

# CONSTRAINTS TO PRINCIPALS' DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY TO TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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## **Abstract**

*This research paper presents the principals' practices in delegating responsibility to teachers in public secondary schools in Kenya. A random sample of 20 secondary schools was used where 120 teachers filled questionnaires, and 20 principals from the selected schools were interviewed. Both the questionnaire and interview guide were designed based on six research questions. The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methodology. The study revealed that responsibilities related to financial decisions were not delegated. Teachers needed to consult before making any decisions on delegated responsibilities. There was little preparation of teachers for delegated responsibility; had limited opportunity to attend seminars and staff development programmes; little support was given to them, and had little or no guidance from the principals. Lack of finances, inadequate training, understaffing, and lack of cooperation among the teachers constrained the process of delegation. It is suggested, among other recommendations, that schools should be adequately financed and staffed, while motivation and staff development programmes need to enhancement in order to improve the effectiveness of the delegation process.*

**Key words:** *consult, delegating, leadership, responsibility, school principals.*

## **Introduction**

The role of the secondary school principal is very crucial in meeting the objectives of the whole secondary school of education. However, the role of the principal has become more complex that the principal needs to share the responsibilities with others in the school through delegation. While delegation involved empowerment of employees as stated above, certain factors should be taken into consideration such as defining the delegated task, capacity, and interest of the person to be delegated the task. Sutherland and Canwell (2004) asserted further that delegation usually began with the identification of an individual suitable to perform a particular task. The person needed to be prepared, and above all, given the authority in order to carry out the job properly. Further, delegation required the leader to support and monitor progress, and once the tasks were completed, to acknowledge that the job was completed successfully.

### *Problem of Research*

Delegation of responsibility to teachers and other staff in the school relieves the principal from many pressures of work. According to Eyre and Pettinger (1999), if delegation of

responsibility was not effective it could lead to work overload, delayed or inaccurate decisions, stress, mistrust, resentment, and low morale among the staff. It was also apparent that, without effective delegation by school administrators, cases of inefficiency, disharmony, and a poor working environment could result (Missik, 2004). Despite the importance of delegation of responsibility in schools, there were still barriers that affected the effectiveness of delegation. There was, therefore, need to establish whether principals were not willing to delegate certain responsibilities, and find out constraints to delegation of responsibility.

### *Research Focus*

In an educational assessment report for secondary schools in Nandi North District, a team composed of 16 quality assurance officers and auditors drawn from four provinces in Kenya carried out an assessment in 20 public secondary schools in the district. The report revealed that delegated duties were poorly supervised in most schools, leading to poor performance of duties and non achievement of set goals and targets. These findings confirmed that there were inadequacies in the delegation process among headteachers in secondary schools in Nandi North district.

The literature by Jones and Walters (1994), Hargreaves (2003), Tracy (2004), and MOE (2008) suggested that there was lack of proper delegation of responsibility in secondary schools. Since there was little evidence from the available literature concerning delegation of responsibilities to teachers in Nandi North district, this study was carried out in an attempt to come up with research-based suggestions that were needed to guide the head teachers to delegate responsibility effectively. In view of the above, it was evident that while headteachers had the responsibility to delegate some of their responsibilities to teachers, delegation was not effectively done. This made the researcher to raise the question as to: What practices led to poor delegation of responsibility in secondary schools? Therefore, the purpose of this study was to establish the constraints in delegating responsibilities to teachers in public secondary schools in Nandi North district.

## **Methodology of Research**

### *General Background of Research*

The population of interest in this research consisted of all the headteachers, deputy headteachers, all heads of department and assistant teachers in public secondary schools in Nandi North District. There were 38 public and 3 private secondary schools in Nandi North District. There was a staffing level of 315 teachers in the public secondary schools (Nandi North District Education Office, 2008). The study targeted 315 participants consisting of head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of department and teachers in public secondary schools in the district.

Headteachers were selected for the study because they were considered as the key persons in the administration of the schools and responsible for the day to day activities of the school. Being the head of the school, the headteacher was accountable for all the decisions within the school. A manual for heads of secondary schools (MOE, 1979) stated that the headteacher was responsible for the overall running of the school, organization and control of staff, was an accounting officer of the school, responsible for all revenue and expenditure, and supervision of teachers. The manual further asserted that, though the headteacher “may delegate many responsibilities to other members of the school, the headteacher must be in close touch with all school activities” (p. 2).

### *Sample of Research*

Random sampling was done in this study to select a number of teachers and headteachers to participate in the study in such a way that the selected individuals represented a larger group from which they were selected as noted by Gay and Airasian (1996). The sampling frame consisted of 38 public secondary schools with 315 teachers. In order to determine the sample size for the study, the 38 schools were stratified according to two variables namely: type of school, and the administrative division. Gorard (2003) asserted that stratified samples enabled the researcher to select cases in proportion to one or two characteristics in the population to enhance the quality of the sample. The sampling design was appropriate to this study as it ensured that the sample selected for the study was representative of the target population of all schools in the selected district. According to Cozby (2001), stratified random sampling had the advantage of a built-in assurance that the sample accurately reflected the numerical composition of the various subgroups (p. 108-109).

According to the type of school, the schools were stratified into boys, girls and mixed secondary schools, where mixed schools referred to those with both boys and girls. The schools were also stratified according to the three administrative divisions of Kabiyet, Kipkaren and Kosirai. The sampling frame was a list of all public secondary schools and their respective teachers in the district. A sample of 20 (52.6 %) of the 38 public secondary schools was randomly selected for the study. According to Gay and Airasian (2003), a sample of 10% to 20% of the target population was often used in descriptive research. However, the choice of a higher sample in this research was meant to obtain a more reliable result that was representative of the target population (Cozby, 2001, p. 107). To determine the number of participants that were drawn for each stratum, a proportional approach was used. Based on the type of school and administrative divisions, which were the main population characteristics in this study, the 20 public secondary schools proportionately selected consisted of 3 boys' schools, 4 girls' schools and 13 mixed schools. Six of the randomly selected schools were from Kabiyet Division, eight from Kipkaren, and six from Kosirai Division.

### *Instrument and Procedures*

In collecting the required data for the study, the main research instrument used was the questionnaire. Interviews were also carried out to get data from the principals. The questionnaire was developed and administered to get the teachers' perceptions about delegation practices in their schools. The interview guide was used to establish the headteachers' perceptions, perspectives, and experiences about delegation as they practiced in their schools. The researcher sought permission in June 2009 from the Ministry of Education to conduct the study, and obtained the permit on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2009. The researcher then visited the selected schools personally between 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 and 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 and sought permission from the head-teachers to conduct the interviews and administer questionnaires in their respective schools. The questionnaires were administered between 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 and the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 before schools closed for the August holiday. Interviews were conducted between 14<sup>th</sup> of July to 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 2009, and were carried out face to face with the headteachers, and were done in the Principals' offices to allow for privacy. The period was deemed appropriate as most principals were present in their schools to prepare for term two examinations and form four mock examinations. After administration of the questionnaires, the researcher collected the questionnaires in person. This was intended to reduce the questionnaire return failure problem that was common when participants were asked to return the questionnaires to the researcher themselves. The questionnaires were given to 120 teachers in the selected schools to fill and data from 111 questionnaires were analyzed. An interview was carried out by obtaining information from the head teachers from the selected

schools. An interview guide was used in this case.

### *Data Analysis*

The data obtained from collected questionnaires were converted into numerical symbols and entered into the computer. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme was used in analyzing the data obtained. The SPSS programme was used to generate summaries of data collected into means, frequencies, and percentages that enabled the researcher interpret the findings and make conclusions accordingly. The statistics generated enabled the researcher to draw sound conclusions and to give meaning to the raw data. Descriptive statistics were deemed appropriate in presenting the results of the research, and according to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1990); results of surveys were often reported in terms of descriptive statistics. The frequencies were able to show the number of participants and the number of responses for each item in the questionnaire that aided the researcher. The data collected were analyzed based on the research questions. Statistical techniques involving the use of basic statistics such as the mean, mode, frequencies and standard deviations were used. Frequency tables were used to give graphical comparison of the responses. The descriptive statistics were deemed useful in summarizing and interpretation of the research findings.

The qualitative data obtained through interviews were analyzed guided by the interview guide questions. Creswell (2007) suggested that data analysis consisted of preparing and organizing the data, then reducing the data into themes through coding, condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (p. 148). Data obtained in this study were organized into categories by classifying the data into meaningful categories, utilizing concepts that emerged from the study and from the literature. Relationships in the data were recognized in order to develop categories. The data were reported in an interpreted form, and the participants' words were quoted where necessary. Whitehead and Whitehead (1992) explained that classification of data reduced the data to manageable proportions, where members of any class should display the same characteristics, and the names given to each class described the characteristics clearly.

According to Cooper and Schindler (1999, p. 411) the process of analyzing qualitative data required data preparation, which included editing and coding. In this study, data were edited as a first step in analysis to ensure that errors and omissions were eliminated, and to ensure that the data were accurate. Coding, which was regarded as the core feature of qualitative data analysis in Creswell and Clark (2007), was the next step after editing. Coding involved assigning numbers, descriptive words, category names, or symbols to responses in order to reduce the volume of material that was to be classified. After refining the codes and summarizing the data in each category, presentation of the findings was made based on the research questions.

The analyzed data were presented largely in form of quotes as extracted from interview transcripts.

### **Results of Research**

When teachers were asked if there were responsibilities that principals did not delegate to them, a high number of participants (51.4%) felt that there were responsibilities that principals did not delegate, while a close number (48.6%) denied there was such a situation. According to the teachers who agreed that some responsibilities were not delegated, table 1 below shows the responsibilities they felt were not delegated.

**Table 1. Duties not delegated by principals.**

Response	Frequency N=111	Percentage
Making financial decisions	41	36.9
Representing in BOG meetings	17	15.3
Representing heads in seminars/conferences/meetings	11	9.9
Discipline of teachers	7	6.3
Hiring of staff	7	6.3
Serious disciplinary cases/suspension/ expulsion	4	3.6
Discipline of non-teaching staff	3	2.7
Budgeting	3	2.7
Admission of students	2	1.8
Checking financial documents	1	0.9
Chairing tender committee	1	0.9
Supervision of non-teaching staff	1	0.9
No response	13	11.7

*NB: Mean 7.6486; Minimum 0.00, Maximum 12.00; Std. Deviation 4.26540,*

Table 1 above shows that most teachers (36.9%) felt principals did not delegate responsibility to make financial decisions. This was attributed to the fact that principals were the accounting officers in their schools and answerable for all finances of the school, hence were not willing to delegate. This was followed by a substantial number of teachers who indicated that principals did not delegate the responsibility of representing them in board of governors meetings (15.3%). This could have been a result of principals being secretaries to the school boards of governors and would like to attend in person as crucial school matters were discussed. The responsibility of representing the principal in heads conferences, meetings, and seminars ranked third (9.9%) as one of the responsibilities that were not delegated. This was attributed to the fact that the chance was one of the fewer opportunities for principals to improve their management skills.

A small number of teachers stated that they were not given responsibility to deal with the discipline of teachers (6.3%), hiring of staff (6.3%), and serious student disciplinary cases that involved suspension and expulsion of students (3.6%) as these were mainly in the jurisdiction of the school boards and the principals. These findings were consistent with what principals pointed out in the interviews. Principals stated that they did not give teachers responsibilities relating to finances, or those that required the board of governors' attention such as discipline of staff and serious student disciplinary cases that involved punishments such as suspension and expulsion.

#### *Challenges that affected the Process of Delegation of Responsibility*

The subsections given below provide challenges that affected the delegation process in schools.

#### *Problems Encountered in the Delegation Process*

A range of problems encountered in the delegation process were identified by the participants and were presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Problems encountered in the delegation process.**

Response	Teachers' responses	
	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of co-operation from teachers	37	33.3
Inadequate resources	27	24.3
Lack of support from the principal	10	9.0
Lack of knowledge/skills/experience	9	8.1
Short/unrealistic deadlines	9	8.1
Work overload/ understaffing	8	7.2
Interfere with teaching/learning	8	7.2
Lack of information	6	5.4
Partial delegation	5	4.5
Poor communication	5	4.5
No guidelines/laid down procedures	4	3.6
Lack of authority to make decisions	4	3.6
Poor performance of the task	3	2.7
Fear of failure	3	2.7
Resistance from non-teaching staff	3	2.7
Lack of motivation/rewards	2	1.8
Principal takes over duties	2	1.8
Large number of students	2	1.8
Lack of trust by principal	2	1.8
Indiscipline of students	1	0.9

NB: Mean 13.3533; Minimum 0.00, Maximum 20.00; Std. Deviation 4.88820

Table 2 shows a range of problems encountered in the delegation process. Out of 111 teachers who responded to this question, including those who gave more than one response, majority of the teachers (33.3%) indicated that there was lack of cooperation from other teachers. Twelve of the twenty principals also supported the view that there was lack of cooperation from teachers. This could have resulted from poor communication to teachers on the reasons for delegating the tasks, and lack of formal appointment of the delegate in order to make the delegation official. Most principals pointed out that teachers' unwillingness to take delegated tasks was a challenge to the process of delegation. This was attributed to the negative attitude of some teachers towards delegation of responsibility, and as a result of their expectations that were not previously met.

In the second place in the rank as indicated by teachers (24.3%) was the problem of inadequate resources such as finances and equipment. This suggests that lack of adequate resources prevented effective performance of delegated tasks. Interview results revealed that majority of the principals stated that the major challenge to effective delegation of responsibilities in schools was inadequate finances. A principal in one of the schools summarized this and explained that:

*At times we run short of money. We rely on government to give us on time, while on the other hand parents do not pay fees on time. If you delegate without money to purchase equipment required, teachers feel we do not want to purchase for them*

It was evident from the results above that principals expressed their concern about financial constraints, which was characterized by large fees arrears and the delays in disbursement of government fee subsidy. Without adequate finances, delegated responsibilities that required purchase of equipment and other associated costs would not be effectively performed. Lack of finances also affected the nature of rewards given to teachers. There was evidence from the literature that lack of finances affected most activities in the schools. It was revealed in table 2

that a considerable number of teachers (9.0) indicated there was lack of support to teachers from the principal while performing delegated tasks.

Participants also stated that principals set unrealistic deadlines (8.1%) that could not be achieved, while at the same time teachers felt that delegated tasks interfered with the teaching and learning process (7.2%).

It was also evident in table 2 that a substantial number of teachers and principals also stated work overload and understaffing (7.2%) as one of the problems encountered in the delegation process. From the interview data, it came out clearly that inadequate staffing was a major factor limiting delegation of responsibility in many schools. A principal of one of the schools stated "The small number of staff is a limitation in delegating responsibilities". While another principal replied "We do not have enough staff". From the above findings, it was evident that understaffing in most schools was a big challenge to the delegation process. This suggests that some teachers were given too many responsibilities that led to teachers developing a negative attitude towards delegation.

Other challenges given by teachers were lack of adequate information (5.4%), principals partially delegated tasks (4.5%), and poor communication from principals (4.5%). Very few teachers cited lack of authority to make decisions on the tasks (3.6%), lack of proper guidelines and procedures on delegated duties (3.6%), lack of motivation and rewards to teachers (1.8%), fear of failure (2.7%), poor performance of tasks, and resistance from non-teaching staff (2.7%) as some of the problems they encountered. Another smaller number of participants (2.7%) felt that poor performance by teachers on delegated tasks was a problem in delegation. This suggests that some teachers did not perform delegated tasks as expected. This finding was illustrated by principals interviewed who stated that some teachers were incompetent in performing delegated tasks. Most principals interviewed pointed out that incompetence by some teachers was a challenge to the delegation process in secondary schools. In explaining this point, one of the principals summarized this by saying that "Another problem is inability of the teacher to perform as expected. Some teachers do not do it the way they are expected". Another principal further stated that "Some teachers have limited experience on the task you intend to delegate. If they are given the task, they do it below expectation".

This suggests that there were a wide range of problems that affected the effectiveness of delegation of responsibilities. Most of the challenges stated by teachers were consistent with interview responses from the principals.

The above findings showed that teachers who lacked certain skills or lacked experience in performing certain tasks created huddles to effective delegation of responsibilities. The lack of knowledge and skills was a result of inadequate training and lack of previous exposure of teachers to a variety of tasks in the school. Teachers could have also been incompetent if the tasks were new to them. This was partly attributed to lack of adequate knowledge, skills, and little experience (8.1%) on the part of the teachers as shown in table 2.

Another challenge that came up from the interviews was the issue of teachers' expectations and attitude towards delegation of responsibilities. It was revealed that teachers expected financial rewards in return for the tasks delegated to them. This view was expressed by some headteachers, with one principal stating that:

*Although we give them responsibilities, they expect a lot from us, especially money. They think they have been given a bigger responsibility but no work to do due to lack of funds. They think they should be paid for the extra work and yet schools do not have money for such duties*

The attitude of teachers towards delegation of responsibility was further expressed by one other principal who said "Some teachers take delegation as evasion of duty by the delegator

and feel it is not their duty to do someone's work. There is an assumption that we are paid to do the work". The above views suggest that teachers expected to be paid some allowances for the delegated duties while on the other hand, they viewed the delegated tasks as a scheme by the principals to avoid doing their work.

The findings above suggest that a number of problems were encountered in the delegation process.

## Discussion

It is evident from the results that school principals did not delegate a number of responsibilities. Some of the responsibilities are sensitive that making a wrong decision may have serious implications to the smooth running of the school, such as committing finances for items that were not provided for in the budgeted, therefore, delegation has to be planned. Some authors such as D'Souza (2002) pointed out that some matters were not simply delegated to anyone.

Some studies have shown that some headteachers were unwilling to delegate and did not involve teachers in decision making (Mujivane 2007), while other teachers were not delegated any task at all (Kipkoech, 2004). This practice was evident from the findings, revealing that secondary school principals in the study area did not delegate some responsibilities, hence, further confirming that principals were hesitant to sharing leadership with teachers (Jackson, 2000).

The findings from the above study revealed that inadequate finances, unwillingness of teachers to take delegated tasks, inadequate staffing, and lack of adequate training were some of the factors that constrained the delegation process in public secondary schools. This confirms Missik's (2004) findings in Nandi South district that established the existence of barriers to delegation such as inadequate financial resources, teachers shying away from taking challenging duties, and centrally controlled delegated duties.

Other researches (Kipkoech, 2004) also revealed that delegation of responsibility was constrained by teachers' anticipation for promotion, inadequate resources, and delegation to teachers not formally appointed by the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) as heads of department. Heads of department who were not appointed by TSC felt that their roles were not recognized by the employer. The results of this study established also that teachers expected promotion or payment for the extra work they do.

Due to limited funding for schools, principals found it difficult to adequately provide the necessary support, materials, rewards, and adequate motivation to teachers. Lack of commitment, lack of cooperation, coupled with inadequate training, can be linked to the poor performance of delegated duties. There are limited opportunities for teachers to attend management training courses, lack of commitment by teachers, and time constraints (Mujivane, 2007) that have affected the process of delegation, while most deputy principals were not adequately exposed to undertake the principal's duties during his or her absence (Ministry of Education, 2001).

## Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that majority of the school principals in public secondary schools in Nandi North District did not adequately delegate responsibilities to teachers. It can therefore be concluded that, some principals are skeptical about delegating certain responsibilities to teachers, such as those related to making financial decisions, discipline of staff, and serious student disciplinary cases. For effective delegation to take place, principals should develop trust in their staff and have confidence in them that they will do the work to the expectation. This will prevent principals from limiting the scope of responsibilities they



delegated.

The findings of the study also revealed that understaffing, lack of co-operation among the teachers, and inadequate training, and lack of adequate knowledge and skills by some teachers, hindered the effectiveness of the delegation process in schools. It can therefore be concluded that, addressing staff development issues, staff relationships, and teacher workloads could improve the effectiveness of delegation of responsibility in schools. This is supported by reports that there are many staffing, financial, and management challenges in schools (Ministry of Education, 2008), hence the need to address the issues.

Adequate financing played a major role in influencing the delegation process. The availability of funds is important as principals can sponsor deputy principals and heads of department to attend management seminars and workshops to foster their skills, and help in providing adequate facilities in the schools.

The training of school principals and teachers on management is important if delegation of responsibilities is to be improved. This requires exposing more principals, deputies, and heads of department to in-service training currently being offered at the Kenya Education Staff Institute.

This paper recommends that the government should address teacher workloads by employing and posting more teachers to schools, and make provision for more funding to schools for staff development and provision of facilities. Efforts should also be made to provide guidelines on delegation of responsibilities in public secondary schools.

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