# INFLUENCE OF HEAD TEACHER'S LEADERSHIP STYLE ON PUPIL'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SOTIK SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

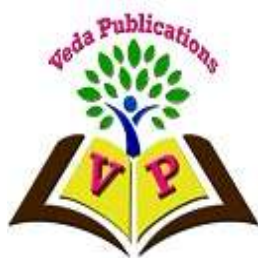Augustine Cheruiyot[1]  Dr. Joshua Manduku[2] and Dr Syallow Makero[3]

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## ABSTRACT

Education plays important role in the development of people and nation as well as a vehicle for and indicator of development. This study investigates head teachers' leadership influence on pupils' academic achievements in Sotik Sub-County. The study adopted descriptive research design method of cross sectional type which was achieved by instruments of structured and unstructured questionnaires, KCPE document analysis and observations. Sotik Sub-County education office examination archives (2013) showed low performance mean score in public primary schools KCPE performance mean score of 232 for 180 public primary schools while 40 private primary school KCPE 2013 means score was 310.This disparity showed in academic performance significantly motivated this study to be carried out in public primary schools so as to investigate head teacher's leadership styles influence on pupils' academic performance. The objectives of the study were to: Examine head teachers organizational leadership behavior on pupils' academic behavior and to determine if there is any significant relationship between head teachers, organizational leadership style and pupils' academic performance. The study targeted 180 head teachers in public primary school, 1500 teachers and one education quality assurance standard officer in Sotik Sub-County. The sample size determination was based on Nwana (1982) and the target sample sizes are 60 head teachers, 300 teachers and one DQASO making a total of 361 respondents.

From the findings of this study it is recommended that school head teacher's should put a lot of emphasis on school leadership in order to establish a trend of being in command with what teachers are doing in the teaching and learning process. Finally, on recommendation for further research more studies in school leadership should be carried out to determine the effects of pupils, teachers and parents leadership on academic performance.

**Keywords***: Education ,Head Teachers, Leadership, Pupils, Academic Performance.*

## INTRODUCTION

Globally; educating a nation remains the most important strategy for the development of society throughout the developing world. The recent Kenya economic blue prints notably the vision 2030 and international protocol sustainable development goals have variously pegged their attainments to improvements (Mwatsuma et al, 2012).

The Kenya government is committed to provision of quality education and training to all its citizens at all levels. Since education plays an important role in development of people and nations as well as it is a vehicle for and indicator of development (UNESCO 2014). For this to be realized education policy makers should make teaching and learning more effective and this finally goes to the school leadership and management in creating a conducive environment.

The head teacher's main role in school is to provide direction and exert influence on others to achieve school goals. This study aimed at analyzing the head teacher's leadership influence on pupil's academic achievements in Sotik Sub-county Kenya.

The study focused on head teachers in public KCPE primary schools in Sotik Sub-county. The variables of the study included: head teacher's leadership behavior of initiating structure, consideration behavior and organizational leadership behaviour, teacher's practices as intervening variables and pupil's academic performance as dependent variable.

The researcher was particularly concerned about the poor performance of learners in public primary schools in Kenya and particularly Sotik Sub-county, the Uwezo Kenya (2013) notes that performance of teachers in public primary schools in Kenya is below par.

A damning World Bank report points out that only 55% of 100 teachers in public primary schools are in class teaching and analysis of teacher's absenteeism shows that 27% report to work but don't teach, as do 2% who attend classes. The poor performance of pupils in public primary schools is a disturbing issue to parents and other stake holders (Kaimenyi, 2013).

The report also states that the school-age children were not acquiring basic competencies in literacy and numeracy at the right age or class. Kaimenyi, (2013) concurs with Uwezo when he noted 10,000 KCPE 2013 candidates got below 100 marks.

The Government through its much-touted Free Primary Education provision should enforce accountability among teachers and Head Teachers in all public primary schools since it has done a commendable job by expanding the country's primary education from 5.9 million pupils in (2002) to10 million in (2013). Unfortunately, the quality of education went down during the period as the public primary schools became factories of mediocrity despite taking a huge share of the National Budget.

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This therefore, implies that unless the government intervention via its Educational policy formulation is made, the road to vision 2030 could be just another illusion and that would be a pity to Kenya as a republic.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leadership is a significant management factor in any organization. Wasanga (2010) observes that dynamic leaders are needed as Head Teachers in Kenyan schools today more than ever   before.  For this is an era of change in the Kenyan education system. This study focuses on evaluation of head teacher's leadership influence on pupils' academic achievements. The Head Teacher's leadership as independent variables to be investigated are 'initiating structure' consideration behavior and organizational leadership behavior on pupil's academic performance. Quinn's, (2002) acknowledges that the head teacher  is crucial in creating a school that value and continually strives to achieve exceptional  education for  pupils. Waters, Marzona  and  McNulty's (2004)  link  head teacher's  effective leadership  to significant  boost in pupil s' achievement both in cognitive and non-cognitive  outcomes.

The KCPE mean score of 40 private primary schools was 310 marks, while 180 public primary schools had a KCPE mean score of 232, (Sotik SCEO 2013

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate Head Teachers leadership styles and its influence on academic performance in public primary schools in Sotik Sub-County –Kenya.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were:

 i.   To examine Head-Teachers' Organizational leadership behaviors and its influence on pupils' academic performance in Sotik sub- county public primary schools.

 ii.  To determine is there any significant relationship between Head Teachers' Organizational leadership and Pupils' Academic Achievement in school KCPE mean scores.

   HO: there is no significant relationship between head teachers' leadership behavior and pupils' academic achievement in KCPE mean score.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research was guided by the following research questions:

 i.   What are the perceptions of teachers on their head teachers' organizational leadership behavior and pupils' academic achievement?

 ii.  Is there any statistically significant relationship between head teacher's leadership behaviors and pupils' academic achievement in KCPE mean scores?
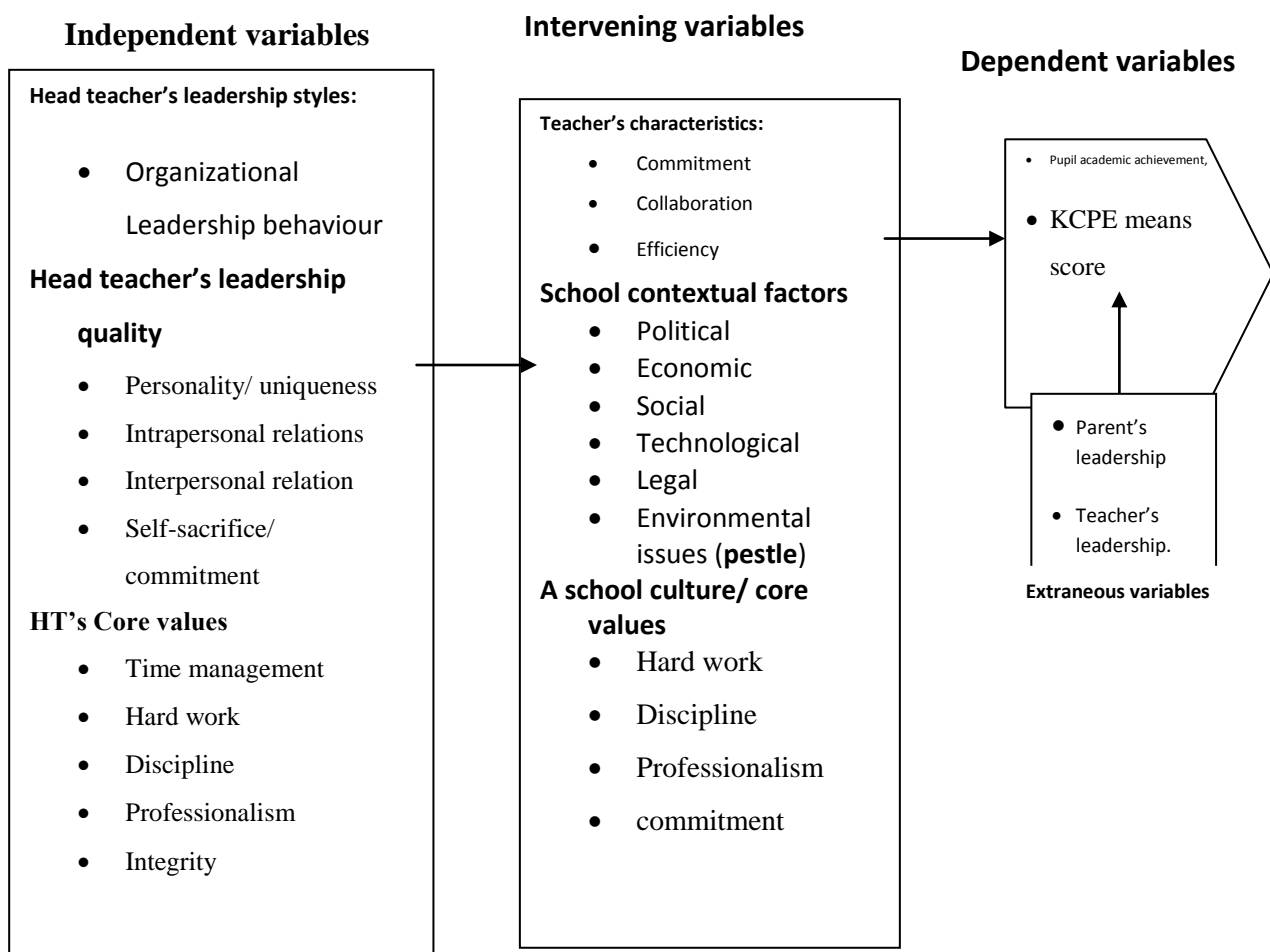
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## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The study was guided by a conceptual framework which presents the interactions among variables in the study as shown in Figure1. Figure1 illustrates the achievements of a high KCPE mean score as influenced by a combination of factors namely leadership role of head teachers, teachers intervening role and school contextual factors known as "Pestle". This study was to investigate the influence of head teacher's leadership styles on pupils' academic achievement at KCPE level.

**Independent variables**

**Head teacher's leadership styles:**

- Organizational Leadership behaviour

**Head teacher's leadership quality**

- Personality/ uniqueness
- Intrapersonal relations
- Interpersonal relation
- Self-sacrifice/ commitment

**HT's Core values**

- Time management
- Hard work
- Discipline
- Professionalism
- Integrity

**Intervening variables**

**Teacher's characteristics:**

- Commitment
- Collaboration
- Efficiency

**School contextual factors**

- Political
- Economic
- Social
- Technological
- Legal
- Environmental issues (**pestle**)

**A school culture/ core values**

- Hard work
- Discipline
- Professionalism
- commitment

**Dependent variables**

- Pupil academic achievement,
- KCPE means score

- Parent's leadership
- Teacher's leadership.

**Extraneous variables**

## METHODOLOGY

Borg & Gall, (1989), Orodho (2005) defines target population as all members of the subjects under consideration to which a researcher wishes to generalize results of the research study. The targeted population includes but not limited to head teachers of' 180 public primary schools, 1500 teachers, and 1 DQASO in Sotik district. The study targeted a population of 180 public primary schools selected in seven wards of Sotik Sub-County. The study used purposive sampling to select head teachers who have stayed in the same KCPE Schools for at least three years.

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A cluster of KCPE public primary schools was made. They were then stratified as young public primary schools yet to sit for KCPE and public primary schools which have sat for at least three   years under the same Head Teacher. The purposive sampling method was then adopted in order to pin-point the head teachers in KCPE schools who have stayed in the same school for at least three years so as to collect focused information while leaving out head teachers from young school or those not yet KCPE schools.

Random sampling was then done to the purposive selected schools to ensure that each school has equal chance to be selected among the forty-two KCPE schools. In   each of the selected schools, questionnaires were administered to the head-teachers and two teachers who have stayed for at least two years and preferably a male and a female teacher.  All these were done so as collect valid and reliable information as well as gender consideration leading to saving time and money.

**Table 1: Sampling Matrix**

| Description | Population | Percentage (%) | Sample size (N) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Head-teachers** | **180** | **30** | **60** |
| **Teachers** | **1500** | **20** | **300** |
| **DQASO** | **180** | **100** | **1** |
| **Total** | **1630** | **20** | **361** |

The sample size for this investigation is 60 head teachers, 1500 teachers, and 1 DQASO. This is in line with the sample determination as per Nwana, (1982). If several hundreds of the population requires about 30% of the population but in this case a target population of 1630 in which 20% is equivalent to 361 as shown in the table above.

**FINDINGS**

**Head Teachers Organizational leadership and pupils' academic achievement in KCPE**

**Mean Score**

Kozol, (2002) stated that in this time of increased accountability and focus on sustained improvement in children learning, attention is being given to academic performance of students and schools are under increasing pressure to produce results.

Hallinger and Heck, (1996), confirmed that the impact of head teachers on school academic achievement occurred through interaction with the school stakeholders and features of the school organization.

Fredericks, (1992) noted that the demanding nature of the school leadership leads to a major need to acquire "simultaneous management skills" for the head teachers to be able to deal effectively with:

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People (b) Instructional programme (c) Community interests (d) Finance and (e) Building concerns, local and state regulation. Leithwood, Haris and Hopkins (2010) in this time of increasing political press, education continues to seek for ways to increase performance of students and in this respect main focus of most researches link the effects of leadership to student performance.

Nettles and Herrington, (2007) in their study of relationships between selected school leadership practices and student learning indicated that there was an indirect effect of leadership upon student outcomes.

Blasé and Blasé, (1999) research showed that effective head teachers to promote quality class instructions utilized the following strategies.

Talking openly and freely with teachers about instruction and learning, (b) Providing time and encouragement for teachers to link with peers, (c) Empowering teachers in decision making process, (d) Embracing challenges of professional development, and (e) Leading without ego or heavy handedness.

They further asserted that quality instructional leader was hinged on head teachers' ability to allow teachers freedom and discretion about classroom instruction in an unintimidating manner that include genuine support.

Surya, (2002) found that contemporary practices of the head teacher that enhance pupils performance include improving instruction, increasing teachers satisfaction, creating learning communities, expanding pupils classroom events and analyzing cultural patterns in the classroom.

Dewey Hensely, (2013) identified five leadership practices head teachers can develop a team to deliver effective instructions: - (a) shaping a vision of academic success for all students (b) creating a climate hospitable to education (c) cultivating leadership in others (d) improving instruction (e) managing data and process.

Portin, Shen and Williams, (1998) stated that leadership in schools has the potential that is the second only to classroom teaching. They further, reaffirmed that the role of the head teacher ship has shifted over the last ten years to having stronger focus on instructional duties, yet the managerial responsibilities of the head teacher ship have not yet been lessened.

However, most studies indicate indirect effects on school leadership upon student outcomes, medicated by other factors.

This study utilized Leithwood's four core leadership practices as a frame work for analyzing leadership actions. These actions are:Setting direction, (b) Development people, (c) Redesigning the organization and (d)Managing the instructional program

This frame work is used to understand which leadership practices/action makes an impact on student academic achievement. For any school reforms which affect pupils learning, involve the reform of the four core elements of leadership dimensions.

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According to Nettles and Herington, (2007) the relationship between selected school leadership practices and student learning indicated a direct effect of school leadership upon student learning.

Moreover, Reeves, (2006) indicated that school and even the entire schools system are capable of closing the academic achievement gap until the right leadership is in place. This concurs with Witziers et al, (2003) who concluded that the school leadership has a direct link to student achievement and hence school leadership does have a positive and significant effect on student achievement.

However, Walker (2009) confirmed that principals have a large indirect effect on academic achievements through interacting with staff and students in educational environment.

O'Donnel and White, (2005) define the primary role of the head teacher as facilitating effective teaching and learning with the aims of increasing student achievement. They further argued that head teacher's leadership behavior directly relates to student academic achievements.

Nettles and Herington, (2007) identify indicators of effective school leadership strategies that enhance students achievements are: Safe and orderly school environment, (b) Mission and vision, (c) Stakeholder involvement, (d) Monitoring school progress, (e) Instructional focus, (d) High expectation of student performance and (e) Professional development.

Horng, Klasik and Loeb, (2010) pointed out that time spent on instructional leadership activities by their head teacher is associated with positive school student academic outcome.

However, Walker (2010), confirm that research does not show clear, direct, casual effects of leadership on student learning, principals have a large indirect effect on achievement through integrating with staff and students in educational environment.

Moos et al. (2011) conducted research as the importance of a principal's leadership in the improvement of student's academic achievement as a concern for the international successful school principal project. The findings were:

Gurr, et al (2005) in Australia stated that the principal's trait such as integrity, high energy and persistent behavior that was consultative, conciliatory and inspirational and leaders' belief in promotion of child centered clearly are key elements that enhanced success and achievement.

Wong (2005) in China-identified Top-bottom Management with a degree of consultation characterizes affective principal.

Moos et al (2005) from Denmark-explained that principal robust participating, consultation with teachers and other stakeholders promoted student achievement.

Day, (2005) in England described successful principals in schools used resilience, integrity and communities that enhance student learning opportunity enhanced student academic performance.

Moller etal. (2005) in Norway-described successful principals are those exemplified collaboration, and team effort in promoting a learning centered approach in teaching enhanced student achievement.

Further Hoog et al (2005) from Sweden-described successful principals as those with effort in building teacher teams as those with effort in building teacher teams and in developing in student, a sense of social values helped learning and academic achievement.

Finally, Jacobson Johnson and Giles in USA reported successful principals as these influenced higher achievements of students, knew how to establish a safe and nurturing learning environment set and ensure the attainment of high achievement expectations for all, students teachers and other staff, parents and the principals themselves.

## CONCLUSIONS

a) The study found out that their head teachers always: manage school discipline, encouraging staff to be creative in teaching and learning methods, building, effective collaboration with staff and creating good climate and rapport for learning.

b) The study established that school leadership had an effect on teacher performance and that if head teachers put more emphasis on school leadership practices teachers would improve their work performance hence would translate to improvement in academic performance in Sotik Sub County.

The study shows school academic improvement solely depend on the leadership conditions set by the incumbent head teacher hence the school is the head teacher or vice versa.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The head teachers should be trained both in institutional leadership as well as teaching and learning programme implementation.

2. A course in education leadership and management sponsored by KEMI, of Ministry Of Education should be made mandatory for all aspiring head teachers.

3. The head teachers need to be provided the necessary skills in teachers' leadership in order to explore more on the role of teachers in school leadership to achieve share leadership in school.

4. Instructional leadership to involve inspection of notes, schemes of work and record of work in order to find a way of discussing the lessons with teachers and thanking them for their work done.

5. Organizational leadership to embrace random inspection of pupils' books and assignments to ensure that teachers' assignment are marked as required.

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6. Teachers should cooperate during instructional leadership supervision so as to learn from the weakness and strength of other teachers.

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