

THE LEVELS OF TEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGERIAL DECISION MAKING IN SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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Abstract

Making decisions is one of the prime functions of educational management and in the current educational setup; more teachers are taking management roles in schools. This study therefore assessed the teachers' involvement in managerial decision making in secondary schools within Keiyo district. The specific objectives were to: determine areas in which teachers are involved in decision making in secondary schools, establish levels of teachers' involvements in decision making in secondary schools. The entire study was propounded on the basis of Vroom-Yetton-Jago Contingency Theory of participative decision making (1988). This study was conducted by cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from a sample of 17 head teachers, 17 deputy head teachers, 51 head of departments and 51 class teachers. The instruments of data collection were: questionnaires, and interviews. Findings indicate that teachers in secondary schools are involved in managerial decisions but at lower levels. The study recommends that head teachers evaluate and identify teachers' needs on managerial decisions in order to facilitate further training on the same. This in turn would encourage teachers' participation and enhance team spirit in decision making that would result in efficiency in management of secondary schools.

Key words: decision making, education, management, participation, teachers.

Introduction

Participative decision-making is conceived as an aspect of shared leadership, and the idea of involving teachers in school-level decision-making is known by many names. Several scholars including Kahrs, 1996; Marks and Louis, 1997; Reitzug, 1994; Rice and Schneider, 1994, have studied teacher empowerment as concept that is related to teacher participation in decision-making. While participative decision-making is a system or structure, teacher empowerment represents an internal perception by teachers of having increased authority in their positions. According to Rinehart and Short (1998), primarily, empowerment has been defined as a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems.

The centrality of the role and influence of the head teacher in shared decision-making has been well documented. Blase and Blase,(2000) pointed out the need for research addressing the personal and professional socialization factors linked to the development of head teachers' perspectives on shared governance and leadership. The literature on participative decision-making has focused primarily on the study of teachers, relying on teachers' self-reports of their views and experiences with participative decision making and neglected the voice of the head teacher (Somech, 2002).

A reason for involving teachers in participative decision making is to improve the quality of decisions that a school makes and the effectiveness of the school in achieving its goals.

It is therefore useful that school administrators have enough knowledge of how and when to involve teachers in decision making Maritim, (1988). Where teacher leadership begins to flourish is where headteachers have actively supported it or, at least, encouraged it (Crowther *et al.*, 2002). Headteachers clearly are viewed as persons with the greatest power, and the one who sets the tone for the relationship between headteacher and teachers. Looking deeper into the relationship between headteachers and teachers, Smylie and Hart (2000) have used the concepts of human and social capital in framing school leadership. In addressing the role of headteachers in developing teacher leaders, they have also focused on the importance of interpersonal relationships. Smylie and Hart, (2000) argue that,

...the research is clear that head teachers play a vital role in the development and maintenance of social capital among teachers. Their contributions come through creating structures and occasions for interaction to take place...Beyond these managerial functions, head teachers play an active role in fostering productive social relations within the structures they may help create. They foster social trust by exhibiting consistency and competence in their work.... p.436.

The above studies' emphasis on the need for interpersonal relations between head teachers and the teachers in order to foster managerial functions in schools.

It is critical therefore, for head teachers to be aware of both modes of participation; – influence and authority and to be mindful of which strategy for involving teachers is most appropriate in each decision domain. Thus another role of the headteacher is to discern which decision domains require formal involvement of teachers and which require involvement limited to influence (Conley, 1989). Kahrs, (1996) suggests formal structures that headteachers can develop, when appropriate, to empower teachers. These include structures that are commonly seen in schools: a leadership team, a staff development committee, a curriculum development committee, teachers hiring and peer evaluation teams, inclusive budgeting process and school traditions of teacher recognition and celebrations.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1. To determine areas in which teachers are involved in managerial decision making in secondary schools.
2. To establish levels of involvement in decision making among various categories of teachers in secondary schools in Keiyo district.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is based on Vroom-Yetton- Jago- Contingency Theory (1988). The theory is essentially a model for deciding how much subordinate should participate in decision making process. It suggests decision making based on the characteristics of the situation in which the leader determines an appropriate decision style that specifies the amount of subordinate participation. The theory of critical model suggests that leaders should have skills to apply decision making styles in a continuum from highly autocratic to highly consultative. The model is designed to protect the quality of the decision and to ensure decision acceptance by all the subordinates.

The model requires the use of decision trees and to use one of the trees the manager assesses the situation in terms of several factors. The assessment involves 'yes' or 'no' answers

to a series of questions. The answers has four categories; two for group level decisions and two for individual level decisions one of each for use when time is of utmost importance and other for when time is less important and the manager wants to develop the subordinates' decision making abilities (Moorhead and Griffin, 2000) and guide the manager to arrive at a recommended course of action. The decision maker finally arrives at a decision which indicates what decision style to be applied to the favorableness of decision situation.

This theory is linked to the undertaken study in that the headteachers are basically managers in their respective schools and are bestowed with authority to make decisions than the rest of the teachers. Hence the study sets to assess the extent to which headteachers in secondary schools involve the rest of the teachers in managerial decision making. The theory appears to be a tool that managers can apply with some confidence in deciding how much subordinates should participate in decision making (Moorhead and Griffin, 2000).

Methodology of Research

This study relied on cross-sectional survey design. According to (Kothari, 2004), survey designs are efficient methods of collecting data regarding the characteristics of populations, current practices and conditions or needs. It is a good method in social sciences that help describe a large population. Cross-sectional research design was used in this study in order to obtain data from selected samples of respondents and was able to generalize the findings to the population from which the sample was drawn.

This study was carried out in secondary schools in Keiyo District, in Rift Valley Province. Keiyo District is situated along the Rift Valley escarpment. The district currently has 34 public secondary schools, which have taken part in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE); 6 of which are boys' boarding schools, 8 girls' boarding schools, 14 co-educational day schools, and 4 co-educational boarding schools. The target population for this study was all the 466 secondary school teachers from all the 34 secondary schools in the district. This consisted of 34 head teachers, 34 deputy head teachers, 118 head of departments 200 class teachers and 80 other teachers.

Data Collection Instruments

In the study data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. In this study, questionnaires with both close-ended and open-ended questions were designed and administered to the deputy head teachers, head of departments and class teachers. The instrument was appropriate due to the large number of the respondents hence helped to reduce time and even costs. The instrument helped to obtain important and honest information from the teachers given that there was no indication of names anywhere in the questionnaires. Each item in the questionnaire was designed to address a specific objective, research question or hypothesis of the study.

The use of interview schedules to collect data was appropriate given that they were a smaller group of respondents as compared the rest. The Interview schedules helped to standardize the interview situation so that the researcher could ask the same questions in a similar manner.

The researcher set a convenient day for interview with the head teachers of the selected schools. The researcher also requested head teachers to avail relevant documents in the school such as staff minutes files. Requisition and procurement files, students' discipline files among others

Results of Research

Areas that Class Teachers are Involved in Managerial Decisions in Secondary Schools in Keiyo District

The study sought to establish the areas that class teachers were involved in managerial decisions in secondary schools within Keiyo district. The data was collected from categories of respondents; class teachers, followed by the heads of Departments and Deputy head teachers.

The study established that class teachers were more involved in management decisions such as: seeking opinion on matters of students' discipline, during choice of school prefects, drawing up programs for important school functions, and involvement in announcement of students' results. The class teachers were however less involved in drawing up staff meeting agenda, involvement in writing of students' school certificate, as well as involvement in admission of new students and procurement of educational materials. Finally, class teachers felt they were almost completely excluded from consultation before admission of new students, when writing school leaving certificate and during formulation of staff meeting agenda. This shows that headteachers involve the rest of teachers in management decisions but in areas that are not directly related to the central running of the schools. The class teachers were more involved in issues oriented towards academic success of the students rather than in the entire running of the schools. This was evident when class teachers expressed their displeasure at being given fewer opportunities when admitting new students, writing school leaving certificates and during staff meeting agenda formulation.

Similarly, the decisions concerning management of schools were left in the hands of head teachers while decisions concerning students' progress were left to the class teachers. Earlier study by Sorensen and Baum (1999), reported that even in schools that have well trained teachers in management, the head teachers and the overall school management boards usually find it more difficult to entrust the teachers with opportunities that will involve direct management.

However, from the perspective of training among the teachers, the teachers were trained to teach students and many are more interested in inculcating knowledge to their students. As a result, majority of the teachers are either not knowledgeable in the key areas of decisions concerning the management or running of the schools or are simply trying to avoid making decisions in areas that are being managed by their seniors. Perhaps, the head teachers and schools management are also not interested to bring on board decisions of the teachers through sheer beliefs that they are not competent to comment on issues that cut across students affairs boundaries. Such findings have been observed by Rodger, (1977) who observed that many head teachers often have a belief that teachers have professional duty of teaching and not getting involved with the internal affairs such as running of the school.

Areas where Heads of Departments are Involved in Managerial Decisions

The study also sought to determine the areas that the heads of departments from the selected schools were involved in. The study found out that heads of departments were more involved in included critical management areas of students' issues such as: involvement in the choice of school prefects, setting of internal exams, making school teaching timetables, choosing subjects to be offered in school and punishing of errant students. On the other hand, head of departments were less involved in procurement of materials for the schools at, drawing of staff meetings agenda at, sending home indiscipline students and taking decisions in absence of head teachers. As such the head of departments did not feel confident about their involvement in managerial decisions in the last four items listed above. Just like the class teachers arguments in

the areas of management decisions that they were more positive about, the head of departments were involved in management decisions in areas touching on the integrity of the students and academic performance in their areas of jurisdiction. These areas were diverse and included management decisions on issues such as choice of school prefects, setting of internal exams, making teaching timetables, choosing subjects to be offered in schools and punishing of errant students.

This seems to concur with Witty (2003) who asserted that in many schools, the heads of departments in schools have a role to ensure that the departments that they head are sailing in the academic spheres. The key departments considered in this study were Linguistics, Mathematics, Sciences, Arts and Counselling. All these departments except counselling are departments involved with academic performance. As such the teachers that were heading them were supposed to ensure that the students there are of good discipline and that they could perform well in third academic cycles. This explains why many of the head of departments were more concerned about choosing the class prefects who will ensure proper discipline is maintained in the classroom. They also contributed immensely to setting internal exams to ensure that the exams are of good quality to help improve the overall academics standards in the school.

The head of departments however, felt that they were denied the chance to be involved with other issues of management decisions that touch on the top level management of the schools. In this front (47.5%) were not happy about the issues of procurement of materials for the schools, (42.5%) on drawing of staff meeting agenda, (40%) on sending home indiscipline students and (40%) on taking decisions in absence of head teachers. This indicates that heads of departments are less involved in the decisions that touch on the direct management of the schools.

Such seclusions of teachers in the management of the schools on issues that are critical have been highlighted by Ford (1996), who indicated that many head teachers and school management boards often hide a lot of issues under the carpet because there is lack of transparency in the entire management protocols. The lapse of proper management procedures often result because head teachers are being dictatorial. When the teachers have proper scrutiny of the entire deal then the head teachers are afraid of being exposed. Such state of affair has often resulted to improper procurement of materials; sometimes of low quality but at inflated prices (Rinehart *et al.*, 2008).

Areas where Deputy Head Teachers are Involved in Managerial Decisions

The study further determined the areas that the deputy head teachers are involved in decision making in secondary schools. The response showed that deputy head teachers were more involved in several areas of management during the process of decision-making in their schools. The areas where the deputy head teachers were more involved in and as such they were more positive about them included: consultation with head teachers to set internal and external exams both at (87,5%) and (82.5%) respectively, making of timetable and choosing of prefects for the school both at (85%) . Conversely, the deputy head teachers felt that there were some areas in the management hierarchy where they were less considered to provide decision making in the schools. These areas were also diverse but key among them were: less involvement in writing schools leaving certificates at (47.5%), taking charge of the school in absence of the head teachers at (60%) and consultation before sending any indiscipline student home at (62.2%).

The Areas that the Head Teachers Attested to Involve Teachers in Managerial Decisions in Secondary Schools in Keiyo District

The final part of this study was to establish the key management areas where the teachers were involved in managerial decision in secondary schools within Keiyo District, looked at managerial decisions that the head teachers attested to involve the teachers. This was done through interview for the head teachers in order to verify the same information obtained through the questionnaires.

The management decision areas where the head teachers allowed more involvement from the teachers included: consultation on the choice of prefects, writing school leaving certificates, choice of subject to be offered by the school to the students, when sending students for fee breaks, admitting new students, and when procuring the teaching facilities. The head teachers expressed their reservations to consult teachers when sending students for half-term breaks and in drawing up staff meetings agenda which painted a picture of low enthusiasm about the two management decision areas.

Levels of Teachers' Involvement in Decision Making

The study also sought to establish the levels of involvement of the teachers in the managerial decision in secondary schools within Keiyo District. The levels of involvement of teachers in the managerial decision were computed based on the ranked scores of the Likert scale questions that were used. Here the presentations of the levels of involvement are presented as means on a scale of 1-4 (Likert scale). Scale 1-2 shows low levels of involvement, 3 shows moderate levels and 4 shows higher levels of teachers' involvement in the decisions making. The overall levels of involvement in the managerial decisions in secondary schools within Keiyo district among the teachers, head of departments, deputy head teachers and head teachers is shown in Figure 1.

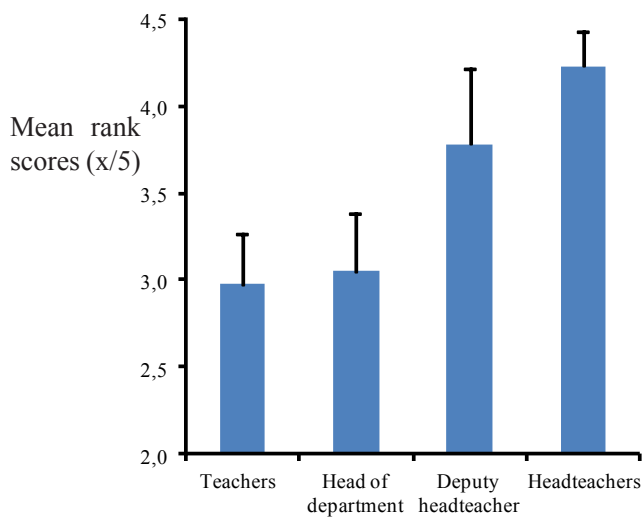


Figure 1: Levels of respondents' involvement in managerial decisions in secondary schools.

The class teachers had mean rank scores of 2.98 out of 4, which mean that they were moderately involved in the managerial decisions in secondary schools in Keiyo district. The head of departments also had moderate levels of involvement in decision making in the schools

(Mean Rank score = 3.05). The deputy headteachers on the other hand, had higher levels of involvement in managerial decision making in secondary schools of Keiyo district (Mean Rank score = 3.78).

The class teachers and head of departments therefore were moderately involved in managerial decision making in the secondary schools within Keiyo District while the deputy headteachers had higher levels of involvement in the managerial decisions within the schools. The feeling of decisional deprivation among the teachers in the management decisions were related to the perception of administrators as exercising high decisional control in agreement with Alutto and Belasco, (1972). From their study, Alutto and Belasco (1972) concluded that shared decision-making may not be a viable administrative strategy for all segments of the school population.

Discrimination on the levels of involvement in managerial decision making among class teachers, heads of departments, and deputy head teachers were further done based on four parameters under study: gender of the respondents, age, levels of education and types of school.

Levels of Involvement in Managerial Decisions among Teachers from Different Types of Schools

The information concerning the differences in the levels of involvement among the class teachers, head of departments and deputy headteachers and headteachers from different types of school is as shown in Figure.2

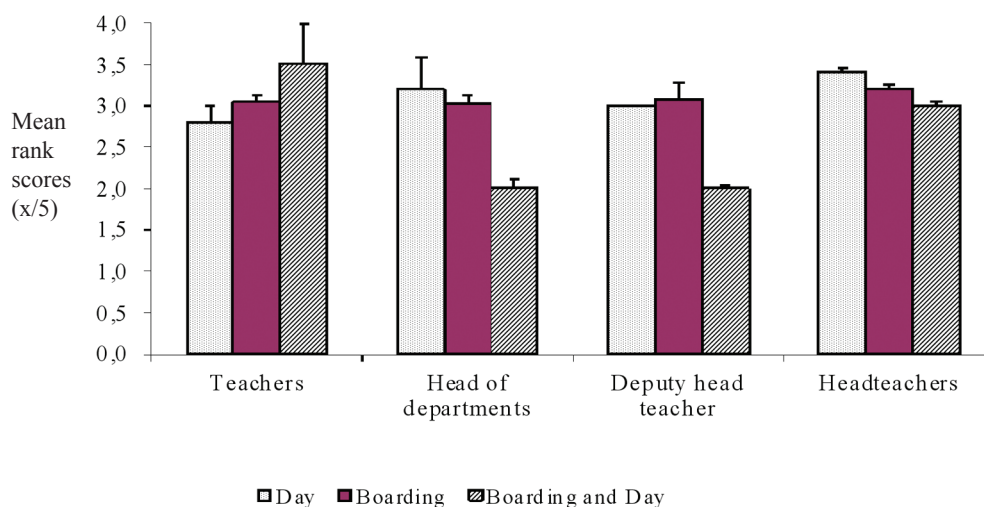


Figure 2: Levels of involvement in managerial decisions among teachers from different types of schools.

Conclusion

Teachers in secondary schools are involved in managerial decisions in many different areas of decision making. Whereas the head teachers are involved in management protocols that enhance student performances as well as running of the entire school the rest of the teachers participate mainly in decisions that are geared towards improved academic performance for the students. Teachers in secondary schools therefore have managerial decision needs which are unrecognized and unmet in many secondary schools merely because it is the head teachers that take up most of the managerial decisions.

Teachers' levels of involvement in managerial decision making are varied. The head teachers and the deputy head teachers have higher levels of involvement compared to the rest of the teachers.

Recommendations

Head teachers should evaluate teachers on management decision making to suggest further training needs if the teachers are less competent in undertaking management decisions.

There is need for school management in secondary schools to develop special programs which are in harmony with the basic principles of education, for teachers with low levels of management.

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