



## Leadership Management

*Elixir Leadership Mgmt.* 118 (2018) 50682-50686

**Elixir**  
ISSN: 2229-712X

# Value of Head Teacher Leadership Proactiveness in Private School Management in Kenya: A Review of Literature

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: 29 July 2017;

Received in revised form:

29 April 2018;

Accepted: 8 May 2018;

#### Keywords

Leadership proactiveness,  
School management,  
Head Teacher,  
Visibility,  
Aggressiveness,  
Assertiveness,  
Innovativeness.

### ABSTRACT

Since the year 2003 when Free Primary Education (FPE) was institutionalized in Kenya, there have been a myriad of challenges that have been associated with it in respect of adequacy, safety of students and teachers, inappropriateness, and presence or availability of vital aspects. Among these are; classrooms, textbooks, teachers, play fields, office space, school fencing, and support staff in public primary schools. Many authorities have attributed such a scenario to the non-committal nature of government to its FPE policy implementation through inadequate human and non-human resource allocation, poor quality and standards assurance mechanisms, and to inconsistent monitoring and evaluation programmes. In this respect, The 2010 Kenya Constitution stipulates a compulsory basic education, implicitly for all citizens aged 18 years and below, or in primary and secondary schools. In as much as several studies have revealed an increase in school retention rates and enhanced access to education, it has also been noted that vital school expected outputs such as learner discipline and academic (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education) performance have dwindled. The result has been relative public dissatisfaction as regards services offered in public primary schools in Kenya. It is noteworthy that the government seems to appreciate the factors underlying such inadequate performance in public primary schools in Kenya. This is seen in their strategic policies to ensure that the poorer public primary school output attain the same national secondary school educational opportunities with the better performing private primary school graduates in a favoured way, seemingly non-competitively. This better performance has led to increased demand for private primary school education in Kenya. From merely less than 20 by the mid 1980s, there has been a marked increase in establishment to over 1000 registered private primary schools spread across the length and breadth of Kenya, Makini School being among the premier in offering regular national curriculum in Nairobi City. These multiplicity of individual, company or group efforts to overcome challenges faced in government educational endeavours through private enterprise then demands competitive engagement of stakeholders to ensure better out-put to meet public expectation. Literature identifies leadership proactiveness, realized through a calculated combination of visibility, aggressiveness, assertiveness and innovativeness in management, as backbone to the desired institutional success. It also explains that a more proactive manager is more likely to remain afloat unlike his complacent peers given similar challenges in their rival organizations. Such success would be necessary for achievement of national goals of education given contribution of private primary school participation. Therefore, this presentation focuses on the value of headteacher leadership proactiveness in management of private schools.

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### 1.1 Background

Proactiveness, being a semi-reactive leadership characteristic, which entails leadership visibility, aggressiveness, assertiveness and innovativeness in management determines the speed of achievement of organizational vision (Shradha, 2016). Proactiveness denotes an individualistic approach to management which isolates policy and procedure from the person; peers with the same guidelines differ on likelihood of success given this intra-personal effort to reach ends. Proactiveness is related to imitativeness and first-mover advantages, and to taking initiative by anticipating and pursuing new opportunities (Lumpkin & Dess., 1996). It relates to, realistically, seizing

market opportunities to determine entrepreneurial outcomes ahead of rivals (Soumitra, Bruna & Sacha, 2015). This thereby marks the speediness with which an individual entrepreneur may attain set institutional objectives.

Olayowola (2013) in a study on relevance of entrepreneurial proactiveness on business performance of Nigerian Companies defined proactivity, as the will to pursue business objectives to the end. He found that across all the sectors, high entrepreneurially proactive companies perform better than the lower ranking counterparts in respect of employee number and firm size increase. In this respect, UNESCO-IICBA (2011) in considering improvement of teaching conditions in rural schools in Africa recommended

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that school management should increase their input and involvement in respect of visibility, commitment, accessibility, assertiveness, availability, and innovativeness. Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) confirmed the argument by asserting that craft-entrepreneurs ought to display visibility, assertiveness, and innovativeness in management of their professional investment of interests. However, for this presentation, the focus is leadership proactiveness which according to Shradha, (2016) comprises of visibility, aggressiveness, assertiveness and innovativeness.

## **1.2 Theoretical Underpinning of Leadership Proactiveness in Management**

Tannenbaum and Schmidt's model of leadership (1958) stipulates that the level of freedom a manager decides to give the team of subordinates and the level of authority used by the manager depends on the team's level of development. The other two factors that determine whether the manager applies the 7 styles of telling, selling, testing, consulting, joining, delegating, or abdicating are, the demand of the situation, and his willingness and skill to manage the full range of 7 options across the spectrum. The application of the stated 7 styles by a headteacher in a private primary school enterprise may then be interpreted by school teachers, as leadership proactiveness in respect of his visibility, aggressiveness, assertiveness, or innovativeness in school management.

### **1.3.0. Value of Aspects of Leadership Proactiveness in Organizational Management**

#### **1.3.1. Leadership visibility as an aspect of leadership proactiveness**

Among the characteristics of entrepreneurial leadership is entrepreneur visibility. This captures the degree to which an entrepreneur commands an organization by being, from the perception of stakeholders, physically or structurally present in work place (Rich, et al., 2010). This entrepreneur visibility is important because it serves a symbolic function signaling his command of the organization. By being visible, an entrepreneur can build effective working relationships and because he can model a visual for the organization with likely positive outcomes (Saridakis, Munoz, Torres & Johnstone, 2013). A study of upper management reveal that the greater the service contact, the less an individual perceives himself, herself as able to understand or control the work setting (Benjamin, Heffetz, Kimball & Rees, 2012). Thus it is possible that service professionals who have daily contacts with customers dictate behaviors and shape attitudes for organizational better performance.

However, leadership visibility in management is not devoid of gender undertones. For instance, there were factors which were inconsistent with leadership entrepreneurial visibility inclusive of negative social perception, cultural and socially ascribed gender roles, and relations which resulted in resistance to change. This narrowed social expectations of women, real or perceived, and hence low leadership visibility in management of institutions (Ndemo & Maina, 2005). Leadership visibility increases the ability to see the make-up of an organization from a unitary perspective and to use that to structure and align the talent required by the business to drive the organizational goals (Toeraien, 2015). Without management visibility, organizations are unable to identify risk areas in the business where they may not have the right skills in key positions. They may also identify where employees are at risk of leaving and identification of potential successors, or

knowing what learning is necessary for staff input improvement.

In respect of the increasing demand for private primary school education in Kenya, several studies have noted that private schools perform better than public schools in KCPE. For instance, according to Onyango (2012) indicated that private primary schools in Nyando District performed better than public schools. However, the following headteacher related reasons, which hampered their leadership visibility, were found to lead to inadequate school management. Headteachers were over concentrating in sugarcane farming and in other SMEs such as shop-keeping, boda-bodas (bicycle taxis) and matatus (public transport vehicle business); some in upgrading their academic qualifications in colleges and universities; some had poor leadership skills; some were under qualified for the job; some were demotivated due to poor salaries by school owners; some worked with inadequate financial and physical resources; and some had set low school targets.

#### **1.3.2. Leadership aggressiveness as an aspect of management proactiveness**

Leadership aggressiveness links directly to the ability of a manager to express abrasive raw energy by shouting, punching the air, shrieking and charging at subordinates in case achievement of organizational vision seems unlikely to be realized. According to Lumpkin and Dess (2001), is the propensity to confrontationally directly and intensely challenge competitors to achieve entry or improve position in the market. In a study by Lumpkin and Dess (2001) on the role of government as mediator in the relationship between environment and industry life cycle, it was found that competitive aggressiveness was positively related to profitability and return on sales but negatively related to growth. On this note, school administrators ought to consultatively set school goals so that stakeholders understand their implication right from the on-set to minimize cases that would demand abrasive address to challenges to their achievement.

According to Oyedepo (2013) in Ukiti Region in Nigeria, a tempered measure of leadership abrasiveness in handling students, teachers, and support staff is healthy as it determines teacher performance, and eventually, achievement of school goals. However, such abrasiveness, if unchecked, may drive teachers to feeling over-driven and over-trodden and hence consider seeking transfers to schools with moderately tempered headteachers (Dawo, Gogo & Kawasonga, 2015). This would lead to increased teacher-to-student ratio hence increased student indiscipline, increased teacher workload versus decreased student academic performance. This was as revealed in a study which examined the relationship between school leadership characteristics and teacher transfer intention in Mbita and Suba Sub-counties in Kenya. It recommended that headteachers adopt a more consultative approach to school management, and to engage mediators such as class teachers and heads of department in times of conflicts to minimize their direct involvement in abrasive encounters with teachers.

#### **1.3.3. Leadership assertiveness as an aspect of management proactiveness**

Assertiveness means remaining results-oriented despite logistical challenges that may threaten achievement of organizational vision. Assertiveness is a fundamental personality characteristic necessary for entrepreneurial success (Kovcevic, et al., 2014).

This is because assertiveness, as a management behaviour, has been defined as useful in explaining past business success and future development of newly formed business. As reported in Keat, Selvarajah and Meyer (2011), characteristics inherent in an entrepreneur are sharpened through training and exposure. However, noted is the fact that there are some characteristics, whose absence, training may not effectively inculcate, key among them is, assertiveness.

Assertiveness in business is vital given that it is the ability to express oneself and achieve one's interest in a socially accepted way with a view to soliciting optimal performance of an entrepreneur towards clients, suppliers and business community as a whole (Lazenby, 2015). This was due to negatively biased stereotyping about perceptive female entrepreneur assertiveness in business. This assertion is in agreement with De Rue, Nahrgang, Wellman and Humphrey (2011) who concluded from the study of curvilinear relationship between intelligence and leadership effectiveness and found that intelligent behaviour was expressed through moderate assertiveness and that this may be more predictive at leadership effectiveness than accessibility because of the collective perception of the subordinates with whom the leadership interacts. This means that individuals with low assertiveness rating can be perceived as having too much of agreeableness in terms of an appealing leadership emergence trait, but may be unable to quell descent from competitors and or opposing forces whereas high assertiveness was aggressively unacceptable. In addition, assertiveness enables an entrepreneur to solve existing problems by transferring, general or sometimes ambiguous, knowledge into specific action (Judge, et al, 2009). It is an interpersonal reaction which implies approachability to other people and develop a rewarding relationship with them towards achievement of desirable goals (Lazenby, 2015).

Based on the grounding that private primary schools were performing better than public primary schools in Kisumu Town. Owuor, Ngacho and Otuya (2017) carried out a study to establish why owner-headteacher private primary schools were performing worse in KCPE than employee-headteacher schools. Among the headteacher characteristics that they considered were headteacher assertiveness. The respondents were owner-headteachers rating themselves on a scale. The findings were as indicated in Table 1.1.

In this study, according to the 30 craft-entrepreneur(owner-headteachers) in private primary schools, the variable entrepreneur-assertiveness scored a mean of 3.2 (interpreted as Mostly). This implies that these headteachers are of the opinion that they were assertive and this being assertive could be related to the high performance in KCPE and eventually attracting the public to demand private primary school education.

### 1.3.4. Leadership innovativeness as an aspect of management proactiveness

Innovativeness implies the ability to mobilize human and non-human organizational or extra-organizational resources before negative changes impact are felt or to address threats. Innovation is fostered by information gathered from new connections, new insights by a journey into other disciplines or places from active collegial networks and fluid open boundaries (Brambilla, Lederman & Porto, 2012). Entrepreneurial world is experiencing a revolution in respects of aspects such as the rising energy costs, material costs, and new technologies, increasing use of automation and computers, and this demands consistent positive response from an entrepreneur to survive and prosper (United Nations, 2013; Sternberg & Wennekers, 2005). In this regard, Schumpeter (1934) developed the concept of innovation and described it as the use of an invention to create a new commercial product or service to meet emerging societal needs through creation of new solutions to emerging challenges.

In many respects, despite government policy framework on innovation, challenges still exist (Ndemo & Maina, 2005). For instance, innovativeness takes three forms: process innovation which includes changes and improvement to methods hence increased productivity, cost reduction and increase in demand; innovation in product and services which leads to an increase in effective demand and encourages increase in investment and employment; and innovation in management and work organization which involves exploitation of human resource together with capacity to anticipate future techniques (Schumpeter, 1934).

UNESCO-IICBA (2011) survey on ways applied by countries in improving teaching conditions in rural schools, indicated that in South Africa, Ghana, Sierra-Leone, Uganda, and Kenya, school management structures allowed and fostered teacher creativity to enhance teacher job enrichment hence job engagement for enhanced teacher retention. In this respect, notable innovation, for instance at science fete, was rewarded even beyond the individual school level. Outstanding teachers were promoted, given cash money or some other tangible materials besides trips and, county or national awards of honour. However, the focus of this survey was on teacher innovation for student benefit or performance and to enhance teacher retention unlike this presentation which is focused on the value on innovativeness as an aspect of school leadership proactiveness.

As regards leadership innovativeness, the following were the findings of Dawo (2017) in a study which compared leadership involvement competencies rating of owner-headteachers with that of employee-headteachers in private primary schools in Kisumu County in Kenya.

**Table 1.1. Headteacher response on relationship between craft-entrepreneur assertiveness in management and business performance of private primary schools in Kisumu Town (N=30).**

Indicators of entrepreneur assertiveness: I know that as school headteacher...	A 4	M 3	S 2	R 1	T	M
I have the right to be treated with respect by all school stakeholders in pursuit of my school business goals	112	6	0	0	118	3.9
I believe I respect others' rights as I seek school goal achievement	0	63	18		81	2.7
I have the right to timely reorganize my school operations despite opinions of other stakeholders who may not understand my intentions	12	42	26	0	80	3.1
I use my persuasive skills to win goodwill of other stakeholders in accomplishing set tasks to achieve my school business goals	16	57	14	0	87	2.9
I believe I have the right to ensure instructions are followed ;as I timely reward, guide, counsel, warn or punish in respect of performance	0	90	0	0	90	3.0
I symbolize pursuit of quality and standards in my school	64	42	0	0	106	3.5
Overall Mean						3.2

KEY: 1.0-1.49 Rarely; 1.5-2.49 Sometimes; 2.5-3.49 Mostly; 3.5-4.0 Always

**Table 1.2. Headteacher leadership innovativeness in private primary schools in Kisumu County.**

Indicators of headteacher leadership innovativeness: Our school headteacher...	Teacher Response Mean Rate	
	Owner- Headteacher Schools	Employee- Headteacher Schools
Is accommodative to new ideas from other stakeholders to refresh educational model in pursuit of school goals	2.3	3.3
Is willingly transformational to achieve higher school goals	2.7	3.3
Recognizes value addition by other stakeholders by rewarding staff creativity through, applause, job promotion, material gifts, money and trips	2.1	3.7
Enhances access to data following internal and external evaluation of school performance to revise overall school objectives based activities	1.9	3.1
<b>Overall Mean Rate</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.4</b>

KEY: 1.0-1.49 Very low innovativeness; 1.5-2.49 Low innovativeness; 2.5-3.49 High innovativeness; 3.5-4.0 Very high innovativeness

This study was overall based on the fact that private schools performed better than public schools in KCPE. It however went on to distinguish between owner-headteacher and employee-headteacher managed schools given that the latter performed better in KCPE and established the headteacher leadership visibility rating of each category of school. The findings as indicated in Table 1.1 revealed that headteacher leadership innovativeness rating was higher in employee-headteacher schools than in owner-headteacher schools where poorer KCPE results were realized.

This showed that headteacher leadership innovativeness was valuable in determining school KCPE output from the perspective of subordinates, the teachers. This is given that, from literature, KCPE results were better in employee-headteacher schools better in owner headteacher schools where leadership innovativeness rating was higher at a mean of 3.4 against the lower at 2.3. This may be associated with the generally increased demand for private primary school education in Kenya.

#### 1.4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Leadership proactiveness drives support staff to perform their roles towards achievement of overall organizational objectives in line with management expectations. It is of necessity to balance the leadership individually pressurizing aspects of visibility, aggressiveness, assertiveness, and innovativeness to maintain a warm work environment. This is because an over-riding of any one of them may hamper the other complementary aspects and hence a misconception of leadership proactiveness for bullshiness by sub-ordinates. This may then overall hinder realization of organizational goals.

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