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PRINCIPALS MOBILITY IN KENYA: CAUSES AND ITS EFFECTS ON TEACHERS' EFFICACY.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the existence of Principals' mobility in secondary schools in Kenya, many studies done have concentrated on instructors turnover and ignored the effect of school leadership change on school effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of principals' mobility in secondary schools' effectiveness as perceived by the teachers in North Rift Region. The study used ex post facto research design to explore the causes of mobility and determine the perceived outcomes of principals' mobility in secondary schools. Simple random sampling was applied to obtain 35 schools where 242 respondents that had experienced transition of principals were obtained from document analysis. This study mainly used the questionnaire, interview and the document analysis to obtain data for analysis. The instruments were piloted through test-retest and reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's coefficient of Alpha, and a coefficient of 0.815 was obtained which was considered sufficient enough to render the instruments reliable. Content and face validation of the instruments were done by the lecturers in the school of education. Descriptive statistics were used to determine and explain proportions. One way ANOVA and Multiple Linear Regression was utilized to find the significance of the identified factors influencing mobility and whether there was a significant relationship between principals' mobility and teacher/school characteristics. One sample t-test was utilized to find out the types and factors of mobility that highly influences principals mobility. The findings revealed that school location, school type, religious affiliation, security and mismanagement were found to be significant in influencing mobility of school Principals. It was also revealed that change of headship in schools helps boost teachers morale and teamwork. The study therefore recommends that the Teachers Service Commission should develop a policy governing principals transfers that incorporates a term limit of 5-6 years. It further recommends that change of school principals should be done periodically so as to create an open school climate which has a strong bearing on the learning environment and in the academic achievement of students.

Key Terms: Principals' Mobility, School Effectiveness, Teacher Efficacy and Teacher Characteristics.

1.1 Introduction

Recent reports and statistics in Kenya have shown that many schools are experiencing high attrition rates of secondary school principals. In the time of systematic education reform, stable leadership is crucial in order for the leader to effectively provide a rich environment for improving student learning (Useem, Christman, Gold & Simon, 1996). Given the empirical evidence on the important role of principal's leadership to improve students' academic performance, Andrews & Soder, 1987; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Zigarelli, 1996, noted that, frequent turnover of school leaders would pose a serious challenge on implementation of educational policies. Steyn (2007) confirms the importance of leadership by pointing out that effective management of people has been identified as a key element of best practice at many leading educational organizations. Despite such possible negative consequences, little is known about causes of head teachers mobility and the effect of such movement in school achievement. The increasing pressure under current education reform to improve school achievement using accountability system has been discussed as an important factor that discourages qualified candidates from taking leadership positions (Adams, 1999; Cooley & Shen, 2000, Copland, 2001; Wangai, 2001). Other studies suggest that teachers' work changes all the time and that in the face of strong mandates; teachers are relatively powerless to resist change forces. Richardson and Placier (2001), for instance described how teacher change occurs naturally and spontaneously. Studies on external change forces have found evidence of the de-skilling (Apple, 1982), intensification (Hargreaves, 1996), marginalization (Bailey, 2000) and expansion of teachers work (Barlett, 2004). When head teachers work becomes excessively regulated, a host of unintended and negative consequences can result such as job dissatisfaction, burnout, loss of self-esteem and early departure from the profession.

Researches done by Braun and Giles (1976) and Katam (2006) revealed that teachers transfer be it classroom teachers or administrators have a great impact on team teaching and instruction at large. Demie (2002) and Kizito, Chumba & Kindiki (2010) reveal that, high teacher transfer has been found to affect academic performance at all levels. Teachers who stay in one school for a reasonably longer period of time are more efficient and more enthusiastic than those who have changed schools frequently. Research has consistently shown that principals play a significant role in school reform efforts. As the accountability gained momentum during the 1980's and 1990's, research on school effectiveness, generally referred to as effective schools research, focused on principals and their role. These studies consistently found that the principal was the key to an effective school. Research done by Zigarelli (1996) and Adams (1999) found that the unique position principals hold, as a person in a school who is responsible for and empowered to oversee the entire school activities, places them in a powerful position to coordinate the entire school operation and move it forward. Research on effective schools further revealed that the most effective principals had a clear vision of how the school could serve its students; had

aligned resources and priorities with the vision; and could engage other key players, within and outside the school, in achieving the goals embedded in the vision.

Rift Valley province is a large province characterized by economically potential areas and hardship zones. It is inhabited by different communities and therefore making it a cosmopolitan province. Placement of principals in various schools has witnessed resistance by native communities leading to rejection. Sponsors of schools have instigated transfers of school principals and influenced their appointments to lead schools. Principals are reported to have sought transfers and others moved out of responsibility for further studies or as field officers in the Ministry of Education and other Government Ministries (Kamunge, 2007, Olocho, 2005). This movement could either influence schools' achievement in terms of resource management or student achievement.

The turnover of secondary schools principals worsened following the post election violence that rocked Rift Valley Province in the early months of the year 2008. Wachira in the article, "10,000 teachers out of work", in the Daily Nation of 30th January 2008 reported that several teachers including school principals flocked the Teachers Service Commission Offices in Nairobi seeking to be transferred to safer areas. Bosire (2008) in his article, "post election strife displaced 100,000 learners", in the Daily Nation of 29th February 2008, reported that the Minister of Education while releasing 2007 Kenya certificate of secondary schools examination results noted with a lot of concern the rate at which teachers from Rift Valley Province went to Teachers Service Commission headquarters to seek for transfer due to insecurity reasons. Given the high turnover of Principals in secondary schools, the lack of research that examined the causes and effect of such mobility on school effectiveness was of great concern. Furthermore, research that sought to determine implication of mobility of Principals on school achievement was significant as one of the stated goals of Education was effective utilization and management of resources (Koech, 1999). Indeed research that connects Principals' mobility with school effectiveness may help the policy makers on appropriate policies and conditions that can be put in place to control mobility of school Principals.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Today's secondary school principals carry an enormously varied workload, which in self-managing environment includes human resources, financial and property management, and a range of other tasks such as marketing and seeking extra funds to improve the school, all while being the professional leaders of the school. The working day of the secondary school principal is characterized by a high rate of interruption, transfers and people-intensive. The statistics obtained from the Provincial Directors Office of Rift Valley Province shows high turnover of principals between the years 2006-2010 in the province. Principal turnover has the potential to impact seriously on school morale and values as teachers attempt to adjust to new administrators and their possible shifts in focus. In an era of mandated school improvement, teachers in schools with new administrators have to deal not only with changes in educational policies, but also with

adapting to the new principal. Much research focuses on leadership values (Hargreaves, 2004; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005) and more recently there has been unprecedented international interest in the question of how educational leaders influence a range of students' outcomes (Fisher, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe (2008). Change of leadership in schools tend to bring with it different leadership styles which may have a direct relationship with student outcomes. Even though principals' turnover has been in existence in Education System, there has been little done to gather information on the effect of such turnover on school effectiveness. This research therefore focused on the factors that influence principals' mobility and effects of such mobility on school effectiveness.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the factors that influence principals' mobility.
2. Determine the effect of principals' mobility on teacher characteristics.

2.1 Research Methods and Materials

This study utilized ex post facto research. Two kinds of design may be identified in ex post facto research- the co-relational (causal) study and the criterion group (causal – comparative) study. This study employed both co-relational and criterion group study designs in determining the causes of principals' mobility and its effect on school effectiveness. According to Cohen & Manion (1992) and Kothari (2008), the main characteristic of this method is that the researcher has no control over the variables; he can only report what has happened or what is happening. The variables occur in the setting, usually a natural setting, and the researcher attempts to determine the relationship and effects that are occurring between the variables (Orodho, (2009). Ex post facto research, then, is a method of teasing out possible antecedents of events that have happened and cannot, because of this fact, be engineered or manipulated by the investigator. Kothari (2008) further notes that ex post facto studies also include attempts by researchers to discover causes even when they cannot control the variables. This design therefore allows the researcher to gather data at a particular point in time with an intention of describing the nature of existing situation and determining the relationships that exist between specific events. Kombo and Tromp (2006) notes, that the major purpose of descriptive studies is description of the state of affairs as it exists.

The target population of this study included all the teachers in schools that had experienced change of principals since the year 2006-2010, in North Rift Valley Region. There were 92 secondary schools in North Rift region that had had change of school Principals during this period. A sample of 35 schools was obtained. From the sampled schools a total of 242 teachers that had experienced transition of principals in their respective schools and 35 principals constituted the sample size for the study.

2.2 Measures

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher so as to capture the various causes of principals' mobility and teachers' perceptions on how such mobility affects the schools' effectiveness. The questionnaire developed by the researcher was divided into two sections. The first section captured the factors that influence principals mobility and the second section contained questions on effects of Principals mobility on teacher characteristics

3.1 Findings and Discussion

3.2 Factors Causing Principals Mobility

It was essential to find out what triggered the various types of change. Thus the respondents were asked to indicate their perception on what influences mobility of secondary school principals on a five point Likert scale which was later collapsed to a three point scale of disagree, undecided and agree and the results were summarized in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 shows that most of the respondents 108(53%) disagreed that gender influences mobility of Principals, 81(39.6%) agreed while 15(7.4%) were undecided. The Table further reveals that 96(47.8%) of the respondents disagreed that gender influences mobility of Principals, 82(40.8%) agreed while 23(11.4%) were undecided. According to studies done by Bobbitt, Leich & Syuch (1994), Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkenic, & Maislin (1998), Grissmer & Kirby (1992), Hafuer & Owings (1991) and Kemple & Olsen (1991) the relationship between age and teacher attrition has been found to form a U-shaped curve-younger teachers have high rates of attrition, but the rates decline through the mid-career period. Yet increase again as teacher approach retirement age. Higher attrition rates are especially distinct among young women who are likely to move due to family obligations such as child-rearing. This finding is not true for secondary school principals as most of the respondents did not perceive gender and age to influence mobility of secondary school Principals. Concerning location of the school as an influencing factor on mobility of Principals, majority 128(63%) of the respondents agreed that it was a factor that determined mobility of principals. However, 66(32.6%) of the respondents disagreed while 9(4.4%) were undecided. When asked to indicate whether school type influences mobility of Principals, majority 134(65.4%) of the respondents agreed with the observation. Forty nine 49(23.9%) disagreed and only 22(10.7%) were undecided.

Studies done by Hanuschek, Kain & Rivkin (2001) found out that teachers would want to seek transfers to schools where students are known to be of high achievement. These observations are in agreement with Mont & Rees (1996) and Ingersoll (2001) who found out that educators are more likely to leave their schools with the negative working conditions. Table 5.1 further shows that 111(55%) of the respondents agreed that religious affiliation influences mobility of the principal, 65(32.1%) disagreed but 26(12.9%) were undecided. When asked whether

denomination influences transfer of a principal, most principals agreed that most churches sponsoring schools prefer principals from their denomination to head their schools. They further noted that sponsors will go out of their way to accuse heads falsely with school mismanagement in order to secure transfers for them so as to allow them have their own choice. The same Table shows that 118(57%) of the respondents agreed that political affiliation plays a role in influencing mobility of principals. However 54(26%) disagreed and 35(17%) of the respondents were undecided.

It can also be seen in Table 5.1 that majority 93(45.8%) agreed that security influences mobility of Principals, 77(37.9%) disagreed and 33(16.3%) were undecided. Some of the principals interviewed from security prone areas agreed with this finding. They noted that most schools witnessed high turnover principals and teachers due to insecurity reasons. Cattle rustling has frequently led to community conflicts and hostility which infiltrates into schools. This hostility together with post election violence of the year 2008 made most schools insecure which led to mass transfers of principals and teachers. Political affiliation in Kenya manifests itself in form of ethnicity. Wachira (2008) and Bosire (2008) noted that in the year 2008, 10,000 teachers were out of work and flocked Teachers Service Commission (TSC) seeking transfers due to ethnic stigmatizations and political affiliation. This finding further agrees with Carol et al (2001) when they observed that educators in multi ethnic communities sought transfers with ethnic reasons

A large number of the respondents 149(70.5%) agreed that mismanagement greatly influences mobility of Principals, 38(18.1%) disagreed and 24(11.4%) were undecided. Principals play a key role in administration and management of the school. Gachukia (2007) observed that the school administration is charged with the responsibility of implementing the decisions of the Board and co- ordinate all the activities of the school including curriculum implementation, supervision of human resources and maintenance and development of both material and financial resources. When Principals fail to meet these expectations school stakeholders get discontented and they will agitate for change of change of headship. Consequently, as indicated in Table 5.2 one way ANOVA was computed to find out whether the factors discussed in Table 5.1 were significant in influencing Principals mobility.

From Table 5.2 it is shown that school location is a significant ($F(3,192) = 2.658, p < .05$) factor in influencing mobility of principals in this region. On further analysis, school type, religious affiliation, security and mismanagement were found to be significant in influencing mobility of principals ($p < .05$) as shown in Table 5.2. However gender, age and political affiliation were not significant in influencing mobility of principals ($p > .05$). Principals interviewed mentioned school location, school type, religious affiliation, security and mismanagement as the main causes of principals mobility.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether change of principals had made them to report to work late. This was aimed at determining their reaction towards the new leadership. From Table 5.3 majority 129(58.9%) of the respondents disagreed, 60(27.4%) agreed while 30(13.7%) were

undecided. Table 5.3 further shows that most 120(54.9%) of the respondents agreed that they spend time after school to attend to students' individual problems, 70(31.9%) disagreed and 29(13.2%) were undecided. Majority 133(60.7%) of the respondents agreed that teachers help and support each other. However 54(23%) disagreed and 32(14.7%) were undecided. This indicates that change of headship enhances teamwork.

Concerning teachers morale 115(53.2%) agreed that their morale went up after change the schools' headship, 69(32%) disagreed while 32(14%) were undecided. This shows that change of headship boosts teachers' morale. When asked to indicate their perception on whether change of principals had led to them being closely supervised, most 99(46%) disagreed, 86(40%) agreed and 30(14%) were undecided. It is therefore evident that the element of close supervision depends on new leadership as supported by the mixed responses of existence of close supervision and lack of it.

Divergence in perception is revealed when principals interviewed noted that the impact that succession has on teachers depends the attachment that teachers had with the outgoing principal. If it was purely professional the effect will be minimal but if it was negative then the exit will be a celebration marked with a boost on teachers morale. Further Analysis of Variance for the Regression Analysis yielded the output in Table 5.4 which indicates that there is a significant relationship between mobility of Principals (Death , Transfers, Job opportunities, Study leaves and Retirement) and teachers characteristics. Since this test showed that there was a significant relationship between Principals mobility and teacher characteristics ($F(5,180) = .967, p < .05$), with an R^2 of 0.263) the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between Principals mobility and teacher characteristics.

4.1 Conclusion

Transfer was the main type of principals' mobility in this region which was mainly influenced school location, school type, religious affiliation, security and mismanagement. Other types of Principals' mobility arising from these factors include study leaves and other better job opportunities in private or public sectors.

With the coming of a new principal in a new school setting, the study reveals that teachers tend to be cooperative and very supportive to each other which are evidenced by teachers' minimal supervision, reporting to work on time and spending time with learners after classes. This may also be related to the fact that when a new principal comes to a school the teachers may be trying to create an association with them hence improving their morale.

4.2 Policy Implication

The Teachers Service Commission should not base transfers on age, gender, school location, school type, religious affiliation and political affiliation. Decisions on change of headship should be based on individual ability to lead and previous performance. The government should

harmonize teachers and civil servants salaries and allowances in order to curb labor mobility of school Principals. Further, Principals should be made more attractive with special allowance attached to the position so as to retain Principals who would otherwise seek employment elsewhere due to poor remuneration in the teaching Profession.

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