

Influence of Female Head Teachers' Level of Competence on Management of Public Primary Schools in Kenya: A Case of Loitokitok Sub County, Kajiado County

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Abstract Leadership in education plays an important role of transformation in society and for this to happen, effective leaders are critical. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of female head teachers' level of competence on the management of primary schools. This study employed triangulation design which involved qualitative and quantitative methods. The target population in this study comprised of 771 teachers and 1 Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (SCQASO) from which a sample size of 78 respondents was selected using Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Primary data were collected using self administered questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) v 20. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented in narrative form. The findings revealed that majority of the female head teachers were competent in managing school finances. The study recommends that the government institutes policies to ensure and strengthen gender parity in all the sectors of the economy so as to empower women with leadership positions.

Keywords: female head teachers, competence, management, primary schools

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1. Introduction

Schools require highly skilled individuals to ensure effective and smooth running of day to day activities in order to bring sustainable development in education sector. To realize this, such citizens ought to be fostering change in the society. For this to happen both men and women must be engaged in conceiving new development models and therefore their effective managerial skills are very important [1].

In most areas of the world gender literature shows that education management is dominated by males [2,3]. These studies asserts that there are fewer female heads of education institutions than there males counterparts. Women continue to be marginally represented in policy and decision making process despite some countries like India having a strong women movement. Under representation might have been caused by the shortage of women in leadership and other areas such as culture, exclusive and lack of resources and opportunities for human development.

In the United States, the role of women has significantly changed for the last 50 years, the ratio of those who are joining the various institutions of higher

learning and obtaining degrees has risen dramatically. With this, fewer women are now associated with low expectations both in education and work force, they therefore are in a better position of being taking over all fields and jobs in the society at large. In the banking sector women take the highest positions in management, this has tremendously risen from 19% to 31% between the year 2003 and 2006. In corporate executive level jobs their ranks have increased by 37% in the same three year duration, this being and extraordinary increase. With these huge increases, there is noticeable evidence that women who are now seeking leadership positions has been widely recognized and accepted [4].

In Ethiopia, school administrators have been male dominated, to this consequence the government had set and passed a great number of recommendations aimed at empowering women in administrative responsibilities [5].

Regionally, for instance in Uganda, women have been encouraged to access higher positions in management in all institutions through making sure that various gender equality policies have put into place as a commitment to addressing the differences that feature the provision of education for girls. According to [6,7], girls who qualify to gain admission to Universities are accorded one point five point in educational opportunities. This also applies to

other areas such as political opportunities of women in leadership.

MoEST, (2015) points out gender roles that relegate women to a lower status continue to characterize aspects of life such as education and development. The strong force of gender discrimination in educational management in the country extended from the Ministry of Education to schools. Though the proportion of trained women teachers had been increasing at a faster rate than that of men, the improvement is not mirrored in educational management [8].

Female leaders possess attributes that support team work and compared behaviors between genders and discovered that they were more collaborative and dedicated to teamwork [9,10]. They further argue that teamwork is important in a school culture because no one person had the knowledge base to make unilateral decisions. A school culture that focuses on teamwork encourages faculty to share and apply particular knowledge about situations. These leadership practices create models for administrators.

When everything is well managed there is a noticeable development and improvement but poor managed resources diminish the rate at which institutions or organizations develop [11]. It is therefore, up to the head teachers to carry out his/her managerial duties very effectively and diligently to try and accomplish the school's goals and objectives. Women administrators than men do their job differently by focusing more on teaching, learning and children. They incorporate their values of teaching, learning and children contact and decide on the best interest of the schools they administer [12].

The Maasai community has gone far along with cultural prescriptions where they came to believe that their lives were to be managed by commands of culture. The fear of breaking taboos silence women into a state where they act without questioning. This justification of the oppression of women was further intensified by creation of myths, stories, proverbs, riddles, traditional practices, and various systems of education a philosophy that neglected women and sanctified the position of men while declaring women as subordinate to men [13]. Based on this background, this study sought to find out how women's competence influences the management in public primary schools in Loitokitok Sub County of Kajiado County.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Head teachers' role in a school is to help execute policies laid down by Teacher Service Commission (TSC) and in decision making concerning activities towards the attainment of specified educational goals. Their effectiveness in the management of the schools is determined by the way they carry out their roles and responsibilities in regard to pupils' management, staff, curriculum implementation and finances allocated to their school by the Ministry of Education. They undergo rigorous training which helps them acquire qualities such as good leadership skills and strong knowledge in particular fields of school management. These qualities are essential to ensuring a permanent change in school despite some of the female head teachers taking

themselves as inferior to their male counterparts among other issues.

Women's various discriminations and less participation in any sector of development is an agenda of every country. The role of women in educational development, especially in developing countries, is usually ignored and underestimated. They are in disadvantaged position in terms of participation. Rombo zone is among the many divisions in Loitokitok that comprises of many women teachers, but according to Sub-County statistics, few of them take headship positions despite having the required qualifications and experiences compared to their male counterparts in the profession [14]. In the international scene, data show that women managers are on the rise but the rate of progress is slow and uneven. So far, little attempts have been made to disaggregate information to avoid wholesale generalizations. Most studies conducted have been done outside Kenya. This has created a contextual gap. These necessitated the need to conduct this study so as to assess the influence of women head teachers' level of competence on management of public primary schools in Loitokitok Sub County of Kajiado County.

2. Underpinning Theory

This study was based on both Contingency and Feminist Theories.

This theory as illustrated by Donaldson, (2001) explains about contingent (dependent) as a course of action upon which the internal and external situations of an organization must follow. It does not agree with some of the ways in which an organization must be run or organize to meet its objectives. It explains about a contingent leader and he/she should apply the best ways to do the right thing. It recommends some of the best behaviors that a leader must possess. Some of these traits or qualities include: being considerate, create good rapport and good relationships, show concern for subordinates and initiate structures to ensure work completion and goal achievement. This theory explains several ways in which a school head must practice in order to ensure proper school management such as motivation, and that he/she must be guided by external and internal situations.

The theory is of significant to this study because it tries to explain the role of the head teacher in school management in different dimensions that need various methods to deal, manage and solve problems in an organization. Such organizations are met with a number of challenges every now and then and that the head teachers should look for a way which is adaptable and situational in order to solve the issues appropriately. This theory is limited to what should be done with leaders who fail to adequately meet the organization demands of effective management. The theory's strength lies on reliability, power to predict and its suggestion on difference between leaders in discharging their mandate effectively in all situations [15]. This theory therefore forms a strong foundation of developing an understanding about women's competence and management of schools.

Social Feminist Theory is a theory which adopts Karl Marx's ideas and suggestions on exploitation, division of labor and oppression. It looks at a wide range of gender

discrimination on society and tries to recognize women's subjugation and the way the society expresses this oppression and subordination. It concludes that both gender have the same chances of growth and that departures in taking up this gains should come from externally enforced restraints [16].

This theory looks at three wide areas as to why female leaders in all sectors (both public and private) are minimal or are not there at all. It outlines personal factors such as psychological attributes, personal characteristics, attitudes and behavioral skills [17]. Others factors that are explained in this theory include organizational and structural issues that helps clarify as to why girls are underrepresented, ranked low in leadership and their behaviors degraded in those fields. It further outlines the underlying factor behind male and female being at in a good position and dedicated in their work of leadership.

The cultural factors that links gender and organizational structure in social construction and assignment of gender specific roles that does not fit well in their institutions. This factor lead to stereotype views of women on their abilities to compete for senior positions in leadership than their male counterparts [18]. Cultural beliefs is another obstacles explained in this theory. It explains about the ability of girls over boys in acquiring a sense of relationship as well as maintaining them [19]. The hypothesis here is the development of women over men in leadership positions and that both men and women have equal chances of taking leadership positions everywhere. This theory therefore provides a basis of establishing the relationship between competence of women head teachers and management of public primary schools.

3. Literature Review

Competence is the ability of having enough cognition, assessment, skill or strength on matters concerning an activity. Management competency on the other hand involves a situation of being functionally equipped with matters directing towards good and effective management. Effective management is crucial since development is the outcome of a series of successful managed projects. Effective management entirely relies on the way the schools are being managed and the quality of leadership provided by the head teacher [20].

In 1996 American government ordered the investigation of school finance for there was an outcry over how the funds were being utilized. The study reviewed headteachers' financial management and that they lacked the competence in handling finances in their institutions. They therefore needed training in order to effectively handle and manage those finances the required manner. In his educational reforms programs in United States Bill Clinton called for a re-testing of teachers skills which included financial management [21].

In Africa, for instance in Lesotho, institutional head teachers lack formal preparation and are therefore characterized by inefficiency and ineffectiveness in relation to financial management competencies and other duties. Its Government in conjunction with the ministry of education appoints them on the basis of academic, qualifications and experiences they posses in discharging

their duties [22]. According to [23] decision making is a critical leadership skill that a successful head teachers must possess. Collaboration of employees and staff in making decision is essential to strengthen management of schools. Transformational leadership approach among female leaders enhances competence and aligns implementation and accountability in relation to school management. This approach requires leaders to change their leadership styles that auger well with their juniors in institutions thus facilitating persuasion and transparency over a long period of time. For smooth improvement in schools principals must lay down practices that illustrate usefulness and faithfulness in dealing with specific aims of an institution. They should use specialized initiatives that identify school-broad improvements and specify areas of improvements through cohesion, heterogeneous application, strategy and sustainable parameters [24]. The asserts that school principals through proper leadership skills should identify high skilled members of staff who are competent in their specific areas thus uplifting school management [25]. On contrary, principals who fail to identify quality staff members finally end up failing in managing their institutions properly and effectively.

The reviewed literature above demonstrates what a competent head teacher should do and work towards bringing effective and efficient running of schools management of activities but it only discusses about general leadership without looking into details the role of women head teachers' competencies in management. It is against this background that this study was carried purposely to assessment the relationship of female head teachers' level of competence and management of public primary schools in Loitokitok Sub County of Kajiado County.

4. Research Methodology

This study employed triangulation design. This method is used for carrying out issues regarding collection, analysis and brings embraces both quantitative and qualitative analysis [26]. The target population consisted of all schools, teachers and SCQASO in Loitokitok Sub County of Kajiado County. The Target population was 771 respondents, and this included 70 head teachers, 700 teachers and 1 Sub-County QASO as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Target population

Respondents	No.of schools	Population
Head teachers	70	70
Teachers	700	700
Subcounty QASO	1	1
TOTAL	771	771

Source: CSO Rombo Division (2015).

Stratified sampling method was used to obtain 7 primary schools from 70 schools while simple random sampling was employed to obtain 7 female head teachers, 70 teachers and one SCQASO. This study used a10% of the total population as a sample size. According to [27] on forms a representative sample. The sample size chosen was as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Sample Size

Respondents	No.of schools	Population
Head teachers	7	7
Teachers	7	70
SCQASO	1	1

Source: CSO Rombo Division (2015).

The study involved teachers who were staff of the sampled schools and were available during the period of study participated.

Questionnaires were used to obtain information from teachers while interview schedules were used to obtain information from female head teachers and SCQASO. Interview schedules were designed to gather information from the female headteachers and the SCQASO. Piloting was done in two primary schools which were not part of the study sample in the Division by the use of test – retest method. This helped to check on validity and reliability of the research instruments. A reliability co-efficient of 0.7 was obtained by use of Spearman rank. The analysis was done by aid of SPSS version 20.

Data obtained was coded and then presented through frequencies, tables, means, graphs. Quantitative data was analysed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Open ended questions was used to generate qualitative data through themes and patterns, categorized by construct analysis and then tabulated.

The researcher endeavored to maintain ethics while carrying out this research. The researcher sought ethics approval relevant authorities. The researcher did not provide details of the informants. The participants were therefore assured of their anonymity.

5. Findings

The first objective of the study was to assess the influence of female head teachers' level of competence on

management of public primary schools. In order to achieve this objective, questionnaires were used to obtain information from the teachers concerning the head teachers' level of competence in terms of ability to effectively plan and coordinate all desired activities and resources, ability to mobilize and motivate people, ability to treat all staff as well as pupils accordingly, consistency in decision making, ability to deliver curriculum and instruction effectively, ability to understand the local school community and school stakeholders and finally the ability to promote optimum use of the material, financial and human activities were sought. To assess these questionnaires were used to obtain information from teachers while interview schedules were used to obtain information from the female head teachers and SCQASO. A set of question in form of a likert scale were posed to the respondents (teachers) on how they perceive their head teachers' level of competence on management of schools. The questionnaires were coded such that very good was rated number 1 while very low was rated number 4.

Teachers were required to rate the level of competence of their head teachers to school management using the likert scale 1. Very Good, 2. Good, 3. Low, 4. Very Low. Table 3 shows the various responses given.

Table 3 shows that majority of between (60-71%) of the teachers rated their head teachers as competent in ability to effectively plan and coordinate all desired activities and resources, mobilize and motivate people, treat all staff as well as pupils accordingly, understand the local school community and stakeholders. On the other hand (40-48%) of the teachers rated their head teachers low in competence areas like consistency in decision making, ability to deliver curriculum and instruction effectively and promote optimal use of the material, finances and human resources. This is in line with [28] who asserted that school principals who fail to identify high skilled staff end up failing in managing their institutions properly and effectively.

Table 3, Response of teachers on the Level of Competence of Head teachers and management of schools

Level of competence	Very Good	Good	Low	Very Low
Ability to effectively plan and coordinate all desired activities and resources	7(10%)	45(64%)	15(21%)	3(4%)
Ability to mobilize and motivate people	6(9%)	50(71%)	10(14%)	4(6%)
Ability to treat all staff as well as pupils accordingly	8(11%)	46(66%)	11(16%)	5(7%)
Consistency in decision making	2(3%)	15(21%)	48(69%)	5(7%)
Ability to deliver curriculum and instruction effectively	2(3%)	15(21%)	40(57%)	13(19%)
Ability to understand the local school community and school stakeholders	15(21%)	42(60%)	10(14%)	3(4%)
Ability to promote optimum use of the material, financial and human activities	3(4%)	13(19%)	40(57%)	14(20%)

To determine the relationship between female head teachers' level of competence and school management, Pearson's moment correlation coefficient was used. Table 4 shows the correlation coefficient.

Table 4. Correlation Coefficient of Female Head teachers' Level of Competence on School Management

Variable	School management	
Pearson correlation	0.9998	
Level of competence	Sig. (2 – tailed)	0000
	N	70

Significance level of 0.000.

From the result presented in Table 4 it was evident that the calculated r-value of 0.9998 is greater than the critical value of 0.7, an indication of an association between head teachers' level competence and school management. The correlation coefficient between the two variables was 0.9998 implying that as head teachers' level of competence changes by a unit there is a corresponding change in school management.

In all the schools visited analysis show that the female head teachers rated themselves as being competent in managing their schools properly. In one of the schools, the head teacher said

‘I allocate enough resources and I have proper policies regarding the distribution and dispatch of revenue and other costs’.

‘I cater for other levies from my own pocket and that none is refunded back’.

They therefore rated themselves well equipped and competent in handling all the resources in their schools.

Results obtained from the SCQASO shows that 5 out of the 7 public schools headed by the female head teachers had issues in his office concerning the management of their schools while 2 of the remaining schools their head teachers had no cases reported.

‘I have received several cases from those schools regarding the mismanagement of resources and taken action.’

Most of the cases reported involved the head teachers mismanaging schools resources, being not competent in decision making among other issues.

Results from Table 4 show that majority (60-71%) of the teacher respondents rated their female head teachers as competent. This showed a positive correlation coefficient of 0.9998. This was also in line with what the female head teachers and the SCQASO gave. This is supported by Liethwood et al., (2010) who asserted that school Heads must use specialized initiatives that identify school-broad improvements and specify areas of improvements through cohesion, heterogeneous application, strategy and sustainable parameters. Competent head teachers raise the quality of management of their schools and at long last better performance of school in terms of academic and other fields. Effective head teachers need to be competent in financial management, proper resource allocation, one who able to develop coherence among the staff, and raise the academic performance of the school in overall. For this to happen head teachers as school managers need to be trained in competent areas discussed above for efficient school management. This is in line with the findings of [20] who asserted that effective management is crucial since development is the outcome of a series of successful managed projects. Effective management entirely relies on the way the schools are being managed and the quality of leadership provided by the head teachers.

In reference to Table 3, results showed that majority of teacher respondents (60-75%) rated their head teachers as competent while (40-48%) rated them low in areas like consistency in decision making, ability to deliver curriculum and instruction effectively and promote optimal use of the material, finances and human resources properly. The level of competence female head teachers possess greatly influenced the management of their schools. It was evident that the calculated r-value of 0.9998 was greater than the critical value of 0.7, an indication of an association between head teachers’ level competence and school management. The correlation coefficient between the two variables was 0.9998 implying that as head teachers’ level of competence changes by a unit there is a corresponding change in school management. This finding is in line with [24] findings that for smooth improvement in schools principals must lay down practices that illustrate usefulness and faithfulness in dealing with specific areas on an institution.

In order to obtain information from the SCQASO and female head teachers’ level of competence, interview schedule were used where female head teachers rated themselves as being competent in managing their schools. SCQASO were of the same view that most of the head teachers were competent according to reports presented in their officer but with very few exception head teachers who were reported to have issues concerning their schools management. This finding in line with [29] who pointed out that when everything is well managed there is a noticeable development and improvement but poor managed resources diminish the rate at which institutions or organizations develop. It is therefore, up to the head teachers to carry out his/her managerial duties very effectively and diligently to try and accomplish the school’s goals and objectives. They indicated that women administrators than men do their job differently by focusing more on teaching, learning and children [30]. They incorporate their values of teaching, learning and children contact and decide on the best interest of the schools they administer.

6. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concluded that there is a relationship between female head teachers’ level of competence and school management. This is because the level of competence of the head teachers is important in the effective school management. Majority of the teachers rated their Head teachers as competent in ability to effectively plan and coordinate all desired activities and resources, mobilize and motivate people, treat all staff as well as pupils accordingly, understand the local school community and stakeholders. On the other hand teachers rated their head teachers low in competence areas like consistency in decision making, ability to deliver curriculum and instruction effectively and promote optimal use of the material, finances and human resources.

7. Recommendation

Female head teachers should be encouraged to aspire to get higher qualifications and affirmative action employed by the Teachers Service Commission to improve the number of female head teachers in educational management positions.

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