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**Teacher recruitment in secondary schools: Policy and practice in Kenya**

**Paper presentation**

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## **Abstract**

Decentralization of educational services is one of the many reforms that have been undertaken in Kenya by the government with a view of improving service delivery to its citizenry. The government draw out policy guidelines and disseminated them to the relevant bodies to help guide when the exercise of teacher recruitment was to be undertaken. The paper surveys the challenges and experiences in the decentralization of teacher recruitment in Kenyan secondary schools. Delegation of teacher recruitment to the school boards has caused a lot of controversy. Schools in certain districts refuse to shortlist-qualified applicants, who pose a threat to their “identified” candidates, while other schools keep their interview dates a secret so as to achieve their sinister motives. Other schools recruit candidates who do not meet the qualifications so long as they have a degree certificate with no relevant teaching subjects on their transcripts. It is evident that school board members' knowledge base on educational matters is wanting; the recruitment process is inefficient and subject to manipulation. It is concluded that the general management of secondary schools is weak due to lack of management capabilities of the school boards. The paper puts forth suggestions on how the teacher recruitment under the current policy can be enhanced

## **Introduction**

As part of educational and public sector reforms, many countries are decentralizing the financing and administration of educational services to regional, local or school levels. The goal of this process is to assist policy makers to refine strategies and to choose between possible options for system restructuring (Gaynor, 1998).

The degree of centralization within organizations has been an issue since the early days of organization theory with both Weber (1947) and Fayol (1930) for example, prescribing highly centralized structures in the interest of organizational effectiveness and the most efficient use of resources. More recently, decentralization in organizations has found much more favour, especially with corporations growing in size. It is against this background that there has been growing interest in the decentralization of human resources management function (Purcell and Ahlstrand (1994), Marginson et al (1998), and Hall et al 1998).

## **Policy Issues on Secondary School Management**

The management of public secondary schools in Kenya is vested in the BOGs appointed by the minister for education in accordance with section 10 of the education act cap 211(1980). District Education Boards (DEB) also has authority to manage schools in their respective districts. The TSC code of regulations (1986) gives powers to PDE, DEO and BOG to manage teachers as TSC agents (TSC code of regulations 1986:4-5). This delegation of managerial duties to PDE, DEO and BOG stemmed from the realization that the centralization of functions within the Ministry of Education was leading to inefficiency and unnecessary bureaucratic delays in the execution of duties by the field education officers. (Republic of Kenya, 1964, part1: 87; 1976: 146; 1988:109).

Smith (1964:143) observed that;

“Centralized bureaucratic control of schools saps the independence of a school, destroys its sense of being a corporate society and detaches its loyalty from the neighborhood which it serves”.

The Education Act Cap. 211 (1980), documents the establishment of school committees and boards of governors for all maintained, assisted and unaided primary and secondary schools, all colleges, institutes of technology, polytechnics and other educational institutions in the country. Responsibilities of BOG as per the Education Act, Cap. 211 (1980: 31-32) include;

- i) Management of schools in accordance with the Education Act and the Teachers Service Commission Act.
- ii) Maintenance of a high moral tone in the school
- iii) Maintenance of the religious traditions of the school.

The National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies otherwise known as Gachathi Report (1976) on the other hand, while addressing the subject of “management of education and training” endorsed that secondary schools be run by boards of governors, and recommended a higher degree of delegation in order to enhance effective management of schools. The Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the next Decade and Beyond (Kamunge report) viewed the establishment of the board of governors by the government as a noble intention to decentralize the day to day management of educational institutions to the boards and the heads (Kamunge, 1988). The report further acknowledged that the role played by the boards of governors in the management of educational institutions was crucial and therefore, these boards should be appointed on time and members carefully selected to ensure the boards have committed members with complementary talents to enhance management and maintenance of high standards of education.

Coming out clearly from these educational commission reports was the fact that the management of secondary schools had been vested on the boards of governors and all aspects of school administration are under boards of governors cloak (Mbiti, 1988). In 1996 former Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Secretary, Jackson Kangali, announced a plan to give powers to school boards to employ teachers. Besides improving efficiency, delegation empowers parents and communities in that they participate in the recruitment and supervision of teachers' (Aduda, 2001).

Addressing secondary school head teachers in Nakuru town during their annual conference, Mr. Kangali took the opportunity to explain the merits and demerits of the move that was largely intended to decentralize teacher management and service delivery. Thus, the government launched the process of a school and district based teacher recruitment process where communities were expected to recruit personnel to serve their institutions. Under this arrangement, the TSC was to identify the available vacancies and advertise for applications, indicating where they were tenable. In turn the boards of governors were to conduct interviews based on guidelines provided by the TSC. They were expected to pick the best three candidates from the interview and make their recommendations to the employer, TSC manual (2002).

According to the education order made under the education act, a school board shall consist of:

- i) A chairperson appointed by the minister, or in the case of church related schools, by the minister in consultation with the church.
- ii) Three members representing the community served by the school, appointed by the minister.
- iii) Four persons representing bodies or organizations, which, the minister feels, should be represented in the board, appointed by the minister.

- iv) Not more than three other persons considered by the minister to be necessary on the school board, appointed by the minister.
- v) Not more than three persons co-opted by the board.

### **Need for Decentralization of Educational Services**

Decentralization is the process of devolving power from the centre to lower levels of authority. It involves delegation of such duties as recruitment, deployment, discipline and supervision to the local communities or the field officers.

As the education service grows and becomes more complex a centralized administration system cannot fulfil its functions effectively. While policies must continue to develop at the centre many of the administrative tasks should be delegated to regions and districts, thereby avoiding long chains of command. The more local things can be the more likely the education service is able to function meaningfully and in response to community needs. The need for delegation of authority in an educational organization increases with increase in scope. It implies giving permission to somebody or a group to exercise authority within certain provisions. The school boards assist the state ministry of education with the day to day administration of secondary schools, and the appointment and placement of secondary school teachers (Nwankwo, 1982).

When parents are treated as consumers to whom the teachers are accountable, school boards are given significant power, as in the case of the United Kingdom and New Zealand. When on the other hand, the emphasis is on partnership, parents, teachers and community leaders are more equal in terms of power and responsibility, (Kogan, 1992). Sometimes, especially in market driven systems the school is also responsible for setting salary levels. An intermediate layer of teacher management, such as a regional or district body may be responsible for promotions, transfers, appeals and pedagogical supervision and support. The central government is usually responsible for regulatory functions such as setting

qualification standards, monitoring teacher standards, determining class standards and salary levels, and establishing the legislative framework. Control over accreditation may be devolved or retained centrally *ibid*, (1998).

It is important to decide at which level of administration the supervision and management of teachers should rest. As education systems have expanded and lessons have been learned in both industrial and developing countries, it has become clear the centralization is not always the best approach for developing and overseeing an effective teacher management system. Centralized structures have proved to be particularly weak in dealing with day-to-day administrative tasks such as responding to grievances and keeping records (*ibid*, 1998:31). In addition, there has been a shift in social attitudes towards parents' rights to be involved in their children's education.

Changes in public opinion about the role and ability of government and the spread of democracy and popular participation have contributed to this shift. Many communities are now demanding a greater say in how their schools are run and how teachers perform, and governments are actively looking for viable ways to devolve authority for teacher management to different levels of the system (Gaynor, 1998). In Kenya attempts have already been made to decentralize many of the managerial responsibilities at the education system to various levels of local government and even to the schools themselves.

A review of the World Bank's role in helping countries to implement decentralization found that administrative, political, financial, and pedagogical rationales have driven such reforms. Most central governments opt to retain responsibility for hiring teachers, usually giving them the status of civil servants. The ministry of education has responsibility for such normative functions as setting standards for teachers, setting salary and staffing levels for teachers, and allocating budget resources to lower levels of administration. While the government usually employs teachers, the TSC approves the appointment of teachers. The legislative framework

for teacher management is usually established centrally. Responsibilities for negotiating with teacher's organizations are also retained at the center.

### **Teacher Recruitment Criteria**

In August 2003 for the first time the Kenya government announced 2,350 vacancies in secondary schools. The boards of governors conducted interviews for secondary school places; the list of selected candidates was then sent to the TSC for ratification and employment. To ensure transparency and accountability, the TSC sent two commissioners to each province to monitor the exercise and any questions or irregularities were to be brought to the attention of the respective provisional directors of education (The Daily Nation, July 31<sup>st</sup> 2003).

The Chairman of the TSC cautioned against generalization, saying the case of irregularity, the names and specific details should be given to the organization or its agents for action. The KNUT union Secretary said, "The process should be transparent and fair to ensure that the most qualified applicants get the jobs". He added "we do not want to hear of corruption, nepotism, political influence and favouritism during the exercise," (Daily nation, July 31<sup>st</sup> 2003:2). The interviewing boards were given guidelines on how to select candidates. Among others, considerations were given to those who graduated earlier, had work experience under boards or private schools and had special talent. To ensure teacher balance across districts, those employed were supposed to stay in the same station for five years before seeking transfer. Since 2001, the government has been recruiting teachers at the school and district level, in a move intended to decentralize teacher management (Daily Nation, August 20<sup>th</sup> 2003).



### **Guidelines for Hiring Teachers**

To ensure that the likely applicants for school jobs selection would be open and fair, the Kenyan government released a scoring guide for the interviews of teachers as follows: Academic and professional qualifications earn candidates a maximum of 40 marks, while communication ability and special talent were marked out of five. A bachelor of education first class degree or a master's degree attracts a maximum of 40 marks; a second-class honors upper division attracts 35 marks, second-class lower division and passes 25 marks. A BA and BSc coupled with a postgraduate diploma in education will attract 40 marks. A second-class upper division under this category will earn 35 marks, second-class lower division 30 marks and a pass 25 marks. A postgraduate diploma distinction will attract 25 marks, credit 20 marks and a pass 15 marks. Knowledge of subject matter and teaching methodology earns 25 marks while previous teaching experience earns one a maximum of 10 marks. (Aduda 2003).

The government said, "There was no guarantee that those selected by school or District Education Boards would be employed" (Nation, August 20<sup>th</sup> 2003). Among the requirements were that the applicants should have graduated from teacher training college before 1999. The recruitment exercise since it started in 2003 has been dogged by complaints of irregularities (Bosire 2003). School and district boards whose recommendations are required as part of the process, have been accused of nepotism and demanding of bribes. Candidates dissatisfied with the recruitment were urged to report to the Minister, the Director of Education or TSC secretary so that their complaints are considered by appeal panels at the commission headquarters.

### **Experiences in Kenyan schools**

Decentralization of teacher recruitment caused a lot of controversy. Reports indicate that some schools in certain districts refuse to shortlist-qualified applicants who pose a threat to

their “identified” candidates, while other schools keep their interview dates a secret so as to achieve their sinister motives. Schools recruit candidates who do not meet the qualifications so long as they have a degree certificate with no relevant teaching subjects on their transcripts. For instance, a Bachelor of Education technology degree has no relevant content and teaching methodology suitable to teach physics in Secondary schools.

The exercise is rife with irregularities; field officers doubt the competence of school boards. Most B.O.G. members may not be able to interpret the guideline and implement it. Moreover, local intrigues and biases have also come into play to affect the outcome of the exercise. The question of the competence of B.O.G. members arose because the process of interviewing people for employment requires thorough understanding of professional as well as topical, socio-economic and political issues. Board members are not selected on merit and have no proven track record making the process of teacher recruitment is inefficient and ineffective.

There were complaints that the recruitment of teachers was unfair. Otieno, (2003) said; “I wish to bring to the notice of the Ministry of Education that interviews to recruit secondary school teachers are biased, tribal, and corrupt and are not based on merit.” Presenters during the hearings of the Commission of Inquiry into the Education system of Kenya raised concerns over the political influence in their appointment, low level of education and lack of commitment and dedication on the part of most of them. The Management of educational institutions was, therefore found to be weak because most B.O.G. members lack quality management capabilities (Koech1999:227).

A study conducted by Sang(2005) revealed that there are difficulties faced by head teachers in school management that they attributed to BOG. Head teachers categorically point out that their relationship with board members is not co-operative during teacher recruitment. This shows the existence of conflict of views between the two parties during teacher selection. School heads accused some board members of over domineering in decision-

making and management with little recourse to head teachers' advice. Head teachers also cite difficulties originating from board members' illiteracy and lack of dedication as sources of problems in school management. However, they point out that BOG's active participation in school depended on head teachers' skills in drawing its support and co-operation.

Teachers and their heads agree that board members decisions on teacher recruitment are biased and depended on whether the case or matter involved a relative, friend, clansman or political foe. They maintain that political, religious and clan leanings take overtone among BOG and blur their capacity to make honest decisions.

Ibid(2005) on BOG educational attainment levels confirm that most BOG members had up to secondary education. Head teachers complained that due to the absence of a clear-cut method of selecting board members, BOG nominations bring into office people who are ignorant and lacking in qualities necessary for enhanced school development. Head teachers and teachers concur that the political nature of their appointment brings into office people who are ignorant of schooling and indifferent to professional values. They make ill equipped decisions on teachers' recruitment. Board members are ignorant and limited in knowledge on professional matters related to education.

Teachers say that there are gross infringements on teachers that lead to tensions, which cause negative effects on student performance. They report that schools' poor performance was inexplicably tied to BOG persistent differences leading to rejection of better-qualified teachers during recruitment.

Teachers have no confidence with the BOG as regards to teacher recruitment. They are of the opinion that board members should not be involved in teacher recruitment, and that the responsibility of hiring teachers should be taken back to the TSC. This is basically due to the BOG low qualifications and biased selection of teachers.

Selection is not fairly and transparently done as priority is given to certain individuals. Gender biases are also evident in certain instances. Teachers selected in such circumstances end up being ineffective in their duties and this has major implications on the quality of education.

### **Reforms to Streamline the Decentralization Process**

Constant monitoring is needed to discover which aspects of the reform work well in practice and which do not, enabling the designers to reinforce the successful aspects of the reform and to make remedial action to change the unsuccessful aspects. The central government should make sure that the design of the decentralization reform includes specific regulations and controls to guide local decision-making. Information about these regulations must be widely disseminated, and personnel at different administrative levels must be trained. Considerations should also be given on how the central government can help the lower administrative levels deal with their new responsibilities, particularly when responsibility is devolved to school and existing intermediate support structures.

Decentralization is a highly political issue and the extent of political will and support for it strongly influences the effectiveness of the reform. There is a strong argument for involving all parties in developing and implementing a decentralized teacher management system. It is logical to expect that reforms that meet the needs of these stakeholders will have a greater chance of working. The way in which stakeholders view the reform and the state of relations among them will affect the outcome of the reform. It is therefore important to persuade them that the proposed reform will increase the availability of education. Politicians and government officials may act in their own narrow self-interest and may be reluctant to give up control of access to teaching posts, (Gaynor, 1998:37).

### **Recommendations**

- Training or in-service courses should be mounted for board members to equip them with basic knowledge on education issues.
- Head teachers need induction courses on personnel management to be able to advise their boards on best recruitment practices and mobilize their staff for effective service delivery.
- School managers like board of governors need to be guided and supported to develop procedures for recruiting teachers if decentralization has to be done.
- Individuals' membership in BOG should be limited to only one school to encourage them to develop a closer interest and commitment in the school.
- If the Teachers' Service Commission is to ensure fairness and transparency in the recruitment of teachers, then the recruitment exercise should be under the supervision of professionals.
- The criteria for membership into BOG should be redesigned to ensure ascent to office by only those who are capable of understanding the values of education and participate effectively in school management.
- The exercise has been regionalized and localized. The Teachers Service Commission should streamline teacher recruitment to give it a national outlook.
- To ensure that there is gender balance during selection and gender inclusive committees should be established.

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