RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING NEEDS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS IN EDUCATIONAL SUPERVISION: A CASE STUDY OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ELDORET MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

Literature reviewed, generally indicate that there has been and there still is a discrepancy between the actual practice and the expected role of primary school headteachers in education supervision. It is on this premise that the researcher sought to assess the training needs of primary school headteachers in educational supervision and also make recommendations on remedial measures. In order to carry out this, the research involved the study of eight macro-competency areas which included; motivation, communication, public relations, financial management, planning and co-ordination, curriculum and instruction, evaluation and staff development. These macro-competency areas were derived through content analysis and the researcher felt that they were the major ones and therefore included in the study. From these macro-competency areas, 37 specific competencies were generated and thus studied.   The findings of this study revealed deficiencies between the current educational supervisory practice of primary school headteachers and the desired practice. This implied that the headteachers were inadequately equipped. On this basis, it was recommended that there was a dire need to introduce a separate, specialized and more comprehensive educational supervisory training programme alongside the traditional concurrent pre-service teacher training programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Background and statement of the problem

In Kenya, the Quality Assurance and Standards Department is the one charged with the responsibility of controlling the quality and standards of education both at primary, secondary and college levels. In discharging this duty, the Director Quality Assurance and Standards has delegated responsibilities by way of having Quality Assurance and Standards Officers at the zonal, divisional, district, provincial and national levels.   These officers make visits to schools where they interact with teachers and learners. In this process, they are expected to provide leadership, help, expert knowledge and guidance to the teachers in analyzing and diagnosing the many facets of teaching behaviour and therefore enhance the quality of education in the country. However, it is observed that the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers have been appointed to the positions they hold by virtue of their academic qualifications and professional experience, and not by any special training in educational supervision.

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It has already been indicated that these officers only make occasional visits to schools, which in this case can be precisely described as inadequate. Much of the supervision is therefore left with the school heads who have more time with their teachers and equally more available to the learners. Olembo (1992), says that the head teachers should be considered as instructional leaders of the school programmes. They therefore should possess superior knowledge about curriculum and instruction, and also provide expert leadership in all areas of the school programme. The head teachers of primary schools therefore play a major part in the supervision of educational activities in the institutions they head. However, it is worthy noting that just like the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, they have not undergone any special training to equip them for this grand responsibility. The Koech commission (1999) in its findings realized that many head teachers had not been trained in management and administration and were more ineffective and lacking in accountability. It therefore recommended that head teachers should be front-line inspectors of their own schools and therefore should be well prepared for this. The submissions from this commission further indicated that for better management of schools, in-service programmes should be regularly organized for head

teachers to undergo school management and administration training to enable them to be front-line quality control managers in their own schools. It can therefore be precisely stated that the importance of training in equipping teachers with knowledge and skills to perform specific tasks need not be overemphasized. In relation to training, Parish (1969) says that well-targeted training programmes greatly improve the performance of teachers in work. He further argues that teachers who have been specifically trained as teachers greatly improve in their classroom behavior and that all things being equal, teachers trained in particular skills have been found to perform better than untrained teachers . Primary school head teachers need special training in educational supervision to enable them perform better in their supervisory roles. However, it is worthy noting that before any training programme is undertaken, it requires that a needs assessment be done to clearly determine the specific competencies that one needs to be equipped with. Miller and Zeller (1967) argue in support of this and believe that training without conducting a needs assessment is analogous to a medical doctor performing surgery based only on the knowledge that a patient does not feel well. The surgery may correct the problem but the odds are considerably against it. A needs assessment is therefore a pre-requisite to training and it is in this light that this study sought to establish the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that primary school headteachers require in order to effectively carry out educational supervision in the schools they head.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study was based on the needs assessment process. English and Kaufman (1975) define needs assessment as a tool which formally identifies the gaps between the current results or outcomes/products and the required or desired results, places these gaps in priority and selects those gaps/needs of the highest priority for action, usually through the implementation of a new or existing curriculum or management process. English and Kaufiman (1975) and Suarez (1991) further define needs assessment as an information gathering and analyzing process in the identification of the needs of individuals, groups, institutions and communities or societies. Bosire (1996:12) wrote that: An education program, like any other activities is directed by the expectation of certain outcomes. The chief activity of education is to change individuals; to add to the knowledge they posses, to enable them to perform skills, which they would not be able to perform, to develop certain understandings, insights and appreciations. To guide in the development of such programs, curriculum specialists have prescribed procedures to be followed. The point to be noted here is that, curriculum development requires systematic and specific procedures to be followed. Various authors have proposed various curriculum development models. Tyler (1949) proposed a curriculum development model of four basic stages in which other curriculum scholars such as Taba (1962), Wheeler (1967), English and Kaufman (1975) and Bishop (1985) have added more details. However it is important to note that despite the fact that there exist these various curriculum development models, all curriculum scholars agree on the fact that whether developing a new curriculum or changing the existing one, the process begins with needs assessment, a stage that Hunkins (1985) calls

curriculum conceptualization and legitimization and that it involves needs analysis and needs diagnosis. This study was based on this initial stage of curriculum development process. The following paragraph describes the needs assessment process and the rationale for using it as a basis for this study.

English and Kaufman (1975) described needs assessment as an empirical process of making specific in some intelligible manner, what schooling should be about and how it can be assessed. It is a process for determining the validity of behavioural objectives. It is the process of determining whether an innovation is necessary and or desirable and hence a problem-solving tool which identifies gaps between current outcomes and required results and priorities these gaps into action. Taba (1962) believes that to keep the curriculum in tune with the needs of the students and of the times, and to help determine which objectives to stress, it is necessary that need assessment be continuously done. As already indicated, the needs assessment identifies gaps and prioritizes the gaps. These gaps become needs when someone feels that they should not exist. Czajkowski and Patterson (1976) believe that the essence of needs assessment is to reduce these gaps. The needs assessment process can in this light therefore be seen as maintaining the balance between the intended and the actual situations, which makes it very crucial in this study. It can be argued that any education system in any given society, helps enhance the society's needs and therefore, in drawing an educational program, a needs assessment is imperative. In this study, the need assessment was utilized to carry out an assessment of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that primary school head teachers require in order to effectively carryout educational supervision. Educational supervisory competencies were therefore identified and prioritized.

The purpose/objectives of the study

The purpose of this study was to carry out a training needs assessment of primary school head teachers in educational supervision .The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the educational supervisory competencies that primary school head teachers use and actually practice in the process of performing their supervisory activities.
2. Identify the competencies that primary school head teachers need in order to effectively perform their educational supervisory roles in their schools.
3. Determine the discrepancy between what supervisory competencies they need and those they practice.

Literature review

The need for staff training and development

Marsick (1998) defines staff development as learning strategies, both formal and informal for the orientation of staff to an organization and for the continued development. In school setup, Shaw (1992) defines staff development as courses and in-service training attended by individual, professional reading, good practice in teaching and management learnt from other colleagues both consciously and unconsciously, as well as individual and team experiences gained in meetings of common concern. All these process

serve to increase teachers' expertise. Staff training and development becomes extremely invaluable due to the changing nature of the society that engenders new ideas, new technologies and new practices. Workers therefore need to keep themselves abreast of any developments which thus makes staff development imperative and of paramount importance in the development of any organization.

Any organization requires an up-to-date and well trained workforce that can effectively contribute to its development. Equally important is that staff development leads to more productivity and enhances knowledge, skills and attitudes. It also helps address the deficiency in initial training of workers. Flippo (1984) asserts that staff development is a very important element in personnel management. He argues that after an employee as been recruited, selected and inducted, he or she must next be developed to better fit in the organization. No one is therefore best fit at the time of hiring and some training and education must take place. Education is a dynamic process. Hewton (1988) says that changes occur within the school, in the schools local community, in education system and within the society. In order to address this dynamism in education, staff development should be a continuous process in any education system.

Nature of educational supervision in schools in kenya

The literature reviewed indicates that educational supervision especially that of primary education has the following characteristics:

i) Supervision done by Quality Assurance and Standards Officers by way of occasional impromptu visits regarded as inadequate.
ii) A high number of schools assigned to a single officer
iii) Due to this high number of schools assigned to a single officer, much of the supervision is left to the school head teachers.
iv) A few pre-arranged visits to schools by the officers.

Expected roles of headteachers as educational supervisors

The kenya education system places the head of school in a position of considerable responsibility which includes that of managing his teachers (Ngala, 1977). He /she has the overall responsibility over the operation of the school and therefore in charge of instructional leadership, administration and supervision. Okumbe (1999) believes that supervision is an administration activity whose strategy is to stimulate teachers towards greater pedagogical effectiveness and productivity.

He singled out major supervisory activities as:

i) Planning
ii) Organizing
iii) Coordinating
iv) Influencing
v) communicating
vi) Evaluation

According to Orlosky and Mclearly (1984), instructional supervision is a major function that the school head must carry out. It should include supervision of activities, supportive of improving instruction and material development, evaluation of programmes and staff instructional planning. For Maranya (2001), the head teachers supervisory position is one of the most critical levels of education system, since it involves the supervision of people in day-to-day operations of the school. Head teachers are therefore responsible for management of numerous resources but the most important and all-inclusive is that of supervising as well proper utilization of teachers.

Methodology

The research utilized the survey research design. Three responsibility groups were selected for this study. They included; Quality Assurance and Standards Offices, headteachers, deputy headteachers and class teachers within the municipality.

Instrumentation and data analysis

The study utilized three types of research instruments which included; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation. For the purpose of analysis, the five-point scale: never, rarely, sometimes, frequently and very frequently used in the research questionnaire was collapsed into a three-point; never, rarely and always. The data collected was coded and descriptively analyzed.

Findings

The study findings revealed that all the macro-competencies studied, namely; motivation, communication, public relations, financial management, planning and coordination, curriculum and instruction, evaluation and staff development, the head teachers ineffectively performed them. The table below shows the mean discrepancies in various macro-competencies as realized from the study findings:

Mean discrepancy scores in macro-competencies as perceived by responsibility groups

Competency categories	Class teachers	Deputy headteachers	Headteachers	Quality assurance and standards officers	Mean	Standard deviation
Motivation	1.351	1.220	0.848	2.219	1.41	0.503
Communication	1.268	0.941	0.878	2.250	1.334	0.549
Public relations	1.321	0.941	0.447	1.906	1.279	0.394
Financial management	1.439	1.070	0.758	2.500	1.443	0.657
Planning and co-ordination	0.930	0.965	1.358	1.800	1.263	0.353
Curriculum and instruction	0.983	0.921	0.578	2.022	1.127	0.540
Evaluation	1.378	1.341	1.382	2.92	1.698	0.574
Staff development	1.680	1.018	0.450	1.575	1.181	0.491
Mean discrepancy scores	1.294	1.052	0.900	2.121		

The results observed about the respondents perception of the macro-competencies in general are not much surprising. It could be argued that headteachers who are directly involved in day to day supervision of educational activities in their schools would overate their current practices more than say the QASOs. In this study, headteachers rated their practices in educational supervision higher than the other participating groups. This could point to the direction that the headteachers felt that their current practices were not too distant from what it ought to be by overrating their current practice of competencies studied. A further observation of the results reveals that contrary to the headteachers trend, QASOs who are charged with responsibility of inspecting school programmes tended to underrate the current practice and overate the desired practice. This is an indication that they expected much more form the headtechers as regards educational supervision

Summary

1. All- the groups that participated in the study generally rated the desired competencies higher than the current practice.
2. A discrepancy exists between the current and desired practice in educational supervision as conducted by headteachers in all the eight macro-competency areas studied.
3. Headteachers tended to overrate the current educational supervisory practices while QASOs underrated the same.

Conclusions and recommendations

The researcher sought to investigate the training needs of primary school headtechers in educational supervision. The need to investigate these training needs arose from the fact that over time, there have been calls from stakeholders expressing the need to equip headteachers with the appropriate supervisory knowledge, skills and attitudes given that they are recognized as first line of inspectors of their own schools. The role of headteachers in educational supervision has been recognized and there is need to train them in educational supervision to enhance their performance. Given that educational supervision is so wide, the researcher found it necessary to limit the study to selected, professionally accepted competency areas relevant to the role and responsibility of headteachers as regards to educational supervision in a primary school setting. From the selected competency areas, specific competency statements were generated. These competency statements were then presented to the respondents in the study. On the basis of their responses the findings already discussed were arrived at. Out of the discussion of the findings, the following conclusions were made. It is apparent and palpable that there has been a great concern over the manner in which education supervision is conducted in Kenya. Koech Report (1999) received presentations indicating that monitoring and evaluation of educational programmes were not being effectively and efficiently carried out. This was because of the incompetent and untrained inspection personnel, lack of equipment and management facilities, and finances in general. However, the report concurred with the Kamunge Report (1988) in recognizing headteachers as the first line of inspectors of their

schools. Equally important to observe is that in Kenya, heads of institutions are central to the successful management of educational institutions and implementation of the total curriculum. The head teacher therefore sets the tone of the school and has the responsibility of creating a healthy environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. The argument being made here is that heads of schools play a significant role in the overall success of a school. They thus should be persons with appropriate academic qualifications, professional qualifications, experience, competence, integrity and initiative. It is no doubt than that the current study will significantly enhance the position of headteachers in discharging their duties. This study endeavored to find out the training needs of primary school headteachers in educational supervision with the hope that given the relevant training, the headteachers could be better positioned to effectively and efficiently carry out educational supervision. The observation that there were significant discrepancies between the current and the desired educational supervisory practices in professionally recognized competencies revealed the need for a comprehensive and specialized training to reduce these discrepancies. The teacher training institutions in the country should therefore re-examine their programmes so as to make them more responsive and relevant as regards to the training needs in educational supervision. Perhaps this could fill the gaps so identified by the study and generally improve the education standards in the country. The section that follows makes recommendations from the study.

Recommendations

In order to adequately prepare teachers for the role of educational supervision at primary school level in Kenya, the following recommendations are made:

i. All teacher- training colleges that prepare teachers for primary schools should have their existing educational supervisory component broadened so as to meet the identified training needs of primary school headteachers in educational supervision.
ii. All teacher-training colleges should introduce a separate and comprehensive educational supervision- specific training programme to meet the expressed needs of practicing primary school heads.
iii. All the practicing primary school headteachers should undergo a comprehensive training programme to bridge the gaps identified by the study as regards to their training needs.
iv. The training programme should also be extended to include QASOs and other educational officers at all levels. This is because, they supervise headteachers as part of their responsibilities and they therefore need to fully understand and also effectively carry out educational supervision.
v. Training programmes for preparing educational supervisors should put more emphasis on the acquisition and practice of competencies that are currently preferred most.

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