

INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES ON TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MERU SOUTH SUB-COUNTY, THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA

Author

Mbaka Kenkelvin Kimathi

Authors' Affiliation

Department of Educational Administration and Planning

University of Nairobi

P.O. Box 30197

KIKUYU.

Email:kimathikenkelvin@gmail.com

Telephone: +254728681403

Abstract

A lot of resources from the government and Non-Governmental Organizations have been put in place to enhance quality education in Kenya. However, Schools have been faced with increased cases of dismal performance, teacher absenteeism, truancy, use of traditional teaching methods, applications for transfers and low morale especially in secondary schools. It is argued that these are signs of job dissatisfaction among teachers. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub-County with view of enhancing quality education. The study used a descriptive survey design. The target population consisted of all principals of 53 public secondary schools in Meru South Sub- county and 500 teachers totaling to 553. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the participants. The study found that a small number of principals opted for autocratic leadership style while majority of principals frequently used Laissez-Faire leadership style by allowing teachers to go about their work the way they want, assigning a task then let teachers handle it themselves, unconcerned with teachers' welfare and paying no attention to individual interest in the work place. Therefore, it was recommended that principals should blend their styles of leadership and to exercise laissez-faire kind of leadership with moderation and cautiously especially where an individual teachers' effort is required such as handling the tasks allocated to teachers.

Key Words: Leadership styles, Job satisfaction, Autocratic, Laissez-faire

1. Introduction

Leadership style a manager of an institution has should have power to influence the employees such as teachers to accept willingly their direction and control (Nzuve, 1999). In Kenya issues relating to teacher motivation and improvement of the job performance have been addressed in various forums such as teachers' trade unions. It has been pointed out that there is need to improve the working conditions of teachers

especially through the kind of leadership style the principal habituates. Okumbe (1992) study found that teachers were only slightly satisfied in the job factors of working conditions, the work environment security, recognition, the work content and supervision. Therefore, (Charlton, 2000), argued that effective leadership has a positive influence on the performance of teachers. In a scenario where principals treat teachers anyhow, they do not handle their work properly in response (Mwangi, 2013).

Following the release of Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E.) Results 2015, many teachers and principals have been transferred and deployed to other schools in Tharaka Nithi County. Specifically, 25 teachers from Meru-south Sub-County transferred between April and December 2015 owing to poor leadership in their respective schools (T.S.C Staffing Office, Meru-South Sub County 2015). Departures to pursue other careers, teacher absenteeism, transfer, truancy, lateness are signs of job dissatisfaction among teachers (Urwick & Nkhobothi, 2005). When teachers are not satisfied with the job, students are the ones who suffer because their academic is likely to deteriorate. Leadership of principals in the schools might have an influence on this. Therefore need to examine the influence of principals' leadership styles on teachers' levels of job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub-County which may be having a negative impact on school effectiveness.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- i) To establish the influence of principals' autocratic leadership styles on teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub- County.
- ii) To establish extent to which Laissez-Faire leadership style by principals influences teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub- County.

3. Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey design. The study population consisted of 53 principals of public secondary schools in Meru South Sub County and 500 teachers totaling to 553. A sample size of 100 teachers and 33 principals from 53 secondary schools in Meru South Sub-county was selected using proportional and simple random sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. A research permit was granted by National Commission for Science and Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and letter of authorization from Meru South Sub-County director of education. Both quantitative and qualitative data was entered into and analyzed by the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 17.0. Pearson moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships between principals leadership styles, (Autocratic, laissez faire) and teachers job satisfaction. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data was categorized according to themes from the objectives and where applicable presented in the form of frequency tables.

4. Results and Discussion

The section here provides the data analysis results and discussions categorized under the sub headings: Demographic characteristics of the respondents and how leadership style by principals influences teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic information sought from the participants included: gender, age, professional qualifications, years one has worked as a teacher or principal and responsibilities being held in the

present school. Data depicted that 63.9% of the teachers were male and 36.1% were female. In addition, 77.8% of the principals were male and 22.2% were female. There is a male dominance among the teachers and principals within Meru South Sub County. Majority of the teachers (66.3%) were below 35 years of age compared to 33.7% who were above 36 years. Most of the teachers are youthful, inexperienced and experimental in their approach and required guidance for them to be effective and realize job satisfaction at their work place. majority of the principals (77.8%) are above 40 years of age followed by 22.2% who are below 40 years .The age of majority of principals being above 40 years and working with teachers who were below 35 years of age coupled by a substantial number of teachers (33.7%) above 35 years represented a delicate balance to principals on leadership styles they were likely to adopt in order to create job satisfaction among teachers from both age extremes. On professional qualifications, 74.7% of the teachers were graduates, 19.3% were diploma holders while a mere 6% were master holders in comparison to 59.3% of the principals who were masters holders while 16% were graduates respectively. Regarding years of service in teaching profession, majority of the teachers (57.8%) had served as teachers for between 1 – 5 years compared to 33.3% of principals who had served for between 21 – 25 years. In addition, 92.6% of principals had served as teachers for over 11 years compared to 22.8% of teachers within a similar duration. Majority of the teachers were still fresh in the teaching profession and enthusiastic to work in an environment that was conducive in order to uplift the teaching standards in the schools. Further, on responsibilities of teachers in their present school, majority of the teachers (47%) were class teachers, 9.6% senior teachers, 8.4% games teachers, while others doubled up as class teachers and Heads of Departments (7.2%), class teacher and coaches (3.6%), teacher (3.6%), dormitory mistresses and masters (3.6%), dormitory mistress and Head of Department (3.6%), class teacher and club patron (2.4%), class teacher and head of subject (2.4%), Head of Departments (2.4%), while 1.2% of teachers were class teachers and games master. From these results teachers had varied responsibilities and quite a number of them were doubling up in various responsibilities in school.

4.2.1 The Influence of Principals' Autocratic Leadership Styles on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Autocratic leadership leads to lower levels of job satisfaction, especially where it centralizes power, authority and decision making on one person. In order to determine the influence of principals' autocratic leadership styles on teachers' job satisfaction; statements with a scale ranging from 1 to 5 were provided with 1 indicating strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – undecided, 4 - agree, while 5 indicating disagree. For ease of analysis strongly disagree and disagree have been merged to disagree while strongly agree and agree have been merged to agree. The Table 1 and 2 represents a summary of the results obtained:

Table 1 Teachers Responses on Autocratic Leadership Style

Leadership style	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	No response	Total
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
My principal decides what to be done and how it shall be done	30 (36.1)	4 (4.8)	49 (59)	-	83 (100)
My principal acts without consulting teachers	46 (55.4)	7 (8.4)	27 (32.5)	3 (3.6)	83 (100)

Data captured in Table 1 show that 59% of the teachers noted that principals decide what to be done and how it shall be done compared to 36.1% who felt otherwise. In addition, 55.4% of the teachers noted that principals do not act without consulting teachers compared to 32.5% who noted differently. From these findings it is apparent that a small percentage of principals opted for autocratic kind of leadership at the inception of their directives before blending it with other forms of leadership styles during the implementation process of the directives.

Table 2 Principals' Responses on Autocratic Leadership Style

Leadership style	Never	Rarely	Always	No response	Total
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
Decide what shall be done and how it shall be done	-	4 (14.8)	23 (85.2)	-	27 (100)
Schedule the work to be done	-	5 (18.5)	22 (81.5)	-	27 (100)
Act without consulting teachers	12 (44.4)	15 (55.6)	-	-	27 (100)
Refuse to explain my actions	17 (63)	10 (37)	-	-	27 (100)

From Table 2, principals indicated that they always decide what shall be done and how it shall be done (85.2%), always schedule the work to be done (81.5%), rarely act without consulting teachers (55.6%) a figure that almost resonates with the position taken by teachers compared to (44.4%) who never consult teachers, others never refuse to explain their actions (63%) compared to 37% who indicated that they rarely refuse to explain their actions. From these results from the principals it is clear that there are aspects of autocratic leadership being exercised though with moderation depending on the nature of issue at hand since majority of the principals recognized the skills and abilities of the teachers.

4.2.2 The Extent to which Laissez-Faire Leadership Style by Principals Influences Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Laissez-Faire is a style of leadership where leaders refuse to make decisions, are not available when needed, and choose to take no responsibility for their lack of leadership ability. Freedoms are fully determined by group goals, techniques, and working methods and leaders rarely intervene. The study was interested in determining the extent to which laissez-faire leadership style by principals

influences teachers' job satisfaction. Statements to this effect with a scale ranging from 1 to 5 was provided with 1 indicating strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – undecided, 4 - agree, while 5 indicating disagree. For ease of analysis strongly disagree and disagree have been merged to disagree while strongly agree and agree have been merged to agree. The Table 3 and 4 represents a summary of the results obtained:

Table 3 Teachers' response on the Laissez-Faire Leadership Style on Job Satisfaction

Leadership style	Disagree f (%)	undecided f (%)	Agree f (%)	No response f (%)	Total f (%)
The principal allows teachers to go about their work the way they want	47 (56.7)	7 (8.4)	29 (35)	-	83 (100)
My principal assign the task, then let teachers handle it	17 (20.5)	2 (2.4)	64 (77.1)	2 (2.4)	83 (100)

From Table 3, teachers observed that 56.7% of principals allow them to do about their work the way they want compared to 35% who indicated differently. Further, the teachers (77%) noted that principal did assign tasks then let teachers handle it themselves. From these results a Laissez-Faire kind of leadership was exercised by principals only when teachers were required to handle tasks assigned to them and hence and this helps to minimize truancy delinquency in their performance.

Table 4 Principals' Response on the Laissez-Faire Leadership Style on Job Satisfaction

Leadership style	Never f (%)	Rarely f (%)	Always f (%)	No response f (%)	Total f (%)
I am unconcerned with staffs' welfare	11 (40.7)	2 (7.4)	14 (51.8)	-	27 (100)
I pay no attention to individual interest in their work place	11 (40.7)	11 (40.7)	5 (18.5)	-	27 (100)
Allow the teachers to go about their work the way they want	9 (33.3)	7 (25.9)	9 (33.3)	2 (7.4)	27 (100)
Assign a task, then let teachers handle it	2 (7.4)	7 (25.9)	18 (66.7)	-	27 (100)

Table 4 show that slightly above a half of the principals (51.8%) are always unconcerned with staffs' welfare compared to 40% who are concerned with staffs' welfare; 40.7% of the principals noted that they do not pay attention to individual interest in their work place; principals were evenly divided with some never and the same time always allowing teachers to go about their work the way they want; and finally 66.7% of principals always assign a task, then let teachers handle it. From these results majority of principals do exercise a laissez-faire kind of leadership. This ought to be done with moderation and cautiously because, Laissez-faire style is described by Hackman & Johnson (2009) as the most effective style, especially where followers are mature and highly motivated because it 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. On the other hand, MacDonald (2007) study of laissez-faire leadership indicated that, it is associated with the highest rates of truancy and delinquency and with the slowest modifications in performance which lead to unproductive attitudes and disempowerment of subordinates. In agreement with this Nsubuga's (2008) study revealed negative correlation between the laissez-faire leadership style and the school performance in secondary schools. It established that head teachers who use the leadership style tend to fail to follow up on those they have delegated tasks to and consequently performance declines.

4. Recommendations

- i. Ministry of Education through Teachers Service Commission should ensure there is staff balancing in schools and recruitment of new teachers in order to ensure schools are adequately staffed and revise teachers' salary by clear cut opportunities for promotion and ensure teachers are adequately assisted in acquisition of study leaves when in need.
- ii. Staff houses through the initiative of Board of Management should be constructed especially in boarding secondary schools.
- iii. Inexperienced principals should seek guidance from experienced principals by bench marking with their schools in order to learn from each other experiences and recommend areas of effectiveness or reinforcement of appropriate action in order to nurture a comfortable working environment.
- iv. Principals should blend their styles of leadership for instance autocratic leadership can be exercised together with democratic, laissez-faire and transformational styles.
- v. Teachers should improve their personal character and discipline to minimize antagonizing their principals or employer who is TSC.

References

- Charlton, G. (2000). Human habit of highly effective organizations. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Hackman, M.Z. & Johnson, C.E. (2009). *Leadership: A communication perspective*, (5th ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Mwangi, W.J. (2013). Leadership effectiveness of headteachers and how it affect the performance of secondary schools in Gatanga Division, Thika County. Unpublished MEd. Kenyatta University.
- Macdonald, N. (2007). *Educational Management*. Macdonalds Institute of Archeological Research. Cambridge: University Press.
- Nsubuga, Y.K.K. (2008). Developing Teacher Leadership; A Paper Presented at the 5th ACP Conference. Kampala, Uganda.
- Nzuve, S.N. (1999). Elements of organizational behavior. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.
- Okumbe, J.A. (1992). Levels of job satisfaction among graduate teachers in Siaya and Kisumu districts Unpublished PhD Thesis, Kenyatta University.
- Urwick, J & Nkhobotin, M. (2005). *Teacher Motivation and Incentives in Lesotho*. Maseru: Lesotho College of Education.