LEADERSHIP STYLES PRACTICED BY PRINCIPALS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SIAYA, KISUMU AND KAJIADO COUNTIES, KENYA

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Abstract:

The leadership style practiced by a principal is one fundamental factor that determines the success of any school. A principal with appropriate leadership competencies can positively impact on the way teachers undertake their duties which in turn will determine the students' performance. This study examined the predominant leadership style practiced by principals in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu and Kjiado counties. The study adopted a descriptive survey paradigm. The study was guided by the Full Range Leadership Theory. The target population comprised of 397 principals, 379 deputy principals, 1010 heads of departments, and 2208 teachers in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties, Kenya who had served for more than two years in the same school. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to sample 40 secondary school principals, 38 deputy principals, 101 heads of departments and 221 teachers giving a total of 400 respondents. The data for this study was collected using Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5X which classified, the leadership style of principals as transformational, transactional and laissez-faire. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found out that transformational leadership style was the predominant leadership style practiced by principals in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties. The study however established overlapping scores between transactional contingent reward and transformational intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. The study

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concluded that even though teachers perceived their principals as more transformational than transactional, one's leadership style cannot be explicitly categorized as both styles complement each other. The study recommends that teacher development programs should provide training on leadership styles to help school leaders understand when and how apply the various leadership styles depending on the situation at hand.

Keywords: leadership styles, principals, students' performance, public secondary schools

1. Introduction

A review of leadership studies indicates that the subject leadership has received much attention from various scholars since ancient times (Alvin, 2001). It is one of the most widely practiced and least understood concepts. Aristotle, Plato and Machiavali made a lot of contributions on political leadership while religious leaders provided moral guidelines to their followers.

Leadership studies have taken different approaches over the years. The early studies known as 'trait' or the 'great man' theories of leadership which focused on the persona of leaders dominated the studies until 1950s. The trait theory holds the view that leadership is an innate, instinctive quality that you do or don't have. The approach argues that leaders have distinctive physical or psychological characteristics specific to an individual that relate to or explain the behavior of such a leader (Gheseli, 1971). The behavioral approach believes that leaders are made and not born. It argues that leadership is learnt and is not a preserve of a few distinctive people. Rooted on the principles of behaviorism, it focuses on the behavior of leaders. This, according to Lewin (1930) gave rise to democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leaders. The contingency approach attempts to predict which type of leadership style is best in which particular situation. Thus, there is no best leadership style. The four widely held contingency theories are Fielder's contingency model, path-goal theory, situational theory proposed by Hersey and Blanchard, and Vroom-Jago Contingency Model (Evans, 1970; House, 1971).

The Full Range Leadership theory on the other hand postulates a continuum which comprises of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles which a leader can use depending on the nature of the organization and the level of maturity of the followers (Bass, 1998; Avolio & Bass, 2004).

The success of any organization depends on the quality of its leadership. Maslow, (1954) observed that the leader has a duty to provide a conducive working environment that would promote employees job satisfaction. In view of this, the Commonwealth Secretariat (1996) noted that the nature and quality of the leadership style of the principal is a critical factor in attaining successful management and satisfaction of teachers. This was supported by Kerry's (2003) study conducted in the US which established that the leadership style of the principal significantly predicted teacher job satisfaction and students' achievement. This view was corroborated by World Bank (2015) which listed principal's leadership style among the key factors affecting teacher job satisfaction and subsequent students' achievement.

In a study conducted in Nigeria by Adeyemi (2014), the study concluded that good leadership styles can turn around an ailing school to do better. The South African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ, 1998) study conducted in Namibia established that management style determined the extent to which both employees and students were committed to achieve school goals. Other studies in Uganda by Anguyo (2014), in Tanzania by Nguni (2006) and Muchumu (2014) supported the above view. In Kenya, Mwangi (2013) and Kalee (2013) in separate studies in Nakuru and Kangundo established a strong correlation between teachers' performance and the leadership behavior of the principal.

Despite the fact that leadership style has greater impact on the success of any school, very little if any empirical research can be found on the leadership styles being carried out in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties, Kenya.

1.2 Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the study was to determine the leadership styles practiced by principals in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties.

1.3 Objective of the Study
The study was guided by the following specific objective: To determine the predominant leadership style practiced by principals in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties.

1.4 Research Question
(i) To what extent do principals practice transformational, transactional or laissez-faire leadership styles in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties, Kenya?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study would enable policy makers to ensure that higher learning institutions and teachers training colleges design relevant teacher training programs that would adequately prepare teachers for the principal ship. This was important because teacher trainees were the potential principals and administrators in our schools.

In addition, the principal has the greatest responsibility to provide effective leadership which impacts on teacher job satisfaction and eventually better students' achievement. The results could therefore help practicing principals to improve practices, and existing leadership styles thereby becoming more effective managers of their schools. The study provided teachers with relevant information regarding leadership styles. This would enable them to understand why their principals made decisions in a certain way. Teachers would therefore be able to support the decisions made by their principals for the benefit of the school. Finally, the results of the study would elicit more research on the Full Range Leadership model in other areas in Kenya.

2. Review of Related Literature

Literature review focused on the concept leadership, school leadership and leadership styles.

2.1 The Concept of Leadership

The definition of the term leadership has evolved over the years leading to more sophisticated definitions. Probably the widely accepted definition was that stated by Cowley in 1930s; "*the leader is one who succeeds in getting others to follow him.*" Hemphil (1949) argued that leadership is all about initiating interaction process between the leader and the led to help solve mutual problems. Stogdil (1950) defined leadership as those activities that an individual engages in that help in determining goal direction necessary for group performance. Robert Dubin (1968) stated that leadership in organizations involves the exercise of authority and making of decisions that guide the operations of the organization. Fielder (1974) saw a leader as a person among group members with the responsibility of directing the group activities.

However, other scholars have noted in their studies that leadership is an act of influence. Koontz and O'Donnel (1959) defined leadership as the process of influencing people towards the achievement of a common goal. Bennis and Nanus (1985) wrote that leadership is the ability to influence followers to perform the assigned tasks to achieve organizational goals. Dales and Beach (1980) noted that leadership basically involves

influencing people to act towards the achievement of predetermined organizational goals.

Robert House and Mary Baetz (1997) saw leadership as taking place in groups where the leader influences group members' behavior towards the achievement of group goals. Hukpati (2009) reported that leadership is a function of management which involves influencing followers to pursue predetermined organizational goals. Shastri (2010) supported Hukpati's view and noted that leadership is the process in which the leader influences the behavior of followers to behave in the manner predetermined by the leader. Bush (2008) supported the above views and argued that leadership is about influence and not authority. Southworth (1993) however noted that there is no universal definition of leadership. Yukl (2002) concurred with Southworth (1993) and reported that the term leadership is subjective and arbitrary. He argued that most definitions however saw leadership as a process of social influence.

Other scholars such as Burns (1978) and Ciulla (2004) however argue that leadership is not only a process of influence but includes deep complex relationships. It is a complex moral relationship between people based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, teamwork and a shared vision to reach a common goal. For purposes of the current study, leadership is active and not passive. It empowers, transforms, guides and supports the led to attain greater accomplishments.

2.2 School Leadership

Educational management is a field of study and practice concerned with the operations of educational organizations (Ornstein, 2008). It is defined as an executive function for carrying out agreed policy (Bolan, 1999). Educational leadership on the other hand has *"at its core the responsibility for policy formulation, and organizational change"*. Ornstein (2008) noted that the term has evolved from educational administration through educational management to educational leadership.

In a school situation, leadership can be seen as the ability of the principal to influence the activities of the teachers to meet defined school objectives and goals. Welgmood (1995) defined school leadership as the ability of the principal to encourage teachers to change to do things they would not ordinarily consider doing without the leader. Carter et al (1997) defined school leadership as the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, pupils and parents towards the achievement of common educational goals. Kartz (2001) defines teacher leaders as teachers who lead within and beyond the classroom and influence others towards improved educational practice. Adeoti (2012) supported the above view and stated that leadership is a key factor in the improvement of a school.

Dalin (1994) quoted in Mbwiria, (2010) identified four tangible dimensions of teacher leadership notably the translation of principles of school improvement in to the practices of individual classrooms, participative leadership where all teachers contribute towards the change process in the school. They work as a team with their colleagues towards a collective goal. Thirdly is the mediating role where teachers provide the necessary expertise and information needed for school improvement and lastly, teacher leadership which involves creating harmonious relationships with colleagues for the benefit of the learners.

2.3 Leadership Styles

Leadership style refers to a particular behavior applied by a leader to motivate his or her subordinates to achieve the objectives of the organization (Okumbe, 1998). It refers to a leader's way of guiding followers towards organizational or personal goals. Martindale (2011) defines leadership style as a leaders' style of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people.

There exists an array of leadership styles in the postmodern literature. Among the major categories that dominate contemporary writing about school leadership include autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, laissez-faire leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, social justice leadership, charismatic leadership, moral leadership, gender and race leadership, contingency leadership and managerial leadership styles (Ornstein, 2008). The three conventional leadership styles chosen for this study, however, are laissez-faire, transactional and transformational leadership.

2.3.1 Laissez-faire Leadership

Laissez-faire is a type of leadership where the rights, power and authority to make decisions are fully delegated to the worker. They establish goals and determine the means of achieving them without interference from the leader (Burns, 1978; Okumbe, 1998). It is the avoidance of leadership as the leader hardly intervenes unless requested by the workers. According to Hackman and Johnson (2003), it is a "hands off" leadership style. They however observed that it can result to lack of cohesiveness, productivity and satisfaction particularly if the leader withdraws too much and abdicates his leadership role. It comprises of only one order factor, the none-leadership.

2.3.2 Transactional Leadership

First described by Max Weber in 1947, transactional leader motivates his subordinates by providing rewards for the accomplished tasks and punishment for none-compliance.

According to Bass (1985), transactional leadership is characterized by three order factors; *contingent reward* which refers to principals' behavior of providing teachers with rewards (psychological or material) based on the accomplishment of the assigned tasks. Teachers are compensated for work well done and punished for breach of contract. The second sub-factor is management *by exception-active* which entails active vigilance by the principal to ensure that teachers accomplish set standards. The principal monitor performance of teachers and enforce rules to avoid deviations from the set standards (Bass, 1985). The third sub-factor is *management by exception -passive* where the principal waits until errors, mistakes, or none-compliance has occurred in order to intervene and take corrective action (Antonakis, Avolio and Sivasubramania, 2003). Basically, a transactional leader uses rewards and punishment to influence employees. Okumbe (2008) noted that the model presents two dimensions; ideographic (school needs) and nomothetic (teacher needs) and the transaction between the two.

2.3.3 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders exhibit charisma and shared vision with their followers, stimulating others to produce exceptional work. The concept was associated with Weber's (1947) work on charisma (Hukpati, 2009). First described by James Burns in 1978, transformational leadership style is exemplified by charisma and shared vision between leaders and followers (Burns, 1978). Burns (1978) contends that it is a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morality and motivation. The power of transformational leaders comes from their ability to stimulate and inspire others to produce exceptional work (Andrea, 2011).

According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders focus on helping their followers to see beyond their selfish interest and work for the good of the organization. Graham (1988) supported the above view and observed that transformational leaders charismatically influence their followers to be innovative and work towards the organization's goals. Transformational leadership can help build a common goal between leaders and the led in an organization. It comprises of five sub-factors; *idealized influence attributed* which describes the extent to which teachers perceive their principals as charismatic, of high ideals, morals and confident. The principal has teachers' faith, respect and trust. He is seen as an exemplary model and is admired and respected and teachers want to emulate him. The second sub-factor is *idealized influence behavior* which describes a visionary principal who do the right things and "walk the talk" and encourage teachers to do the right things for the benefit of the school. Idealized principals envisage a desirable future, articulate how it can be done, provide examples to be followed, show confidence and determination and set high standards of

performance (Bass, 1999b). The third sub-factor is *inspirational motivation* which refers to the ability to inspire and motivate followers. It describes principals who encourage their teachers to be optimistic and enthusiastic about the future. Teachers are encouraged to have a strong sense of purpose and team spirit. Teachers are encouraged that the school mission is achievable and that they can achieve more than what they thought was possible. The fourth sub-factor is *intellectual stimulation* which refers to the principal's ways of encouraging creativity, intelligence and rationality in finding new solutions to difficult problems to make the school better. The principal encourages teachers to be change agents and discard old ways of doing things (Avolio, 1999). The principal encourage teachers to question their own assumptions, beliefs and values and those of the principal that may be outdated or inappropriate for solving current problems (Bass and Avolio, 2000). The last sub-factor is *individualized consideration* which describes principals who act as teachers, mentors and coaches to their teachers. They create new learning opportunities for the individual development and growth of the teachers putting into consideration individual needs, values and differences of the teachers. The individually considerate principal listens actively and effectively and cares for the interest of the teachers. They focus on the performance and potential of individual group members (Kendra, 2012). Leithwood (1992) on the other hand observed that transformational leadership helps redefine the workers' mission and vision in an organization and helps them to work towards goal achievement. The leader influences the workers to strive to achieve what they would not have achieved without the leader's influence. It arouses the workers interest and commitment towards the organizational goals.

For purposes of this study, transformational principals are considered to be those that influence, motivate and encourage teamwork in the school. They have high moral and ethical standards, are visionary and authentic and aim to transform both the school and the teachers (Katie, 2013). They have greater influence on teachers' attitudinal change through inspiration, stimulation and mentoring as they offer a purpose that transcends beyond short term goals.

From the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that each principal would at least practice one dominant leadership style alongside other leadership styles. However, there is no empirical research that indicates to what extent the leadership styles are being carried out in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties. The study intends to fill this gap.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design
The study employed a descriptive survey design to examine the types of leadership practiced by principals in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu, Kajiado counties. According to Kothari (2003), descriptive survey is a method of securing information concerning an existing phenomenon from all or a selected number of respondents of a concerned universe. Survey was used because there was a systematic collection of data from members of a given population through questionnaires (Orodho, 2005) which in this case were principals, heads of departments and teachers.

3.2 Target Population
The target population comprised of 397 principals, 379 deputy principals, 1010 heads of departments and 2208 secondary school teachers in the respective counties who have served for at least two years in the same school giving a total of 3994 respondents.

3.3 Sample Size
Stratified and simple random sampling was used to select 40 principals, 38 deputy principals, 101 heads of departments and 221 secondary school teachers giving a total of 400 respondents.

3.4 Research Instruments
The study employed Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 5X to seek information from various sample groups and the data obtained were subjected to descriptive techniques. Questionnaires were used to collect data from principals, heads of departments and teachers to gather quantitative data on the leadership styles practiced by principals as perceived by teachers.

3.5 Piloting Reliability
A pilot study was carried out on three principals, three heads of departments and six secondary school teachers from three different schools to establish the reliability of the research instruments through a test-retest.

3.6 Validity
To validate the research instruments, expert opinion from my supervisors and other experts from Kenyatta University was sought to help check on the content and construct validity of the instruments. They read through the draft instruments and

thereafter their recommendations were incorporated in the coming up with the final instruments that were used in the study.

3.7 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. Results were analyzed using simple statistics in the form of frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviations and one way analysis of variance.

4. Findings and Discussion

The study established that transformational leadership was the predominant leadership style practiced by principals in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties. The study however noted that even though teachers perceived their principals as more transformational than transactional, there was overlapping scores between transactional contingent reward (M = 2.91. SD, .751) and transformational intellectual stimulation (M = 2.79. SD, .670) and individualized consideration (M= 2.70. SD, .805).

4.1 Principals' Use of Transformational Leadership Style

Findings on principals' use of transformational leadership style established that transformational leadership style is the predominant leadership style practiced by principals in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Principals Use of Transformational Leadership Style
(N= 270)

Teacher Category	Transformational Leadership Style					
	Hardly Used		Dominant		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Principals	0	0	39	100	39	100
D/principals	5	14.3	30	85.7	35	100
HODs	19	24.4	59	75.6	78	100
Teachers	27	22.9	91	77.1	118	100
Total	**51**	**18.9**	**219**	**81.1**	**270**	**100**

Table 4.1 indicates that most (81.1%) respondents were of the opinion that transformational leadership style was the dominant leadership style exhibited by principals.

The mean response scores and standard deviation for each individual transformational leadership style sub-factors showed that inspirational (M = 3.31. SD,

.688) was perceived as being the highest contributing factor of transformational leadership style while individualized consideration (M= 2.72. SD, .805) scored the lowest indicating that it had the least impact as perceived by teachers. Results are shown in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Mean Response Scores for Transformational Leadership Characteristics

Leadership Characteristics	Mean	Std Deviation
Inspirational motivation	3.31	0.688
Idealized behavior	3.21	0.671
Idealized attributes	3.10	1.943
Intellectual stimulation	2.79	0.670
Individualized consideration	2.72	0.805

0- not at all; 1- once in a while; 2- sometimes 3- fairly often; 4- frequently if not always

4.2 Principals' Use of Transactional Leadership Style

The study established that transactional leadership style was occasionally practiced by principals in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties. Results are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Principals' Use of Transactional Leadership (N= 270)

Teacher Category	Transactional Leadership Style							
	Hardly Used		Occasionally Used		Dominant		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Principals	2	5.1	30	76.9	7	18	39	100
D/principals	2	5.7	25	71.4	8	22.9	35	100
HODs	7	9.0	53	67.9	18	23.1	78	100
Teachers	14	11.9	79	66.9	25	21.2	118	100
Total	**25**	**9.3**	**187**	**69.3**	**58**	**21.4**	**270**	**100**

Table 4.3 show that most (69.3%) respondents were of the opinion that they occasionally principals used transactional leadership.

The mean response scores and standard deviation for each individual transactional leadership style sub-factors showed that contingent reward (M=2.91. SD, .751) was the highest perceived contributing factor of transactional leadership as shown in Table 4.4

Table 4.4: Mean Response Scores for Transactional Leadership Style

Leadership Characteristics	Mean	Std. Deviation
Contingent Reward	2.910	0.751
Active Management by Exception	2.283	0.893
Passive Management by Exception	1.023	0.764

0- not at all; 1- once in a while; 2- sometimes; 3- fairly often; 4- frequently if not always

4.3 Principals Use of Laissez-faire Leadership Style

Findings on principals' use of laissez-faire leadership style indicate that the style is hardly used by principals. Results are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Principals' Use of Laissez-faire Leadership (N= 270)

Teacher Category	Laissez-faire Leadership Style							
	Hardly Used		Occasionally Used		Dominant		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
Principals	39	100	0	0	0	0	39	100
D/principals	35	100	0	0	0	0	35	100
HODs	75	96.2	3	3.8	0	0	78	100
Teachers	111	94.1	5	4.2	2	1.7	118	100
Total	**260**	**96.3**	**8**	**3**	**2**	**0.7**	**270**	**100**

Results in Table 4.5 indicate that most (96.3%) respondents rated the style as hardly used.

The mean response scores for laissez-faire leadership style showed a much lower score (M= 0.667. SD, .1.082) indicating that the leadership style is not used at all as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Mean Response Score for Laissez-faire Leadership Style

Leadership Characteristics	Mean	Std. Deviation
Non Leadership	0.667	1.082

0- not at all; 1- once in a while; 2- sometimes; 3- fairly often; 4- frequently if not always

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the predominant leadership style practiced by principals in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties in Kenya. The study was guided by the following specific objective: to determine the

predominant leadership style practiced by principals in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajaido counties, Kenya.

The study established that transformational leadership was the predominant leadership style practiced by principals in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties, Kenya. Most (81.1%) respondents stated that transformational leadership style was the predominant leadership style which was fairly often practiced by principals in public secondary schools in siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties. It was mainly manifested through inspirational motivation (M =3.31, SD = 0.688) and idealized behaviour (M = 3.28, SD = 0.761). Transactional leadership was occasionally used by principals in their leadership. Most (69.3%) respondents reported that it was occasionally exhibited by principals in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties. Its main contributing factor was contingent reward (M = 2.92, SD = 0.751) indicating that principals occasionally provide rewards for accomplished tasks and sanctions for non-accomplishment of tasks. Laissez-faire leadership was style hardly used by principals. Most (96.3%) respondents indicated that principal hardly used the leadership style indicating that principals did not wait for problems to occur before taking action. The findings further revealed overlapping scores between transactional contingent reward (M = 2.910, SD = 0.670) and transformational intellectual stimulation (M= 2.79, SD = 0.670) and individualized consideration (M = 2.72, SD = 0.805) sub-scales.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the finding that transformational leadership is the predominant leadership style, the study concludes that even though teachers perceived their principals as more transformational than transactional, one's leadership style could not be explicitly categorised as both styles complement each other.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the study objectives, the following recommendations were made:

i.   Teacher professional development programs should provide training on leadership styles to help principals understand when and how to use the various leadership styles depending on the situation at hand.

ii. The Ministry of Education should endeavor to develop and improve on existing leadership policies, practices and frameworks to be used by principals in the management of schools.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

The study sought to determine the predominant leadership style practiced by principals in public secondary schools in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado counties, Kenya. The researcher suggests other studies as follows:

i. A study of the same nature should be replicated in other counties in Kenya for purposes of comparison and generalization.

ii. In terms of wider application, future studies should be conducted in higher educational institutions such as universities and colleges.

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