The Relationship between Demographic Characteristic of Age and Instructional Leadership Style - A Kenyan Perspective

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Abstract: Education is the vital instrument for economic and social mobility at the personal level, an instrument for transforming a society and a veritable means of effecting development at the national level. Consequently, leadership exhibited at any institution of learning is widely deemed to be an important aspect. As such, there are several reasons in literature suggesting that Instructional leadership (IL) has a strong influence on the success of a school. However, from literature, studies on the relationship between instructional leadership behavior and demographic characteristic of age are very few. As such, the essence of this study was to fill that gap by establishing whether there is significant relationship between instructional leadership behavior and age of head-teachers in primary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study adopted a quantitative method, used a stratified random sampling technique and utilized Instructional Leadership Inventory (ILI) instrument to survey 198 head-teachers of public and private primary schools in Kiambu County. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to determine the relationship between IL behavior and age of the head teacher. On the overall, the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between IL behavior and demographic characteristic of age as measured in the dimensions of: Managing curriculum, supervising teaching, monitoring student progress, defining mission and promoting instructional development. The study is in agreement with various studies that demonstrate that age has no strong relationship with leadership style.

Keywords: Education, Instructional leadership Style, Age.

I. INTRODUCTION

To establish attributes and behaviors that determine effective leadership and leadership style, different theories and assumptions, based on personality, behaviorist, and contingency theories, also known as demographic characteristics have been used (Molleman, 2005; Lopjpur et al., 2014). Consequently, demographic characteristics of the leader as a manager of an organization or institution have received much attention among researchers Adeyemi, & Jimoh, (2014). According to Bell et al., (2015), scholars have spent more than a century in trying to comprehend the characteristics or demographic theory behind effective leadership due to their importance in predicting workers’ behavioral outcomes such as efficiency (Shadare, 2011). effectiveness (Craven, 2006), and communication style (Gilley 2009). With this in mind, there has been a common observation that male and female are similar (Manning, 2002,) or differ (Barbuto et al., 2007; Manning, 2002) in their behavior in many ways. According to Kakabadse, (1998) and Kabacoff & Stoffey, (2001) the reasoning behind demographic theory is that demographic factors or traits such as age, gender, years of experience and level of education tenure, occupation, gender, and ethnicity of the leader, affects the working dynamics of the people which influences organizational goals.

1. Leadership

Exhaustive and analytical reviews using quantitative and qualitative data have found that leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning (Leithwood et al., 2006). A number of researchers, Leithwood et al. (2004); Hallinger, (2005, 2012, 2016); Robinson et al. (2009) found a powerful link between school leadership and student learning confirming that principal leadership reckons. A relationship between the leadership style and attainment of organizational goals exists as has been demonstrated by researchers. As such, towards achieving these organizational goals, the leadership style the leader prefers is considered paramount (McColl-Kennedy, 2002; Koech, 2012).

1. Instructional Leadership

Literature has numerous studies done in the western countries which have concluded that instructional and transformational leadership styles results in positive outcomes in educational leadership (Hallinger, 2005; 2012, 2016; Robinson et al., 2009).

However, Robinson’s et al. (2009) and Hallinger’s (2005, 2009, 2016) meta-analysis results of their quantitative empirical studies suggested that compared to transformational leadership, instructional leadership is more likely to result in strong effects upon pupil outcomes by head-teachers focusing on the core business of schools in enhancing effective teaching and learning. In fact among all models of leadership, instructional leadership has received the greatest extensive global attention with majority of researchers coming from North America, Europe and Asia (Hallinger, 2012; Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Hallinger, 2005, 2016).
Marks & Printy, (2003) and Leithwood & Duke, (1999) described instructional leadership as referring to all functions that contribute to student learning, accomplished by the head teacher. These entail observing the behavior of teachers on a daily basis as they accomplish their activities that contribute to the growth of students to support their achievement. Instructional leadership has been conceptualized through three dimensions that guide the behavior of the leader. Firstly, the instructional leader defines the school’s mission by determining the central purposes of the school through setting up the school vision and goals and communicating these goals to the entire school community. Secondly is developing an effective instructional program focusing on coordinating, controlling, supervising, evaluating of instruction and monitoring student progress. The final dimension is promoting a positive school learning environment which entails protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining a high visibility, providing incentives for teachers and students and developing high expectations and standards (Hallinger, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Bellibas, 2017).

In Kenya, the concept of instructional leadership has specifically been examined by various researchers such as Wambui & Ngariyua, (2016); Ombonga, (2017); Mutuku, et al. (2017); Mutea, (2015) and accordingly we can conclude that Instructional leadership is to some extend practiced by head teachers of both primary and secondary schools in Kenya.

Extensive research on instructional leadership and student achievement continues to receive popularity studies from various researchers (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood & Duke 1999; Robinson, Hohepaet al., 2009).). There is also a dearth of literature concerning instructional leadership and its relationship with other variables including personal characteristics like gender (Cunningham, 2004; Kis & Konan, 2014; Hallinger 2016; Mannan et al., 2017; Shaked & Gross, 2018; Shaked 2019); years of experience of the principal (Bredeson, 1996; Bredeson & Kose, 2007; White-Smith, 2012; Ohlson, 2009) and school context e.g. school size: (Zheng, 1996; Gaziel, 2007; Packard, 2011). On the contrary, perusing through literature, Studies on the relationship between leadership and the demographic characteristic of age are few. Fewer still are studies between leadership style and age and education. Almost missing are studies on the relationship between instructional leadership style and the age of the head teacher.

Statement of the Problem

A great deal of research has explored both demographic attributes of gender, years of experience and aspects of school context such as school size and their relationship or how they affect the instructional leadership of the head teacher. However, very few studies have delved on the relationship between age and instructional leadership style. From literature review, there are no results indicating such studies in this context for Kiambu County, Kenya. Therefore this study aims to investigate the relationship between the age trait and the instructional leadership style among primary school head teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Study Objective

To establish if a relationship exists between the demographic characteristic of age and the use of instructional leadership style among head teachers of primary schools of Kiambu County, Kenya.

Age

Despite literature having few studies on age as a predictor of leadership style, Barbuto et al. (2007), regards age as an important factor that could influence leadership style as attitudes and behaviors between different generations can have important differences. Moreover, research posits that younger and older managers have different profiles in their leadership styles (Oshagbemi, 2004). Kabacoff & Stoffey 2001 fronts two arguments about leadership and age based on the perspective of ageism suggesting in the first argument: “older leaders are rigid, less likely to retool and unwilling to learn new ways of working. They are prone to resist change and innovation, and therefore likely to encumber the organization” in their second argument they say “because of their years of experience and “trial by fire”, older leaders have developed a maturity, wisdom, and “corporate memory” that allows them to anticipate problems, respond to crisis calmly and with confidence, and to effectively develop others to assume leadership through role modeling, coaching, and mentoring relationships” (p. 4).

Similarly, it is argued that younger workers envisage new approaches, are more courageous in taking risks and adoptable in fast-changing environments (Kabacoff & Stoffey, 2001: Oshagbemi, 2008). Additionally, in his Ohio state university study, on “exploring the concept of self-leadership: factors impacting self-leadership of Ohio AmeriCorps members” Kazan, (2000) found that self-leadership style is influenced by age. Other reasons why the study of leadership and age is important are that younger people are working side by side with older workers in various work and leadership roles based on the simple fact that older workers are remaining employed longer (Cufaude & Riemersma, 1999). Additionally, due to the organization of structures, boundaries that once separated “senior” staff from “junior” staff has been removed leading to a mix of cross-generations (Ernst, 2000). Therefore, according to Kabaco & Stoffey (2001), leadership is no longer an exclusive domain of a single individual, due to the complexity of leadership in a dynamic and fast growing global economy.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section covers the study population, sampling, data analysis, results and discussions and conclusions.
2.1 Study Population

Kiambu County, Kenya has an estimated 847 primary schools, which formed the total school population for the study. Thus target population of this study comprised of all head teachers of different gender and age groups of both public and private primary schools in the County. The sample population for the study was done through random stratified sampling method. According to Elfil, & Negida (2017), stratified random sampling means each unit within a sampling frame has an equal chance of being selected. First the schools were stratified into the 12 sub-counties of Kiambu County, then into public and private primary schools. Thus we obtained a total sample of 198 head-teachers. The questionnaires were administered personally chiefly through voluntary participation to protect individual confidentiality guarantying promptness and accurate data collection.

2.2 Data Analysis

For data acquisition, the Instructional Leadership Inventory (ILI) semi structured questionnaires consisting of closed question was used. Based on literature review on instructional leadership behaviors, ILI item content was found appropriate to cover the research objective for this study. The instruments included in each dimension were:

- define mission,
- supervision of teaching,
- management of curriculum,
- monitoring of student progress and
- Promoting instructional climate, were identified as instructional leadership behaviors.

These dimensions which had a total of 46 items or variables were found to be associated with improvements or gains in student academic achievement (Conoley et al, 1995). The ratings were assessed on a 5-point likert-scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represented “never”, 2 represented “rarely”, 3 represented “sometimes”, 4 represented “frequently” and 5 represented “almost always”.

Questionnaire data collected was structured and analysed using the SPSS program. Through statistical treatments, the arithmetic means and standard deviation were calculated; one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test were performed and used to draw inferences about differences between the means of two or more groups. For all statistical tests, the level of significance was set at p<0.05.

III. RESULTS

The specific objective for this study was to establish if a relationship existed between instructional leadership style and the demographic characteristic of age among head teachers of primary schools of kiambu, County Kenya. The findings are discussed according to the dimensions: define mission, supervision of teaching, management of curriculum, monitoring of student progress and promoting instructional climate. The study findings are presented in Table 1 and 2.

The results show that on the overall, the statistical findings of the study indicated that head-teachers of all age groups had a positive perception about the instructional leadership style and that to some extent all age groups had adopted the instructional leadership style in their schools (Mean 3.98). However, the dimensions of “defines mission (Mean 4.22) and Management of curriculum” (Mean: 4.09) were perceived positively higher as demonstrated in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional leadership styles</th>
<th>Age of head-teachers (Years) Mean±SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managed curriculum</td>
<td>4.07±0.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervised teaching</td>
<td>3.93±0.989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitored students’ progress</td>
<td>3.90±0.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defined mission</td>
<td>4.33±0.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote instructional climate</td>
<td>3.67±1.033</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

However, 6 out of 46 variables in the five dimensions had significant results at p<0.05 among head-teachers of different age groups as explained below:

- In the define mission dimension the variables of: discussing school goals, purpose, and mission with staff, head-teachers with at least 60 years of age and younger than 40 scored significantly at 0.05, focusing on school goals in curriculum development was scored significantly high at 0.01 among younger head-teachers of less than 40 years in age and lower among head-teachers that had attained 60 years in age while communicating excitement about future
possibilities to staff and students, head-teachers younger than 40 and over 60 years scored significantly at 0.05.

- Under supervision of teaching dimension, observing a class and Modeling effective teaching techniques for staff with teachers was scored significantly at 0.01 and 0.05 respectively among head-teachers of less than 40 years to 49 years of age.

- In Monitoring students’ progress dimension, working with teachers to discover new approaches for dealing with learning problems was significantly scored by head-teachers of less than 40 and 60 years age groups.

- Finally, under the Promoting instructional climate dimension, seeking advice from members in making a decision was scored significantly among head-teachers of less than 40 to 59 years.

**IV. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Significant results of this study were found in only 6 variables of different age groups among a total of 46 variables from all the five dimensions.

These variables revealed that Head-teachers over 60 years old were the most active in working with teachers to discover new approaches for dealing with learning problems. These findings agree with a previous study by Oshagbemi (2008), who reported that older managers prefer more collaborative decisions compared to younger managers, who prefer making decisions that might not necessarily get the approval of the majority of workers. These findings are interesting since again in this study, schools with head teachers who had attained 60 years of age had a lower score in seeking advice from teachers during decision making. This congruous with research findings of Ekaterini (2010), whose empirical study on the relationship between four prominent models of leadership and the managers’ individual traits of age, established that older managers did not necessarily seek advice from their colleagues in making decisions, as they could draw on their years of experience with more confidence than younger leaders.

Focusing on school goals in curriculum development and communicating excitement about future possibilities to staff and students was also significantly scored among head-teachers of less than 40 years in age and lower among head-teachers 60 years and above. This concurs with literature which posits that older leaders are less likely to retool, resist change and innovation while younger workers are more courageous in taking risks and adoptable to fast-changing environments (Kabacoff & Stoffey, 2001).

From the foregoing, the overall results show no significant relationship between young workers (between less than 40 years old) and older workers (more than 40 years old) when using instructional leadership style, as demonstrated in the ANOVA results which was used to investigate whether the mean ratings were significantly different. As demonstrated in Table 2, the study findings revealed no significant relationship between demographic characteristic of age and instructional leadership style based on the four dimensions because the p-value obtained were greater than 0.05 i.e., manages curriculum obtained (F=0.327, p=0.859), supervised teaching (F=0.357, p=0.839), defined mission (F=0.812, p=0.519), Monitored students’ progress (F=0.618, p=0.650) and promotes instructional climate (F=0.945, p=0.439).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional leadership styles</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manage curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.822</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>0.327</td>
<td>0.859</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>121.178</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.628</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122.000</td>
<td>197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervise teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>0.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>121.105</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.627</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122.000</td>
<td>197</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>monitor student progress</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.544</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>0.386</td>
<td>0.618</td>
<td>0.650</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>120.456</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.624</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122.000</td>
<td>197</td>
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<tr>
<td>define mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.020</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>0.812</td>
<td>0.519</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>119.980</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.622</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122.000</td>
<td>197</td>
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<td>promote instructional climate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.345</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>0.439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>119.655</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.620</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122.000</td>
<td>197</td>
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</table>
Consequently, since no particular age bracket had significant score on all or majority of the dimensions on the variables or items of instructional leadership behaviours, this implies that for the head teachers of Kiambu County, there is no significant relationship between the demographic characteristic of age and instructional leadership style. These findings are in tandem with Songan’s et al. (1999), on instructional leadership roles of the school head teachers on their expected and actual instructional leadership roles when correlated with age. On the contrary, Zengh (1996) reported a weak but positive relationship between age of the headteachers and their effectiveness on instructional leadership but which only applied to public as opposed to private schools, thus concluding that older head-teachers are more likely to be effective instructional leaders.

In conclusion, since this particular study on instructional leadership and its relationship with age was premeditated as a result of missing literature and growing interest in instructional leadership style, the findings of this study could be useful:

- For theory and practice in understanding different influences on one’s choice of instructional leadership style,
- add more knowledge base upon which to understand the practice of instructional leadership,
- help inform policy decisions
- enhance existing research on instructional leadership in developing countries as most of the studies are done in North America, Europe and Asia.
- Thus, the research will assist in developing a deeper understanding of instructional leadership and more precisely the leadership characteristics and determinants of instructional leadership styles in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Nevertheless, the relationship between age of the head teacher and instructional leadership could be further investigated on a larger scale in primary and secondary schools to understand this particular phenomenon better.

REFERENCE


Wambui, M., Tanui, E., & Ngaruiya, B. (2016). Relationship between Principal’s instructional leadership role and students’ subject choice in Public secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya
