

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AS HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NANDI COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT: *Across the world, globalization has elevated the importance of human resource management development in organizations. These changes have led to the notion of the human resource system as a strategic asset. Many of the arguments about processes of globalization within the HR function rest on the assumption that there has and continues to be longitudinal change in the conduct of human resource. In order to effectively deal with all these changes, human resource professionals must develop competencies that will allow them to carry out their roles effectively, such competences like: flexibility, team work, communication, strategic planning, network building, client service, orientation, organizational awareness, self confidence, sharing of expertise, global and cultural understanding among others. This paper sought to identify the role played by school principals as Human Resource Managers in Secondary schools. The study was modeled on Burns and Stalk Contingency theory which focuses on how management systems might change in response to demands of rapidly changing environment. Survey research design was used. The target population was 140 secondary school principals drawn from Nandi County. Census sampling was used to select the study sample. Data collection was done using self-administered questionnaire. Coding of responses was done using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) for windows Version 16. Analysis of the data was done through descriptive statistics. Data was presented in form of frequency tables and charts. The study findings clearly indicated that the primary roles identified included recruitment of staff in schools, encouraging team work among staff, empowering staff and encouraging them in developing their career. Therefore the principals should have a knowhow on, how to carry out the above roles to boost the performance and development of the institution.*

KEYWORDS: Role, Principals, Human Resource Managers (HRMs), Secondary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the school principal

School Principals generally have a responsibility in four areas that include:

School Management. This includes ordering supplies, ensuring that teachers are hired and assigned, information gathering and basic record keeping. In many Schools, it is viewed as the chief set of responsibilities.

External Communications. Completing reports required by the central ministry is a major task for Principals in some countries. For instance, until only a few years ago, Principals in Nepal had to complete a 52-page form for the School Administration Section of MoE and a four-page

survey, collecting much the same information, for the Manpower and Statistics Section of the same Ministry, (Chapman & Dunghana, 1991). In another school, Principals until recently were required to complete a 46-page survey about their schools three times a year. Principals also share responsibility with district education officers for ensuring that ministry policies and programs are conveyed to teachers and parents.

School-Community Relations. The demands of school-community relations involve working with community councils, community development associations, parent-teacher associations, and other local organizations that have an interest in the schools (Cody, 1998). The goal for such relations is to encourage community support for the school, for teacher subsidies, facilities construction, and maintenance or for the schooling process encouraging parents to ensure that their children do homework, send their children to school.

Instructional Supervision. The extent to which school-level administrators regard instructional supervision as part of their responsibility varies across countries. However, one common by-product of decentralization is an increased expectation that Principal rather than inspectors will play this role. This shift toward Principals taking more responsibility for instructional supervision which has major implications on how they are trained, (Chapman & Dunghana, 1991).

For many years, all across the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, schools have been dismissed as little more than a collection of classrooms, one school interchangeable with another, the smallest units in a powerful, centralized education system. School principals, traditionally mid-level managers, acted strictly as transmitters of orders and rules. With minimal authority, low prestige, and inconsistent support from the school community and the education system at large, they were overlooked as potential leaders and facilitators of change (Moura, 2000).

Over the past decade, there has been a shift in how schools are viewed by education policy makers and researchers; but perhaps more importantly teachers, parents, principals, and indeed the general public are reconsidering the purpose and goals of schools. National and international conversations about education reform suggest a need for schools to be more autonomous, more responsive to the demands and concerns of multiple stakeholders, especially at the local level (Alvairo, Arzola, Brunner, Recart & Vizcarra, 2000; Pozner, 2000; Sallan, 1998).

In part, the role of the principal is to ensure the efficient and transparent administration of the school. Many of the day-to-day management issues are very practical, but of critical importance. In many areas, working to reduce teacher absenteeism is a major priority (Halliday, 1999, Condy, 1998). Secondary school principals may also face a series of financial pressures. In Kenya, school principals ranked school fees and money matters as their principle concerns (Kitavi & Westhuizen, 1997). Some other very specific challenges include the incidence of sexual and physical abuse of girl students by teachers. School heads have a particular role to play by working to change the culture of violence and complacency and establish a more caring, participatory, and democratic school environment (Leach *et al.* 2000).

Schools are also increasingly expected to develop links with local communities. Parental involvement may be seen as a mechanism to increase attendance, a means of raising additional

income, or as a means of creating accountability for school management. Developing good community relations is an additional burden on school leaders, particularly as the community may have no idea of what is needed in teaching and rely on the principal to explain the issues to them (Condy, 1998).

While school principals may focus on the administrative roles (Kogoe, 1986), there is strong evidence that they play an important part in ensuring instructional quality (Togneri 2003). In the absence of other inspection and supervision structures, the responsibility for guiding and supporting new and often poorly trained teachers may fall to the school principal (de Grauwe, 2001).

Helping teachers to develop the quality of their teaching is a difficult and lengthy process, particularly where the teachers have low levels of education (Condy, 1998). With the growing importance of school-based in-service programs, it is important that the supervision be focused on providing guidance, improving performance, and enhancing professionalism and morale, rather than simply on criticism of teachers (Craig, 1999). It was argued by (Lumby, 2003) that teacher motivation has been affected by the multiple education changes and by the wretched physical conditions in many schools. He adds that, if motivation and morale are low, then teaching and learning suffer. Therefore motivation and morale are the main factors to performance in teaching and learning. The principals have not realized that they are human resource managers therefore they are not even aware of the human resource (HR) roles like motivation (Lumby, 2003).

It is the function of the managers to make sure that by all means the morale of the teachers is uplifted so as to enable the work to be carried out with a lot of interest which in turn will boost the performance of different individuals in their different tasks.

The principals have not been delegated fully to the responsibilities of HR managers. You will find that the motivation of teachers will need involvement of several people after a certain performance. The principle cannot decide on his/her own on what to do on a certain performance because the board of governors (BOG) has to be involved. This becomes big challenge because the process of motivation will take long and it will lose meaning. Therefore the principals should be given the mandate of performing some HR manager roles without interference for it to have meaning. It is the motivation of the workers which will make the working condition to be conducive thus boosting the morale.

With few exceptions, instructional supervision is the function least well served by the typical allocation of responsibilities across the administrative structure of the education ministry. Teacher supervision in most Schools is the responsibility of officials operating from the provincial or (more often) district level. This removes the administrator most aware of a teacher's pedagogical skill (the principal) and assigns it to individuals removed from the school context, who visit the school only intermittently or not at all, and who often view their main role more as one of enforcing rules than of demonstrating to teachers how they could improve their teaching (Philippines, 1992). This indicates clearly that the supervision of the teachers (HR) is not done directly by the manager (principal). This is the person who is on the ground and knows more about the HR he/she is working with. The people who are sent by the ministry to come and supervise the teachers and scrutinize their work once in a while will put the principal in problems because after every visit they are expected to take in the advice of the

supervisor and implement. This may be a challenge because what is observed by the supervisor within a short period of time may not be a true picture of a situation known by the principal observing it daily. Thus the work of supervision of teachers should be fully delegated to the school principals to ensure close supervision which in turn will enhance performance.

It was observed by Eshiwani (1993); Okumbe (1999) and Mutai (2003) that in Kenya, there are no set criteria enumerating the skills a person should possess to qualify for appointment as a principal. This creates a managerial gap in public schools since without basic managerial training; the principals are less likely to be knowledgeable in elementary management practices and cannot readily grasp the provisions of the Education Act.

The regular upsurge of unrests in schools puts the capability of principals in this respect, in serious doubt. Although the Act confers extensive powers on the Ministry of Education (MOE) over the management and regulation of education in Kenya, the day to day running of affairs in the school falls squarely on the shoulders of principal. Indeed, the Act presumes that head teachers are knowledgeable in educational management and HR management. This is a wrong assumption because for one to have management skills, one has to undertake some training on the same. It is this assumption by the ministry of education which put the principals of secondary schools in affix as they experience management challenges.

The Ministry of Education plays such roles as policymaking, resource mobilization, quality assurance, auditing how resources are used, field implementation, and capacity building. School Principals who are also referred to as HR managers in secondary schools are not involved in the above process and they are the ones in the ground to implement as human resource management at school level. The principals are appointed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), and run the day-to-day administrative operations of schools. In the Kenyan context, a number of researchers have conducted studies on principals' training needs and made various recommendations. For example, (Okumbe, 1999) recommended that for purposes of effectiveness of school teachers, school managers, and curriculum implementers, an effective in-service training should be provided to them.

(Mutai, 2003) underscored the need for effective school management and reported that promotion of teachers to a position of responsibility should be pegged on having undergone a pre-service training on his/her new roles. However, the appointment of principals in Kenya is based on years of service, rather than on having undergone training on their roles before taking up the post. This put the principals in an awkward situation of handling roles they have not trained on. It is challenging for instance to carry out the roles of HR managers among others before undergoing the training of HR managers. It is difficult to handle individuals working in an organization without the required skills. This is the reason which makes the management of the school not fully delegated to the principal. There is Board of Governors (BOG) which carries out most of the management roles in schools. This calls for the need of training head teachers before they assume their new roles so as to be in opposition to handle different situation and escape the challenges they encounter in their day to day activities (NCSL, 2007).

(Ogembo, 2005) observed that appointments of principals is done on the assumption that the pre-service professional training that they underwent to prepare them for teaching, coupled with the experience that they get as practicing teachers are enough to enable them discharge their roles effectively. It is assumed that when the newly appointed heads assume office they

will learn on the job and that they will attend in-service training to equip them with emerging managerial challenges. One cannot get all the skills required for management on job as assumed by the ministry. A manager has to undergo full training on management. The training of managers is a training which one undertakes for two to four years. The professional pre-service training of the principals is unsystematic and inadequate in content and coverage on management thus cannot empower one to manage with confidence, instead it renders one to undergo so many challenges when carrying out the managerial roles.

It is therefore important that training needs for school heads are addressed immediately one is appointed. This would render them effective in overcoming managerial challenges as human resource managers in schools. Principals have no formal training beyond that of teachers. On the other hand, it is clear that principals have an important role to play in assuring school effectiveness and success. Yet at the same time, most principals do not assume the leadership and management functions that are required to contribute to the improvements in learning and teaching that lead to the school's success.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Nandi County among public secondary school principals. The Nandi County has a total of 140 public secondary schools. Survey research design was used in this study because it covers a larger area. Therefore it was suitable for the study since all the principals of secondary schools in Nandi County were involved.

The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected by use of questionnaires. Secondary data were used to depict pertinent issues as they existed before the study and as a basis to confirm or contrast findings of the study. Questionnaires were used as research tools to collect data from the sampled respondents. Data cleaning, coding, validation, error checking exploratory analysis, tabulation and finally statistical analysis was done. The analysis was centered on generating descriptive statistical outputs. Descriptive statistical analysis technique was used in data analysis. Presentation of data was done quantitatively in form of tables, graphs and pie-charts to illustrate the description and explanations of the research findings.

RESULTS

Roles of the principals as human resource managers in secondary schools

The study sought to establish the roles performed by the Principals as human resource managers in secondary schools. The respondents indicated various roles of the Principals as human resource managers. This was indicated on the basis of agreement on a five point likert-scale. The primary roles identified included recruitment of staff in schools, encouraging team work among staff, empowering staff and encouraging them in developing their career.

The department of human resource in any organization or institution is charged with the responsibility of recruiting qualified and competent staff for the organization. This is usually done in a pre determined and procedural manner.

Table 1: Roles of the Principals as human resource managers

Role		Frequency	Percent (%)
Recruiting of staff in school	Disagree	10	8.3
	Undecided	33	27.3
	Agree	52	43.0
	Strongly Agree	26	21.5
	Total	121	100.0
Encouraging team work	Disagree	5	4.1
	Undecided	16	13.2
	Agree	70	57.9
	Strongly Agree	30	24.8
	Total	121	100.0
Staff Empowerment	Disagree	6	5.0
	Undecided	9	7.4
	Agree	43	35.5
	Strongly Agree	63	52.1
	Total	121	100.0
Encourage career development	Strongly Disagree	3	2.5
	Disagree	57	47.1
	Agree	39	32.2
	Strongly Agree	22	18.2
	Total	121	100.0

In the study, 78(64.5%) of the respondents were in agreement that Principals are charged with the responsibility of recruiting members of staff. Those who were undecided were 33(27.3%) while those who disagreed were 10(8.3%). This clearly indicates that recruitment of the staff remains the core role of the Principals in our secondary school. Perhaps what may vary are the procedures the Principal has to follow when doing so. Therefore the principals should have a knowhow on the recruitment process so as to enable them to select qualified and competent staff. This will boost the performance and development of the institution

Similarly, the Principal is also charged with encouraging teamwork among the staff. In the study, the findings indicated that 100(82.7 %) were in agreement that the Principal is charged with the responsibility of encouraging teamwork among the members of staff and 5(4.1%) disagreed on encouragement of teamwork by the principal. This implies that the principals

should ensure that the staff works as a team for the success of the institution. For in any organization, it is the work of the human resource manager to ensure that the staff come together and pull together as a team for the success of the organization.

Further the Principals are charged with the responsibility of empowering the members of staff. Some of the ways in which a Principal can empower members of staff is by giving them the opportunity to make key decisions. In the study, 106(87.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the principals are charged with the responsibility of empowering staff while 6(5.0%) disagreed. This implies that the principal has a duty of creating empowering environment for their staff. This will make the staff feel comfortable and secure in their place of work. When someone is comfortable in his or her working place, then there is no hindrance on performance. Therefore the principal as a human resource manager should ensure that he or she has that knowledge and skills on empowering people so that they can empower the staff professionally.

As to whether the Principals are charged with the responsibility of encouraging career. Development among the staff, the research findings indicated that this is a role that the Principals are not keen to. Almost half 57(49.6%) of the respondents were disagreeing to the fact that Principals as human resource managers encourage staff career development. 61(50.4%) agreed that it is their responsibilities to encourage career development of their staff. This implies that in our secondary schools, some of the Principals encourage career development while others don't do it. Therefore the staffs who are not encouraged stagnate in one level till they retire. This will make the school to have some deficiency which will hinder development. There will be no development nor progress in such an Institution because the staff is not embracing new changes. An organization which does not allow their staff to embrace change will slug behind and finally will collapse. Those who are encouraged develop themselves and they benefit both the school and themselves. Therefore it is the work of the human resource manager in any organization to encourage the staff to develop their career for the benefit of both the individual and the organization. Therefore as the principals carry out the role of a human resource manager in their school, they should ensure that they encourage the staff to develop their careers.

Other roles of the principal

Other roles of the Principals include contracting employment and looking in the terms of benefits and condition of service. Also they are charged with the responsibility of fostering employee relation, managing changes in the school, and sensitizing employees on employment law and professional ethics. In the study, 24(20.0%) of the respondents indicated that the Principals are involved in contracting employment while 30(25.2%) indicated that their role is to look into matters of remuneration.

Table 2: Other roles of the Principal

Other HR roles of the H/T	Responses	
	N	Percent
Contracts of employment	24	20.0%
pay, benefits and condition of service	30	25.2%
employee relation	30	24.9%
Change management	24	20.0%
Employment law	12	9.9%
Total	121	100.0%

DISCUSSION

Roles of the principals as human resource managers in secondary schools

The study objective was to establish the roles carried out by Principals as HRM in secondary schools. The result findings clearly indicated that the primary roles identified included recruitment of staff in schools, encouraging team work among staff, empowering staff and encouraging them in developing their career. The department of human resource in any organization or institution is charged with the responsibility of recruiting qualified and competent staff for the organization. This is usually done in a predetermined and procedural manner. This clearly indicates that recruitment of the staff remains the core role of the Principals in our secondary school. Perhaps what may vary are the procedures the Principal has to follow when doing it. Therefore the principals should have a knowhow on the recruitment process so as to enable them to select qualified and competent staff. This will boost the performance and development of the institution

Similarly, the Principal is also charged with encouraging teamwork among the staff. In the study, the findings indicated 100(82.7 %) were in agreement that the Principal is charged with the responsibility of encouraging teamwork among the members of staff. This implies that the principals should ensure that the staffs work as a team for the success of the institution. For in any organization, it is the work of the human resource manager to ensure that the staff come together and pull together as a team for the success of the organization.

The Principals are also charged with the responsibility of empowering the members of staff. Some of the ways in which a Principal can empower members of staff is by giving them the opportunity to make key decisions. In the study, 106(87.6%) of the respondents agreed that the principals are charged with the responsibility of empowering staff .This implies that the principal has a duty of creating empowering environment for their staff. This will make the staff feel comfortable and secure in their place of work. When someone is comfortable in his

or her working place, then there is no hindrance on performance. Therefore the principal as a human resource manager should ensure that he or she has that knowledge and skills on empowering people so that they can empower the staff professionally.

The Principals are also charged with the responsibility of encouraging career development among the staff. The study findings indicate that this is a role that the Principals are not keen to. Almost half 57(47.1%) of the respondents were disagreeing to the fact that Principals as human resource managers are supposed to encourage staff to develop their career. This implies that in half of the secondary schools, Principals don't carry out this role. Therefore the members of staff stagnate in one level till they retire. This will make the school to have some deficiency which will hinder development. There will be no development nor progress in such an Institution because the staff is not embracing new changes. An organization which does not allow their staff to embrace change will slug behind and finally will collapse. Thus it is the work of the human resource manager in any organization to encourage the staff to develop their career for the benefit of both the individual and the organization. Thus as the principals carry out the role of a human resource manager in their school, they should ensure that they encourage the staff to develop their careers.

CONCLUSION

From the study findings, it can be concluded that the primary roles of School Principals include recruitment of staff in schools, encouraging team work among staff, empowering staff and encouraging them in developing their career. Therefore the principals should have a knowhow on, how to carry out the above roles to boost the performance and development of the institution.

RECOMMENDATION

The author recommends a further research to be carried out on the effects of the failed roles of principals as human resource managers on the performance of the educational institutions.

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