

THE MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES USED BY HEADTEACHERS IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VIHIGA DISTRICT, KENYA

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Abstract

One of the roles of a headteacher is to promote students' academic performance. The purpose of this study was to investigate the motivational strategies used by secondary school headteachers in academic achievement in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations in Vihiga district in Western province. The study was occasioned by continued poor performance by most secondary schools in Vihiga district. Literature revealed that the headteacher provides professional leadership for quality and improved standards of learning. The population of the study comprised 84 headteachers and 1,280 teachers. Saturated sampling technique was used to select a sample from the high and average performing schools, while stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample from the low performing schools. The sample comprised a total of 44 headteachers and 352 teachers from 7 high performing schools, 17 average performing schools and 20 low performing schools. Data were collected by use of questionnaires, in-depth interviews and document analysis guide instruments. A pilot study was conducted in two secondary schools which were not in the sample to test the reliability of the instruments. Data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings show that headteachers in Vihiga district, Kenya, use strategies such as: rewards, guiding, and counseling to motivate teachers. It is recommended that headteachers enhance teacher motivation in order to achieve good academic results.

Key words: *academic achievement, effectiveness, efficiency, head teacher, high performing schools, motivation, performance, school size, staffing, supervision.*

Background to the Study

The education system in Kenya is examination oriented. The quality of education offered by any school is judged in terms of the number of students who perform well in national examinations (Eshiwani, 1993). For this matter, educators and the general public in Kenya have often expressed concern over factors that influence student performance in national examinations. The organizational management of schools greatly influences student academic outcomes. Several scholars (Rutter et al., 1979, Wekesa, 1993) note that in order to improve students' performance, the headteacher is first of all required to improve the management of the school in general. This can be done by setting a clear vision for the school and communicating the vision to students: support the achievement of

the vision by giving instructional leadership; provide resources; and, be visible in every part of the institution that account for students' academic performance.

Both the government and parents expect teachers to perform better at their present levels of learning. The whole issue of students' performance should be considered from the broad framework of input and output. One of the core functions of schools is to take raw material (students) and convert them into valuable commodities i.e. employable adults. Of paramount importance, therefore, is the proper management of teachers for its absence will invariably lead to low productivity (Republic of Kenya, 1988) and poor performance of students. Headteachers as schools' chief executives are charged with this daunting task of managing teachers among other school resources for high academic achievement.

Research and inspection have ascertained that the quality of leadership makes the difference between the success and failure of a school (Millette, 1988). In highly effective schools, as well as schools which have reversed a trend of poor performance and declining achievement, it is the headteacher who sets the pace by leading and motivating students and staff to perform to their highest potential. As such, schools make a difference to students' achievement; headteachers' motivational strategies are some of the factors which contribute to students' academic success. Other school factors that the headteacher ought to address due to their influence on students' behaviour and scholastic achievement include: Amount of teaching and degree of academic emphasis; the extent and nature of ability groupings; teacher expectation; styles of teaching and classroom management; size of the school; and, patterns of discipline and characteristics of school climate (Rutter et al., 1979).

According to Sushila (2004), the headteacher is the leader in a school, the pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve, and the person in charge of every detail of the running of the school be it academic or administrative. The headteacher should be involved in making most of the decisions of the school. It is therefore important that, the headteacher is a leader, a thinker and a decision maker. A discreet headteacher will employ teamwork as a working strategy. S/he will set up committees and smaller groups of members of staff to investigate ideas or strategies. It therefore behoves the headteacher to be a good team player upon whom the performance of a school is appraised.

Kwakwa (1973), describes the headteacher as the keeper of keys, the director of transportation, the coordinator of correspondence, the quartermaster of stores, the divisor of intricate schedules, the publisher of handbooks, the director of public relations and the instructional leader; the headteacher is a key person in any education system. S/he takes care of the final arrangements for the education of students in a school. His/her role cannot be taken for granted, hence, the focus of this study.

Wandiba (1996), remarked that schools in Western Kenya, once the pride of the nation in academic excellence, have dropped drastically in educational standards. He attributed these poor standards to unpreparedness among members of the teaching fraternity, rampant absenteeism and drunkenness. Therefore, one can conclude that something is wrong as far as teacher competency and instructional matters are concerned and only

those headteachers who are keen on good performance will resolve this problem. It is against this background that a research need arose to determine the motivational strategies used by headteachers in academic achievement in Vihiga District.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the motivational strategies the headteachers use to improve academic achievement in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination in Vihiga District.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to identify the headteachers' motivational strategies for the teachers to achieve good academic performance in their subjects.

Research Question

The following specific research question guided the study, what motivational strategies does the headteacher use to achieve good academic performance in Vihiga district?

Statement of the Problem

Performance in national examinations in secondary schools in Vihiga district is poor. The expected maximum mean score is 12 the equivalent of grade A, while the minimum score is 1 the equivalent of grade E. The performance of the district in national examinations between the years 2000-2003 as shown in Table 1 gives a comparison of Vihiga district with other districts in the province.

Table 1. Western Province KCSE Performance by District & Year.

District	Mean Score			
	2000	2001	2002	2003
Butere/Mumias	5.61	5.36	5.25	5.38
Teso	5.24	5.12	5.03	5.42
Bungoma	5.37	4.79	4.58	5.38
Busia	4.9	5.21	5.43	5.76
Mt. Elgon	4.55	4.81	4.41	4.67
Vihiga	4.50	60	4.45	4.46
Kakamega	4.65	.73	4.87	4.55

Source: PDE's Statistics Office, Kakamega: 2004

The descriptive statistics in table 1 indicate that poor performance in Vihiga district has persisted despite the fact that schools in the district are assumed to be having: adequate and well-trained teachers, fairly well qualified pupils from primary schools, as well as trained and qualified headteachers. More specifically, Vihiga district had the lowest mean score in the years 2000, 2001 and 2003. It registered the second lowest mean score in 2002. Undoubtedly, the reasons for poor performance in the district cannot be easily discerned without focused investigation. Examination performance generally has shown that a majority of schools which display good results each year have adequate facilities and effective human resources (Verhoeven and Gheysen, 1993). Certainly, the scenario in Vihiga district is different. The district has consistently posted poor examination results in the previous years. Table 2 contains data captured in 2003.

Table 2. 2003 Vihiga District K.C.S.E Performance by Category.

Category	No	%
High performing schools	7	8.33
Average performing schools	17	20.24
Low performing schools	60	71.43
Total	84	100.00

Source: DEO's Statistics Office, Kakamega: 2004

Statistics in Table 2 show that only 7 (8.33 percent) are high performing schools, 17 (20.24 percent) are average performing schools and 60 (71.43 percent) are low performing schools. The high number of poor performing schools reflects the general picture of performance in Vihiga district. The issue of poor academic performance in examinations signifies a critical impediment in any country since education is a major contributor to economic growth (Atkinson, 1987). As earlier noted, head-teachers play a significant role in determining academic performance in a school due to their varied critical tasks and roles. Their tactful fulfillment of their roles together with their consistent motivation of teachers determine the level of teacher in-put and student academic achievement. The puzzle in Vihiga district however, is that the district has consistently performed poorly academically.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual Framework is useful to the study in various ways. First the study is based on the premise that headship plays a significant role in determining academic performance. Second, headship encompasses a variety of tasks and roles whose effective operationalisation positively affects academic achievement. In this study it was noted that secondary schools' high academic achievement was influenced by a high level of teacher motivation. The focus was on the headteacher who is the central independent variable. A headteacher ensures that there is a high level of teacher motivation which contributes towards effective teaching resulting into high academic performance by students. Motivational strategies used by headteachers to achieve good results may include: rewards, and discipline. This study's conceptual model is diagrammatically demonstrated in Figure 1.

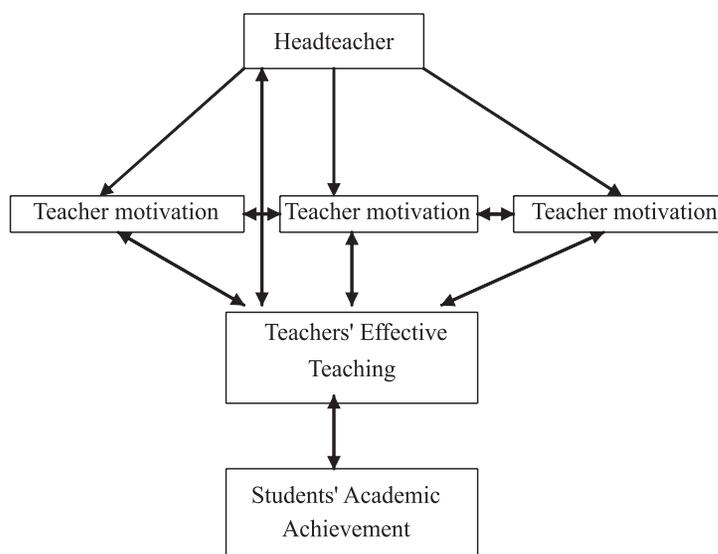


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the motivational role of the headteacher in academic achievement.

Methodology of Research

Research Design

Descriptive analysis design was used in this study. Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) describe descriptive analysis as that method that involves asking a large group of people questions about a particular issue. Information is obtained from a sample rather than the entire population at one point in time which may range from one day to a few weeks. This study employed descriptive analysis to establish opinions and knowledge about the role of the headteacher in academic achievement. Any research undertaking involves lots of cost implications hence this design was deliberately selected for the study because it allows for quick data collection at a comparatively cheap cost (Grinnell, 1993).

Area of Study

Vihiga district of Western province formed the study area. It was carved out of Kakamega district in 1991. It borders Kakamega district on the North, Nandi to the East, Kisumu district to the South and Siaya to the Southwest. The district is divided into six administrative divisions namely Vihiga, Sabatia, Tiriki East, Tiriki West, Emuhaya and Luanda. According to the National Population census of 1989, the district had a total population of 460,538 (Republic of Kenya, 1997).

Study Population

The study focused on the 84 secondary schools in Vihiga District with a population of 84 headteachers and 1,280 teachers. The high performing schools were seven, average performing schools were 17 and the remaining 60 were poor performing schools. The district has 13 girls' secondary boarding schools, seven boys' secondary boarding schools and 64 mixed boarding and day secondary schools. This district has more mixed day than single sex secondary boarding schools. That could be attributed to the high poverty levels in the district that made boarding fees too high for most parents to afford. The secondary schools that met the conditions of the study were those that had presented candidates for the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) between 2000- 2003.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The secondary schools were stratified into high performing schools with a mean score of 6.00 and above in KCSE examinations; average performing schools with a mean score of 5.00 to 5.9 in KCSE examinations; and, low performing schools with a mean score of 4.9 and below in KCSE examinations (of 2000 to 2003). The identification of schools was based on the mean examination scores posted in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations for the four years of study (2000-2003). Saturated sampling method was used to select the high and average performing schools because they are few, while stratified random sampling method was used to select the poor performing schools. There were seven high performing schools, 17 average performing schools and 60 poor performing schools. A third of the poor performing schools were randomly sampled. A sample of 44 schools was selected based on the above stratification. The principals of the 44 sampled schools participated in the study. Similarly, 8 teachers from each school were randomly sampled to participate. In total 396 respondents were selected for the study. The population and the sample of the study are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Schools stratified by performance and sample selection.

Schools mean score	Girls	Boys	Mixed	Total	Sample
6.00 and above	3	3	1	7	7
5.00-5.99	3	4	10	17	17
1.00-4.99	7	0	53	60	20
Total	13	7	64	84	44

Source: DE O's Statistics Office, Vihiga: 2003

The data were collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. The questionnaire was suitable as a method of data collection because it allowed the researcher to reach a larger sample of respondents within limited time. It also ensured confidentiality of the information and thus gathered more candid and objective replies. The questionnaires were prepared both for headteachers and class teachers.

Face to face interviews were also used because they helped to enlist the cooperation of respondents. Borg et al. (1993) observe that questionnaires are often used to collect basic descriptive information from a large sample while interviews are used to follow up

Questionnaires' responses with a smaller sub-sample for in-depth data. These two instruments were used in this study for the purpose of triangulation and data cross-checking.

The Headteachers' Questionnaire (H/TQ)

The headteachers' questionnaire had two sections. Section A of the questionnaire comprised general information from the school. Section B comprised open-ended questions related to the motivational role of the headteacher. The number of respondents was seven from the high performing secondary schools, 17 from the average performing secondary schools and 20 headteachers from the low performing secondary schools.

The Teachers' Questionnaire (C/TQ)

The teachers' questionnaire was used to collect data on the headteachers' motivational strategies in academic performance in Vihiga District. Part one of the questionnaire sought information on education inputs prevailing in schools that affected performance. This included the headteachers' motivation. In part two of the section the teachers were asked to give their views on how the headteachers would promote academic achievement in the schools. The number of respondents was 56 from the high performing schools, 136 from the average performing schools, and 160 from the low performing schools.

Interviews

Face to face interviews of 44 headteachers of the schools involved in the study were conducted. The headteachers were better placed to give detailed information on the study. The interviews were administered to the principals of high, average and low performing schools with an aim of getting more information on the motivational role of the headteacher in academic achievement. Responses from interviews were recorded under headings emerging from interviews with the interviewees. It was hoped that this would give a deeper insight into the inputs that would be associated more with examination performance.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

In order to ascertain content and face validity, the questionnaires and in-depth interviews were presented to three lecturers in the Department of Educational Management and Foundations at Maseno University who are authorities in the area for scrutiny and advice. The contents and impressions of the instruments were improved based on the authorities' advice and comments. The questionnaire and interview items were then constructed in a way that they related to each question. That ensured that all research questions were covered.

Grinnell (1993), observes that reliability measures the degree of accuracy in the measurements an instrument provides. It ensures that the instruments generate similar data when used by independent researchers. He further observes that to remove possible errors, every instrument should be tested before it is formally administered. To ensure reliability of the instruments the researcher conducted a pilot study in two secondary schools in Vihiga district before the actual

study. The two schools were not included in the main study. The main purpose of the pilot study was to check on suitability and the clarity of the questions on the instruments designed, relevance of the information being sought, the language used and the content validity of the instruments from the responses given.

Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were appropriately used to provide for description, analysis and interpretation of circumstances prevailing at the time of study. These included averages, percentages, frequencies and totals. This approach provides level understanding of the findings to majority of readers (Gay, 1992). Accordingly a number of tables and charts were used to present the data findings. Once the coding was completed, the responses were transferred into a summary sheet by tabulating. This was then tallied to establish frequencies, which were converted to percentage of the total number. Responses from open-ended questions were recorded. To determine the frequencies of each response, the number of respondents giving similar answers was converted to percentages to illustrate related levels of opinion.

Responses from in-depth interviews were transcribed and later organized into themes and categories that emerged (Gall et al., 1996; Achoka, 2003).

Results and Discussion

Motivational Strategies used by Headteachers for Good Academic Results

The headteachers were asked to state the motivational strategies they used for teachers to improve their schools' academic performance. Their responses are summarized as shown in Tables 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4. Headteachers' motivational Strategies in High Performing Schools by Rank.

Motivational Strategy	Score	Rank
Rewards	7 (100.00)	1
G/Counselling	6 (85.71)	2
Discipline	5 (71.43)	3
School Identity	4 (57.14)	4

It is observed from Table 4, that all the seven (100%) headteachers in high performing secondary schools used rewards to motivate the teachers. Six (86%) headteachers guided and counseled their teachers for good academic performance. Five (71%) headteachers used discipline to motivate the teachers. Four (57%) headteachers employed school identity to motivate the teachers. Thus, rewards played a significant role in motivational strategies used by headteachers to either improve or maintain a high academic performance in KCSE in Vihiga district. Interestingly, Guidance and Counseling were strategically very important

in motivating teachers. This means that headteachers took much time guiding as well as counseling their teachers for high academic performance. Discipline was ranked third. Apparently without discipline, neither teachers nor students can score high in teaching and examinations respectively. Although school identity was ranked 4th (last), over 55 % of the headteachers recognized it as an important strategy in teacher motivation. This was interesting because by

implication, poor school identity can not attract “good” teachers. Accordingly, students in such schools can not achieve highly in KCSE examinations.

Table 5. Headteachers’ motivational Strategies in Average Performing Schools by Rank.

Motivational Strategy	Score	Rank
G/Counseling	13 (76.47)	1
Rewards	11 (64.71)	2
Discipline	11 (64.71)	2
School Identity	9 (52.94)	4

Table 5 shows that 13 (76.47%) headteachers in the average performing schools guided and counseled their teachers for good academic performance. Guiding and counseling was ranked second as a motivational strategy in the high performing schools. Rewards and discipline were employed by 11(64.71%) headteachers to motivate the teachers. School identity was used by nine (52.94%) headteachers. This motivational strategy was also ranked fourth in the high performing schools category. The percentage of teachers who used it in both schools was almost the same. Thus guiding and counseling played a very significant role in motivational strategies used by headteachers to improve on the academic performance of their schools. Rewards and discipline were also found to be very important motivational strategies. School identity can not be ignored since over 50% of the headteachers in the average performing schools used it as a motivational strategy.

Table 6. Motivational Strategies Used by Headteachers in Low Performing Schools.

Motivational Strategy	Score	Rank
Rewards	12 (60)	1
Discipline	12 (60)	1
School Identity	8 (40)	3
G/Counseling	5 (25)	4

As shown in Table 6 twelve (60%) headteachers in the low performing schools employed the use of rewards and discipline. Rewards were ranked first and second in the high and average performing schools respectively. While discipline was ranked third in both high and average performing schools. Eight (40 %) headteachers employed school identity to motivate the teachers. School identity is ranked third here, while in the high and average performing schools it is ranked last. Only five (25 %) headteachers used guiding and counseling as a motivational strategy. This strategy was ranked highest in average performing schools and second in high performing schools. It is observed that the highest score thus 60% on the four strategies used by headteachers in the low performing schools implies that most of them did not put these strategies into consideration. These low scores therefore, explain the poor performance in the low performing schools. The low performing schools are more than the average and high performing schools. Although all headteachers in all categories of schools used the same strategies, they differed in emphasis put on the various strategies. This could mean that headteachers in low performing schools lacked persistent and consistent use of

guiding and counseling, rewards, discipline and school identity. This made it very difficult for these schools to perform well.

From these observations it is evident that high motivation of teachers contributed to high academic achievement. It was revealed by the data from the questionnaires and interviews that headteachers used rewards, guidance and counseling, discipline and school identity to motivate their teachers. The six (85.71%) headteachers in high performing schools, 11 (67.71%) in average performing schools and 12 (60%) in the low performing schools who said that they used rewards were asked to specify how they motivated the teachers. The teachers were given free break time tea and lunch, money for quality grades in their subjects and trips to various places. Therefore motivation of teachers was not only just through verbal praises and other non-monetary rewards such as letters of appreciation, presentation of gifts and promotions. Mbiti (1974) and Decenzo and Robinson (1986) all concur that non-financial rewards are equally important as financial rewards. According to Mbiti (1974) an administration where the employees cannot hope to receive a word of commendation or sympathy from their superiors at a time of need is inhuman. The headteacher is also expected to provide the right motivation and stimulation for teachers so as to enhance high academic performance

Conclusion

Performance was bound to be high in schools where motivation and guiding and counseling were employed. Motivation of teachers is indispensable if they are to remain productive. When teachers are highly motivated they do their work with enthusiasm and interest since motivation involves maintaining competence and interest in the work of the teacher. As a result the motivated teachers enable the students to perform better in national examinations.

Policy Recommendation

The Kenya Education Staff Institute should train headteachers on teacher motivation in order to improve academic performance in secondary schools in Kenya.

Practice Recommendations

The findings of the study have implications for practice. Therefore the following are the recommendations emanating from the findings of the study:

- a. Headteachers should find various ways of motivating the teachers. The following measures were recommended:
- b. Presentation of awards, prizes, gifts and presents can be used to raise higher performance in various subjects.
- c. Other incentives such as: meals, special ceremonies (parties), proper criteria and procedure in promotion, assistance related to teachers' personal problems, disciplining of teachers confidentially, provision of proper staff room and space to work should be attended to in order to boost individual teacher morale in teaching for academic performance.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study did not exhaust all matters related to high academic achievement at KCSE in Vihiga district. Other issues emanated from the study that require further investigation. These are as follows:

1. Research should be done on other strategies used by headteachers in academic achievement in secondary schools.
2. Research should also be done on the headteachers' motivation of students, non-teaching and subordinate staff.
3. More comprehensive studies should be undertaken to include a larger population in order to establish whether the problem transcends other districts.
4. Studies should be carried out on time management by headteachers to give a precise understanding of how much time is spend on motivating teachers to perform highly.
5. In future, studies should be done to establish the role of BOGs and PTAs in motivating teachers for high performance.

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