

Full Length Research Paper

Effectiveness of boards of governors in curriculum implementation in secondary schools in Kenya

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The boards of governors (BOG) are legally mandated by the ministry of education under the education act Cap 211 to manage secondary schools in Kenya. Their immediate roles have not been defined in the laws and there are no standards that have been adopted to measure their effectiveness. This study investigates effectiveness of the BOG in curriculum implementation in secondary schools in Kenya. The study was carried out in Keiyo district in Kenya. Adopting survey design, using interviews, questionnaires and documents, data was collected from a sample of 15 schools with 15 head teachers, 70 teachers and 65 governors represented by 5 members from each school using purposive, stratified and simple random sampling. Data collected was coded and analysed descriptively. Findings indicated that training of the members of BOG was directly related to the implementation of the curriculum. The BOG supported schools to acquire physical resources and enhanced curriculum development. The study recommended that schools should strive to provide pre-requisite training to the members of BOG and more involvement in the daily running of the schools (188) words).

Key words: Governors, curriculum, implementation, effectiveness, resources, role.

INTRODUCTION

In the management of education in Kenya, at primary school level school management committees (SMCs) and parents teachers association (PTAs) are responsible for their respective schools while secondary schools, middle level colleges and TIVET (Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training) institutions are managed by boards of governors (BOGs) and universities by councils. These bodies are responsible for the management of both human and other resources so as to facilitate smooth operations, infrastructure, development and the provision of teaching and learning materials (Sessional Paper No. 1 2005: 63). In some countries these bodies are known as School Governing Bodies (SMBs).

In the Kenyan case management of secondary schools by boards of governors (BOGs) came into place after independence following recommendation by the Kenya education commission report of Ominde (Republic of Kenya, 1964). This aimed at giving each school its own personality and decentralization of authority for effectiveness. Education act Cap. 211 and sessional paper No. 1 of 2005 state that the boards of governors have been given the role of managing human and other resources so as to facilitate smooth operations, infrastructural development and provision of teaching and learning materials

(MOEST, 2005; Kamunge, 2007).

In sessional paper No. 6 of 1988, the government accepted the recommendations of the presidential working party on manpower training famously known as Kamunge report that:

Members of boards of governors and school committees be appointed from among persons who have qualities of commitment, competence and experience which would enhance the management and development of educational institutions (MOEST, 1988).

The education act Cap. 211 of the laws of Kenya section 10 (Republic of Kenya, 1980) indicates that the minister appoints members of the boards of governors through a selected committee comprising of provincial administration, local leaders, members of parliament and local councillor, sponsors, local education officer and the head teacher. This committee selects 3 persons representing local community, 4 representing bodies and organizations like sponsor and 3 representing special interest groups. Once officially appointed by the minister, the 10 members select the chairperson of the board and co-opt 3 other

persons from the parent's teachers association (PTA) into the board (Opot, 2006).

From 1980s, the ministry of education in Kenya has provided in-service management training for principals of schools. In 1988, the government of Kenya (GoK) established Kenya education staff institute (KESI) to offer in-service training for heads of educational institutions including school principals. Further, the KESI mandate was to be diversified both serving and potential school leaders. However, although it has been existence for almost 2 decades, the institute provides in-service to other school leaders such as deputy principals and rarely to other school leaders such as deputy principals, heads of departments, school committees and boards of governors (Otunga et al., 2008). Thus, lack of capacity can be traced to inadequate funding to KESI and lack of full time training facilities (Sessional Paper No. 1 2005: 65).

The study focused on implementation of curriculum as a core function of the secondary school boards of governors in Kenya. It casts doubts on quality management capabilities, training levels and effectiveness of secondary school boards of governors in providing leadership and good governance in implementation of curriculum. In addition, the study casts doubts on the effectiveness of the boards of governors in contexts of political interference. Appointments of members of the boards of governors in Kenya as in other parts of the world such as in the United Kingdom is obvious with some purposely elected as channel for varied interests and hence such boards lack power and important interests by pass it as pointed out by Kogan (1984).

The secondary school boards of governors in Kenya have not been exposed to adequate management training. Also, majority of them lack adequate supervisory competencies to utilise available information for management purposes. As such many secondary school principals lack the capacities to oversee and account for the utilisation of resources under them. The inquiry of Koech report (Republic of Kenya, 1999) pointed out that management of educational institutions in Kenya was found to be weak because most the boards of governors lacked quality management capabilities.

These challenges sometimes lead to poor performance in national Kenya certificate of secondary education (KCSE). Poor examination performance leads to high wastage rate due to finances invested in education. Although all secondary schools in Kenya comply with government requirement of putting governing bodies, there is evidence of ineffectiveness due to bad governance perpetuated by authoritarian, draconic and undemocratic leadership. The appointment of secondary school governing bodies in Kenya is occasionally coupled with political interference which is contrary to the government policy pertaining consideration of persons who have qualities of commitment, competence and experience which would enhance the management and development of schools.

However, this study is hoped to generate new knowledge that widen horizons of existing knowledge - concerning

the boards of governors that could help them improve their managerial abilities that facilitate results based informed decisions in relation to governance and controlling curriculum.

Statement of the problem

As elsewhere in the world, internal management of schools is done by teachers who are the core pillars and are in constant touch with the students sometimes influencing their decisions immensely. The school governing bodies on the other hand are the external managers of the schools. They are expected to be in constant touch with school, students and teachers as well as with other stakeholders. In Kenya, boards of governors in many secondary schools are often in constant touch with the school authority and less with students. This naturally implies that if a decision that touch a student has to be made by the head teachers, then it is imperative that the boards of governors be fully involved in the whole decision so as to reach the intended beneficiary.

This study has been necessitated by lack of studies on the role of boards of governors in curriculum implementation in secondary schools in Kenya. The literature on this area is also inadequate. Many secondary schools in Kenya are affected by political interference and examination performance has been wanting. There has been public hue and cry for long due to continued poor performance in KCSE examinations in many schools hence high wastage rate due to costly investment entailed in financing secondary education. Examination results in Kenya are very important because they determine the future destiny of students, the type of university or college they attend and the type of job they get as well as the type of income they get after training. Likewise, parents expect their children to help them in old age if they do well in school. Thus, education system in Kenya is examination grade oriented. Based on this ground, this research intends to find out how effective the boards of governors are in curriculum implementation.

The following research questions were posed- what are the effects of training levels of boards of governors on curriculum implementation? What is the effectiveness of boards of governors roles on curriculum implementation? What are the effects of support provision by boards of governors to acquire physical resources on curriculum implementation? And what are the effects of boards of governors discipline policy on effective implementation of the curriculum?

Research design and methodology

Methodology describes the overall approach to research design. It is a strategy or a plan of action that links methods to outcomes. It governs choice and use of methods (Creswell, 2003). The study adopted qualitative methodology as the broad theoretical framework which was used to investigate effectiveness of boards of governors in implementation of curriculum in secondary schools in

Kenya. Thus, qualitative methodology helped the researcher to understand, "in broadest possible terms, not the products of specific enquiry but the process itself" (Kaplan, cited in Cohen et al., 2000).

Research design

The study adopted survey design and utilized questionnaires, interviews and documentation as methods of approach. This design was guided by contingency theory of Fiedler (1967) who points out that effective group performance can only be achieved by matching the manager to the situation or by changing the situation (Bartol and Martin, 1991). But one major limitation of the study was the question of generalizations as data obtained may be not representative. Other limitations included refusal by some of the respondents to voluntarily offer information on the questionnaires for fear of reprisal even though no respondent was expected to write their names in the questionnaires. Some members of boards of governors refused to respond to questions maintaining that they are not the right people to respond to the questions. Accessibility to some of the schools was difficult because Kenya has very poor road network that affected the overall transport. In some areas, steep terrain made researcher to go on foot to reach some schools which took lots of time.

Sample

The sampling procedures involved included a total of 34 secondary schools in Keiyo district although only 30 of these had sat for KCSE examination. Half of these schools were used for the study leading to a total of 15 secondary schools.

Sampling procedure

To obtain the sample, stratified random sampling were used where the 30 secondary schools were stratified as per their categories be it district or provincial schools. Later items were selected from each stratum to constitute the sample of 15 schools using purposive sampling technique to enable the researcher identify schools with ease of access and where members of the boards of governors have been in operation for at least 1 – 3 year term. From each stratum the samples would be proportionately chosen as per the researcher's decision. Of the 15 secondary schools chosen the sampling units included 15 head teachers, 65 boards of governors; 5 from each school and 70 teachers; 5 from each school.

In the choice of the board members and the teachers these were obtained through random sampling where the researcher would go to each school and after getting lists of teachers and boards of governors then wrote papers equivalent, folded and picked the required 5 from each case. Prior to going to the field for data collection the researcher obtained permission from the ministry of education to go out and do the research. The researcher then gave a self introductory letter to the district. Education office and the head teachers of the schools sampled explaining the purpose of the research and request for their permission and participation in the research.

Questionnaires

Open-ended and closed-ended self-administered questionnaires were issued to sample 2 groups of respondents in the 15 selected schools. The researcher distributed and allowed the respondents some time to respond to the questions and then went round to collect the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to all teachers and members of the boards of governors since they

were able to read and interpret the instrument. The use of questionnaires helped to save time, cost and reduced biasness of interviews leading to honest answers since no identification was needed so respondents give answers without fear. At the end of the research, the researcher thanked the respondents for their participation in the study.

Interviews

Interview technique was chosen since it allowed for in-depth probing leading to more information and also clear expression of feelings, opinions and attitudes from tone of response and facial expression. The researcher liaised with the head teachers to set a convenient day for the interview with the boards of governors. The head teachers were interviewed since they were only 15 in number and so were convenient and more so they are key persons in school management being secretaries to the board so had more details as to their actual roles. The boards of governors of 2 schools were interviewed through focused group discussion to allow them more freedom to elaborate on various issues and also lessen time to be taken. This interview schedule was preferred to be able to push for revelation of sensitive matters and to take care of members of the board who may be illiterate and unable to read and respond to questionnaires on their own.

Documentation

The researcher requested head teachers to avail relevant documents on curriculum for verification. The researcher studied boards of governors and teaching staff minutes books on performance and KCSE results for period of 5 years, curriculum documents which included syllabuses, schemes, inventories on purchases of teaching materials, school development plans (SDPs), circulars on curriculum and boards of governors from ministry offices. The researcher gave an assurance to all participants of confidentiality of data collected. The research attempted to establish the performance of the schools by seeking information from the past records by perusing available documents. These were used to verify some of the information obtained through interviews and questionnaires.

To check on reliability of the instrument, the questionnaires were pre-tested through a pilot study in another district in 4 schools in order to determine the questionnaires' internal consistency and to detect any difficulties that the respondents were likely to face when responding to the items. Critical friends and colleagues were used to determine the content validity of the questionnaire items. Based on the feedback offered by those who examined the questionnaire the wording was crosschecked and the entire questionnaires modified to ensure that it achieved the requisite validity.

Summary of findings

The first theme of this study was to determine effects of training levels of secondary school boards of governors in Kenya on curriculum implementation. The findings of the first theme of this study found out that academic qualification level of BOG members affected in curriculum implementation. Therefore, the study established that many BOG members had bachelors degree certificates while a few had attained diploma while none had attained masters degree.

All the non-teaching BOG members had attained secondary levels of education; a very small number had attained diploma, bachelors, masters and PhD degrees.

Members of the BOG members who attained bachelors' degree and PhD degree ensured that better implementation of the curriculum was achieved than BOG members with secondary and diploma levels of education. In Kenya, there is no clear government policy on training of BOG members despite the fact that Kenya education staff institute (KESI) has programmes and offers training in management courses. Many schools sideline training programmes for members of the BOG members and thus have not benefited from it (MOEST, 2001).

The findings indicated that many school head teachers often emphasize the selection of less educated BOG members who will rarely question their ineptitude in running of schools. Thus, rather than selecting more qualified BOG members they end up selecting close relatives or less qualified members of the BOG. This anomaly confirms the Kenyan report of task force on student unrest in schools which pointed out that poor educational background of BOGs as a factor towards the unrest (MOEST, 2001). Experience was another factor considered alongside academic qualification of members of BOGs. Data analysed revealed that majority of the members BOGs had been in service for less than 5 years as members BOGs in schools. A small number had had been in service for 6 - 10 years, while the rest had been in service for longer than 11 years, though their proportion were few in the sample. The data shows that many BOGs were new in the schools hence need to familiarise them-selves with the tradition of the schools and the management tasks expected of them.

Literature support the above findings although with different views for example, the Koech report on the inquiry into Kenya's education system (Republic of Kenya, 1999) expressed concern on the political influence in board of governors appointment, low level of education and lack of commitment and dedication on the part of most of them leading to weak management of institutions. Koskei (2004), Wendot (2004), Clarkson et al, (2004), Dawson (2008) and Mahoney (1988) highlighted the importance of proper education qualification in the managerial efficiency of schools. These studies established that members of BOGs were incompetent in school management because majority were not learned and as such their services were not found to be useful in the schools. Academic qualification is part of training.

When investigating to determine the types of school management training that the BOGs underwent, the study found out that few schools embarked on staff workshops mainly in performance management. Efforts to increase number of teachers' development were done by Kenya district secondary school heads association (KDS-SHA) in liaison with the district education office that organised workshops at subject and departmental levels to help impart necessary skills and update teachers on professional matters. The members of the board of governors who trained on general management of schools had higher skills than those with financial and performance training.

Literature support the above finding, Mahoney (1988) argued that BOGs members should be trained to enable them be more knowledge, confident, determined and effective in their roles. Kenyan government policy document sessional paper No.1 of 2005 emphasizes that there should be a strong linkage for ensuring that the members of the non-teaching staff including BOG members are regularly trained in management of school affairs, use professionalism in discharge of their duties their judgment in the daily co-ordination and running of the school capacities (MOEST, 2005). Bishop (1985), Shiundu and Omulando (1992) and Olembo (1977) emphasized that the BOGs members can play a vital role in curriculum development and need appropriate and relevant training to be able to handle a new curriculum through intensive workshops, a series of in-service courses and other in-service training devices to develop the necessary content background of the theory underlying new programmes.

The second theme of the study was set to establish effectiveness of BOGs roles on curriculum implementation. When teachers were asked to state the roles of BOG on curriculum issues in their schools results show the various roles undertaken by the members of the BOGs as they were involved in decision including handling of teachers, students and workers discipline and decisions on subject choice for the students, involvement in making decision on fees, maintenance of religious affiliations in schools, decision on development projects to undertake, adequacy of teachers and recommendation of teachers transfer.

When it comes to handling the teachers discipline, then many heads of schools would often prefer to deal either with a third party to help them face a teacher whom they believe is errand or they would prefer to seek intervention of the teachers service commission, which are always more often than not transfer letters for the teachers to other areas that the teachers may not prefer. However, many schools in Kenya were involved in handling the teachers discipline by themselves at times unless the problems were out of hand. The BOG members are also involved to some extent in handling discipline of the students. Even though the BOG members were not providing discipline to the students, they were involved in the provision of the solution concerning discipline to the teachers. This type of management skill where the BOG members closely monitor the student and report any indiscipline case to the teachers and head teachers is widely practiced in many schools in Kenya and has resulted to establishment of proper discipline among students in many of the schools (Abagi and Olweya, 1999).

A considerable time was also devoted by the BOG members to attend to workers discipline. The workers are integral part of the smooth running of the schools because without them many of the daily chores of the school will not be performed and many school strikes have always been reported because of the problems from such areas including unclean toilets, lack of water and poor

quality food among other concerns that are handled by the workers. The BOG members were found to be useful in helping the schools to handle such types of workers discipline problems. The BOG members were also found to have subtle decision concerning the choice of subjects that the schools could handle and advising the students appropriately. When the BOG members advice the students on subjects to undertake and how easily the students can undertake the subjects then they play a very crucial role in the development of the schools education systems, which according to Wendot (2004) has been accredited with proper performance for many schools. Therefore the BOG seemed to have substantial roles to play in the managerial efficiency of the schools.

Finally, major decisions involving the BOG members were decision on teachers' adequacy and transfer. The members of BOG are supposed to ensure that the school have adequate teachers throughout and that in case of any shortage; they were supposed to provide solutions that would lead to the employment of new teachers. As such, it was imperative that they perform the roles of ensuring that the schools have adequate teachers and that some of the teachers who are bringing problems to the schools are disciplined. The employment of teachers though done by the TSC is through the recommendation of the heads of schools and this is where the BOG is crucial in recommending the shortages. At present in Kenya, BOG members are also constituted in the interview boards and would always recommend the types of teachers to recruit and using the same token can recommend the kinds of teachers to dismiss from the schools in case of indiscipline and underperformance.

Information concerning the roles of BOG was further subjected to analysis by relating this to the implementation of curriculum in secondary schools in Kenya. Cross-tabulation of individual independent variables representing various roles of the BOG yielded 5 significant roles that ultimately affect the implementation of curriculum in schools. These roles were: handling of teacher's discipline, handling of students discipline, handling of workers discipline, maintenance of religious traditions and role in the subject choice to students. On the other hand, the BOG's role of deciding on fees, decision on projects to undertake, adequacy of teachers and recommendation of teachers transfer did not significantly affect the curriculum implementation by the schools.

This is in agreement with Wekesa (1993) that roles of the non teaching staff such as enhancing discipline, handling of students and encouraging active participation of the students in religious issues are often significant in encouraging proper students' initiatives and active participation on the school curriculum. This is probably the reason why guidance and counsellors in schools are successful in changing the students' roles in schools.

In regard to organisational roles played by the BOG members in schools and frequently such roles are played in schools, the data revealed that the members of school

BOG played 5 major organisational roles in schools mainly by organising workshops and seminars, organising in-service training courses, organising academic trips, benchmarking in other schools and motivation of staff through award schemes. In regard to frequency, organising workshops and seminars, organising in-service courses, organising academic trips and benchmarking were roles that the members of the BOG performed often while staff motivation were done very frequently by the BOG members. Staff motivation through award to the teachers was one of the more roles that the BOG members played.

Moreover the data revealed that the BOG members in Kenya provided teachers with incentive through annual award schemes that improved their overall outputs. Other organizational roles that were not played out very frequently by the BOG members was benchmarking and organizing workshops and seminars; all of which increased the cognitive skills acquired by the BOG members in the schools and consequently helped the school in the curriculum implementation. Organization of in-service training was also conducted by the BOG members, however since such trainings require a lot of financial expenditure, they were undertaken by BOG in less frequent periods to scale down the financial expenditure of the schools in organizing such events.

BOG members were involved in several roles that enhanced curriculum development such as: handling of teacher's discipline, handling of students discipline, handling of workers discipline, maintenance of religious traditions and role in the subject choice to students. On the other hand, the BOG's role of deciding on fees, decision on projects to undertake, adequacy of teachers and recommendation of teachers transfer did not significantly affect the curriculum implementation by the schools.

The third theme was meant to determine effects of support provision by BOG in acquisition of physical resources on curriculum implementation. The first aspect of this objective involved determining physical resources necessary for effective implementation of the curriculum. Other resources that the teachers and head teachers found to be adequate were classrooms, desks and chairs and teaching aids. About many teachers indicated that resources are inadequate in schools in Kenya. In fact, Eshiwani (1993) has underscored the fact that adequate and proper learning materials are a pre-requisite in any learning situation. The results of this study show that in schools where there were adequate resources, the BOG members were able to help in the curriculum implementation while in areas where there were inadequate resources, the implementation of the curriculum was found to be difficult among the members of the BOG. According to Bishop (1985), the greatest single drawback to the implementation of the new ideas and techniques in schools is often not lack of funds but delays and problems in connection with ordering and delivering of equipment.

Furthermore, the study established from the BOG

members the kind of support that they often provide to the schools that would enable them to partake curriculum implementation. The results indicate that BOG members supported schools in several ways that enabled schools to effectively undertake the pre-requisite curriculum implementation. Majority of these BOG were involved in getting support to provide library books, textbooks, building of classrooms and purchase of teaching aids. Other support to the schools towards curriculum implementation was construction of laboratory, provision of laboratory equipment, construction of library as well as providing assistance to acquire chairs and desks.

However, in order to determine whether the active role they play to ensure acquisition of these resources are actually helpful in the curriculum implementation. The results indicated that construction of laboratory and library, provision of library books, textbooks, chairs and desks and teaching aid by the BOG assisted immensely in the curriculum implementation. On the contrary, provision of laboratory equipment and building of classrooms did not advance any progress in curriculum implementation. Finally the researcher established from the BOG members actual kinds of support that they solicit in order to help them with the task of curriculum implementation.

Running schools require a lot of funds to purchase various kinds of resources and other materials as well as payment of dues and other allowances to the teachers and other workers. Therefore when the school lacks adequate funds, it become difficult to achieve curriculum implementation and most schools often find it difficult to cope with the changing societal needs. Therefore, some schools often engage the BOG members in raising funds through PTA.

In his study of the funding of schools Abagi and Odipo (1997) established that primary schools that had good funding bases through active participation of the members of BOG were established to be performing well. Other sources of finances that were sought by fewer members of the BOG were through CDF funding, which is starting to be more useful to schools after the enactment of the constituency development funding initiatives. The BOG members were also involved in sourcing for funds to buy books that have been established numerously to help in curriculum implementation.

Through provision of CDF assistance, there was no curriculum implementation while PTA funds and organizing harambee resulted to curriculum not being implemented. On the other hand, purchase of books ensured that there was implementation of curriculum. As already noted earlier, teaching and learning materials are very essential for effective teaching, which are directly linked to the curriculum implementation. They help learners to achieve the specific objectives constructed for the content. Curriculum developers point out that no curriculum can be adequate and effectively implemented without adequate teaching and learning materials. However, organization fund raising will not translate to curriculum

implementation because the money being raised from the fund raising exercise could be geared towards other expenditure not directly linked to the school curriculum.

The fourth and final theme this study was concerned with the effects of BOGs discipline policy on effective implementation of the curriculum in secondary schools in Kenya. The data show that when BOG members involve parents curriculum implementation was achieved. BOG members played a crucial role in ensuring that schools have high levels of discipline. Punishment of the students by BOG members alone did not result to any effective implementation of the curriculum but full involvement of other stakeholders- teachers, parents and students. The findings revealed that when the students were disciplined by teachers they were more likely to change their attitude and thus likely to achieve more progress in the education development. But, when students were punished by the parents and BOG members they develop negative attitude and resentment. Students believed that they should be punished by teachers only whom they regard as school authority.

Also the researcher was interested in establishing the key areas in guidance and counselling that the BOG members were involved in that ensured proper implementation of the curriculum in schools. The BOG viewed implementation of curriculum in schools as a key area that the stakeholders should be involved in because the functions of many schools is to provide quality education. The BOG members were involved in the arena of provision of guidance and counselling in the education. The BOG members were also involved in counselling students in areas of career development focusing on students' spirituality and their future careers to their uncertainty. The BOG members psychologically prepare students to be able to undertake those subjects in the curriculum that guarantee them brighter and better future. Though counselling in such area does not necessarily translate into direct curriculum implementation, it is important component of attaining uprightness in the society and as such the students can be able to undertake the curriculum without major problems. This is particularly important because religious knowledge enables the students to avoid misfit and deviant behaviours brought about by use of illegal substances such as drugs. Though knowledge of spiritual information does not necessarily result to the changes in the human behaviour, teaching related to spiritual issues often tend to mould the students to know some of the wrong things that lead to student indiscipline.

Conclusion

Training of the members of the boards of governors was directly related to the implementation of the curriculum with those having higher training being able to effectively assist the school to implement the curriculum. The school boards of governors also assisted the schools in

acquisition of physical resources and promote discipline initiatives that eventually helped the school in achieving proper implementation initiatives.

Recommendations

The ministry of education should establish a mandatory training course for all BOG after inauguration to familiarize them on their managerial roles.

Training of board of governors

There is need for school administration to organize workshops and in-service courses for their BOG and teachers to enlighten them on changing trends and approaches in curriculum implementation. A comprehensive plan of service for BOG members should be enacted in order to reduce the unique proportions of stress, which make them vulnerable to difficulties with social and or emotional adjustment and thus lower their overall managerial effectiveness.

Roles of the board of governors

The BOG should consider curriculum implementation as a key role. The BOG should do more visits schools more frequently meet with teachers to asses the curriculum and its implementation in the school.

Acquisition of physical resources

The school management should ensure adequate resources for learning are provided for effective implementation of the curriculum as shown in findings.

Discipline policy

Board of governors to enhance school discipline both staff and students since this affects effective implementation of the curriculum and work towards curbing any indiscipline.

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