

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS' CAPACITY  
IN PROVISION OF QUALITY EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN  
KENYA**

**Elicanah M. Mosiori and Dr. Ruth W. Thinguri  
Mount Kenya University, School of Education  
P.O. Box 342 – 01000 Thika, Kenya**

**Corresponding Author Email: [emosiori@gmail.com](mailto:emosiori@gmail.com)  
Telephone +254 723 152 349**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is responsible for formulating and implementing educational policies throughout the country. At the school level the Headteacher is regarded as an agent of supervision and translation of educational policies and objectives into programmes within the school. Headteachers are appointed from among teachers with similar training and experience, yet once appointed the head teacher is expected to offer leadership in the provision of quality education. The headteacher's job involves providing leadership, administration and management in addition to teaching. The purpose of study was to critically analyze the school headteacher's capacity in provision of quality education in primary schools in Kenya. The study used a qualitative research methodology specifically critical analysis design. It is recommended that the Headteachers should be equipped with leadership, management and administration skills as well as excellent pedagogical skills. It is critical that serving and potential headteachers be trained in leadership and management.

**Key Words:** School Headteachers, Administration, Primary Schools, Quality Education, Capacity, Critical Analysis

## **1.0 Introduction**

The Government of Kenya has been devoted to providing quality education to all children since independence in 1963, but has faced numerous challenges. Notable among these challenges include the high cost of educational materials and infrastructure, management of schools and inadequate teachers. The cost of construction and maintenance of school facilities was left to the parents under the cost-sharing policy of 1980s to 2002. This responsibility was left squarely in the hands of Headteachers and school committees on behalf of parents.

The introduction of free and compulsory primary education by the Government in 2002 was a major step towards achieving universal primary education, albeit the challenges increased raising concerns about the quality of education offered. These challenges included the capacity of the Headteachers to offer sound leadership, inadequate teaching staff, textbooks, school uniforms, writing materials for teachers and students. In some areas the class sizes are too large per teacher, desks are not enough, inadequate toilet facilities and water ([www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)). Although, the Ministry of Education is responsible for curriculum development and supervision, the actual management of schools is the responsibility of school committees and Headteachers.

A school like any other organization requires effective administration and management in order to achieve its objectives. In Kenya Headteachers are charged with this responsibility as the single administration officer of primary schools in charge of all operations. In addition to administration responsibilities, the headteacher must teach, although with a lower number of lessons compared to other teachers. The headteacher is assisted by the deputy head teacher and other teachers to

administer the school. In few cases the school will have a minimal number of support staff such as the Matron, Watchman, Cooks, Accounts Clerk and Grounds man among others depending of the size and financial stability of a school.

The headteacher being the chief administrator in a school is responsible in the following main administrative task areas: Curriculum and instruction; Student/pupil personnel; Staff personnel; the school facilities; Business management; Staff development; School community relations; and Monitoring and evaluations of programmes. The government expects the headteachers to ensure that all education policies are implemented to letter including ensuring the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which requires the country to provide access to free and compulsory quality primary education for all children by the year 2015. In addition, Kenya Vision 2030 identifies Human Resource Development as key pillar in transforming the country into an industrialized and knowledge economy by 2030. Effective administration of Kenya's over 30,000 primary schools is therefore critical to the attainment of the Vision ([www.education.go.ke](http://www.education.go.ke)).

## **2.0 Statement of the problem**

The headteacher is a single administration officer in a primary school in charge of all operations. In addition to the administration responsibilities, the headteacher must teach, although with a lower number of lessons compared to other teachers. The headteacher is mostly assisted by the deputy head teachers and other teachers to administer the school. In few instances the school will have a minimal number of support staff such as the matron, watchman and ground man among others. The headteacher being the chief administrator is responsible for the following main administrative task areas; curriculum and instruction; student/pupil personnel; staff personnel; the school facilities; business management; staff development; school community relations and monitoring and evaluations of programme.

As an instructional leader the headteacher is also involved in many activities such; improving teaching and learning; developing supervisory strategies, executing strategies for improvement, maintaining the school system; improving curriculum and library materials; evaluating students' progress and timetabling. The head teacher therefore is expected to provide expert leadership in all areas of the school programmes to ensure quality education despite being selected from among classroom teachers who have no training at all in school administration (Kenya, 2012; Waweru and Orodho, 2014).

## **3.0 Purpose of study**

The purpose of study was to critically analyze the school headteacher's capacity in provision of quality education in primary schools in Kenya. The focus of the study was on leadership and management skills necessary for effective school administration. The study was guided by the following objective; Critically analyze the leadership and management skills offered by the Primary Education Teachers' course; analyze the acquisition of leadership and management skills by experience; analyze the effectiveness of in-service courses offered by the ministry in developing leadership and management capacity of headteachers; determine the leadership and management skills required by the headteacher in provision of quality education; analyze the role played by headteachers in the provision of quality education.

#### **4.0 Objectives of the study**

- a. Critically analyze the leadership and management skills offered by the Primary Education Teachers' course.
- b. Analyze the acquisition of leadership and management skills by experience.
- c. Analyze the effectiveness of in-service courses offered by the ministry in developing leadership and management capacity of headteachers.
- d. Determine the leadership and management skills required by the headteacher in provision of quality education.
- e. Analyze the role played by headteachers in the provision of quality education.

#### **5.0 Research questions**

1. What are the leadership and management skills offered by a Primary Education Teachers' course?
2. How effective is the acquisition of leadership and management skills through experience?
3. How effective is the in-service management courses offered by MOEST in building leadership and management capacity of headteacher?
4. What are the leadership and management skills required by a headteacher in the provision of quality education?
5. What role is played by headteachers in the provision of quality education?

#### **6.0 Research methodology**

This is a qualitative study using critical analysis design. The design is non-interactive in nature basing its ideas on content and desk analysis. The researchers preferred this design since it permitted the study to go beyond the statistical results used in qualitative research of this kind of study. The researchers therefore extended their critiques as a constructive examination of a variety of issues, highlighted in the role of a headteacher in the provision of quality education. This method clearly identified the leadership skills required by headteacher to carry out effective leadership and administrative tasks in schools in order to achieve quality education. The researchers examined the training of headteachers and experience, the potential headteachers are exposed to before appointment vis-à-vis their role in the provision of quality education.

#### **7.0. Theoretical framework**

The theory behind this party was the path goal leadership theory which has its roots in the expectancy theory. The theory emphasis on how leaders can facilitate task performance by demonstrating to the subordinates how performance can be instrumental in achieving desired out comes. The theory further emphasis that managerial behavior should motivate in order to increases goal attainment by the subordinates as well as clarify the path to these goals.

The path goal theory of leadership presents two propositions, first the acceptability of the leader's behavior as an immediate source of satisfaction to the subordinates or as being instrumental in obtaining future satisfaction, second, that leader's behavior will motivate to the degree that it makes subordinates satisfaction dependent upon effective performance and the degree that it complements the subordinate's work environmental by providing leadership and reward for effective performance. From the capacity of the headteacher's view, the headteacher is able to complement the teachers and non-teaching staff by providing guidance and clarity of direction required in various task areas of school administration.

The proponent of this theory identify at least four distinct types of leader's behavior namely: Directive leadership, where the leader provides specific guidance, standards and work plan; Support leadership, where shows concern for the well-being and personal need of subordinate; and Achievement oriented leadership concern with setting of challenging goals and participative leadership where the leader consults with the subordinates and embodies their suggestions in decision making. The modern development of this theory is attributed to Martin Evans (1970) and Robert House (1970).

## **8.0 Critical Review of Literature**

### **8.1 Critical analysis of the leadership and management skills offered by the Primary Education Teachers' course.**

Headteachers of primary schools in Kenya are usually appointed from among the classroom teachers with a Primary Education Teachers Certificate who have no training at all in school administration (Waweru & Orodho, 2014). The appointments are done by the district education officers upon recommendations by the area education officer. The Primary School Teacher's Certificate (P1) is two years full time course in a teacher's training college, where the teacher trainees learn fourteen subjects namely; English, kiswahili, mathematics, science, christian religious education, physical education, geography history and civics, art, music, agriculture, home science, business education, practical teaching and professional studies. Basically all the subjects are aimed at giving the teacher trainee technical skills except for professional studies where they are given basics of child psychology, foundations of education and school administration.

Upon graduating these teachers are posted to schools where their major assignment is teaching. Suddenly they may find themselves being appointed as headteachers or deputy headteachers. The position of a headteacher is a leadership position which requires conceptual, human and technical skills. It is a social process position where the headteacher gets things done by working with all stakeholders. The Primary School Teacher's course does not give the teachers the skills they need for school administration. Hence, where are they expected to acquire them from?

The challenges of quality education require competent and skilled administrators to address. Studies have supported the view that, academic and professional qualifications of Headteachers influence the quality of education offered (Waweru and Orodho, 2014). Both the knowledge on effective teaching and learning practices and the leadership, Headteachers provide to the school and community are important in the provision of quality education (Mulkeen et al, 2005).

In 2010 a study on learner achievement for class 3 in literacy and numeracy revealed the qualifications of Headteachers in Kenya as 38.7% were holders of Primary Education certificate, 26.2% were Approved Teacher Status (ATS)/Diploma holders and only 7% were degree holders. This confirms that most Headteachers are not adequately trained and prepared for the job hence cannot offer effective school management.

### **8.2 Critical analysis of the acquisition of leadership and management skills by experience.**

In the study by Luthans (2011) of the behavior of 248 administrators at diverse hierarchical levels in a number of different organizations, including schools and institutions of learning quoted in Lunenburg (2010), found that effective administrators spent most of their time on communication related to their key responsibilities. Consequently, prospective headteachers are expected to learn the leadership and administration skills from their bosses. However in a landmark study by Kreitner, & Kinicki, (2010) found out that ineffective administrators have some of the following

shortcomings; Insensitive to others' feelings, abrasive, and intimidating; Cold, aloof, arrogant; Betrayal of trust; Ambitious; Over managing; Poor staff management; Poor in planning and organizing of work; Incapable of adopting to superior with a different style; incapable of adjusting to new and challenging conditions among others. Accordingly therefore may not be able to mentor their successors to become effective administrators

Headteachers who have learned from their predecessors are likely to pick the skills they have observed from their former bosses including the shortcomings. These shortcomings will affect the relationship between Headteachers and their supervisors, colleagues and subordinates and eventual work itself. Most of the shortcomings of ineffective administrators are related to the ability to work effectively with others.

### **8.3 Critical analysis of the effectiveness of the in-service courses offered by the ministry in developing leadership and management capacity of headteachers.**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is fully aware of the enormous responsibility placed on Headteachers to ensure the provision of quality education. Research has affirmed that effective management of schools translated to student's academic achievement (Orodho, 2014). Consequently, the ministry has from time to time organized in-service courses for capacity development of the headteachers and other school leaders.

The courses covered may not be achieving the intended objectives as only about 40% of the Headteachers who attended the in-services courses claimed that their capacities were highly enhanced by the training they attended (www.uwezo.net., 2011).

### **8.4 Critical analysis of the leadership and management skills required by the headteachers in provision of quality education.**

It is not in dispute that Headteachers are administrators, managers and leaders of a school, hence it is important to analyse the skills and competencies required for the job. Research agrees that all administrators must first and foremost have conceptual, human and technical skills (Katz 1974, Okumbe, 1998). These skills are necessary for the roles played by headteachers namely planning, organizing, facilitating and monitoring and evaluation.

#### **8.4.1. Conceptual skills**

A conceptual skill is the ability to obtain, analyse and interpret information in a logical and meaningful manner (Okumbe, 1998). It is the ability to see the diverse perspectives of school programmes and activities, and how they related or affect each other. School administrators should have a systems theory view of the school. Headteachers must understand both the internal and external environment in which they operate. This will enable them understand the effects of what goes on in their school and help them device appropriate responses (Sergiovanni, 2009).

They need to understand the effects of the changes in one or more of the school programmes and activities. It is imperative that all school leaders possess conceptual skills, particularly headteachers (Bjork and Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski, 2005; Lunenburg, 2010). The good news is that through further training and staff seminars the conceptual capacities of headteachers can be enhanced.

#### **8.4.2. Human skills**

Human skills refer to the ability to understand the teachers, students and school stakeholders and interact effectively with them. Headteacher will use human skills for motivation, facilitation, communication as well as for management of conflicts among teachers, students and school stakeholders (Arnett, 2010). Human skills are important to the headteacher and other leaders since

they are required at all levels for dealing with teachers and students as individuals and as groups. According to Lunenburg (2010) effective human relations enable school leaders to unleash staff potential and assist them to achieve their maximum performance. Headteacher must use Human skills to manage school committees, teachers, students, support staff and other stakeholders.

#### **8.4.3. Technical skills**

According to Locke, (2010) technical skill is the competence in knowledge, methods and techniques of a particular discipline or subject (Lunenburg, 2010). It includes the understanding and ability to perform effectively specific tasks as required jobs (Okumbe, 1998) Various personnel in a school have various technical skills, for instance teachers have the pedagogical skills, the accountant or bursar has accounting skills, the watchman has security skills among others. Headteacher and the departmental heads are supposed to have the ability and knowledge to supervise others (Lunenburg, 2010) as an additional technical skill to their subjects of specialization.

The technical skills for headteachers and departmental heads are twofold namely subject experts and instructional supervisory. As subject experts they acquired the skills during training and enhanced them through practical teaching for many years. On the other hand the instructional supervisory skills are acquired through experience and ad hoc in-service courses. The headteacher must be a competent teacher in a particular subject, able to organize the staff, acquire relevant resources, and able to evaluate performance. He should also be able to relate well to the community and wider stakeholder of the school. The headteachers need technical skills, although the amount of time spend performing technical activities (Lunenburg, 2010) is limited compared to other teachers. The headteacher closely monitors the teaching of the students. He may often have to observe, guide and develop teachers and sometimes respond to work performance related questions.

In analyzing the role of an effective Headteachers, studies have singled out thirteen main task dimensions for the headteacher's work (Marshall Sashkin and Gene Huddle, (1986), Lunenburg (2010) and Olembo et al (1992). These task dimensions are categorized into managerial tasks and building cultural linkages tasks. The managerial tasks include formulating and implementing policies, rules and regulations, while that of building cultural linkages include establishing behavioural norms to lay foundations of excellence performance. According to Lunenburg (2010), effective Headteachers create effective and efficient schools through designing policies and procedures that support a culture of excellence.

The table below shows the tasks performed by headteachers vis a vis skills needed for effective management of schools.

| <b>Task</b>  | <b>Skills needed</b>   |
|--|--|
| Building sound relationship with the Education Authorities | Liaison skills and negotiation skills  |
| Monitoring school information                              | scrutinizing information and networks  |
| directing school activities                                | Time management skills, teamwork and interpersonal skills                                |
| Management of financial resources                          | budgeting and accounting skills  |
| Maintenance of the school facilities                       | Formulation of schedules and procedures for maintenance                                  |
| Administration of support services                         | Formulating policies, procedure rules and regulations. Creating and monitoring contracts |
| Staff Management   | Selecting, assessing and appraising, coaching and developing skills                      |
| Establishing a conducive atmosphere for learning           | Organizational, interpersonal, communication   |
| Setting of school expectations                             | setting of goals and interpersonal relationship skills                                   |
| Setting school goals                                       | Goal setting, targets and organizational communication                                   |
| Instructional leadership                                   | Interpreting Curriculum, teamwork and supervision  |
| Organizational communication                               | Using team, committees and task forces and conflict management skills                    |
| Stakeholder support  | public relations skills and public communication skills                                  |

To acquire these skills the headteachers require both a planned deliberate training as well as experience.

### **8.5 Critical analysis of the role played by headteachers in the provision of quality education.**

Primary school headteachers carry out a number of tasks including being responsible and accountable to; the Ministry of Education Science and Technology and its agents on the interpretation of educational policies and objectives as well as curriculum implementation. He/she provides instructional leadership, supervision and inspection; the model for his staff and pupils to emulate; the community as a public relations officer; human resource management and welfare; School finance and facilities and discipline.

In view of these the role of headteacher can be examined from three perspectives, namely Leadership, Administration, and Management. The head teacher is expected to possess a superior knowledge about school administration to provide expert leadership in all areas of the school programme. Specifically, planning, organizing, facilitating and evaluation as analysed below.

#### **8.5.1. Planning**

It is the headteacher who determines the vision and mission of the school and defines how to achieve the vision (Parker, 2011; Lunenburg, 2010). He therefore consults with the stakeholders, draws plans to guide implementation of the goals, mission and vision of the school, its sub-units and personnel. In planning the headteacher in consultations with stakeholders determine the goals which

the school has to achieve. These goals must be in line with the national goals of education. For instance, if the headteacher wants to increase the number of pupils who will join secondary school after class eight, he will need to develop a frame work for the school consisting of the goals and the methods needed to attain it (Gardiner 2011).

Planning provides a sense of purpose and direction for the entire school fraternity, outlining the tasks and activities to be performed in order to achieve the overall goals and objectives of the school (Oosterlynck, 2011). Planning assists the teachers, students and other staff to utilize their time and energies more efficiently and productively. Goodstein 2011 and McDonnell, (2011) agree that planning is a basic function of leadership and provides vital information to guide monitoring and evaluation of actual performance. Consequently plans made at the beginning of a programme provide the criteria against which performance is measured. School plans should be mutually agreed among stakeholders to ensure effective outcomes (Lunenburg and Irby, 2006; Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2008).

A comparison between set targets and results provide the headteacher with a foundation to assess and improve school plans. Over the years challenges facing schools have changed, placing new administrative demands on the headteachers. The school environment has become uncertain and even hostile hence schools have been described as “organized anarchies” (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972). This overemphasizes the significance of planning in schools.

### **8.5.2. Organizing**

Organizing involves coordinating school activities with the aim of achieving the objectives of the school efficiently and effectively. The headteacher does the function of organizing by ensuring that the teachers, students and other staff are allocated duties in accordance with both their expertise and abilities as well as available material resources. It is incumbent upon the headteacher to understand the potentials of human resources at his /her disposal so as to acquire and develop their potential and establish patterns and networks (Argyris 2011) to achieve the goals and objectives of the school. In coordinating the headteacher ensures that the varied duties allocated to individuals are unified in such a manner that all energies are expended towards the goals and objectives of the school. Lunenburg (2010) and Burton (2007) agree that the headteacher must help people understand their job and make arrangements to reduce the effects of teacher absenteeism.

### **8.5.3 Facilitating**

Having put the plans in place and organized the activities, the headteacher’s work is to facilitate and stimulate staff members to achieve the school goals. Facilitating entails influencing and stimulating other people. Lunenburg, 2010 and Northouse, 2010 calls this leading. The headteachers provide articulate leadership skills which gears the schools and its personnel towards a deliberate integration of both the school and personal goals. In stimulating the headteacher strives to release maximum potentials from the staff and the students through proper motivation, communication and management of group dynamics. The headteacher should recognize that human beings are endowed with abundant potentials which should be deliberately and carefully released to ensure maximum utilization of the resources at the disposal of the school. The headteacher must communicate the goals to staff (English, 2008) and motivate the entire school community towards the attainment of the school goals.

### **8.5.4. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation is a key responsibility of headteachers. Evaluation enables the school to determine whether it is achieving its planned goals and objectives. It provides the headteacher with

the necessary feedback for improvement, redesign of programme or for better results. The headteacher must utilize both formative and summative evaluation techniques. While evaluating the headteacher may walk around the school make observations, talk to students and teacher or visit the classrooms and observe lessons (Lunenburg, 2010). In some cases the headteacher may employ the use of advanced monitoring and evaluation techniques to check on the school performance (Lunenburg, 2010).

The paramount goal of a school is the student learning (Blankstein, 2010). To attain this goal the headteacher must work with all stakeholders to create an environment of professional learning development (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2010). Monitoring and evaluations must be done if headteachers have to be successful (Blankstein, Houston and Cole, 2011).

### **8.5.5. Administration and Management**

As the instructional leader of a school, the headteacher is expected to provide leadership in all areas of the school programmes, despite being selected from among classroom teachers who have no training at all in school administration and management (Kenya, 2012; Waweru and Orodho, 2014). The headteachers' responsibilities include the following;

**Improving teaching and learning** -where the headteacher has to play the role of a supervisor from time to time by checking the teacher's classroom work and assess their overall performance. He is also responsible for promoting academic and professional status of teachers by availing them current curriculum materials and in-service courses.

**Improving curriculum and library materials:** - learning material change from time to time, hence the headteacher has to lead the staff to ensure that learning material are up to date, such as textbooks, teaching and learning aids etc.

**Evaluation of student progress:** - the headteacher is the key person in a school in executing policies and procedure relating to evaluation of students' progress record and reporting of student's achievement. The school grades are used for informing pupils, parents, employers, colleges and universities about the achievement of each student for various reasons. The head teacher has to give the report of student performance through letters, report forms and maintain permanent records of mark books.

**Time tabling:** - the school timetable is a device for realizing the aims of educational programmes. Its construction involves decisions governing the kinds of instructional activities provided, number of personnel groups, length of instructional periods, staff work load and assignment and duties appropriate to staff interests, training and ability. The work load of each teacher is difficult to measure because teachers are involved in many other activities such as out of school activities, community demands, variations in lesson preparation and school related duties beyond normal classroom assignments.

In addition, the headteacher is the school's public relations officer, human resource manager, financial controller and disciplinarian. Research has categorized the work of school administrators into three categories (Hughes and Norris, 2011; Tareilo, 2010). The first category is heavy workload such as processing several mails per day, attending a number of meetings and inspecting school premises daily. He also attends to unexpected occurrences that erupt frequently and require immediate attention leading to unscheduled meetings (Lunenburg, 2010). All this is in addition his/her teaching workload.

The second category has been called Variety, fragmentation and brevity by Lunenburg (2010). He argues that the headteacher's role consist of demands that are fragmented, rapid and voluminous which do not allow time for quiet reflection. Headteachers have unpredictable pattern of work.

Planned activities interspersed with trivial events without a particular sequence. Every issue has to be decided as quickly as possible.

The third category is Communication. They communicate with colleagues, education officers, professionals, teachers, community leaders, students, parents and school stakeholders. Effective headteachers set up personal contacts with significant stakeholders outside the school including headteachers in other schools, legislators, national education officials, parents and stakeholders. The most common communication by headteachers is face-to-face. However there is increasing use of telephone, email and social media. Written communication is usually left for official communication. Research demonstrates that headteachers that make things happen in the schools and spend up to 80% of their time in interpersonal communication (Lunenburg, 2010).

## 9.0 Conclusion

Stakeholders expect headteachers to ensure that schools provide quality education and achieve other school objectives. Provision of quality education requires effective use of resources through sound leadership hence conceptual, human and technical skills are critical. The Primary Education certificate qualification which most primary schools teachers have only equips them with adequate technical skills. Those who are selected for headship require additional training before they assume office. It should be noted that once appointed, the headteacher has an opportunity to influence change beyond the classroom (Adan & Orodho, 2014)

## 10.0 Recommendations

- I. The key stakeholders of primary schools such as the Quality Assurance Officers, Parent-Teachers Association Members, Board of Management and Community leaders should be sensitized to offer support to enable the Headteachers perform their work effectively.
- II. There is need for the MOEST to mount regular and meaningful in-service courses to build the capacity of headteachers;
- III. The TSC should consider appointing headteachers from among teachers who have additional training/ qualifications to Primary Education certificate;
- IV. The MOEST in conjunction with schools Board of Management should employ technical officers such as Accountants, Procurement and HRM officers to provide technical support and advice to headteachers; and
- V. The Government should increase funding for in-service courses on school management for headteachers, including enlisting support of private sector through public-private arrangements.

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