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Assessment of the Application of Deontological Ethical Theory in the Performance of Head Teacher's Instructional Leadership Duties in Public Day Primary Schools in Nyamache Division - Kisii County, Kenya

Roselidah Mariaria

Masters Student, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Faculty of Education, Instruction and Media, Kisii University, Kenya

Dr. Enock Obuba

Lecturer, Department of Curriculum, Media and Instruction Faculty of Education, Instruction, Media and Human Resource Development, Kisii University, Kenya

Abstract:

Without offering solutions to educational problems, the society may not move forward in the process towards achieving the noble goals of education. This study has explored the impacts of deontological ethical theory on the performance of head teachers in instructional leadership. The knowledge gap this study attempted to fill was an improvement in the head teachers' performance on instructional leadership. The study was conducted in Nyamache division - Kisii County, Kenya which had 74 day public primary schools. The researcher took a sample of 10 schools which represented 13.5% of the target population who were respondents. The participants of this study were 5 in number, in each of the 10 schools. Specifically, the sample was selected as follows: 10 head teachers, 10 teachers, 10 support staff, 10 std 7 learners and 10 school committee chairpersons. The total sample was 50 and the target population was 2,113 people. The researcher used a descriptive design which adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches in data gathering. The validity of the research instruments was ascertained by the degree to which the items measured the application of deontological ethical theory on the performance of head teachers and reliability was assured by asking the same interview questions to all the respondents of a particular category and the extent to which the responses were consistent from all the respondents. Data was analysed using a simplified version guideline by Hycner. The analyzed data was converted to percentages and there after tables were used to depict the research findings. The main research finding was that most head teachers are not fully committed to their duties and majorly apply power leadership theory in instructional leadership. The result of this study is expected to benefit the county education officers, the government policy makers, Curriculum designers and any other interested party in the theory and practice of education; regarding the policies that should be put in place in a bid to streamline public day primary schools' leadership.

Keywords: Deontological ethical theory, educational philosophy, ethics, instructional leadership, performance

1. Introduction

Philosophy of education can be explained as a critical assessment of an educational system with a view to laying bare the factorial problems that must be settled or with the aim of postulating solutions to some felt educational issues (Chukwu, 2002:292). Issues like what to include in the educational system in order for the curriculum to meet the social, political economic and cultural needs of the learner is part of the subject matter of philosophy of education. The prescriptive function of educational philosophy also known as normative function seeks to establish norms and standards of performance and conduct. It sets out the goals and ideals to guide practice and criteria for evaluating achievement of the goals. (Nyirenda and Ishumi, 2002).

2. Deontological Ethical Theory

According to Ladner and Segun (1996:26), ethics as a philosophical study of human conduct has two senses; a code of conduct and an academic discipline, a branch of philosophy. Ethics as a code of conduct refers to the moral code which guides the actions of a person, profession or society and this is the sense in which this study is focused on. Descriptive, normative and meta ethics are further classifications of ethics.

Descriptive ethics is an account of the moral beliefs of a people. Normative ethics is a philosophical account of right and wrong conduct or good and bad character traits with a view to providing guidelines for action while meta ethics is a reaction against philosophical speculation with regard to normative issues. The normative sense of ethics is needed to account for the ethical foundation of education and community (Ladner and Segun, 1996). There are three major normative theories: deontological ethics which focuses on obligation or rules, consequentialist (teleological) ethics which focuses on the consequences of actions and virtue ethics with its focus on character.

The term teleological comes from the Greek word 'teleos' which implies 'purposiveness', 'goal', that which has to be realized. Thus, according to teleology, an act is right if and only if it or the rule under which it falls produces, or will probably produce a great balance of good over evil. An act is wrong if it does not do so. Deontological ethics or the term deontology comes from the Greek word 'Deon' which means 'obligation or duty', and 'logia' is an approach to ethics that judges the morality of an act based on the action's adherence to rules or duties (Popkin, 1986; Frankena, 2001).

Deontologists look at rules and duties (Orendi, 2000, Popkin, 1986). The view of the deontologists for example, is that people are punished for the crimes they commit because the acts they perform are wrong. It is inherently wrong to commit a crime and by punishing people for their crimes, is acting justly. A person who does good deeds according to deontology deserves to be rewarded. A person who commits a crime deserves to be punished (Popkin, 1986:56). The deontological ethical theory possesses the strong advantage of being able to account for strong widely shared moral intuitions about people's duties better than can teleological ethical theory. In the light of this fact, this study was based on deontological ethical theory.

Some of the proponents of deontological theory include Ross (1930), and Kant (1797). Ross is a British philosopher who holds the position that is representative of pluralistic deontology. Ross argues that there are seven right making features of a moral act. These are: duty of beneficence, duty of non-maleficence, duty of justice, duty of self-improvement, duty of reparation, duty of gratitude and duty of promise keeping. He called these 'prima facie' duties because when a person tries to decide on how to act, each of these duties need to be taken into consideration (Popkin, 1986; Cronin, 2006).

Kant (1724 - 1804) is great Germany philosopher whose major writings on three ethical theories occurred between 1785 and 1797. Kant argued that the highest good was the goodwill. To act from goodwill is to act from duty. Persons of goodwill do their duties because it is their duty and for no other reasons. It is this emphasis on duty and lack of concern with consequences that makes Kant quintessential deontologist. Kant distinguished between two kinds of duties (imperatives). Sometimes we do something so that we may get something else. Kant referred to this kind of duty as hypothetical. Other duties are required per se, with no ifs, ands or buts. He described these duties as the categorical imperative and referred to it as a fundamental principle of ethics. He believed that reason provide the basis for the categorical imperative and demanded that people act on reasons which all rational agents could endorse. That is, universally acceptable reasons (Cronin, 2006)

To critique the literature that has been reviewed, Ross (1930) thinks that the right action in a given situation is determined by a careful weighing of various moral principles that apply in that situation. This study is based on a single ethical theory of deontology which holds the position that heads of schools should perform their duties of instructional leadership according to their obligations as head teachers regardless of other duties outside these obligations and irrespective of the consequences that might follow.

In a sharp contrast, Kant (1797) attempts to ground moral obligation on reason alone, with feelings, motives, inclinations and other empirical elements brushed aside. This position leaves Kant open to the naturalistic fallacy of deriving an 'ought' from an 'is'. It would also seem to imply that the rational process comes first and the obligation comes as a consequence. Another major criticism on Kant's approach to ethics is that, it doesn't handle cases where we have a conflict of duties. Similarly, to assert that one should act for the sake of duty and not in accordance with duty is a position that is different from the one taken by the present study (Popkin, 1986; Cronin, 2006). Thus, the current study is adding a body of knowledge to the already existing one in the area of deontological ethical theory.

According to *Moest* (1999) module in Kenya, it is the responsibility of the head teacher to ensure that guidance and counselling services are offered to the learners. He or she should offer an enabling environment in which the staff and learners follow and obey the school rules and regulations willingly. To maintain discipline in the school, the head teacher must cultivate the attributes of self-discipline and set a good example by observing punctuality and commitment to duty. The work of the head teacher involves communicating with the various stakeholders at different times, in different forums. The head teacher requires both oral and written communication skills for the process.

As a synthesis of the literature that has been reviewed and for the purposes of answering the first research question, heads of schools should ensure that they as head teachers and every stakeholder of the school carries out their duties accordingly and as expected of them since this is what deontology stipulates (Bowie, 1999). The current study sought to capture which duties of the head teachers are deontological in practice such that if they are applied appropriately, can impact on instructional leadership at public day primary schools.

3. Methodology

Research design can be regarded as an arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance with research purpose. Qualitative research has become a preferred method for social research mainly because quantitative research has been found inadequate for investigating educational problems where numbers are not the only concern, but reasons, attitudes and perceptions are also important (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and

Sorensen, 2006:25). Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used in this study. Descriptive survey that was conducted collected quantitative data. In-depth interviews collected quantitative data as well. This is because in phenomenological approach, it is the participant's perception, feelings and lived experiences that are the objects of the study. Further, the approach allowed research participants to talk about the topic in their own words free from constraints. Moustake (1994),Giorgi, (2009). Therefore, the study utilized a mixed method approach.

3.1. Results and Discussion

Application of the Deontological Ethical Theory on Instructional Leadership

The study sought to assess the Application of the deontological ethical theory on instructional leadership. Deontological Ethics which is sometimes referred to as a duty or obligation or rule-based ethics was used as a measure of determining the effectiveness of the head teachers' duties and obligations in a public day primary school setting. To achieve this, the researcher conducted interviews with the head teachers, teachers, school management committee chairpersons, support staff and learners all from 10 schools. The following were the results.

3.1.1. The Responsibility of Marking the Staff Attendance Registers

When the above interview question was asked at the head teachers of 10 schools, they responded as shown on Table 1.

Head Teachers' Responses	Percentage Response
Head teacher	33.5
D/Head Teacher	61.9
Senior teacher	4.6
% response	100

Table 1: Responsibility of marking staff attendance register

Source: Field study, 2013

From Table1, it is evident that the deputy head teachers predominantly mark the staff attendance register. The percentage of head teachers who mark the attendance register are 33.5 % and percentage of senior teachers who mark the staff attendance register is less than 5%. These results imply that head teachers do not take this responsibility seriously though some head teachers delegate this responsibility to their deputy head teachers and a few delegate this duty to the senior teachers. This result displays lack of commitment and dedication on the part of the head teachers in carrying out their duties as expected of them. Brubacher (2004: 139) posits that: "One of the principle ways in which the professional person assures the public of his high ethical sensitivity resides in the kind of motivation to which he owns in carrying out his professional activities." What Brubacher did not study are the prime responsibilities of a professional person. This study therefore attempts to fill the gaps left by Brubacher in the sense that it is exploring how the duties and obligations of head teachers which assist them to effectively manage public primary schools.

3.1.2. Head teachers Training in Management Skills (2012 to 2013)

The 2nd interview question asked at head teachers is how many had trained in management skills. Table 2 shows the head teachers' responses

Head Teachers' Response	Percentage Response
Positive (trained)	95.24
Negative (untrained)	4.76
Total	100

Table 2: Head teachers' Management Training for one year for the award of a Diploma in School Management

Source: field study, 2013

Table 2 depicts the percentage of head teachers who have trained on how to manage schools. Table 2 shows that a good number of head teachers have trained on management skills. The only problem the researcher noted was whether the trained head teachers on management were putting into practice the skills they had acquired. Those head teachers who have not trained are either doing Master's Degree Programmes or Degree Programmes or do not see the need of training in school management. Brubacher (2004: 139) remarks: "If a teacher is thoroughly imbued with his high ethical obligation, he must necessarily dispense his expert information and skill for the service he renders to others" Brubacher has studied ethical obligations of teachers and how they dispense it. The present study sought to explore the number of head teachers who have trained in school management such that they can be enabled to use the knowledge, skills and attitudes they acquire at the training to improve their performance in school administration.

3.1.3. Head Teacher's Discussion on Their Moral Obligation during Their Meetings of Head Teachers Association

10 head teachers were interviewed on whether they do discuss at their meetings of Head teachers the importance of morality while discharging their duties at the primary schools setting. Their responses are tabulated on Table 3.

Head Teachers' Response	Percentage Response
A strong affirmative Loaded response	0
A Good affirmative Response	19.04
A fairly Affirmative response	23.82
A fairly Negative response	47.62
A strong Negative Loaded Response	9.52
Total	100%

Table 3: Head teachers' discussion on their moral obligation during their meetings of head teachers' association
Source: field study, 2013

From Table 3 it is evident that less than 50% of the head teachers do discuss the importance of being moral as they discharge their duties. It is also clear that a small number negate strongly discussing such matters. Those who fairly negate discussing the same matters were over 47%. The only problem the researcher noted was whether discussing morality was practicing morality. In one of the schools the researcher visited, the head teacher responded by affirming that they do discuss such matters and went an extra mile to say:

"Some head teachers like in school 'X' and 'Y' attend head teachers meetings while in a drunken stupor and late. They criticize everything constructive that is discussed. If one goes ahead to examine how effective their schools are, they are found wanting". Maxcy (2002) posits: "That it is not only a question of having knowledge of ethics and virtues and dispositions to carry out ethical activities but also the will to use them". Maxcy focuses on virtue ethics and this study focuses on deontological ethics. This study attempts to examine whether what head teachers discuss at their meetings is pragmatically coherent with the reality on the ground, achieved through performance of their duties.

3.1.4. Factors which Influence the Head Teachers in Decision Making

10 teachers were interviewed from 10 schools, on what influences head teachers in decision making, they elicited varied responses. The responses ranged from character, obligation, to relationship. Table 4 illustrates their responses.

Teachers' Responses	Factors Influencing in Percentage		
	Behaviour	Obligation	Relationship
A strong affirmative Loaded response	33.32	20.25	16.66
A Good affirmative Response	36.90	36.90	36.61
A fairly Affirmative response	29.78	42.85	19.04
A fairly Negative response	0	0	0
A strong Negative Loaded Response	0	0	27.69
Total percentage response	100	100	100

Table 4: What influences head teachers in decision making
Source: field study, 2013

From table 4 it is evident that most head teachers (33.2%) make decisions under the influence of their behaviour and no member negated this position. (20%) of them are influenced by their duty call or obligation. while a minority is guided by relationship. In those schools where head teachers were guided by their behaviour in making their decisions, there was evidently an element of mistrust from the members of staff. There was no room for delegation of duties since they were not given time to participate in decision making. This makes the teachers to be demotivated in the actual class room teaching.

Relationship between the head teacher and the stakeholders of the school seems to have the worst influence on the head teachers when making decisions. Only over 16% engage in it. Relationship entails that the head teachers favour some members of the staff at the expense of others, which is of course wrong. From this finding therefore, it is majorly behaviour of heads that influence their decision making.

3.1.5. Administrative Aspects upon which Teachers Differed with Head Teachers

10 teachers were interviewed on the administrative aspects they differed with the head teachers. The teachers responded as Table 5 portrays.

Teachers' responses	Aspects in percentage				
	Discipline	G/Counselling	Punctuality	Absenteeism	Purchase
A strong affirmative Loaded response	55.95	57.14	58.33	54.76	53.58
A Good affirmative Response	33.33	25.01	29.76	28.57	22.61
A fairly Affirmative response	10.72	17.85	7.14	16.77	16.67
A fairly Negative response	0	0	4.77	0	7.14
A strong negative loaded response	0	0	0	0	0
Total percentage	100	100	100	100	100

Table 5: Administrative aspects upon which teachers differed with the head teachers
Source: field study, 2013

From Table 5 it can be deduced that the highest number of respondents stated that punctuality was an administrative aspect that head teachers differed with the teachers. The head teacher as a person in charge of the school fails to observe time. This leads both the teachers and learners to do so; and this adversely affects the curriculum. Guidance and counselling as the respondents put it, was not existent. Whenever a disciplinary case came up that required counselling, there was nobody mandated to do so, owing to the fact that caning of learners was banned in all public schools. It becomes difficult to restore the right behaviour without talking to the learners.

Learners' discipline was another aspect that made head teachers differ with the teachers. 55% of the teachers interviewed confirmed that discipline of learners was not captured in schools. The respondents of five schools responded as follows: "Some teachers (head teachers included) indulge in sexual abuse with the learners, school rules are not observed by the learners especially when this is the case, some head teachers fail to be strict on other teachers when they themselves are victims of this circumstance."

Absenteeism of the head teachers is another aspect of administration that made head teachers differ with the teachers. Head teachers in most schools were reported absent in many days of the week on claims that they were out on official duty and sometimes without a reason at all; leaving the school under the deputy head teacher who may also not be present. In one of the schools visited, a teacher had this to say about head teachers: "I cannot walk with the school. Each teacher looked for employment differently, and therefore each has to work in different styles suitable to him or her."

Purchase of instructional materials is the other aspect that the teachers stated as the point of departure for head teachers. The respondents in many schools stated that the SIMSIC committee mandated to order instructional materials was not given all the powers in carrying out this duty. One of the schools recorded the following: "As the SIMSIC committee, we order learning materials by the name but do not see the delivery of these materials, if ever they are purchased, they are not the number that is ordered, the amount that is sent periodically for such purchase, we have never known". Therefore, how free education funds are used was an issue as well as punctuality, guidance and counselling and discipline.

3.1.6. Yearly Meeting of Staff for National Examination Results Analysis

The researcher interviewed 10 head teachers on their reaction to national examination results analysis each year. Their responses are tabulated on Table 6

Head Teachers' Responses	Percentage Response
A strong affirmative Loaded response	0
A Good affirmative Response	23.8
A fairly Affirmative response	52.4
A fairly Negative response	23.8
A strong negative loaded response	0
Total	100

Table 6: Yearly meeting of head teachers for National examination analysis
Source: Field study, 2013

It is clear from Table 6 that those schools that analyze their examination results each year are more than half while less than the other half does not analyze it. Analyzing examination results put away forward for the improvement of the next examination. Improvement is achieved through questioning the past weaknesses as to who did or did not do what and why.

4. Conclusion

The researcher made conclusions based on the summary of the research findings. This study intended to explore the impact of the deontological ethical theory on the performance of the head teachers.

Based on the research objective, which was to assess the application of the deontological ethical theory on school leadership, the researcher concluded that a good number of head teachers had not taken their duties seriously as expected of them. There also was doubt on whether the head teachers were finally going to practice the management skills they had

acquired from training. Equally important is that, learning morality from each other is not an indicator of practicing that same morality back in the actual school setting.

Finally the researcher found out that most head teachers have no clear channel of communication. Consequently, the stakeholders who include the staff, support staff and learners are not highly motivated.

In conclusion, the researcher observed that the impact of the deontological ethical theory in instructional leadership has not been fully felt as it ought to since most head teachers have not applied fully this ethical theory on their performance of school leadership.

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