



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Head Teachers' Role In Policy Making In Secondary Schools In Kenya: A Case Of Kobujoi Division In Nandi County

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ARTICLE INFO

*Article History:*

Received 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2011  
Received in revised form  
18<sup>th</sup> May, 2011  
Accepted 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2011  
Published online 16<sup>th</sup> July 2011

*Key words:*

Policy,  
Policy making,  
Policy implementation,  
Perceptions.

ABSTRACT

Policy making in education in Kenya is usually the concern of those in authority such as the legislators, Minister of Education, Ministry officials among others. However there are school based policies that are a concern of the Head teacher. This study sought to investigate the role of head teachers in the formulation and implementation of school-based policies in Kenya. The study was conducted in all the ten secondary schools that are found in the study area. It involved all the ten head teachers who were chosen purposively, through simple random sampling fifty teachers and three hundred students were chosen as respondents. The study was guided by collegial theories which assume that organizations determine policies and make decisions through a process of discussion. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study revealed a significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents regarding the head teachers' involvement of students, teachers and parents in school- based policy making and schools' effectiveness in terms of improved academic performance. The study further found out that the head teachers do not involve other stakeholders (teachers, students and parents) in school-based policy making which negatively impacts on schools' academic achievement.

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INTRODUCTION

The foremost function of educational management is the assurance that sound policies, goals and objectives are formulated in a given school, and that methods are determined for the achievement of these objectives. The head teacher has to ensure that policies and objectives of the school are clearly stipulated and well known to the school community, that is, the teachers, students, parents, staff and other stakeholders. According to Okumbe (1998) it is through policies and objectives that the directions and destinations of the school's activities can be patterned. The head teacher has a responsibility to ensure that the long-term aims of the education system are made feasible through the short-term objectives of the school. This is achieved by formulating sound school-based policies. These policies have to be in line with the national policies on education as formulated by the Ministry of Education. 'Aims and objectives of education can be better achieved if the head teacher involves all stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of school policies. Head teachers need to be democratic in policy formulation and implementation. More often than not, school heads fail to be democratic in policy formulation and implementation, a fact which builds up resentment and results in unrest in schools, and in turn affects student achievement negatively.

Davis and Morgan (1983), point out that teachers wish to participate more fully in the management of their schools. Bush (1995:58), concurs with this view when he says that when teachers participate in policy making, they find it easier to implement them. He reiterates that the participation of teaching staff is important because they usually have the responsibility for implementing the changes in policy, and adds that effective implementation is much more likely if teachers feel that they 'own' the decisions. Thus, the quality of decision-making is likely to be better where the teaching staff are allowed to participate in the process. Heads do not have a monopoly of wisdom or vision and so the involvement of other staff increases the quotient of experience and expertise brought to bear on problems. Similarly, Watts (1976), points out that the major policy decisions that have shaped the curriculum and discipline of the school have been made by the consensus of the staff. He adds that, students have increasingly contributed to this consensus.

Thus, school administrators have a challenging responsibility of steering the school community-teachers, students, parents and support staff to formulate and implement good policies that are school-based. These school-based policies have to be in line with the national policies of Education as formulated by the Ministry of Education, and articulated by the school's Board of Governors, the body that represents the Ministry on the ground.

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According to the report of the Task Force appointed by Ministry of Education (2001) on student discipline and unrest in schools, the report from provincial committees established that despite the fact that the Ministry of Education has in place sound policies on management of education - which are reviewed from time to time in order to address any emerging issues and changing circumstances-there are still many policy-related problems. Some of those policy problems were identified as;

1. The failure of the Ministry of Education to involve other stakeholders in formulation of policies;
2. The tendency of the ministry to make policy pronouncements in response to occurrence of crisis;
3. The long period of time that the ministry often takes to effect some of the recommendations made by other stake-holders on students welfare;
4. That the ministry does not seem to have an effective dissemination mechanism for communicating important administrative and policy decisions; and

The lack of an effective monitoring system in place to ensure implementation of policies. These policy problems at the Ministry of Education level have a lot of similarities at secondary school level. Policymaking and implementation is of great importance in any school setting. This ensures that members of a school community arrive at guidelines based on their unique situation for effective school management and realization of educational goals. The school's head teacher plays a great role in ensuring that policies formulated and implemented at school level are in line with the requirements or directives from higher authorities, in this case, the Ministry of Education, through its agents like the Provincial Director of Education, the District Education officer and the Boards of Governors ( BOG). The head teacher has to create a conducive environment for policy formulation and implementation. All the stakeholders have to be involved in policy making. They have also to be guided by the school's head on what is expected of them and how well to handle this task. It is against this background that the present study intends to look at the head teachers' role in policymaking in secondary schools in Kenya.

### Statement of the Problem

This study is a response to resentment and complaints raised by the stakeholders in secondary schools in Kenya to the effect that head teachers are not playing their roles as expected of them in matters of policy making and policy implementation. Heads have sometimes been accused of not only imposing unpopular policies on students and teachers, but also of failing to involve other stakeholders in policy making, yet these stakeholders are called upon to implement them. In addition, it is claimed that some heads have not endeavored to acquaint themselves with the right procedures of policy formulation, let alone directing other stakeholders in these procedures. According to stakeholders, poor approaches to policymaking have resulted in poor management of schools and poor performance of many students in national examinations; while in some schools unrests have been reported.

Records held at the District Education Office in Nandi county show that in the recent past (less than five years ago) unrests have been reported in five schools in this Kobujoi division. In the year 2008, students burned down an administration building in one of the schools. They were reportedly protesting against the poor results in national examinations and alleged high-handedness of their head teachers. More so, about ten teachers of the schools in this division apply for transfers each year. Among the reasons that they give for doing so surrounds their discontent with the way head teachers handle the formulation and implementation of school-based policies. Students and teachers have time and again accused their head teachers of highhandedness in matters concerning school-based policies. Some head teachers have even been branded as dictators/autocrats. Moreover, some of the teachers' transfers in this division are attributable to school policy implementations. Some head teachers have found their work of headship very difficult to handle. The focal problem of this study therefore, is to have a look at the head teacher's role in policy making in secondary schools in Kobujoi Division of Nandi County.

### Objectives of the study

1. To establish the perceptions of head teachers, teachers and students on school-based policy making
2. To determine whether students, teachers and parents are involved in the process of school-based policy making in secondary schools
3. To ascertain whether involving teachers in school-based policy making improves schools academic performance
4. To find out whether involving students in school-based policy making improves schools academic performance.

### Research Questions

1. What is the perception of head teachers, teachers and students on school-based policy making
2. Are students, teachers and parents involved in the process of school-based policy making in secondary schools
3. Does involving teachers in school-based policy making improve schools' academic performance
4. Does involving students in school-based policy making improve schools' academic performance.

### Hypothesis

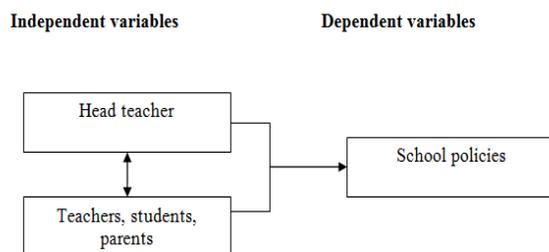
1. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of head teachers, teachers and students in the involvement of teachers in school based policy formulation and improved academic performance. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of head teachers, teachers and students in the involvement of students in school based policy formulation and improved academic performance.

### Theoretical Framework / Conceptual Framework

This study is based on collegial models, which emphasize that power and decision-making should be shared among some all members of the organization. Collegial models assume that organizations determine policies and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus. Wallace (1989) acknowledges the fact that power is shared among some or all

members of the organization who are thought to have a mutual understanding about the objectives of the institution. Bush (1995:52) concurs with this view by stating that, "something is gained when members of an organization work together and something is lost when they do not." Collegial approaches reflect the perspective that management should be based on agreement; that decision-making should be based on democratic principles. These models assume that professionals have a right to share in the wider decision-making process. The reason for basing the study on collegial models is because school-based policy formulation and implementation ought to be based on consensus of all stakeholders. School teachers are professionals and thus possess authority arising directly from their knowledge and skills. They have the authority of expertise. Consequently, teachers not only require a measure of autonomy in the room but also need to collaborate to ensure a coherent approach to teaching and learning.

Collegial models assume that members of the organization hold a common set of values. The common values of professionals or part of the justification for the optimistic assumption that it is always possible to reach agreement about goals and policies. The size of the decision-making group is an important element in collegial management. Bush adds that the democratic element of formal representation rests on allegiance owed by participants to their constituencies. Formal representation confer the right to participate in defined areas of policy, while informal consultation is at the sole discretion of the leader who is under no obligation to act on the advice received (Ibid:54). Effective policy formulation and implementation at school level should embrace collegial theories. Secondary school heads on this case are supposed to be responsive to the needs and wishes of their profession colleagues. Collegial school heads acknowledge the expertise and skill of the teachers and seek to harness these assets for the benefit of pupils and students. Head teachers are expected to be sensitive to the informal codes of professional practice that govern expectations for relations among teachers and heads. Basing on this, a conceptual framework was developed as shown below:



### Research Design

A survey research was employed in the study. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to get a much details as possible within the limited time and available resources, Kothari (2008). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means. Correlations were also computed by use of chi—square test. This design helped the researcher to determine whether head teachers play their roles efficiently in the realm of school-based policymaking, which entails the involvement of all other stakeholders.

### Target Population

Kobujoi Division has ten secondary schools with 150 (one hundred and fifty) teachers. The study targeted all the head teachers of the ten schools in the division and half of the teachers. Form three students in the secondary schools within the division were also involved in the study. The reason for targeting all head teachers is because they are the ones who facilitate policy formulation and policy implementation in their respective schools. Teachers were involved in the study because they are the ones who help the head teachers to succeed or fail in their policy formulation and policy implementation, while the form three students were involved because having been in school for a reasonably long period time, it was believed that they were in a position to understand the school and its ways of administering policies better. Form fours, though having stayed longer in school were exempted owing to their busy schedule of preparing for national exams.

### Sampling Procedures

Because of the small number of schools in the area of study, the researcher used the universe procedure of sampling, whereby all the ten schools in the division were involved in the study. The study involved the total population of the head teachers in the division. Of the total population of teachers, a sample was obtained by use of the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sample consisted of senior teachers and heads of department, who were identified by the researcher with the help of the head teachers. They were chosen for the study because it was assumed that they would have more information about policy formulation and implementation owing to their higher positions and experience as compared to the other teachers. Purposive sampling was also used to choose a sample from the student population. In comparison to form ones and twos, the form threes have stayed long in school, they were deemed to have an idea of how school-based policies are formulated and implemented in their respective schools. The form fours were exempted because they were busy taking their pre-mock examinations. Consequently, the form three students were used to represent the student population.

### Development of the Research Instruments

The instruments that were used are questionnaires and interview schedules, which were developed by the researcher, and improved on by experts in the School of Education. The questionnaires were deemed appropriate as they can be administered to many people in a short period of time. An interview schedule for head teachers was used to clarify some points in the questionnaires. They gave room for respondents to express themselves more clearly on the topic.

### Validity of the Research Instruments

Toili (2001), defines the validity of an instrument as its ability to measure what it is supposed to measure. To verify the validity of the research instruments, the researcher took the questionnaires and interview schedules to experts in the School of Education, Moi university before administering them. The experts scrutinized the instruments for face validity and made suggestions that were incorporated.

## Reliability of Research Instruments

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) states that an instrument is reliable when respondents give the same answers at any given period. To achieve this, the researcher administered the questionnaires in a test-retest to two selected schools outside Kobujoi division as a pilot study on the same level of the population. The instruments were administered and a lapse of two weeks given before administering the instruments a second time. The data obtained were then subjected to a reliability analysis using Pearson's Product Moment correlation. A coefficient of 0.682 was obtained for the head teachers, 0.654 for the teachers, and a coefficient of 0.731 for the students. Since a reliability coefficient of 0.5 is acceptable for the social sciences, the instruments were considered reliable and adopted for the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Perception of head teachers, teachers and students in the school based policy making in secondary schools

In order to answer the question as to whether school-based policy formulation involves all stakeholders, several questions were asked that required the respondents to indicate their perceptions on a Likert scale whether they agreed with the statements that teachers, students and parents are involved in the formulation and implementation of school-based policies. Their responses are tabled in Table 1 below in percentages and frequencies. The table is a summary of responses to four questions that were posed to head teachers, teachers and students. The four variables were presented in the same table for ease in comparison, interpretation and reporting.

on their own. According to Johnson & Johnson (1995) and Bush (1995), point out that the head teacher is typical as a facilitator of an essentially participative process (the process of policy making). The involvement of students in policy formulation and implementation is of great importance. Danielson, (2002) asserts that the inclusion of students' voices in the process of decision-making, and in the making of rules and procedures is likely to be stronger than if the students are not involved. Teachers feel that they are not involved in the process of policy formulation. Sixty four point six (64.6) percent of them (teachers) responded that they are not involved in the process of policy making. Bush (1995), noted that implementing policies in whose development teachers have participated is successful because the teachers feel that they own them. The findings shown above indicates a total of 78.8% of the respondents believed that involvement of teachers, students and parents improves academic performance. Lambert (2003) agrees with this observation by stating that meaningful participation is a cornerstone of professional and school achievement.

### Hypothesis Testing

Statistical treatment of hypothesis was done using chi-square test. This was used in order to test whether there was a significant difference between perceptions of respondents regarding the involvement of stakeholders in school based policy making and schools academic performance. *H01: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of head teachers, teachers, and students in the involvement of teachers in school-based policy formulation and improved academic performance.* From Table2 above, the calculated chi-square value of 10.78 is greater than the critical value (9.49).

**Table 1. Numbers and Percentages of Respondents Indicating their Perceptions as to whether Teachers, Students and Parents are involved in Policy Formulation and Implementation**

Variable	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Un-decided	Total
The head teacher formulates and implements policies on his own	Head teachers	-	9 (100)	-	9 (100)
	Teachers	28 (58.3)	17 (35.4)	3 (6.3)	48 (100)
	Students	234 (79.1)	47 (15.9)	15 (5.1)	296 (100)
	Total	262 (74.2)	73 (20.7)	18 (5.1)	353 (100)
Parents are involved in formulation and implementation of policies	Head teachers	7 (77.8)	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	9 (100)
	Teachers	13 (27.1)	34 (70.8)	1 (2.1)	48 (100)
	Students	205 (69.3)	74 (25.0)	17 (5.7)	296 (100)
	Total	225 (63.7)	109 (30.9)	19 (5.4)	353 (100)
Teachers are involved in policy formulation and implementation	Head teachers	7 (77.8)	-	2 (22.2)	9 (100)
	Teachers'	16 (33.3)	31 (64.6)	1 (2.1)	48 (100)
	Students	237 (80.1)	44 (14.9)	15 (5.1)	296 (100)
	Total	260 (73.7)	75 (21.2)	18 (5.1)	353 (100)
Students are involved in policy formulation and implementation	Head teachers	8 (88.9)	-	1 (11.1)	9 (100)
	Teachers	17 (35.4)	26 (54.2)	5 (10.4)	48 (100)
	Students	73 (24.7)	208 (70.3)	15 (5.1)	296 (100)
	Total	98 (27.8)	234 (66.3)	21 (5.9)	353 (100)

The findings tabled above show that 74.2% of the total respondents believed that the head teachers formulate and implement policies on their own without consulting the parents and the teachers. Seventy nine point one (79.1) percent of the student sample and 58.3% of the teachers' sample believed that head teachers formulate and implement policies

Hence, the stated null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of head teachers, teachers, and students in the involvement of teachers in school-based policy formulation and implementation and improved academic performance was rejected. Therefore, this result implies that there is a significant difference between the

**Table 2. Numbers and Percentages of Respondents Indicating their Perceptions as to whether involvement of Teachers, Students and Parents in Policy Formulation and Implementation improves academic performance**

Variable	Respondent	Agree	Disagree	Un-decided	Total
Involvement of teachers, students and parents improves academic performance.	Head teachers	6 (66.7)	3 (33.3)	-	9 (100)
	Teachers	38 (79.2)	7(14.5)	3 (6.3)	48 (100)
	Students	234 (79.1)	47(15.9)	15 (5.1)	296 (100)
	Total	278 (78.8)	57 (16.1)	18 (5.1)	353 (100)

**Table3. Results of Chi-square Tests on the Difference between Perceptions of the Respondents on the Involvement of Stakeholders in Policy Formulation and Schools Academic performance**

Hypothesis	Degree of Freedom	Level of Significance	Calculated Value X <sup>2</sup> Cal	Critical Value X <sup>2</sup> t	i2 Remark
HO1	4	0.05	10.78	9.49	S
HO2	4	0.05	H4.18	9.49	S

perceptions of respondents in the involvement of teachers in school based policy formulation and implementation which enhances students' academic performance.

*HO2 : There is no significant difference in the perception of head teachers, teachers, and students in the involvement of students in school-based policy formulation and implementation and improved academic performance.* Table2 above shows that the calculated chi-square value of 114.18 is greater than the critical value of 9.49. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents in the involvement of teachers in school-based policy formulation. In order to perform its role effectively and efficiently, a school and by implication the headteacher must be able to play a leadership role based on the formulation and implementation of sound policies. Musaazi (1992), defines leadership as the process of influencing the activities and behavior of individuals or a group in efforts towards goal achievement in a given situation. He goes on to explain that leadership is concerned with the implementation of those policies and decisions, which assist in directing the activities of an organization towards its specified goals. One of the responsibilities of a leader, in this case a school headteacher, is to see to it that decisions made in the organization are within the confines of the organizational policies. He points out that when policies have been made, they have to be put into action without deviating from the overall policy. According to Lunenburg and Ornstein (1991:131), democratic leadership is based on the idea that members of the group or their representatives shall be involved in the making of policies. In the *British Journal of Sociology* (1970, vol. 21, p. 433) points out that the right of status can be equated to being respected and consulted when it comes to policy formulation. The leader derives his / her power and authority from his / her followers.

### Conclusion

In relation to perception of respondent as to whether the head teacher formulates school-based policies single handedly, 74.25% concurred. On whether the parents are involved in formulation and implementation of school-based policies, 63.7% of the respondents agreed that they are involved, while 73.7% of respondents agreed that teachers are involved in school-based policy formulation and implementation. Relating to involvement of students in school-based in policy

formulation and implementation, 66.3% of the respondents said that students are not involved. The chi-square test of the hypotheses revealed that there is significant difference in the perceptions of head teachers, teachers and students on the involvement of teachers and students in school-based policy formulation and implementation and improved students' academic performance. Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

1. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that head teachers formulate policies single-handedly without involving other stakeholders, a fact which causes resentment among stakeholders and results in poor academic performance by the students.
2. Involvement of stakeholders (teachers and students) in school-based policy formulation and implementation enhances student academic performance.
3. Involvement of parents in school-based policy formulation and implementation enhances parents' participation in school activities.

### Recommendations

1. The head teachers should take into consideration the active involvement of stakeholders (parents, teachers and students) in school-based policy formulation and implementation. This makes the stakeholders feel that they own these policies and hence they find it easy to implement them.
2. The Ministry of Education should organize more courses train and equip head teachers with the knowledge and skills of sound policymaking at school level.
3. Parents should be fully involved in school-based policy formulation. This will make them participate more fully in school activities such as fund raisers for the school. In so doing, the schools will develop their physical facilities and consequently improve instruction activities.
4. Appointment of head teachers by the Ministry of Education must take into consideration the experience of head teachers in order to minimize their resentment by stakeholders.

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