers' stated intentions are very good measures of actual turnover patterns in schools.

This growing body of literature suggests that the work context matters to teachers; however, we know of only one study that has explored how the conditions of work in American public schools are related to the academic performance of students who attend those schools. The relationship between working conditions and student achievement in elementary schools, as evidenced by school-level value-added scores has been examined [7]. She found that working conditions predict school-level value-added scores in mathematics and, to a lesser degree in reading, above and beyond the variation explained by school-level student and teacher demographic characteristics. Of the five working conditions that Ladd examined, school leadership again emerged as the most important predictor of achievement in mathematics.

Any system of hierarchical control, even if it has very good people, is subject to abuse [12]. Bureaucratically, organized school environments deny teachers autonomy and control, thus negatively affecting teachers' productivity and commitment. Principals are being asked to create conditions that will foster the empowerment of teachers to take

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advantage of the move toward site-based management and shared decision-making structures [8].The trade unions have for a long time been the voice of employees in many countries [1]. In Kenya for instance, teachers have unions like KNUT and KUPPET which empower them and voice their concern and mistreatment. The presences of these unions signify teacher representation, involvement ad participation in the management of organization.

Education quality has recently received a lot of attention in Kenya. The government's main document in this effort, the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme for 2005–2010, established the National Assessment Centre (NAC) to monitor learning achievement. The government through the vision 2030 has made several initiatives in so far as educational reforms are concerned namely, building at least one boarding school in each constituency in the pastoral regions and undertakes a teacher's recruitment programme. Universal primary education is one of the Millennium Development Goals, which emphasizes the importance of literacy. Kenya began a campaign for free primary education after independence in 1963.The Kenyan education system has undergone various reforms for instance, after independence in 1967,there was the 7-4-2-3 system, which entailed 7years of primary education,4 years of secondary education,2years of high school and 3yrs of university education [8].

2. Statement of the Problem

A main force driving the empowerment movement in education is teacher effectiveness [14]. Given that there are differences in the environment under which schools operate such as administrative, physical environment and source of funding, there are bound to be differences in performance. Teacher empowerment encourages teacher effectiveness, which some claim leads to improved student learning [2]. When teachers are more effective, student achievement, responsiveness to student conflict, teacher satisfaction, and the school environment are likely to improve. In addition, the outcomes of teacher empowerment are high energy levels, positive attitudes, high productivity and commitment to education.

School environment prosper when teachers are active participants in school and decision-making. The issue of decision making is paramount in schools, it is something that no one can do without and it is required in our day to day running of the institution. Principals only hold meetings with some matured members of staff of their choice and sometimes with professionals everything depends on the method the head chooses to use. However, this difference in approach is not certain that decisions made could affect performance. It is asserted that unless the members of today's well educated work force are treated as equals and shown that they are appreciated, they simply will not produce that which they are capable of producing [10]. Organizations often fail to improve because managers who have the authority to make changes are sometimes unaware of the problems, while people on the front line (teachers) who know what the problems are have little or no authority in decision making process. Various aspects of school management have been studied in Kenya but none has

focused on the impact of empowerment of teachers on performance of schools more so in national exams hence the purpose of this study.

3. Objectives of the Study

3.1 General Objective

To examine the effect of empowerment of teachers on performance in selected public secondary schools in Nakuru East Constituency, Kenya

3.2 Specific Objective

To determine how teacher's participation in decision-making affects performance of secondary schools in Nakuru East Constituency.

4. Research Question

Does participation of teachers in decision making influence performance of secondary schools in Nakuru East Constituency?

5. Conceptual Framework

In tandem with the empirical studies reviewed, a conceptual framework of both independent and dependent variables pertinent to the study is developed. The framework is as illustrated in Figure 1.
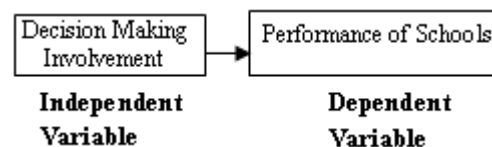

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between the independent variable (decision making involvement) and dependent variable (performance of secondary schools). The framework hypothesizes that there exists a relationship between the two variables.

6. Literature Review

The section presents a detailed review of relevant literature as guided by the variables under study. Concepts, theories and empirical studies are reviewed relative to empowerment of secondary school teachers and the school performance.

6.1 Theoretical Literature

McGregor's theory X and theory Y and Maslow's needs-hierarchy theory are reviewed. The theories are then discussed in the context of the current study.

6.1.1 McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y
McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y are sets of assumptions about behaviour of people at work. In Theory X, managers tend to micro-manage and very closely supervise employees

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[10]. Complex hierarchical structures are needed in order to offer a narrow span of control at every level of the organization. Employees show little ambition without an incentive program and avoid responsibility whenever possible. This theory also holds the view that employees are lazy; they dislike work and will avoid it. Managers in Theory X rely more heavily on punishment, fear, and coercion as motivational techniques and less on reward. So the only way that the management can make employees to achieve high performance is to coerce, control and even threaten them. Managers and employees in this theory generally mistrust each other and they do not have rewarding relationships. Usually the managers feel that the sole purpose of the employee's interest in the job is money and security.

A Theory Y manager is generally the opposite. They possess the ability for creative problem solving, but their talents are underused in most organizations. Given the proper conditions, theory Y managers believe that employees are not lazy, they will learn to seek out and accept responsibility and to exercise self-control and self-direction in accomplishing objectives to which they are committed [1]. A Theory Y manager believes that, given the right conditions, most people will want to do well at work. They believe that the satisfaction of doing a good job is a strong motivation. Many people interpret Theory Y as a positive set of beliefs about workers. McGregor thinks that Theory Y managers are more likely to develop a climate of trust with an employee that is required for human resource development than Theory X managers [10].

6.1.2 Needs-Hierarchy Theory
One of the most referenced frameworks of motivational theory is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs [13]. According to Maslow, people are motivated to satisfy five basic needs- the need for survival, the need for security, the need for affiliation with other people, the need to feel self-esteem, and the need for self-actualization [1]. According to Maslow again, any person's behavior can be understood primarily as a directed effort to satisfy one particular level of need in the hierarchy. The level which happens to be motivating one's behavior at any time depends on if the needs below have been satisfied or not.

Maslow believes lower level needs must be satisfied before the next level becomes relevant. In other words, higher-order needs, like those of self-esteem and self-actualization, would not be important until lower level needs are satisfied. Thus, leaders may only be successful in motivating follower behavior by taking into account whether the follower's more basic needs are being met. At all levels of the hierarchy, the leader should watch for mismatches between his motivational efforts and the followers' lowest unsatisfied needs. In educational setting, Maslow's need hierarchy implies that educational management has a responsibility to create a work climate in which teachers and other educationists can satisfy their needs. Most primary school teachers have not met their basic needs and therefore, educational managers at this level should concentrate on the satisfaction of these needs [10]. However, in secondary schools, most teachers have met their basic needs, and therefore, the school heads should focus on creating a work environment which satisfies the growth or higher order needs. For example, the enabling work environment should provide opportunities for greater variety in teaching methodologies, autonomy in work schedules and increased responsibility so that maximum potentials of the teachers can be released. If an enabling environment is not provided for teachers, they will have increased frustration, lower performance and job satisfaction and high turnover [10].

6.2 Empirical Literature Review

Studies touching on teachers' empowerment and performance in general; and specifically studies revolving around decision making involvement of teachers in the light of performance of secondary schools are reviewed.

6.2.1 Teachers Participation in Decision-Making in Schools
Decisions made affect all parts in a system. In a system, planning is very important, as it helps to simplify the decision making process and also provides guidelines for goals to be achieved and the process of achievement. Participative Decision Making (PDM) is still a central theme of research policy and practice in business organizations as well as in schools [16]. This theme has been the subject of extensive research for more than 30 years in education. The increasing emergence of PDM may be even more crucial today, when schools struggle to reinvent themselves to respond to a growing demand for flexibility, concern for quality and the requirement of a high degree of commitment by teachers to their work. Scholars and practitioners often conclude that the problems facing schools are too great for any one person to solve alone. Involving teachers in the decision-making process offers a variety of potential benefits, which can generate the social capacity necessary for excellent schools: improving the quality of the decisions, enhancing teacher motivation and contributing to the quality of their work lives.

In the school system, like any other organization, decisions are made towards solving immediate and remote problems all aimed at achieving set goals and objectives effectively and efficiently. These decisions could be on curricular/instructional programmes, communication systems, staffing, students/staff welfare, students/staff discipline, accommodation/health facilities, admission policy, budgeting and extra-curricular activities [19]. The outcome of such decisions should be good quality teaching and good quality learning in a pleasant and conducive atmosphere. It is noted that principals tend to be authoritative in making decisions, thus denying the teachers the right to exercise meaningful control over the purposes and final social results of their studies [5]. Teachers' adequate involvement in decision-making in schools is not only crucial to accepting, accommodating and implementing change decisions, but also contributes a great deal to the maintenance of internal discipline in schools, positive attitude to school work, as well as improving the quality of future decisions. Also, the success of any organization is dependent upon satisfying the needs of the members of the organization as well as sustaining organizational goals. Therefore, participation in the decision

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making process may be perceived as one method of satisfying individual work needs.

Different administrators employ different decision-making styles for reasons that may be best known to them. Some may take decisions all alone, others may consult with one or more confidants amongst the subordinates before taking decisions, while some others may adequately involve subordinates and they all make and take decisions collectively. It is this last case that is usually referred to as collective or participatory decision-making and usually accepted as a democratic decision. It has been advocated by many scholars who believe it is the best leadership style in implementing democratic values to education [9]. Consultation can be seen as participation only in the sense that teachers are consulted about decisions affecting them [15]. A school climate that promotes involvement in decision making is characterized by openness and risk taking which encourages teachers to try new ideas and take different approaches. The problem solving capacity of teachers is strengthened when shared decision-making is utilized in schools. Teachers who are decision makers feel ownership and commitment to the process [12].

6.2.2 Performance of Schools
Research shows that when administrators use tactics to increase teacher empowerment, teacher morale also increases. It is stated that in schools where teachers are empowered to be leaders, the focus of control changes from the principal to the teachers [14]. The administration should encourage other teachers to seize opportunities to share their strengths with other members of the staff. By providing opportunities, teachers are accepting leadership roles. It is further shown that public-school students in the world's largest city, Shanghai, China, are academically outperforming their counterparts across the globe and becoming the talk and envy of education experts worldwide. Using an innovative partnering approach that matches successful schools with low-performing schools, Shanghai has valuable lessons to teach on turning around public-school systems—lessons that transcend several of the unique characteristics of the Chinese educational system, as well as the country's rich pedagogical traditions.

For more than a decade, Shanghai's empowered-management program has aimed to improve student achievement in all of its schools by contracting high-performing schools to turn around the academic outcomes of low-performing schools. Chinese officials regard the program as highly successful and have extended its reach across school districts and to other parts of China. For a number of years now, the Shanghai approach to schooling has garnered worldwide attention due to its students' impressive performance on international assessments. Results from one of the most respected of these assessments, the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, ranked Shanghai as the world's highest-performing education system in 2009. The student assessment, which is conducted every three years, evaluates the math, reading, and science skills of 15-year-old students from more than 70 countries. According to the most recent results available, from the 2009 administration, the average 15-year-old student in Shanghai performs at a math level that is 33

months ahead of the average 15-year-old student in the United States. The performance gap in science is 23 months, and the performance gap in reading literacy is 17 months. Admittedly, some have questioned Shanghai's performance on the evaluation, claiming that the results are false, misleading, or the results of selective sampling of students to take the PISA tests. There is, however, no evidence to support such claims.

High performing schools have administrators who articulate a vision, help teachers grow professionally, and play a leading role in determining the school's climate. Some points for principals to follow include: principal's should assist teachers in maximizing their strengths, principals should develop collegiality and be proactive in the pursuit of the schools vision. Therefore, the principal as part of school improvement team should be committed to allowing teachers and staff to gain new experiences on a daily basis. These experiences will allow all members of the school to develop a better understanding of their role in the school's mission and vision thus directly impacting to the success of the students [14].

Performance is the result of ability and effort [1]. The performance of teachers in most schools is measured using various approaches but the most common in Kenya is the use of performance of the students in the final examination, K.C.S.E. The more a teacher is empowered the more he/she becomes effective, committed and productive in the institution. Any teacher who is satisfied with the work and the position he holds in the institution will work very hard to produce results. In reaching something one is usually motivated by the performance. Motivation is an important element that should be owned by everyone, because the role of motivation could serve as a spur to performance [6].There is a positive relationship between a person's motivation and performance. This means that every worker who has high motivation to work will produce a high performance.

7. Research Methodology

Descriptive research design was applied in this study. It is a research design that describes characteristics of a population and phenomenon. The design facilitated detailed description and analysis of the variables under study; describing and presenting their characteristics and explaining their relationships without manipulation [11]. The target population of the current study comprised of 464 teachers employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) from 15 public secondary schools in Nakuru Town East Constituency. The study employed the Nassiuma's formula to estimate the sample. Subsequently, a sample of 83 respondents was chosen from the target population using simple random sampling method.

The study used semi-structure questionnaires since it relied purely on primary data. Closed-ended questions were used to obtain both personal and data pertinent to the study variables from respondents while open-ended questions were used where explanations and personal opinion were sought. The researcher undertook a pilot study prior to the main study with the object of identifying any probable weaknesses in the research instrument. This was achieved by testing both

the reliability and validity of the instrument. Reliability was tested by use of Cronbach alpha coefficient. The content validity of the research instrument was determined by seeking the opinion of the University's supervisors

7.1 Data Processing and Analysis

The collected data was cleaned before being processed and analyzed. This was in order to ensure that only the accurately filled questionnaires were considered. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPPS) tool was employed to electronically process and analyze the cleaned data. Appropriate coding was carried out before data was input. The data was then run with the object of obtaining both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study findings were presented in form tables (frequency tables, descriptive statistical tables, and inferential statistical tables).

7.2 Research Findings

All the 83 questionnaires issued to the sampled respondents were correctly filled by respondents and collected by the researcher. Therefore, the study achieved a response rate of 100%. This represented an absolute significant response rate.

7.2.1 Teachers' Involvement in Decision Making
The study sought the views of the respondents on issues touching on decision making in their respective schools. Table 1 illustrates the findings. It was discovered that on average, respondents were of the view that the school head makes decisions which must be strictly followed (mean ≈ 3.00). However, they at least disagreed (mean < 2.50) that the school head takes teachers' contributions seriously during consultations, teachers level of participation in decision making is high, and that the school consults individual teachers whenever crucial decision concerning the school are being to be made. On all the aspects bordering on decision making in secondary schools, the respondents held closely related opinions. This is evidenced by the fact the findings returned standard deviations less than 1.00 (std dev. < 1.00).

Table 1: Descriptives for Decision Making

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
The school head makes decisions which must be followed strictly	83	2.00	4.00	3.17	.428
In case of consultation, the school head takes teachers' contributions seriously	83	1.00	4.00	2.48	.937
Teachers' level of participation in decision making is high	83	1.00	2.00	1.23	.226
The school consults individual teachers whenever crucial decisions concerning the institution are made	83	1.00	4.00	2.19	.687

7.2.2 Performance of Schools
Performance of schools was looked into from various aspects as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptives for School Performance

	n	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Motivation of teachers improves school performance	83	4.00	4.00	4.00	.000
Performance of schools will improve if teachers are allowed to participate in decision making	83	1.00	4.00	2.91	.782
Further training of teachers affects the school performance	83	1.00	4.00	3.01	.863
Accountability of teachers affects the school performance	83	1.00	4.00	2.65	.899

According to the study findings, respondents were unanimous that motivation of teachers improves school performance (mean = 4.00; std dev. = 0.00). It was also agreed that performance of schools would improve if teachers were allowed to participate in decision making; further training of teachers affects the school performance; and that accountability of teachers affects the school performance. These issues returned means inclined towards 3.00 (agreed).

7.2.3 Effect of Teachers' Involvement in Decision Making on Schools' Performance
The composite scores of the aspects touching on decision making were correlated against composite scores of issues touching on schools' performance. The results of the correlational analysis are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Relationship between Decision Making and Schools' Performance

		Schools' Performance
Decision Making	Pearson Correlation	.410[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011
	n	83

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As indicated by the findings, there exists a positive and moderately strong correlation ($r = 0.410$; $p < 0.05$) between "decision making" and "schools' performance". This implies that the involvement of teachers in decision making had significant and moderate consequences on the performance of schools. The more participatory in decision making the teachers are, the higher the performance of the school, and the reverse is true.

8. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The chapter presents the summary of the major study findings, the conclusions drawn and suggested recommendations pertinent to effect of teacher empowerment on secondary school performance. Summary, conclusions and recommendations are in tandem with the study objectives

8.1 Summary

It was discovered that on average, respondents were of the view that the school head makes decisions which must be

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strictly followed. However, respondents at least disagreed that the school head takes teachers' contributions seriously during consultations, teachers level of participation in decision making is high, and that the school consults individual teachers whenever crucial decision concerning the school are being to be made. It was established that there exists a positive and moderately strong correlation (r = 0.410; p < 0.05) between "decision making" and "schools' performance", which implies that the involvement of teachers in decision making had significant and moderate consequences on the performance of schools.

Respondents were unanimous that motivation of teachers improves school performance. It was also agreed that performance of schools would improve if teachers were allowed to participate in decision making; further training of teachers affects the school performance; and that accountability of teachers affects the school performance.

8.2 Conclusions

It was inferred that school heads make decisions which must be strictly followed; the teachers' contributions are not taken seriously by the secondary schools' principles; teachers do not adequately participate in decision making; and that teachers are not always consulted whenever crucial decisions are bound to be made. Moreover, it was concluded that decision making is moderately and positively consequential to performance of secondary schools

8.3 Recommendations

The study recommends that the secondary school heads should increase the teachers' involvement level in decision making, by consulting them whenever crucial matters concerning performance of schools arise. Being implementers of any decisions or policies formulated, it ought to be ensured that teachers participate in every stage of decision making

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