

The Role of Parents' Teachers Association in the Management of Public Secondary School: Gatundu North, Kenya

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Abstract: *The quality of management at the institutional level continues to be a major concern of the Ministry of Education in Kenya. This is because the quality of the school largely depends on its leadership. It is on bases of the above assumption that this study set out to investigate the role of Parents' Teachers Association (PTA) in management of public secondary school in Gatundu North, Kiambu County. To accomplish this task survey method was used in conducting the study. A total of 13 schools out of 26 were selected comprising of 9 mixed secondary schools, 2 boys schools, and 2 girls secondary schools. Stratified random sampling technique and purposive sampling were employed to identify study sample. A questionnaire and interview guides were used for data collection. Qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed to data analysis. The study revealed the following challenges facing PTA in management of public secondary school: shortage of staff personnel; inadequate school finances; misappropriations of funds, insufficient physical facilities; poor performance in national examinations; lack of support from the local community; and interference in the running of school by the local communities. In conclusion, urgent measures should be put in place so as to minimize the hindrances.*

Keywords: Challenges, effective management, public secondary schools, Parents' Teachers Association, Quality assurance.

1. Introduction

This study presents findings of research study carried out in Gatundu North; Kiambu County, Kenya to investigate the role of the parent teachers association in management of public secondary schools. In this paper the term public secondary schools refers to all school funded by the government in collaboration with the parent teachers association. The finding reveals that the PTA encountered many challenges in school management.

2. Background to the Study

A school as a social system is a small society that is situated within the larger one, the community. The school has Parent teachers' association (PTA) as members of school management who are in charge of all its functions. The managers must observe proper management practices in order to achieve the objectives of the school. PTA is a formal body made up of parents whose children are officially registered as students in the school together with their teachers. The aim of PTA is to promote public private participation of parents and teachers toward education of their children.

From a global perspective PTA plays major roles in education. In United States of America the role of PTA is involved in determining curriculum and instructional decisions, promotion of communication, raising school funds and lobbying the state and national legislation on behalf of the students (Onderi and Makori, 2013). According to Chang (1995) PTA in Hong Kong provides a channel for teachers and parents to work together, to articulate their educational views and to make a parent policy for participation in the educational process of their children. In

South Africa PTA has been involved in providing hygiene facilities such as sanitation facilities within the school environment (UNICEF, 2009; Van Wyk (2009). Obi (2003) states that in Nigeria, PTA ensures high moral standards and academic excellence in consultation with the school Board of Management (BOM). He further adds that PTA is represented in government local authorities with the purpose of common interest of the school, students and staff but do not interfere directly with day-to-day running of the school.

The history of secondary school management in Kenya can be traced back to the colonial times and in early years of independence when education was highly decentralized as the colonial government controlled education (Sifuna, 1990). In those days, school systems were small and management was relatively easy. The school management was left almost entirely in the hands of missionaries who provided teachers, finances, spiritual and moral guidance. The local community was involved in the provision of labour for building educational facilities (Kenya Constitution, 2012).

At independence following the recommendations by the Kenya Education Commission (1964), the government took over the management of public secondary schools from the former managers. Management of education was centralized to ensure equitable distribution of opportunities throughout the country. The government advocated for expansion of schools at all levels from nursery to university following the Ominde Report (1964) especially at the tertiary education level in order to produce enough man power for national development. As a result, quantitative expansion took place as well as diversified educational structure leading to management problems. According to the Kenya constitution (2010) management of education at the national level was

put under the ministry of education with county directors at the county level. According to the Education act (2012), the cabinet secretary is responsible for the development and implementation of Education policies for primary, secondary education and tertiary institutions. The TSC has also delegated the function of day today running of the school to the school principal (secretary to the board) with full responsibility for internal organization, discipline and supervision of the teaching and non-teaching staff. The school principal is assisted by the deputy principal, Heads of departments, assistant teachers and the support staff.

The Parents Teachers Association (PTA) is the agent of the Ministry of Education and head teachers must work in conjunction with them through regular consultations. The parents' teachers association were established under Education Act (1968), revised in (212) and conferred with the responsibility of promoting health working relationships between teachers and parents. PTA serves as a channel of communication between the school and the community. They advise on educational needs as perceived by the parents and promote quality teaching and learning. They are expected to identify their schools short, medium and long-term priorities and quantify the resources required towards the achievement of the school goals.

Okumbe (1999) states that the PTA formulates school policies towards the achievement of the school objectives. They should identify the sources of funds, physical facilities, and the human resources available. They organize and coordinate the activities of the school with the prime function of achieving objectives of the school with maximum efficiency and effectiveness. They should influence and stimulate the human resources, provide appropriate organizational climate at the same time integrating the school and its activities with the society setup. In addition, they should evaluate the school activities in accordance to the blue print evaluation which enables the school to determine the achievement of predetermined goals. In addition Adizes (1980) further states that PTA role involves initiating, planning and implements school policies.

3. Statement of the Problem

Every country's foundation and destiny lies with its people being given quality education. The quality of management at institutional level is and continues to be a major concern of the government of Kenya. The PTA is appointed with the express task of managing schools on behalf of the cabinet minister. It is assumed rightly and sometimes wrongly that the appointed members would be equal to the task, however, this is not always the case as some schools experience problems while others succeed. The effectiveness of PTA has been questioned by many studies both in Kenya and other countries that use similar models. In Kenya for example, the official government reports such as the Kamunge (1988), Koech (1999) and task force on students discipline and unrest in secondary school, (2001) indicates clearly that PTA in Kenya experience many challenges. The Koech report (1999) shows dissatisfaction in management of physical facilities, curriculum and poor community relations.

On the other hand, PTA has been accused of misallocation, mismanagement and even embezzlement of school funds, Daily nation 11th July (2015). Other challenges regarding human resource and students discipline have resulted to public cry, strikes, up heels and disasters such as destruction of property and loss of lives, Kenya Times, July (2015).

Given the importance of proper school management towards education process against challenges affecting effective and efficient school management, there is need for immediate attention and proactive approach to providing a comprehensive and long-term solution. It is, therefore, in this context that the researcher chose to investigate the role of the PTA in management of secondary school in secondary schools in Gatundu North; Kiambu, Kenya.

4. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were:

- 1) To find out the challenges facing PTA in the management of staff personnel, finance activities, physical and material resources, curriculum and instruction, students' personnel and school-community relations.
- 2) To analyze the extent to which challenges hinder PTA from carrying out their administrative roles.
- 3) To identify possible solutions to the challenges facing the PTA.

5. Research Questions

- 1) What challenges does the PTA encounter in school management?
- 2) To what extent do these challenges hinder PTA from carrying out the administrative roles?
- 3) What strategies does the PTA use to cope up with the challenges?

6. Significance of the Study

The study may be of great help to the policy-makers especially the educational planners at the ministry of Education and Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) on determining whether the various courses offered are of any benefit to the PTA to cope with challenges in school management.

7. Theoretical Framework

The researcher based the study on the management theory by Henry Fayol and Campel (1969) on functions of the manager and the principles of the organization. Fayol identified five key functions of the manager in administrative process namely, planning, organizing, coordinating, commanding and controlling. Planning involves establishing goals and process of attaining the goals. Organizing is the process of programming which consists of grouping activities, assignment of tasks and delegation of authority. Directing involves influencing the employees to carry out various tasks and responsibilities. It is also referred to as commanding or leading. The process of directing involves making certain assumptions about the

nature of people, performing leadership roles through a leadership style, and using the leadership style to influence motivate teachers. Controlling involves determining the actual performance and comparing it to the performance standards at the same time taking corrective measures where necessary.

Fayol identified 14 principles of management directed towards management of the organization: division of work; authority and responsibility; discipline; unity of command; unity of direction; subordination of individual interests to the general interest; remuneration; scalar chain; order;

equity; stability of tenure of personnel; initiative and esprit de corps. On the other hand, Campel (1969) identified six management tasks areas: namely; curriculum and instruction; staff personnel; pupil personnel; finance and business; physical facilities and school community relations.

8. Conceptual Framework

According to the researcher, the role of the teacher's parents association in management of public secondary schools was dictated by factors shown in figure 1.1.

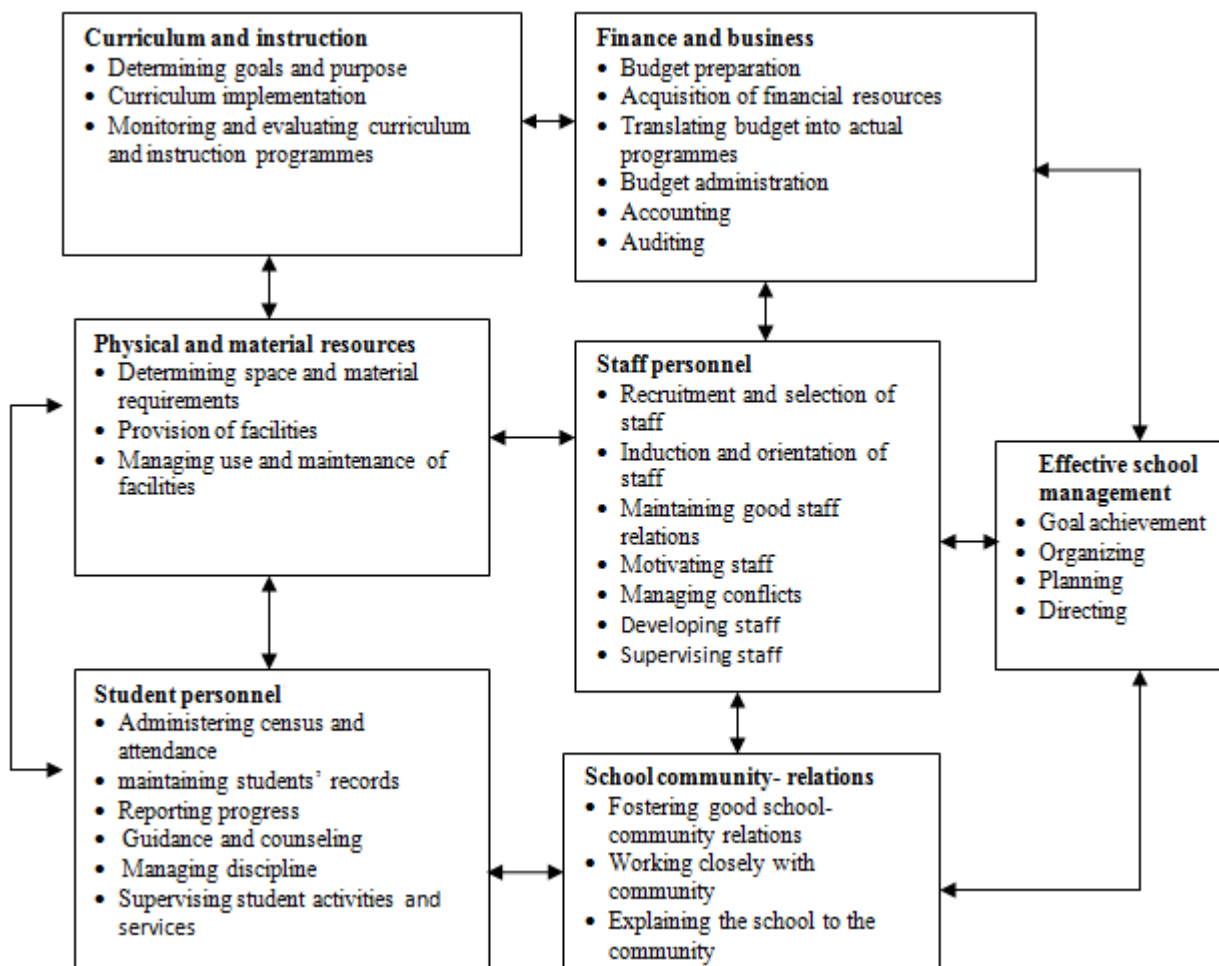


Figure 1.1: The conceptual framework

Source: Researcher 2015

9. Methodology

The study adopted survey design. Mouley (1983) and Kerlinger (1983) observes that survey design is used to gather data from a large population at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of current existing situation in order to plan for the future. The survey design, despite being used for both exploratory and preliminary studies allows the researcher to gather information, summarize, and interpret the information for the purpose of clarification (Orodho 2004). Survey design was employed in the study because it enabled the researcher to gather information from the respondents on the role of PTA in management of public secondary school.

10. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Stratified random sampling technique was used to determine the sample size because it gives equal opportunity to all subjects in the population to be selected in the study. A sample size of 13 schools was selected from a target population of 26 secondary schools. This comprised of 2 Girls schools, 2 Boys' and 9 mixed secondary schools on the proportional basis. This was 50% of the target population according to Jacob and Rasariah (1972). It was considered adequate in giving results since all categories of schools were included in the study (Kothai, 2003; Kerlinger 1986). Simple random sampling was used to select school from the specific category. Purposive sampling was used to select Gatundu North district, Kiambu County and AEO

representing the Ministry of Education. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews.

11. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative procedures. In qualitative analysis, information collected was transcribed into written texts by combining the notes taken and then organized into various themes. Quantitative data was grouped according to the research questions and analyzed through percentages and frequencies, and presented in tables.

12. Findings and Discussions

The characteristics of schools showed that 9 (70%) of schools were mixed schools, 2 (15%) were girls and 2 (15%) boys' secondary schools. The background information on age of the participants of the study showed that 4 (31%) ranged 30-39, 8 (62%) were between 40-49 and 1(8%) were above 50. The findings indicate that Kiambu County has high percentage of mixed secondary schools.

Another finding showed that 10 (77%) of respondents were male while 3(23%) were female. The findings indicate that women were not well represented in parents' teachers association. The reason given for this is that women do not volunteer themselves for leadership positions and are generally perceived as incompetent in managerial roles due to cultural factors.

The findings on the age of the respondents showed that 3 (23 %) of the respondents were graduates, 2 (15%) post graduates while the majority 7 (53%) were undergraduates. The findings reflect low qualifications among the participants which concur with Koech (2003) and Wamire (2006). The study indicates that PTA members were appointed with low level training such as diplomas or certificates.

Table 1: Challenges facing PTA in effective management of schools

1. Challenges in Staff Personnel	N	%
Inadequate staff	10	77
Discipline	10	72
Staff motivation	5	38
Grand Mean		62
2. Challenges in school finances	N	%
Inadequate funds	13	100
Budgeting and accounting procedures	7	54
High maintenance cost	4	33
Mean		62
3. Challenges in physical and material resources	N	%
Inadequate facilities	13	100
Lack of control over the use of resources	7	54
School plant	7	54
Mean		70
4 Challenges in curriculum and instruction	N	%
Monitoring and evaluation	10	77
Interpretation and articulation of curriculum policies	6	62
Instructional leadership	6	62
Poor KCSE results	10	77

Mean	67	
5. Challenges in students Activities	N	%
Discipline of students	7	54
Family related issues	7	54
Poor entry behavior	10	77
Mean		62
6. Challenges in School community Relations	N	%
Integrating school interest with those of the community	9	69
Interface from community	11	85
Illicit brews/drugs supplied	6	46
Mean		67

Findings in Table 1 reveal that 10 (77%) PTA members encountered the challenge of staff discipline issues. Others 5 (38%) reported lack of motivation among teachers. The interview revealed that teachers lacked work motivation. The findings concur with Bennel (2004) that the standards of teachers' professional conduct and performance are low in many countries due to low motivation. Majority of the respondents 10 (77%) experienced challenges relating to inadequate staff. This is in line with Makori (2009) that lack of inadequate teachers was a big challenge in curriculum implementation. Similarly 13 (100%) of the respondents reported the challenge of inadequate funds and physical facilities. The challenges reduced effectiveness and efficiency because some school had old and outdated physical facilities and resources which were poorly maintained. According to Okumbe (2006) the appearance of the school plant is a source of inspiration to members of the school community. Others 7(54%) PTA members reported lack of proper accounting and budgeting procedures as well as lack of control over the use of the school physical and material resources. On the other hand, 10 (77%) PTA members reported lack of monitoring in curriculum and evaluation and poor instructional leadership respectively. The study also revealed that 7 (54%) PTA members reported challenges related to family issues and poor entry behavior. It was revealed that some parents did not cooperate in instilling discipline among the students.

Table 2: The extent to which the challenges affected PTA in School Management

Challenges	Large extent		Small extent	
	N	%	n	%
Extent of challenges in staff Personnel	12	92	1	8
Extent of challenges in financial management	13	100	-	-
Extent of challenges in physical facilities and material	12	92	1	8
Extent of challenges in curriculum and instruction	9	69	3	23
Extent of challenges in student personnel	12	92	1	8
Extent of challenges in school-community relations	10	77	3	23
Mean		87		12

As shown in Table 2, the challenges affected the role of the PTA members all management task areas. The study found that 13 (100%), and 12 (92%) PTA members faced the challenges of financial management in staff personnel, students' activities, physical facilities and material resources

to a large extent. On the other hand 10 (77%) faced challenges of school community relations. It was also revealed that schools were challenged by changes in prices of goods and services, inflation, whether conditions drug abuse and frequent strikes.

Findings in table 3 indicate that 4 (31%) embarked on training and staff development, 10 (77 %) strategized on careful selection and recruitment process. In Kenya, Koech (1999) noted that lack of training affected management of educational institutions and the maintenance of quality standards in education and training. This is in line with Kipsoi and Sang (2008) that PTA members lacked ability to provide adequate teachers. 10 (77%) PTA members reported that they sourced funds from different quarters, while 6(46%) were of the opinion that they should train school financial officers including the bursar and the accountants. Others 7(54%) reported constant appraisal of curriculum and instruction through evaluations and examinations. 7(54%) reported use of effective communication system and involving stake holders in issues of students welfare. Others 8 (62%) recommended creating a favourable environment for learning to occur. Majority 10 (77%) indicate the need for effective communication to facilitate positive school community relations while 6 (46%) reported enforcing security within the school

Table 3: Strategies Used to overcome the challenges facing PTA in school Management

1. Strategies on Staff Personnel	N	%
Training and development	4	31
Careful selection process	10	77
Sought advice from experts	3	25
Mean	44	
2. Strategies on School Finances		
Monitoring expenditure in the light of approved budget	5	38
Source funds from different quarters	10	77
Training financial officers	6	46
Mean	54	
3. Strategies on Physical Facilities & Material resources		
Prioritizing school projects	8	62
Repairs and maintenance	7	54
Adapting available space to need	6	46
Mean	54	
4 Strategies on Curriculum & Instruction		
Co-ordination and consultation with curriculum experts	6	46
Employment and staff development	7	54
Constant appraisal of curriculum and instruction	7	54
Mean	51	
5. Strategies on Students Activities		
Communication system	7	54
Involving stake holders	7	54
Favorable climate	8	62
Mean	57	
6. Strategies on School Community Relations		
Provision of services and facilities to community	4	31
Enforcing security	6	46
Effective communication	10	77
Mean	51	

13. Conclusion

It is clear from the findings that the PTA faced challenges related to staff personnel, school finance, physical facilities and material resources, curriculum and instruction, students' activities, and school community relations. The study also revealed that the challenges affected the PTA in school management to a great extent. Some of the strategies put in place to curb the identified challenges include; training and development, careful selection and recruitment processes, sourcing funds from different quarters, constant appraisal of teachers and effective communication.

14. Recommendations

Appointments of PTA should be from among people of integrity and competence with a minimum requirement of university education. The PTA should moderate administrative processes in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning. The ministry of education in Kenya should formulate relevant policies to enable school PTA to be more useful in management. PTA and educational administrators make concerted efforts initiate and sustain new projects, rehabilitate dilapidated infrastructures and initiate professional development through staff training. There is need to create awareness of public private partnership in financing education. A similar study should be conducted on a wider population of both public and private schools in rural and urban settings of other districts to establish whether similar challenges exist in the management of public secondary schools.

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